

If you suspect child abuse, state requires you to report it

BY **LACY GARRISON**
Reporter for the Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

Did you know April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month? According to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, in Warren and Van Buren counties there were 649 reports of child maltreatment in 2017.

That statistic accompanies 72,877 reported cases of child abuse or neglect statewide last year.

"Child abuse and neglect occur everywhere, even in our quiet little community," said Martha Phillips, the Children's Advocacy Center director. Phillips says it is no longer a moral decision to get involved when you think a child may be harmed. It is your legal responsibility.

Everyone in the state of Tennessee is required by law to report suspected cases of neglect, physical, sexual or mental child abuse.

So what should you do if a child shares information about abuse with you? Here's some tips from the Children's Advocacy Center website:

- Remain calm
- Believe the child

- Allow the child to talk, but do not overwhelm him/her with questions
- Show interest and concern
- Do not promise anything you cannot control
- Do not confront the offender
- Most importantly, do make a report immediately. You could save a child's life

That's not all you need to know when making a report, says Pierce. When you contact the Child Abuse Hotline, you will be asked for detailed information about what you suspect or know about the child's circumstances.

Even if you are unable to provide all of the information, it is still vital for you to contact the hotline to make the report.

Sadly, many people fail to report child abuse. Phillips says the most common responses are "I don't have proof that it's really happening" or "I'm afraid to get involved" along with "I wouldn't want to ruin an innocent person's life."

Phillips' response is simple, "You as a concerned citizen do not need proof that a child is being mistreated to make a report. You only need the suspicion that it may be happening and we have a highly skilled group of profession-

als, whose primary job is to investigate reports of child abuse for validation or not."

So what happens once a report is made?

By law, all reports must be kept completely confidential.

The alleged offender will never be provided with the identity of the reporter and reports may also be made anonymously. Once a report has been made, the child, family and alleged offender will each be independently interviewed.

If the investigative team finds no ground to substantiate the allegation, then the case is closed.

This month the Children's Advocacy Center is offering several free local events to educate and help protect children from abuse.

- Field of Flags displayed on Court Square from April 14-28.
- Stewards of Children, a free prevention education seminar, will take place at the Children's Advocacy Center, 1350 Sparta Street, on Monday, April 30 from 1 to 3 p.m.

Remember, be conscious of the children you see, and report any suspected abuse to the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-877-237-0004 or online to <https://apps.tn.gov/carat/>.

For more information on child abuse, go to <http://cac31.org/>.

Word Match winner!



Lisa Hobbs photo
Linda Bell is the Standard's first Word Match winner. She was presented \$50 at the newspaper office Friday by Standard employee Phyllis Vanatta. Said Bell, "I played Cashword every time and never won. I played Word Match once and I won the first time."

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

TUESDAY, APRIL 17
Westwood Church of Christ will hold its clothing giveaway from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. Anyone in need of clothing is welcome.

Central High School class of 1952 will be having its monthly get-together at Nana's Kupboard at 12:30 a.m. on Sunnyside Heights. The invitation is extended to all classmates.

The Warren County Republican Party will have its monthly meeting at the Warren County Admin-

istrative Building at 6:30 p.m. and light refreshments will be provided. The speaker will be Logan Williams of the Tennessee Young Republicans. Several additional local Republican candidates will speak.

SATURDAY, APRIL 21
The 7th annual Autism Awareness 5K will take place in downtown McMinnville at 8 a.m. Race day registration is \$35 and extra T-shirts will be available for purchase. This event honors those impacted by autism while also raising

funds and awareness for autism.WCGA Monthly Members Meeting will be at 2 p.m. in the Magnolia Room of Warren County Administrative Offices, 201 Locust Street. There will be a presentation on the story of Center Hill Lake and the people who lived there.

Irving College's eighth-grade class is having a benefit auction and supper at Fairview CIC for a class trip. The menu is turkey and dressing or chicken strips with green beans, mashed potatoes, slaw,

roll, dessert and drinks. Carry-out is available. For adults, the cost is \$7. For children, the cost is \$5.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Shady Grove Baptist Church, located on 4976 Shady Grove Road, is having its Homecoming on Sunday, April 22 at 11 a.m. Lunch will be served at noon followed by singing by The Calvary Trio and the Mel-O-Tones. The next Oster lunch will be Tuesday, April 24 at Medley's

Diner at 11 a.m. Please contact Linda at 668-2131 with how many will be in attendance. Leave a message if no answer.

Midway Head Start is accepting applications for 2018-19 school year for children ages 3-5 including children with disabilities. Registration is April 25 from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more info, contact Midway Head Start at 686-2098.

Campaign Church of God is having a monthly gospel singing Thursday, April 26 at McMinnville's Bojangles. Singing begins at 6:30 p.m. Everyone is invited.

LBJ&C Head Start is accepting applications to provide free, comprehensive child development services to children ages 3-5. Registration for the 2018-19 school year is April 26 from 9 a.m. to 5

p.m. For more info, contact Brookside Head Start at 668-7043. On Saturday, April 28, First Baptist Church is hosting Priscilla Shirer Live Simulcast from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tickets with lunch is \$15 or \$10 without lunch. Deadline to sign up is Monday, April 23 and childcare is provided with \$3 per child registration. Call 473-4416 for more info.

East End Church of Christ is having its 18th Annual Ladies Day on Saturday, April 28 at 9 a.m. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the guest speakers are Hannah Giselbach and Cindy Colley. Lunch will be provided.

Decoration Day at Charles Creek Cemetery will be on Sunday, May 6 and all contributions will go to the care and upkeep of the cemetery.

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You are cordially invited to the
18th Annual Ladies' Day
Saturday, April 28, 2018
at
East End Church of Christ
102 Edison Street
(off Sparta Street)
McMinnville, TN
931-473-2775
Guest speakers will be:
Hannah Giselbach & Cindy Colley
"The Everlasting Arm"
Registration starts at 8:30 am
Program begins at 9:00 am
Lunch will be served after the program.