

October 2008

the advocate's Voice

The quarterly newsletter for the Child Advocacy Center

Special Points Of Interest

- Alisha Smith named an "Everyday Hero"
- U.S. swimmer reveals childhood sexual abuse
- Vesper Memorial Golf Classic
- The Purpose and components of a Child Advocacy Center
- Upcoming Events and Trainings

Alisha Smith named an "Everyday Hero"

Kearney, Nebraska
9/23/08

Alisha Smith, case coordinator with Health and Human Services Integrated Care Coordination Unit in Scottsbluff/Gering, was recognized for her service excellence at the "Children Need Everyday Heroes" conference.

The Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers presents annual statewide Excellence in Service Awards to a child protection worker, law enforcement officer and county attorney who consistently put children first, make significant contributions to team work for children and inspire others in their work.

The Nebraska Alliance consists of eight centers across the state whose purpose is to provide a culturally competent, multidisciplinary team response to allegations of child abuse in a dedicated, child friendly setting.

Smith was nominated by the Morrill County Attorney Investigation and Treatment Team, led by County Attorney Jean Rhodes, which meets monthly with local Law Enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), area school representatives and other agencies Working to protect children from abuse and neglect.

Her nomination said that she has "gone above and beyond the call of duty to keep kids safe, demonstrating determination and dedication to doing the right thing, no matter what."

Lt. Governor Mike Sheehy provided remarks and helped congratulate the award winners. Approximately 250 prosecutors, social workers, law enforcement, school personnel, mental health agency staff and other persons involved in the prevention, investigation and treatment of child abuse attended the annual statewide conference that was held in Kearney Sept 23 and 24.

The Nebraska Statewide Child Abuse Prevention Partnership comprising the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, the Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board, and the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, incorporating Prevent Child Abuse Nebraska, presented the 2008 conference.





Three-time
Olympic
Swimming
Medalist
Margaret Hoelzer

U.S swimmer reveals childhood sexual abuse

Hoelzer said she is sharing her story to make sure what happened to her doesn't happen to others. "It's nerve-racking," the 25-year old Hoelzer said in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press. "Some days I feel great about it, and I'm completely at peace with it, completely calm and read to do this. Then, there are other days where I'm like, "Oh my God, do I really want to do this?"

Hoelzer says she was 5 years old when the abuse by a playmate's father started.

Hoelzer and her mother believe the abuse went on for at least two years, ending when that family moved away.

"I was going to their house on a regular basis," Hoelzer said. "I would spend the night at their house from time to time... it was definitely a situation where I was taught to trust that person." She wasn't even sure what was going on was wrong.

"I didn't connect the dots other than feeling uncomfortable," Hoelzer said. "I think on a subconscious level I knew it. But consciously, I didn't."

Hoelzer revealed her secret less than a month after the Beijing Olympics, where she won a bronze medal in the 100 meter backstroke and silvers in the 200 backstroke and silver in the 4x100 medley relay. Even after the abuse stopped, it took years to realize what happened. Finally, at the age of 11, Hoelzer was walking in the neighborhood with her best

friend. Suddenly, the awful truth poured out. "She was the one who was like, 'Oh my God, you were molested,'" Hoelzer said. "you need to tell your mom." She was the one who actually put a name on it for me. Heeding her friend's advice, young Margaret went to her mother.

"She was very quiet and listened," Hoelzer recalled. "I remember from time to time, she would say things to kind of prod me along. I was very, very lucky because she 100 percent believed me. She never questioned it. Most importantly, she just let me talk. She didn't freak out.

Hoelzer's other immediately told her father. That night, the police were called. The family was directed to the National Child Advocacy Center, which lined up counseling for everyone and showed them how to pursue legal action.

The alleged molester was arrested. There was no real evidence because Hoelzer wasn't raped. Also, the passage of time and a child's still-developing memory raised doubts about whether a conviction could be reached in the harsh scrutiny of a courtroom. The case was taken to a grand jury, but no formal charges were ever brought.

"I was very angry for a long time that nothing happened and he got off scot-free," Hoelzer conceded. "In school, if you did

something wrong you would get in trouble for it. You would go to detention or have your parents ground you. It was almost this mentality of, 'How can you do something like that and have nothing happen?' No community service. No fine. Nothing.

"Now that I'm older," she added, "I realize that's not how it is. A lack of evidence is just a lack of evidence."

She never had any more contact with that family.

She never had any desire to confront her molester.

"I haven't seen him in almost 20 years," Hoelzer said. "I don't even know if I'd recognize him at the point."

