INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Sexual Assault and Abuse of Men and Boys
- “Erin’s Law” and “Faith’s Law”
- In The Mainstream: Violence Against Women Act
- Staff Spotlight: Nancee Brown

let’s start the conversation.
On June 1, head to duckracepeoria.com to get your ducks in the race. Ducks will be “buy one, get one free” while supplies last. Once you buy your ducks, you’ll be entered to win 1 of 15 fantastic prizes, including the $10,000 grand prize!

CFPA’s Duck Race is one of the longest-running Duck Race events around the country and this year, we celebrate our 34th anniversary. On August 27, you can watch all 30,000 rubber ducks race down a giant water slide at EastSide Centre in East Peoria! The first 15 ducks to cross the finish line win a prize for their owner. Prizes include a cash grand prize, gift cards, technology, and more! Ducks will be available for sponsorship beginning June 1. Stay tuned for more information!
During the 94th Academy Awards on March 27, 2022, there were a handful of memorable moments during the telecast. Troy Kotsur made history as the first deaf man to win an Oscar for his role in “Coda.” The movie “Coda” won Best Picture – a film that brings deaf actors and deaf culture to the forefront. Jane Campion became the third female in history to win Best Director. And a real and unpredicted act of violence took center stage as the world watched.

The day after the awards, the sole focus on all forms of media was on that outburst of violence and a viral emphasis on the debate ensued — was the explosive behavior justified or unjustified?

In his acceptance speech, the Oscar winner who perpetrated the violence claimed to have walked up on stage and physically assaulted a comedian because “love will make you do crazy things.” That, my friends, is no excuse for violence.

Violence is never proof of love.

Claiming violence as proof of love has been an excuse for domestic violence and sexual assault for ages and it is dangerous territory. It isn’t love. It is assault.

Not long ago, a friend told me a memorable story of a 9-year-old who was punched on the playground by a known bully. When the child was asked if they punched the bully back in retaliation, they said “no” because the Center for Prevention of Abuse’s prevention educator had long taught them that “I should work through my range of emotions before responding.”

Proudly, CFPA’s Prevention Education team frequently talks with young children about self-regulating emotions. If provoked, students are instructed to STOP or send a signal to our brain to “hang on,” “pause,” “wait,” or “freeze.” Further, students are asked to NAME THEIR FEELING, such as “angry,” “embarrassed,” or “frustrated.” And they are instructed on ways to CALM DOWN by deep breathing, positive self-talk, and so on. It may seem elementary, but if we don’t “STOP,” “NAME OUR FEELING,” and “CALM DOWN,” impulsive behavior can cause hurtful, or even deadly consequences.

The Oscars provided what is now a forever moment of flawed humanity and inappropriate messaging when it could have been a positive teaching moment. A bad joke, or a bully’s ugly words, are not justifiable reasons to respond with violence. It is not chivalrous. It is not defending someone’s honor. It shouldn’t be applauded.

While there may be no visible bruises from the televised brutality, metaphorically, we’re all aching.

In Peace,

Carol Merna
Chief Executive Officer
Sexual Assault and Abuse of Men and Boys

By: Julie Boland, Director of Sexual Assault & Advocacy Services

Every April at the Center for Prevention of Abuse, we join the nation in recognizing National Sexual Assault Awareness Month. We do so to shed a light on the prevalence of sexual abuse and assault and to honor the strength and resiliency of survivors of this life impacting trauma. We know that, sadly, each of us has the potential to experience sexual victimization, regardless of age, gender, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, or economic status.

It is important to share information about the sexual abuse and sexual assault of boys and men. Each year, the Sexual Assault Services program at CFPA provides services to young boys and men who are victims of sexual abuse and assault. Statistics indicate that 1 in 6 boys will experience sexual abuse or assault before age 18. Male college students are approximately 5 times more likely than non-students of the same age to be a victim of sexual violence. About 3% of American men — or 1 in 33 — have experienced sexual assault in their lifetime and 1 out of every 10 sexual assault victims is male.

These statistics hit close to home. During the last fiscal year, we assisted 57 male survivors with over half of those being under the age of 18. We have met with these survivors in the emergency departments when they sought medical care or provided counseling and therapy to them during their healing journeys.

Perpetrators of boys and men could be individuals of any gender, age, or sexual orientation, and can have any relationship to the survivor. Like all perpetrators, abusers may use physical force or psychological and emotional coercion tactics.

