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Community involvement helps prevent child abuse

Rowynn Ricks

A guest speaker from the Oklahoma State Department of Health gave a talk about the importance of community involvement in preventing child abuse during the Woodward Area Coalition meeting Thursday afternoon.

Sherie Trice, of the Family Support and Prevention Service, said her main goal in visiting the group was “to hopefully get you thinking about child abuse prevention.”

Trice said April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, and during that month the health department concentrates on increasing awareness about child abuse prevention.

To increase awareness, her office distributes posters to be displayed in communities across the state. She said they also arrange for special displays, using things like pinwheels to deliver a visual message about just how many children in Oklahoma are abused every year.

Her office also tries to team with a different local agency each year, so that the agency can help distribute information about child abuse prevention. Each year the department hosts a Child Abuse Prevention Day at the state capitol, Trice said. During that day, a number of speakers discuss the various issues surrounding child abuse prevention.

Trice said now is the time for local community groups like the Woodward Area Coalition to prepare and think about what they would like to do during Child Abuse Prevention Month.

In addition to discussing child abuse prevention, the Coalition members also took time during their meeting to identify other important issues and concerns they believe Woodward is facing.

They identified four main issues – obesity, substance abuse, strengthening families and providing activities for kids.

The Coalition already provides programs to deal with some of these issues, including events like Walk this Weigh and the Family Fun Day, but several of the members expressed interest in developing new events in order to better meet the needs of youth and their families in the community.

For more information about the Woodward Area Coalition you can contact Lana Shafer at (580) 921-2029.