Preventing child abuse

APRIL, 26 2011
BY MADDIE REYNOLDS
LAHONTAN VALLEY NEWS

In light of horrific child abuse stories, local officials gathered on Friday at Millennium Park to celebrate the growing successes of preventing child abuse within Churchill County.

The park is decorated with many pinwheels glistening in the sun, each representing a family helped by a county organization within the last year, said Wendy Pearce, event coordinator and FRIENDS differential family response advocate.

“These pinwheels don’t necessarily represent the victims anymore,” said Detective Frank Shyne of the Fallon Police Department. “They represent the families that have been helped.”

The pinwheel is part of Prevent Child Abuse America’s campaign to introduce it as a symbol for child abuse and neglect prevention nationwide. According to its website, the pinwheels represent a change needed in how the nation thinks about prevention to stop abuse from ever occurring.

Like many other mayors and city officials nationwide, Mayor Ken Tedford Jr. presented a proclamation recognizing April as National Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month.

“The city of Fallon is dedicated and the community is dedicated to help the effort you have here,” Tedford said to Pearce.

Also in honor of Child Abuse Awareness Month, the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe planted pinwheels on Saturday at Fox Peak to recognize child abuse victims.

In Churchill County, several organizations work with one another to prevent child abuse.

“We intercede on behalf of our children by providing nutrition,” said Pastor Paul Slaton of Fallon Church of Nazarene. The church works closely with FRIENDS.

More than 1.2 million pounds of food passed through the church’s food pantry in 2010, Slaton said.

In addition, the Churchill County Sheriff’s Department relies heavily on the community to report incidents in order to prevent abuse, Sheriff Ben Trotter said.

“The most important thing anyone can do is speak up,” he said. “It can make a life changing difference for one child if we speak up.”

Speaking up and speaking to children is important, said Linda East, director of Domestic Violence Intervention. Many domestic abuse victims don’t talk to their children about the violence in the household whether it’s aimed at the child or not.

“Make sure you talk to your children,” she said. “Make sure they know it’s not their fault and (they’re not) responsible to help alleviate their fears that they may be causing the events that are happening.”

The successes in child abuse prevention will never be seen in court or anywhere else because children are not being abused, District Attorney Arthur Mallory said.

“We can be very proud of our parents and families in Fallon,” Mallory said. “I think Fallon adheres more closely to the values that we all believe in that our children need when they’re growing up than almost any place we can imagine.”