What is the impact? Male survivors may react to sexual assault and abuse in the same way as other sexual assault survivors, but may also face some additional challenges and reactions due to societal attitudes and stereotypes about males and masculinity. Common reactions following a sexual assault include emotional shock, disbelief or denial, embarrassment, shame, guilt or self-blame, anger, anxiety, fear, confusion, depression, and sometimes, suicidal thoughts. Males are more likely than females to respond with anger, or try to minimize the severity of the assault. Male survivors are also more likely to experience substance abuse to manage their feelings and cope with the assault. Additionally, male survivors of a male perpetrated assault may question their own sexuality, or how others perceive their sexuality. In our society, and through many forms of media, boys and men are still expected and encouraged to be tough, “wipe the dirt off,” “stand up for yourself.” These messages often prove harmful when children are targeted and sexually abused by an older male with authority or a favorite relative. Adolescent males are sometimes groomed and abused by an older female. In these instances, society often applauds the male for his “achievement!” when in fact, this is a prime example of sexual abuse. Males may internalize these messages when unable to protect themselves from sexual assault by a male or female perpetrator and begin to experience harmful thoughts and behaviors.

If you are a male sexual abuse or assault survivor, know that the assault was not your fault and you did not deserve what happened to you. The feelings and thoughts that you have experienced are normal reactions to traumatic events. Help is available to you and you deserve to live a safe, healthy life.

How to help a male survivor of sexual abuse or assault:

- Take it seriously
- Ask them what you can do to offer support
- Let them know that it was not their fault
- Share resources that are specific to male survivors

Tell them that help is available and encourage them to call CFPA’s 24/7 Crisis Hotline at 1-800-559-7233. Specific resources for male survivors can also be found at Rainn.org, 1in6.org, MaleSurvivor.org, or Pandora’s Project.

We believe you and support you.
“Erin’s Law” and “Faith’s Law”

By: Laura Kowalske, Director of Prevention Education

Erin Merryn and Faith Colson may not be household names but these young women’s efforts have made a difference in the safety and well-being of school-aged children attending public schools in Illinois.

In 2010, Erin Merryn began her mission to help children recognize child sexual abuse, equip them with skills to reduce their vulnerability, and encourage them to report the abuse. During her childhood, a male neighbor and an older cousin sexually abused Erin. She never told anyone about the abuse until, one day, her younger sister confided in her that the same older cousin was sexually abusing her. That spurred Erin on to champion making sexual abuse prevention education readily available to school-aged youth.

In December 2021, Governor JB Pritzker signed “Faith’s Law” into effect. The new law expands the definition of grooming and requires Illinois public schools to put additional safeguards in place to prevent sexual abuse of students. Those safeguards include requiring school districts to develop a code of conduct related to sexual misconduct. Additionally, administrators must review the employment history of staff to look for any prior incidents of sexual abuse and increase their sexual abuse training for educators.

Grooming can take place in-person or online and is usually employed by a family member or someone else in the victim’s circle of trust.

After three long years of sharing her story and meeting with legislators, on January 24, 2013 Governor Pat Quinn signed into law “Erin’s Law.” The law requires all Illinois schools to provide age appropriate child sexual abuse prevention education for students Pre-K through 12th grades, annually. As of March 2022, 37 states have passed Erin’s Law. The remaining 13 states are in various stages of passing the legislation.

Similarly, Faith Colson experienced sexual abuse as a high school student. A teacher used the tactic of “grooming” to gain her trust and build a relationship with her in order to engage in unlawful sexual conduct.

The prevention education team at Center for Prevention of Abuse helps schools comply with both laws. Our PreventEd: Sexual Abuse programming is age appropriate, evidence based, and comprehensive curriculum for students grades Pre-K through 12. Students learn about safe and unsafe touches, body safety rules, types of child abuse, and prevention techniques in age appropriate ways. Last year, the prevention team empowered over 21,000 tri-county students with this education.

To request programming for your school, contact us at (309) 691-0551 (x291) or email us at PreventEd@centerforpreventionofabuse.org.
On Saturday, April 9, CFPA hosted its 5th annual “I Run With Survivors” 5K run/1 mile walk in honor of Sexual Assault Awareness Month! Thank you to all of our supporters who joined us either in person or virtually for a beautiful morning of raising awareness about sexual assault and supporting survivors in our community. Thank you to our sponsors, Mid-Illini Auto Center, 309 Cultures, Alpha Chi Omega at Bradley University, Mix 106.9, and Lost Art Design & Print for their support and a special thanks to ShaZam Racing, the City of East Peoria, and the East Peoria Chamber of Commerce for helping us create a safe, well-executed event. We can’t wait to run with you again in 2023!

197 participants

more than $9,000 raised
Chief Executive Officer Carol Merna with overall winner Joey Cave. Congratulations Joey on a fantastic race and your incredible time of 16:52!

