

SafePath Earns Award for Service to Children - November 21, 2010

by Marcus E. Howard
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From left are Page Wally of Casey Family Programs Foundation; Jinger Robins, SafePath executive director; Ed Lee, SafePath board president; and Andrew Agaston, attorney.

[slideshow](#)

MARIETTA - While Jinger Robins, executive director of SafePath Children's Advocacy Center in Marietta, has been with the private, nonprofit that helps abused and neglected children since its establishment in 1995, she has no plans to retire anytime soon.

"It would be nice to retire," said Robins, a married Kennesaw resident and mother of two children. "But right now there's way too much to do and there are a lot of people to still educate and a lot of children to serve."

Her dedication has paid off. For its years of service, SafePath recently received the 2010 Outstanding Agency Award from the Georgia Association of Homes & Services for Children, a support agency. The award was presented Wednesday at the Georgia Conference on Children and Families luncheon at the Legacy Lodge and Conference Center on Lake Lanier Island.

The award honors an agency that has demonstrated outstanding service to children, said Normer Adams, GAHSC executive director. Marietta lawyer Andrew Agatston nominated SafePath.

"SafePath is the one agency that stands out as a consistent leader in meeting the needs of children who have alleged sexual and severe physical abuse," said Adams.

"SafePath's comprehensive services which include a welcoming environment, crisis counseling, therapy, group treatment, medical services, court assistance, crime victims assistance, victim advocacy and referral services make it an agency to be emulated."

Robins said she and others at SafePath were surprised but excited to receive the award.

SafePath works with law enforcement, the state Division of Family and Children Services, the district attorney's office, therapists and healthcare professionals in Cobb to reduce the trauma of child victims of abuse or witnesses to homicides.

When the economy goes downward, that's when reports of child abuse typically increase, said Robins. According to a recent study SafePath conducted, physical child abuse has doubled within the past year in Cobb, she said.

"Since 1996 to present, we've served over 10,000 children and their families who have come through our doors. If we have a good year, we may have anywhere from 1,500 to 2,000 cases. If we have a year where the economy is really bad or we have several multi-victim cases that involved sexual abuse of children, those numbers will go up."

Not only have the number of abuse cases increased, Robins said, but so have the nature of their severity.

"Physical abuse in 1999 may have been a brutal spanking or something that left bruises or harmed the child," said Robins. "Today we see things as brutal as death and more children who are brutally beaten. Instead of an over zealous harming of the child, we are looking at a brutal beating of the child."

The caseload increase isn't the only impact the economy has had on SafePath. The organization receives its funding from competitive public grants, fundraisers and donations, and has had to cope with less wallets opening for its cause.

"The most difficult part is being able to maintain the level of quality that we need to maintain because children deserve to be safe in our community," said Robins.

"We have such a rich history since 1996 of providing those services in Cobb County."

On Dec. 3, SafePath's Prevention Arm will conduct its annual holiday breakfast where the organization recognized individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions toward decreasing child abuse and neglect in Cobb. State Rep. Judy Manning of Marietta will host the event.

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SafePath Honors Child Advocates

by Marcus E. Howard
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MARIETTA - SafePath's Prevention Arm membership program presented awards Friday to individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to decrease child abuse and neglect in Cobb. The presentations were part of the program's annual Holiday Community Open House breakfast at its Whitlock Avenue office.

In attendance were board members and supporters of the nonprofit SafePath Children's Advocacy Center, as well as dignitaries such as Marietta Mayor Steve Tumlin, Cobb Sheriff Neil Warren, Kennesaw Mayor Mark Mathews, Kennesaw Police Chief Bill Westenberger and state Rep. Judy Manning of Marietta.

"What we are really about today is trying to prevent child abuse," said Jinger Robins, SafePath's executive director. "What we really know, as a community, is if we can start teaching people how to better prevent child abuse, maybe we won't have so much traffic to our front door."

The Prevention Award, awarded to a nonprofit that contributes to making children safer, was presented to Patsy Bryan, founder of Ten Women of Hope. Established in 2007, the nonprofit brought together several Cobb women who wanted to financially assist single mothers in crisis. Since then, more than 55 women have been helped.

"Their backgrounds all bring something different to the table," Bryan said. "We have a banker, attorney, accountant, social worker; so we're just well-covered in the areas we need to. I have to share this award with my other nine women because we are a team of 10 women and we all work together, love what we are doing, and have just done more in three years than we ever imagined."

The recipient of this year's VIP Award, presented to a Prevention Arm member who has made a significant impact in preventing child abuse and neglect, was Andrew Agatston of Powder Springs, a lawyer who has provided pro bono legal research, training and advice for child abuse cases.

"I'm humbled because I think I'm more of a behind the scenes guy working to support what they do here," said Agatston, 47, after receiving the award. "I'm glad to support what they do on the battlefields, really. SafePath and Crimes Against Children are really on the forefront of doing the heavy lifting."

The Crystal Gavel Award, which recognizes an individual or organization that has made a significant contribution toward decreasing the negative effects of abuse and neglect of children, was awarded to the Junior League of Cobb-Marietta.

Members of the Junior League, founded in 1933, have provided funds and trained volunteers to assist SafePath. The organization has also dedicated rooms and murals at SafePath's offices.

