



CATAWBA COUNTY

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Department of Social Services

PRESS RELEASE

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Lowes Foods of Catawba County are *Joining Hands* to Protect Children

Joining Hands, a project of the National Children's Alliance, aims to increase awareness of Children's Advocacy Centers across the country and to raise much needed funds at the local level. During the month of September, all five Lowes Foods stores in Catawba County will invite shoppers to contribute \$1 for a "child's hand". All proceeds will go to support the Children's Advocacy Center of Catawba County.



The Children's Advocacy Center of Catawba County, founded in 1998, aims to minimize the trauma a child can suffer during a criminal child abuse investigation and expedite the prosecution of sex offenders. The Center offers a child friendly atmosphere where child victims of sexual abuse and/or severe physical abuse and their families can access a continuum of services through enhanced coordination of efforts between Social Services, law enforcement, the district attorney's office, medical and mental health professionals, and others involved with the child victim during an investigation and subsequent court proceedings.

Last year, the Children's Advocacy Center of Catawba County interviewed 174 children who were allegedly sexually and/or severely physically abused, 39% of these children were age five and under. At the Center, the child victim can tell his or her story in a safe, comforting, private environment, and all parties involved in the treatment and investigation are allowed to gather information needed from the victim without overwhelming the child. An on-site pediatrician is available to examine the victim and gather physical evidence of the alleged assault.

The Children's Advocacy Center of Catawba County is located in the historic Bolick House in Conover. The Beaver Family Foundation, Smart Start, Unifour Foundation, Catawba Valley Community Foundation, Catawba Valley Medical Center, Catawba County Social Services, and private citizens support the Center, a non-profit, tax-deductible agency.

For more information, contact Child Advocacy Center Director Deborah Johnson at 828-465-9296.