

# S.A.F.E. showcases Butterfly House, promotes child advocacy

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On Friday, April 16, the nonprofit Support in Abusive Family Emergencies, Inc. opened to the public its Butterfly House Child Advocacy Center, which has been recognized as a full member of the Child Advocacy Centers of Georgia since 2004.

The purpose of the event was to welcome community members in to highlight some of what the organization does to offer child and family advocacy services.

S.A.F.E. Executive Director Molly Cousin gave a tour of the different rooms of the home, describing how the child-centric Butterfly House lends itself to multiple uses for families and children in need.

When a family dynamic is threatened by abuse, the facility provides a safe, neutral space for children and families to give testimony to help authorities get a better idea of abusive situations.

"If there is a law enforcement investigation for child abuse, or sometimes when (Division of Family & Children Services) has an investigation, our county protocol is to have forensic interviewers," Cousin said. "We interview kids from 3 to 18, and we are trained to be non-biased and do it in a friendly manner. It is videorecorded and used in the investigation as evidence."

S.A.F.E. provides advocacy and follow-up for all families to see what resources they may need, including using the facility to conduct supervised visits.

"We average like six families a month (for supervised visits)," Cousin said. "Families usually last from 12 months to two years doing visits. Our calendar stays pretty packed."

"(In terms of forensic interviews), it kind of depends; I have done three recently, and I think seven total this month. So, it is definitely used more than people think."

By providing the community with information about S.A.F.E. and its services, Cousin hopes families will feel more comfortable reaching out when they find themselves facing abusive emergencies.

"We just want people to know what we are here for," Cousin said. "If people have something happen to a child and they don't know what to do or don't know



S.A.F.E. Executive Director Molly Cousin, Family Advocate Amanda Stover and UCSO Capt. Doug Loyd attended the April 16 Butterfly House open house to raise awareness for the organization.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

how the process works, I think it would benefit families to know that law enforcement doesn't interview children.

"They try to make it as child-friendly as possible. They try to make it not traumatic for kids, and there is a whole system working together to help families survive these situations. It is not just us; we work with DFCS to get what people need."

Additionally, S.A.F.E. hosts

parenting classes and skills each day, "and we do drug screenings," Cousin said, noting that the organization is also available to accompany families to court if needed.

"We just try to help when we can," Cousin said.

S.A.F.E. operates with funding from its local thrift stores at 4134 Bonny Hills Drive in Young Harris and 27 Pinebrook Drive in Blairsville, and through community donations, fundraising and other

activities.

The overall mission of S.A.F.E. is "to provide support, advocacy and emergency shelter for victims of Domestic Abuse, Child Abuse and Sexual Abuse, regardless of gender, and to heighten community awareness of such abuse in Towns and Union counties."

For more information, including on donations or volunteering, visit SAFEServices.org.

## School Board...from Page 1A



Local stakeholders and school officials traveled to the State Capitol Building April 22 to meet with Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan for special recognition in receiving \$3,075,000 in grant funding to form a College & Career Academy.

Photo/Facebook

"Regionally, we had it all online, which included a knowledge test," Cattanach said. "Isaiah scored high on that, which let him go to state."

"SkillsUSA decided that they wanted to give students the chance to do something hands-on. They decided to do it all virtually through the school.

We had to set up the stations at the school, and they supplied materials for that."

Assistant Facilities Director Derrick Pruitt was awarded the Going the Extra Mile Award for his assistance in mentoring Gray and contributing to the success of the students.

"Derrick has been very instrumental for me," Cattanach said. "Setting up a new lab and all that is when I got to know Derrick and found out he was a licensed commercial electrician. I had a ball in my court, and I knew I could use him when I needed. When I asked him to help Isaiah, he was glad to help."

Also recognized were STAR Student Hannah Todd and STAR Teacher April Krieger. Todd had the highest single-sitting SAT score in the district and is at the top of her senior class, and she chose Krieger for the tremendous influence

of the English teacher has had on her academic career.

In other business, the board heard about the need to redesign the upcoming College and Career Academy building, for which the system has received more than \$3 million in grant money to establish.

During a report by Facilities Director Mike Patton, it was explained that the building would have to be redesigned from the original goal due to increasing costs of construction materials.

"We have had multiple meetings between the architect, construction management team, and ourselves," Patton said. "If you haven't experienced what is going on lately, I am going to give a little update on material costs. Lumber is about 200% higher than it was in October. Metal buildings from October 14 to April 12 are up over 60%."

With the cost concerns, the system has decided to redesign the plans to fit the original budget, which the Board Office assures will still give students exactly what they need in the program.

Separately, several local stakeholders involved in the College & Career Academy traveled with representatives

of Union County Schools for a special check presentation for grant awardees by Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan at the State Capitol Building on Thursday, April 22.

Also in the April 20 board meeting, Special Education Services Director Tiffany Setzer reported on the significant increase in interest in programs available at Union County Schools.

"I thought it was a record when I looked at it last week, and it was 460, and today it is 464," Setzer said of enrollment. "We have 27 students with open eligibility, so by the end of the year, we could have 491, and I wouldn't be surprised if we started with over 500 early next year."

Added Setzer, "We have well surpassed our referrals, and we have 70 transfers to date. We are growing leaps and bounds. I just have to attribute that to the stellar work the people in this system are doing."

After a long year of COVID precautions and concerns, the school system is looking forward to a successful end of the year with zero school closures having been necessary due to COVID-19.

## Patriots' Day...from Page 1A



Members of the Sons of the American Revolution fired a patriotic volley from muskets for onlookers during their April 19 Patriots' Day gathering.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

"Also, on the same day a few years later, three British ships were sunk in the Georgia coast, so this is Georgia Patriots' Day, too. We do it to teach people and educate them on our history so we don't forget what this country was founded on."

"Our job is to let people know that we do have a heritage, and I'm concerned because people want to change so rapidly. Change is something that evolves."

Ogden uses history as a lens to view meaningful change as a phenomenon that largely occurs gradually over time, and he feels that in present-day America, rushed change is being favored over tried-and-true considered change that got the United States to where she is today.

"From my lifetime growing up, it was a lot different," Ogden said. "Now, a lot of things are a lot better, but that wasn't a fast change. I fear that people want change to

happen fast, and that is not how change works."

"Change will come when we get there, and that is why we look back on our heritage to see how it changed."

Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris attended the demonstration and celebration, signing proclamations right there on the square commemorating the two Patriots' Days.

"Anything that is about our history is important to me, which means that it is also important to our community," Paris said. "To have these guys spend this much time and effort to keep our history prevalent and in the view of the public, I think it is just awesome."

For Paris, being a patriot means having a deep feeling of love for this country, which many Americans experience individually and together as a nation.

"It is such a powerful thing; I don't really know how to describe it," Paris said.

"You are a patriot to your country, you are a fellow of your country, you believe in your country, and you know what your country is about. It is like a heart feeling to me."

The Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter SAR also recognized Registrar Jack Dugger, who recently recovered from a lengthy bout with COVID-19.

In the leadup to the event, Dugger assured everyone he would make it to Patriots' Day because of his passion for history and his desire to celebrate the creation of the United States with his fellow countrymen.

"Patriots' Day is the beginning of what our country is today," Dugger said. "We were fighting all these taxes without representation, and that started it all. Nobody is really sure who fired the first shot at Lexington and Concord, but it did start our country."