

GENEROSITY IMPACT

APRIL 2024

Child Abuse Prevention

by LaRu Woody

I would like to thank you for the opportunity during Generosity Impact for April to talk about a topic very close to my heart.

In 2022, there were 56,944 confirmed victims of child abuse and neglect, and 9,623 children were removed from their homes in Texas. That is not something that we want to hear about on a beautiful Sunday morning. But it needs to be said. Almost 57,000 children victims of abuse and neglect in Texas.

April is Child Abuse Prevention month. I am here to speak briefly about preventing abuse and neglect. Some of you know that during my time as a prosecuting attorney here in Travis County I was the director of the Family Justice Division and oversaw cases involving child abuse and neglect. During my tenure as a prosecutor, I saw the devastation that wrecks families and children that are exposed to abuse and neglect. But I remain hopeful. I am hopeful because of the many good hard working dedicated people who are striving to prevent child abuse in our community.

Securing a future free from the damages of abuse will not be accomplished by one agency, but by many. While there are many organizations in our community devoted to protecting our children, I want to highly ght one of them.

UPBRING

For more than a century – beginning with a group of visionary Lutherans who dreamed of building an orphanage in the 1860s to the vital programs in place today throughout Texas – UPBRING has proudly grown and adapted to the changing needs of society. You probably know of UPBRING by its former name, Lutheran Social Services. The organization re-branded itself in 2015 changing its name but not its mission. Today UPBRING’s mission stays the same: to break the cycle of child abuse by empowering children, families and communities.

Upbring sponsors several different efforts to support children and families.

1. Foster Care training and support. When a nurturing family decides to foster a child, Upbring offers an abundance of resources to wrap around both family and foster child to give them extra support and assistance.
2. Upbring supports parents guiding them through adoption options in Texas. Providing information and support for individuals seeking to adopt children.
3. Providing safety and security for children in crisis Upbring’s Residential programs. These residential facilities include placement for teen and pre-teen girls providing compassionate support to trauma survivors. Upbring also provides home-like shelters for unaccompanied children. These are children who are alone after they have traveled to unfamiliar countries, leaving home and loved ones behind to escape war and violence.

4. Upbring provides a wide range of community services including medical care in a clinic in Lubbock and community care where families, elderly and individuals with disabilities are able to endure difficult times with emergency assistance. Supporting both Texas and Louisiana, Upbring provides support to families in the aftermath of natural disasters such as tornadoes and floods and fires.

5. Upbring sponsors early childhood education programs that strive to build a solid foundation for lifelong learning. Upbring's Head Start preschool programs provide children with the highest level educational opportunities.

Although they have been known by different names throughout their history, the meaning behind the name today, Upbring , honors the past while promising a commitment to the future – one that is longstanding, innovative and designed to bring up” children just as our predecessors have done throughout our history.

Child Abuse Prevention comes in many forms and touches so many of our systems. We prevent Child Abuse and Neglect by feeding kids, providing adequate medical care, supporting unhoused families, providing opportunities for education and intellectual growth, providing mental health care and on and on.

The congregation at First English has a long tradition of providing support and care for children. We have many current and former teachers in our pews every Sunday from Lois Holck who taught very young children for many years to Bailey Barlow who continues the First English tradition by teaching Spanish also to very young children. Our former pastor Mike Coffey volunteered as a Court Appointed Special Advocate being a voice for children in the child protective services court system.

We are all charged to support and protect the children of this world.

One of the very best examples of child abuse prevention can be found in the building of First English. The First English Lutheran Child Development Center is a model for how we can protect children and support families. Since 1972, the First English Lutheran Child Development Center has been serving the community by offering safe, loving and engaging child care for families and children of Austin.

The mission of the Child Development Center “is to provide a quality child care experience that helps each child develop cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally, and we are proud and passionate about our work.”

Dr. Paulette Clemons and our CDC staff support children and families every day. If you want to support child abuse prevention then support our very own Child Development Center.

Psalm 127:3 says “Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him.”

We have been given a gift from God (some of us many gifts) and we need to work to protect that gift as best we can. There are many ways that any of us can help prevent child abuse: by being educated about abuse and neglect, by volunteering for organizations that work to prevent child abuse and providing financial support to those organizations.

If you have questions about these or other child abuse prevention programs please feel free to contact me. I thank you for working to protect our gift from the Lord.

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[FELCDC \(firstenglishcdc.org\)](http://firstenglishcdc.org)

[Non-Profit Foster Care & Adoption in Texas | Upbring](#)

[Center For Child Protection - Here To Protect Austin Kids](#)

[CASA of Travis County \(casatravis.org\)](http://casatravis.org)

[Home Page - The SAFE Alliance \(safeaustin.org\)](http://safeaustin.org)

[CAP Month 2024 \(preventchildabuse.org\)](http://preventchildabuse.org)

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