"They all love coming here and leave with a sense of accomplishment," President Jennifer Johnson-Lynch of Kennesaw said. "What really got me is that I had my five-month-old one day when I was here - it's windy and she's all dressed up - and they bring in two kids without shoes on. My little five-month-old, who doesn't need shoes and was wearing shoes for appearances, and these kids had no shoes. It's just tremendous what they do."

Ed Lee, SafePath board president, also recognized Harrison High School's Octagon Club, which decorated the advocacy center office with Christmas decorations. The Cobb Excel Management Development Program was also applauded for designing and building a garden at SafePath.

Business

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Staff/Laura Moon

CREDIT FOR SERVICE: LGE Community Credit Union CEO Chris Leggett, right, presents Snyder Turner of Calvary Children's Home with a \$10,000 check. LGE Community Credit Union CEO Chris Leggett gave three local charities more than \$10,000 each on Wednesday morning from funds raised by the LGE Foundation. The Foundation, created this year by LGE employees, is entirely funded through the efforts of LGE employees and volunteers. LGE matched funds raised, up to \$25,000. A total of \$35,968 was raised this year and the bulk of that was divided among Calvary Children's Home, SafePath Children's Advocacy Center and MUST Ministries. Eight other charities and individuals in need received about \$4,000 total. 'We are acutely aware that many people are struggling and we are dedicated to helping with that need,' Leggett said. 'The LGE Foundation has been a blessing to all of us. It has brought our employees together to help people in serious need.'



Above Left: Leggett, left, presents Jinger Robins, executive director of SafePath Children's Advocacy Center, Inc., with a \$10,000 check. **Above Right:** Leggett, right, presents Lane Henderson, in corporate relations with MUST Ministries, with a check for more than \$10,000 on Wednesday.

COBBBRIEFLY

\$90K grant awarded to child advocacy group for equipment

From staff reports

MARIETTA — The Governor's Office for Children and Families recently awarded a \$90,200 grant to the Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia to purchase telehealth equipment to assist in medical assessments of child abuse cases.

Twenty-six of 39 Children's Advocacy Centers will be issued telehealth equipment

designed to allow medical professionals to make a diagnosis when they are separated by distance. Equipment will include a camera, computer, web cam, a speaker, and software.

Cobb County should receive equipment by the end of the year during the second phase of the implementation process, said **Jinger Robins**, executive director of SafePath Children's Advocacy Center in Marietta.

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New service award named after Olens

by Katy Ruth Camp
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CUMBERLAND — Attorney General Sam Olens, Cobb County's immediate past chairman, got a surprise Monday morning when the Cobb Chamber of Commerce announced that it has named a community service award after him.

For the past 12 years, the Cobb Chamber has been giving out the Business Community Service Awards to Cobb businesses for their support of nonprofit organizations. Beginning this year, the Chamber will be choosing one of the 11 recipients for a top award, which Chairman Rob Garcia announced at the group's First Monday Breakfast would be called the Sam Olens Business Community Service Award.

After the breakfast, held at the Atlanta Marriott Northwest near Windy Hill Road and Interstate 75, Olens said he had no idea that the award was going to be named after him. Olens said he had planned to attend the breakfast anyway because of his friendship with the featured speaker, United Distribution CEO Doug Hertz.

"Originally, I was going to give his introduction, but they said they wanted me to do something else. So I didn't know if I was going to be serving coffee or what," Olens said with a smile. "Many business leaders are active at their churches or in one sole area, but it is unusual to have so many businesses in this county who help out in so many different areas. I'm not worthy of it, but I am humbled by it, and there are so many folks who make this county so great."

Garcia said the award was being named after Olens because of his contributions to the successes of nonprofit organizations and businesses in the county, as well as his own philanthropic service.

"Sam Olens has been instrumental in countless organizations and many initiatives throughout our county," Garcia said. "The impact he has made on our community will continue to leave a great legacy for years to come."

Balfour Beatty Construction, whose Southeastern headquarters are located in the Galleria area, won the first-ever Sam Olens Business Community Service Award. SafePath Children's Advocacy Center, Inc. nominated the company, which has contributed nearly \$210,000 to 32 nonprofit organizations in the past year, Garcia said.

The 11 recipients of the Cobb Chamber/Georgia Trend Magazine Business Community Service Awards were nominated by nonprofit organizations in the community for their service. Along with Balfour Beatty Construction, this year's recipients were:

n Cobb EMC, nominated by The Tommy Nobis Center

n Comcast Corporation/Comcast Foundation, nominated by The Center for Family Resources

n Digital Insurance, nominated by Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

n Elite Telecom Services, nominated by the American Cancer Society

n General Electric, nominated by Communities in Schools of Marietta/Cobb County, Inc.

n Printpack, Inc., nominated by The Center for Children & Young Adults

n SA White/Mobilized Fuels, nominated by YWCA of Northwest Georgia

n Star-Tech, Inc., nominated by Reconnecting Families

n Vulcan Materials Company, nominated by Kennesaw Police — Law Enforcement Torch Run

n Zenith Design Group, nominated by Kiwanis Club of Marietta Foundation, Inc.

Nearly 340 people attended Monday's breakfast. The next First Monday Breakfast will be held on Jan. 9 at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, where Cobb Chairman Tim Lee will give his State of the County Address.

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