

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

PINWHEELS, VIRTUAL AND VISUAL, PROMOTE CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

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JACKSON, Miss. – Blue pinwheels, signifying April as Prevent Child Abuse Month, are popping up across the map, both virtually and at a busy Jackson intersection to promote education, awareness and prevention.

Volunteers planted 1,200 blue pinwheels on Tuesday morning near the University of Mississippi Medical Center campus at the corner of Woodrow Wilson Avenue and State Street to mark the event.

As well, Prevent Child Abuse Mississippi, a partner with UMMC and the Children's Justice Center, worked with the UMMC Division of Information Services to create a virtual pinwheel garden mapping each donors' choice of location. The map, at preventchildabusems.org, is the first of its kind among the 50 state chapters under the umbrella of Prevent Child Abuse America.

The PCA MS online map signifies donations to Mississippi's only statewide child abuse prevention organization. Any amount is accepted, and the donation can be made in memory of or in honor of a donor's special person, said local Executive Director Rebecca Mansell. PCA MS relies entirely on donations and legislative funding to support its programs.

Pinwheels for Prevention is a nationwide initiative for Prevent Child Abuse America and its state affiliates.

"The pinwheel is an uplifting reminder of childhood and the bright futures all children deserve," according to the national PCA website. "When all children don't have equal opportunities for healthy growth and development, we put our future as a society at risk."

During Prevent Child Abuse Month agencies are encouraged to sell pinwheels to plant in yards, offices and other places.

"We took that concept a step further, and with the help of DIS Web Development, and came up with a way to plant pinwheels electronically. This way people can donate with a few clicks on their smartphone or computer," Mansell said. "We may be the last state to join PCA America, but we're the first with a virtual garden."

"There has been a lot of interest in what we've done and how we've done it," said Kerry Marshall, who heads up the DIS Web Development team.

"We've got the attention of our national organization, PCA America, and now they are trying to duplicate it for all the state chapters," Mansell said.

"Education is key for the prevention of child abuse," she said. There are several dominant triggers for potential child abuse, Mansell said. Crying is the No. 1 trigger for parents of infants, followed by discipline issues and toilet training.

"Our website has been designed to help parents cope with raising a child and to recognize the potential triggers that could cause abuse," she said. "It also will help others recognize the signs of an abused child and how to report it to the authorities."

Mansell said PCA MS will use some of the donations to create a video for new moms. "Our goal is to show this at childbirth classes and at the hospital when their babies are born. We want to emphasize how not

to hurt their children.” Other projects will focus on the organization’s mission to prevent abuse and neglect of Mississippi’s children.

According to national statistics, a report of child abuse is made every 10 seconds. More than four children die each day from child abuse. About 30 percent of abused and neglected children will later abuse their own children, according childhelp-usa.com.

Prevent Child Abuse America and its state organizations are also the charitable project of Kappa Delta sorority found on many university and college campuses. Five Kappa Delta chapters in Mississippi pledged support for PCA MS including chapters at Millsaps College, University of Southern Mississippi, University of Mississippi, Mississippi State University and Delta State University.

- Visit preventchildabusems.org to plant a pinwheel on the virtual map in support of Prevent Child Abuse Mississippi and to learn more about how you can help. All donations are tax deductible.
- Charity Taco Night will be held from 5 p.m.-until April 24 at Jaco’s Tacos in recognition of Prevent Child Abuse Month. Entertainment will be provided by Kelly Nagy of the band U.S., and half of all sales at the event will benefit Prevent Child Abuse Mississippi. The event is co-sponsored by PCA MS and the Kappa Delta sorority chapter at Millsaps College. Jaco’s Tacos is located at 318 S. State St., Jackson.
- To report suspected abuse or neglect, call the Mississippi Department of Human Services at 1 (800) 222-8000. Mississippi state law requires all persons make a report when they reasonably suspect abuse, neglect or exploitation of children.

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The University of Mississippi Medical Center, located in Jackson, is the state’s only academic medical center. UMMC encompasses five health science schools, including medicine, nursing, health related professions, dentistry and graduate studies, as well as the site where University of Mississippi pharmacy students do their clinical training. The Medical Center’s health-care enterprise includes five hospitals and University Physicians, the faculty group practice. The Medical Center’s threefold mission is to educate tomorrow’s health-care professionals, conduct innovative research to improve human health, and to provide the highest quality care available to the state’s population. A major goal of the Medical Center is the improvement of the health of Mississippians and the elimination of health disparities. For more information, contact the Division of Public Affairs at (601) 984-1100 or umc.edu/publicaffairs