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Wyandot County children, agencies kick off child abuse prevention month

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Staff writer

Child abuse and neglect is no joking matter, but area children's faces were shining just after 10 a.m. Thursday as area first grade students participated in the annual balloon launch on the Wyandot County Courthouse lawn to kick off annual Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Many of the Upper Sandusky school district and St. Peter's School first grade students danced, hugged and raced to keep their eyes on the balloons after a proclamation by the Wyandot County Commissioners declaring April as Child Abuse Prevention Month and the raising of the flag by maintenance worker Mark Ratliff.

"Child abuse and neglect is a complex and ongoing problem in our society and child abuse prevention depends on involvement among people throughout the community," commissioner Mike Wheeler said. "... Every child is entitled to feel secure and be free from neglect and verbal, sexual, emotional and physical abuse."

"... The (effects) of child abuse are felt by whole communities and need to be addressed by the entire community. It is the responsibility of every adult who comes in contact with a child to protect that child's inalienable right to a safe and nurturing childhood," he added.

The Upper Sandusky High School FCCLA club and child psychology classes soon joined the first grade students, with each youth carrying pinwheels to represent the 333 reports of child abuse and neglect last year in Wyandot County.

Child psychology teacher Jessica Puhlman said USHS students got involved with the statewide Pinwheel for Prevention campaign in 2007 with a display on the high school lawn.

The local campaign since has moved to the curb along courthouse lawn.

Puhlman said the goal is to have every chapter of FCCLA in the state of Ohio participating by 2010.

This year's theme for the month is "It Shouldn't Hurt to be a Child."