**TOP FINISHERS IN EACH CATEGORY**

**FEMALE 18 & UNDER**
1. Maci Cave – 21:50
3. Loren Crook – 27:36

**MALE 18 & UNDER**
1. Joey Cave – 16:52
2. Trey Socha – 16:53
3. Andrew Elward – 17:08

**FEMALE 19–29**
1. Amy Quast – 22:28
2. Jacquelyn Beaver – 24:59
3. Ashley Pummill – 31:00

**MALE 19–29**
1. Tyler Franciscovich – 18:29
2. Colin Hicks – 31:57
3. Curtis Wolfe – 40:38

**FEMALE 30–39**
1. Ashly Stephens – 22:32
2. Karla Anderson-Sarquis – 29:33

**MALE 30–39**
1. Jim Gatti – 18:43
2. Nathan Young – 20:08

**FEMALE 40–49**
1. Snehal Radford – 17:43
2. Melissa Bundren – 26:08
3. Edna Ng – 27:48

**MALE 40–49**
1. Thomas Radford – 17:42

**FEMALE 50 & OVER**
1. Brenda Shawgo – 24:15
2. Kwei Ng – 31:37
3. Sherri Ernst – 32:34

**MALE 50 & OVER**
1. David Zietlow – 23:56
2. James Dunn – 30:30
3. Daniel Kinkade – 31:10

*photo credit: CFPA*
At the Center for Prevention of Abuse, we are so thankful for the community support received through donations. We want you to know exactly where your money goes and how it impacts the lives of all who come to us seeking peace.

$5 could provide personal hygiene products for one person staying in our emergency shelter
$10 could provide fresh produce for a week’s worth of healthy meals for a family in our emergency shelter
$25 could provide a gas card to help outreach clients get to and from appointments with our counselors
$50 could help survivors afford their monthly medications
$100 could cover the cost of one hour-long classroom presentation on violence prevention education
$350 could cover the cost of our 24/7 crisis hotline operation for one day
$500 could provide funding for an Adult Protective Services caseworker to investigate possible abuse in the home of an elderly individual
$1,000 could provide six hours of language translation for a trafficking survivor whose native language is not English
$2,500 could provide one month in safe shelter for an individual fleeing a violent or abusive situation
$5,000 could provide two months of therapy for one sexual assault survivor
$10,000 could cover the cost of Safe From the Start for one month, a violence intervention program for children ages 0–5 who have witnessed or experienced an act of violence at home or in the community

Give the gift of peace today by making a monetary donation. Donations can be designated to specific services or as a general donation.

Honorariums and Memorials
Honorariums may be made to celebrate a special occasion and memorials may be given to acknowledge a lost friend or loved one.

Stock, Real Estate, and Insurance Policies
Donations can be made in the form of capital assets.

Donations that Leave a Legacy
Remembering CFPA in your estate plans can save and change lives for many years to come. A bequest can be designated to a certain program of CFPA or used at CFPA’s discretion. However, if a donor wishes, a bequest can be designated to one of two endowment funds. The Slane Endowment Fund supports the general operations of CFPA and the McPheeters Endowment Fund supports the Prevention Education program.

For more information about monetary donations, honorariums, memorials, capital assets, and legacy donations, please call 309-691-0551.
The Center for Prevention of Abuse celebrates the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022, as part of the recently passed Omnibus appropriations bill. The re-boot of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was included in the 2700-page FY2022 Omnibus spending bill which passed the US House on March 9, the US Senate on March 11 and was signed into law by President Biden on March 16, 2022. Unfortunately, it had expired in December 2018.

VAWA is now reauthorized to 2027, and it includes a number of enhancements to increase access to VAWA-funded programs and improve responsiveness to the needs of survivors.

“We are grateful to those in the United States Congress who understand the positive cultural shift VAWA has continued to make since its inception in 1994. This bill is a diligent effort to support the needs of today’s survivors by reauthorizing the most important elements of all the VAWA bills that preceded it, and includes major enrichments. The new updates to VAWA increase access to life-saving services, invest in prevention and improve the responsiveness of law enforcement and health care systems,” said Carol Merna, CEO of the Center for Prevention of Abuse.

The 2022 reauthorization is, in total, the outcome of six years of bipartisan negotiation. Special thanks are due to Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Joni Ernst (R-IA), Dick Durbin (D-IL), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and their staffs for their leadership.
Happy Retirement, Olga!

By: Celsy Young, Director of Marketing & Communications

For 15 years, Olga Becker has started her day by sipping a fresh cup of hazelnut coffee while catching up on the morning news. She wraps her hair in a neat bun and makes her way to the Center for Prevention of Abuse campus. From there she spends her workday diving into grants and keeping close track of all the reports and information needed for funders. Olga’s keywords: reporting, deadlines, and yada yada. In total, CFPA has more than 60 grants, both government and private. A lot to keep track of! Olga is tasked with making sure we are meeting requirements of grant funders while also working closely with program directors and other team members to keep it all running smoothly.