Hoelzer is not ready to say she's reached closure, but she's eager to use her plight to help others. She majored in psychology at Auburn University, with a minor in criminology. She wanted to learn about the child abuse issue from both sides: Victims and perpetrators.

"In my own way, I was self-counseling in college," she said. "Every single paper I wrote in school was about kids who've been molested and sex offenders."

That process goes on. Without telling anyone of her motivation, she already has gotten involved with the National Child Advocacy Center, the first of its kind and now one of about 900 branches around the United States.

The Jason Vesper Memorial Golf Classic

CAPstone Child Advocacy Center received a check from Jason Vesper family in the amount of \$4,300 and from Wal-Mart for \$1000

A Very Special Thanks to the Family of Jason Vesper and everything you have done for CAPstone

We would also like to thank those who participated in the tournament.

Also a thank you to WAL-MART

The Purpose and Components of a Child Advocacy Center

The purpose of Children's Advocacy Centers is to provide a comprehensive, culturally competent, multidisciplinary team response to allegations of child abuse in a dedicated, child-friendly setting. A child appropriate/child-friendly setting and a multidisciplinary team are essential for accomplishment of the mission of Children's Advocacy Centers and for accredited membership in National Children's Alliance. The team response to allegations of child abuse includes forensic interviews, medical evaluations, therapeutic intervention, victim support/advocacy, case review, and case tracking. These components may be provided by Children's Advocacy Center staff or by other members of the multidisciplinary team. To the maximum extent possible, components of the team response are provided at the CAC (Children's Advocacy Center) in order to promote a sense of safety and consistency to the child and family.

The following program components are necessary for accredited membership in National Children's Alliance:

Child-Appropriate/Child-Friendly Facility: A Children's Advocacy Center provides a comfort-

able, private, child-friendly setting that is both physically and psychologically safe for clients.

Multidisciplinary Team (MDT): A multidisciplinary team for response to child abuse allegations includes representation from the following: law enforcement
child protective services
prosecution
mental health
medical
victim advocacy
Children's Advocacy Center.

Organizational Capacity: A designated legal entity responsible for program and fiscal operations has been established and implements basic sound administrative practices.

Cultural Competency and Diversity: The CAC promotes policies, practices and procedures that are culturally competent. Cultural competency is defined as the capacity to function in more than one culture, requiring the ability to appreciate, understand and interact with members of diverse populations within the local community.

Forensic Interviews: Forensic interviews are conducted in a manner which is of a neutral, fact

finding nature, and coordinated to avoid duplicative interviewing.

Medical Evaluation: Specialized medical evaluation and treatment are to be made available to CAC clients as part of the team response, either at the CAC or through coordination and referral with other specialized medical providers.

Therapeutic Intervention: Specialized mental health services are to be made available as part of the team response, either at the CAC or through coordination and referral with other appropriate treatment providers.

Victim Support/Advocacy: Victim support and advocacy are to be made available as part of the team response, either at the CAC or through coordination with other providers, throughout the investigation and subsequent legal proceedings.

Case Review: Team discussion and information sharing regarding the investigation, case status and services needed by the child and family are to occur on a routine basis.

Case Tracking: CACs must develop and implement a system for monitoring case progress and tracking case outcomes for team component.

Up Coming Events and Trainings

A Powerful 2-Day Workshop

Bridges Out of Poverty

Presenter & Co-author
Terie Dreussi Smith, MA, ED

October 9th & 10th, 2008
9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Northeast Community
College
Lifelong Learning Center
601 E. Benjamin Ave
Norfolk, Nebraska

The Batterer's Impact on Children and Strengthening the Mother - Child Relationship

Tuesday, October 28, 2008
12:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday, October 29, 2008
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Holiday Inn Convention Center
110 2nd Avenue
Kearney, Nebraska

No registration fee!!

Through the Eyes of a Child

An all day seminar focusing on
the 0 to 3 population in the court
system: how courts and stake-
holders can ensure the best pos-
sible outcomes for babies and
toddlers

October 10, 2008 Ogallala
October 17, 2008 Papillion
November 7, 2008 Hastings
November 21, 2008 Norfolk

Trainer: Debra Anderson, October 13, 2008

Part One - Child Abuse 101, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. - Limited to 25 participants

**Part Two - Child Abuse 101, Only if you would like to go out and train about Child Abuse and Neglect
12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Limited to 10 participants**

Harms Advanced Technology Center, 2620 College Drive, Scottsbluff, NE 69361

Presenter: Sally Sexton

Adults Protecting Children from Sexual Abuse

**Darkness to Light is an international prevention training program that educates adults to prevent,
recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse.**

Late October or Early November at the Harms Center

Please call the Advocacy Center for more information on these trainings: 308-632-7274