

Local

Stand Against Child Abuse event set for April 12

✎ By Renee Beasley Jones Messenger-Inquirer

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For at least 15 years, the Stand Against Child Abuse resource fair has taken place in Owensboro.

Kristy Clark, coordinator for Green River Area Development District's Community Collaboration for Children, is organizing the event again. It starts at 4:30 p.m. April 12 on the front lawn at Kentucky Wesleyan College, 3000 Frederica St.

"This event brings awareness to child abuse and neglect in our region and provides free resources for families," Clark said.

Recently, child abuse in Kentucky made the news.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' "Child Maltreatment" report, the commonwealth's abuse rate is the highest nationwide. Kentucky's rate -- more than 22,000 victims, or about 22 kids out of every 1,000 -- is more than double the national average. The statistics came from 2017, the latest information available.

"This is troubling," Dr. Erin Frazier, a pediatrician and medical director at Norton Children's Prevention & Wellness, said in a press release. "Hopefully we can attribute the numbers to everyone doing a better job of recognizing and reporting abuse. We, as a community, need to continue to support and educate families so that situations don't escalate to the point of abuse."

At the Stand, Kentucky Legend is donating free hot dogs. Children can enjoy a petting zoo, bounce houses and face painting.

"Every booth will have an activity for children," Clark said.

Vendors, including Building Stronger Families, RiverValley Behavioral Health, schools' family resource centers and University of Kentucky Extension Services, will entertain children with cornhole, origami and more. Owensboro Twisters will make balloon animals, and one booth will feature a sandbox for kids.

Also, this year's Stand has a new feature. Clark said a balloon release will represent Kentucky abuse cases that resulted in fatalities and near-fatalities between July 1, 2016, and June 30, 2017.

Ashley Evans-Smith, SPARKodc project manager, said Kentucky's No. 1 rating for child abuse is a call to action.

SPARK stands for Social Partners Advocating for a Resilient Kentucky. It is an Owensboro-based pilot program that brings awareness to adverse childhood experiences and their lifelong negative effects on health and well-being.

"In light of the No. 1 ranking for child abuse, many people in our community may be wondering what can be done," Evans-Smith said. "Engaging in the community through events like Stand Against Child Abuse and initiatives like SPARKodc provide us with the chance to come together and make meaningful changes in the lives of children and

families. Every child deserves the opportunity to grow up free from abuse."

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RESOURCE FAIR

Stand Against Child Abuse, a resource fair that is free to the public, will take place from 4:30 to 7 p.m. April 12 at Kentucky Wesleyan College, 3000 Frederica St.