



Northern Kentucky
CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER
Community Foundation of Northern Kentucky

To the Editor:

It is **Your** Responsibility

The Penn State child sexual abuse nightmare has brought to the forefront a horrific abuse that is seldom exposed in our communities, but which occurs every day to children in our neighborhoods. Child sexual abuse can destroy the very fabric of a child's life. If untreated, it will result in long term physical, emotional and psychological damage. As adults, it is our responsibility to ensure the safety and protection of children in our society. The statistics are alarming - 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually assaulted before their 18th birthday. Most children will never tell anyone what happened to them. So the question that everyone should be asking is, "How do I ensure the protection and safety of the children in my life?" And it must begin with an intentional and conscious decision to be watchful, to embrace our individual responsibility to protect children in our community and to bravely challenge situations that put children at risk.

Child abuse thrives in secrecy. When adults are not able to identify risky situations or feel that it is someone else's responsibility to report abuse, children will continue to be hurt. Adults can learn how to protect children. They can ensure that policies are in place to reduce risk, to make sure that children are not in one-on-one situations with adults or older youth, to identify high risk situations and how to take action to protect children. When adults become proactive in protecting children, then sex offenders have less access and opportunities to harm our children. We know there are offenders in our community, and they do not look scary and perverted. In fact, many times they look like people that we trust.

The Northern Kentucky Children's Advocacy Center offers a three-hour interactive workshop called Darkness to Light, Stewards of Children that empowers adults to protect children. The program is an excellent way for adults in our community to gain specific tools to protect children, including how to minimize the opportunities for abuse, how to talk with and listen to children, how to report abuse and how to act on your suspicions and most important how to get involved.

We can make Northern Kentucky a safer place to be a child. Law enforcement, child protection and other professionals cannot do it alone. We need you...each of you...to watch, ask questions, talk with others, and take action to increase safety.

For more information about the Stewards of Children training and how you can become more informed, contact Northern Kentucky Children's Advocacy Center at 859-442-3200, or visit the Northern Kentucky Children's Advocacy Center website at www.nkycac.org.

Submitted by: Vickie A. Henderson, Executive Director, Northern Kentucky Children's Advocacy Center