Before joining the CFPA team in 2007, Olga was the Executive Director of the Chicago Abused Women Coalition and had previously volunteered for domestic violence programs. She has always had a heart for service and after getting a tour of CFPA and learning about all of the services provided, she knew she wanted to work here.

As the Director of Administration for CFPA, Olga has had the opportunity to get an in-depth look at CFPA’s programs and work closely with other staff. She says that through the years, one of her greatest achievements was developing a tracking system for grant applications that streamlined the reporting process and will keep grants organized for years to come. Her favorite part of the job is that every day is different while the hardest part has been balancing all the responsibilities at once.

Olga has many fond memories of her time at CFPA. Who could forget when she dressed up as “Quacky” (CFPA’s official Duck Race mascot) in the Morton Pumpkin Festival Parade?! Or all the Tootsie Pops she has passed out through the years to clients, colleagues, and children, always saving the grape ones for herself. It has been an incredible decade and a half that we won’t soon forget.

Now the time has come for Olga to clean off her desk and hand in her keys. Retirement is calling her name. Though she will miss the people, the special events, and being involved in all the work that CFPA does, she is ready to see where this next adventure takes her. When asked what’s next for her she said, “I’ll have to call you after I retire and let you know”. We are holding you to that, Olga. Though she will not physically be at CFPA, the important work she did day in and day out will leave a legacy for years to come. Thank you for making CFPA a better place, Olga. We wish you well.

New General Manager at WMBD

CFPA is thrilled to share that Shaun Newell, Vice President of CFPA’s Board of Directors, is the new General Manager and Vice President at WMBD/WYZZ TV! Way to go Shaun!

We are so grateful for your passion for CFPA’s mission and wish you every success in this new role.
Thank you to local artist, Suzette Boulais, for donating this meaningful piece of artwork that will be displayed in our Human Trafficking Services Department. This 30” x 30” piece of contemporary art, *Hope For All The Flowers*, aims to send a bright and hopeful message. While it can be taken literally as a field of flowers reaching happily for the sun under bright blue skies, this painting is designed to send a more symbolic message, too. Each of the flowers figuratively represent all the individuals whose lives have been brightened by the wide array of services provided at CFPA. It’s beautiful!
Clayton Frankel (CF): When did you start working at CFPA? Have you always been the Medical & Legal Advocacy Coordinator or have you held various job titles during your time here?

Nancee Brown (NB): I started at CFPA as an intern on January 3, 1992. The name then was Tri-County WomenStrength and the slogan for the t-shirts was “You Can’t Beat a Woman.” My internship was completed by the end of March, and I stayed on as a volunteer until my start date as a counselor in May of 1992. Julie [Director of Sexual Assault & Advocacy Services] was getting ready to go on maternity leave to have her baby girl the first week of August when she was going to train me to cover her position. With wings, I flew and grew into the position of Legal/Medical Advocate. We traded positions in November of 1992 and a few years later, my title changed to Legal/Medical Advocacy Coordinator.

CF: What has been your favorite part about working at CFPA?

NB: Watching the healing process in our clients. I also really enjoy the training of law enforcement officers and have been a witness to the change in responses toward the positive. One of my favorite quotations is, “I think the most beautiful thing in the world is watching the light come on in someone’s eyes when they’ve been lost in the dark so long.”

CF: Any milestones you are particularly proud of, for yourself or the agency?

NB: I am most proud of my position as a victim advocate when I initiated a legislative change to seal evidence in child pornography cases. I worked side by side with a senator and representative to get support from both sides of the aisle and with the help of ICASA.

CF: Did you have a specific mantra or philosophy to help guide you through your advocacy work?

NB: My job as an advocate is to plant the seed, provide support to nurture, and watch it grow in its own strength, blossom, and show its beauty to the sun. We cannot fix the situation nor heal someone’s pain, but we can stand by their side, guide them, and support them during their own journey.

CF: How does it feel to celebrate your retirement? Anything you’re looking forward to as you take this next step?

NB: It feels strange. I really have loved my time here at the Center for Prevention of Abuse. I have had the pleasure of working with some wonderful people. I truly have had the best director in the world in Julie Boland. Julie never ceases to amaze me with all she does. I feel we have grown up together here and I will miss my co-workers. However, I am looking forward to the final chapter in my life with great expectations and excitement. Farewell!
If you are interested in becoming a volunteer or medical advocate for the Center for Prevention of Abuse, please contact Kelly Ward at 309-691-0551.
CFPA received funds from First Federated Church towards children’s therapy.

The Kiwanis Club of Pekin awarded CFPA a grant for Prevention Education.

Thank You!

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