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**Key Note for Pin Wheel Garden Dedication**  
**Chesapeake, Virginia 4/3/17**

Thank you to Mayor Alan Krasnoff, Dr. Nancy Welch, Department of Health, Melynda Ciccotti, Champions for Children / Prevent Child Abuse Hampton Roads and In Support of Children, student organization at Old Dominion University.

Thank you coming together to take important steps to prevent violence, trauma and neglect in the lives of children. Your collaborative initiatives clearly illustrate this year's prevention theme ' "Together for Children".

The Pin Wheel Garden that you are dedicating today reflects your acknowledgement of the importance of childhood and the **importance of the work that children do** trying to make sense of and cope with the world around them.

While the pinwheel may connote the whimsy of childhood, it also contains opportunities for a child to experience competence and mastery. When a child holds the pinwheel in her hand, moves it through the air and makes the blades of the pinwheel spin. **Lesson a child learns: I can affect the world!**

We know, however, that violence, trauma and neglect force children to cope with these toxic stressors (See: [Adverse Childhood Experiences Research](#)) often preventing them from taking advantage of learning experiences and developmental

assets (See: [Search Institute](#)) and the great childhoods we want for all children.

Sixty years ago medical observations of patterns of child injuries and the application of x-ray technology lead Dr. C. Henry Kempe and Frederic Silverman to give us the term “Battered Child Syndrome”. “Beating of children,” the article noted, “is not confined to people with a psychopathic personality or of borderline socioeconomic status. It also occurs among people with good education and stable financial and social background.” They recognized then that **hitting children was the norm.**

Today, 50 years of research in many disciplines on patterns and effects of child-maltreatment and another new technology (this one for observing what happens in the brain as a result of trauma and neglect and how it affects the lives of children and the adults they become) has brought us a deeper understanding of the behavioral and health consequences of maltreatment occurring in childhood.

**We now are beginning to see that child maltreatment is both a cause and result of many public health problems.**

Now we see the need for community wide efforts at prevention of harm to children. We now realize that anything that interferes with children’s work is violence against children it harms them by hindering their development. We now realize that in dealing with problems after sufficient harm has occurred (legal definition of child abuse) may be too late.

We need to prevent harm in the first instance.

What do we need to do and what are we doing here in Chesapeake? Let's look at what some experts have to say:

Dr. Bruce Perry of the [Child Trauma Academy](#) in his paper "Incubated in Terror: Neurodevelopmental Factors in the 'Cycle of Violence'" concludes:

*In order to solve the problems of violence, we need to transform our culture. We need to change our child rearing practices; we need to change the malignant and destructive view that children are the property of their biological parents. ... Children belong to the community, they are entrusted to parents.*

In 2016, the Centers for Disease Control published a technical package <sup>1</sup> on child abuse and neglect prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/can-prevention-technical-package.pdf>) . In that report they note:

*One social norm that is particularly relevant to preventing child abuse and neglect relates to how parents discipline their children. Another has to do with whether it is appropriate for parents to seek help in parenting. Approaches to changing [these] social norms "... include public engagement and education campaigns ...to reduce corporal punishment.*

Also in 2016 the American Professional Society on Abuse of Children (APSAC) approved a position statement opposing the

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<sup>1</sup> Fortson, B. L., Klevens, J., Merrick, M. T., Gilbert, L. K., & Alexander, S. P. (2016). *Preventing child abuse and neglect: A technical package for policy, norm, and programmatic activities*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

hitting of children for discipline or other purposes advocates (See [APSAC Advisor.pdf](#) ). In their report they urge professional to:

*Inform parents, caregivers, teachers, and the general public about the harmful effects of corporal punishment;*

*Educate parents, caregivers, and teachers about age-specific expectations for child skills, behavior, and development;*

*Provide parents, caregivers, teachers, pediatricians, clinicians, and other professionals who work with parents and families with suggestions for positive parenting approaches that use non-physical forms of child guidance,*

This is what you are doing with the Pinwheel Garden and the attention you are drawing to the importance of primary prevention

This is what you are doing in establishing “No Hit Zones” [See "No Hit Zone" - Gunderson](#) in your community and making the idea that it’s NEVER ok to HIT A CHILD (or anyone else) the NEW NORMAL for our culture. (See: [IN SUPPORT OF CHILDREN - CAUSE PAGE](#))

You are recognizing a child’s right not to have his /her physical integrity violated (just as any other human).

Finally let me commend all of you engaged in these efforts for your courage.

As my brilliant colleague and dear friend Dr. Karen Polonko wrote (See [Child Abuse and Neglect: The Need for Courage](#)):

*This [work you are undertaking] will take courage, for in granting children human rights, we must challenge not only the beliefs and laws which support the power parents have to hit, harm, ignore and exploit their children, but also the beliefs, defenses and behaviors that parents developed to survive their own childhood maltreatment.*

*As researchers and practitioners emphasize, we, as a society, must do everything in our power to prevent and treat child maltreatment, not only because of the suffering of the victims, or even because of the benefits that society stands to gain, but because it is the right thing to do. It is an ethical imperative. It is our moral responsibility.*

Though Karen recently passed away last year, I know she would be pleased to see all that you are doing to prevent harm to children. Good luck on this important work.