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COMMUNITY LEADERS LEARN ABOUT NEW CHILD SAFETY INITIATIVES

HICKORY -- Approximately 100 community leaders learned about two programs designed to protect area children at the Children's Advocacy and Protection Center's second annual Children's Breakfast.

The center was created last year with the merger of the Children's Advocacy Center and the Children's Protection Council. The new non-profit will continue its work in trying to prevent child sexual abuse and responding to cases of reported child sexual abuse. In addition, the center will expand its efforts to educate the public about how to prevent all types of child abuse.

Deborah Johnson, executive director of the CAPC, said the center is well on its way to meeting a five-year goal of training 6,000 Catawba County adults in the Darkness to Light: Stewards of Children Prevention Program. This three-hour program teaches concerned adults how to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse. The center trained 1,300 persons in this program the first year, exceeding its goal. This free training is continuing and is available to any group in the county.

Dr. Stacy Briggs, a pediatric pulmonologist and board member of the CAPC, gave a presentation on "The Period of Purple Crying." This is a term describing extended periods of crying by infants. An educational program has been designed to let new parents and other caregivers know that prolonged crying is a normal stage of development.

Briggs said she was not prepared for the hours of non-stop crying after the birth of her first child, although she was a pediatrician. She said she became frustrated when the baby would not stop crying no matter what she did. "I was so unprepared for how horrible that made me feel," she said.

It is now known that prolonged crying for no apparent reason is a normal stage for many infants. It usually occurs between two weeks and five months. Some children cry for up to five hours at a time. It eventually stops as the child matures.

The term "The Period of Purple Crying" has been developed to describe this phenomenon. The word "PURPLE" stands for "Peak of Crying," "Unexpected," "Resists Soothing," "Pain-Like Face," "Long-Lasting" and "Evening." These periods of uncontrolled crying often happen in the late afternoon or night, when caretakers are tired.



Dr. Stacy Briggs, a pediatric pulmonologist and board member of the Children's Advocacy and Protection Center, talks about "The Period of Purple Crying" at the center's Children's Breakfast.



It is important for parents and others to resist the urge to shake the baby, which can result in Shaken Baby Syndrome, now often called Abusive Head Trauma. Because babies' neck muscles are weak and their heads are large, shaking a baby can result in death or serious long-term injury.

Area hospitals are now showing a video about The Period of Purple Crying to new parents. Efforts are also being made to share this information with expectant parents and other caretakers.

Adrienne Opdyke, victim advocate at the center, described a new certification that can be earned by organizations committed to preventing childhood sexual abuse. Groups that work directly with children, such as child care centers and youth recreation leagues, must commit to certain policies and actions, including background checks and training for staff. Other types of organizations may also apply.

Those who meet the requirements will be allowed to use a new seal that will tell the public that the organization is committed to protecting children. It can be placed on a window, put on a website, and used in printed materials. Applications may be downloaded at <http://www.catawbacountycac.org>.

For more information about these and other programs of the Children's Advocacy and Protection Center, go to <http://www.catawbacountycac.org> or call 465-9296.