

# COMMUNITY STRONG

People Helping People in St. Charles County

Community News has been published weekly by Huneke Publications, Inc., since 1921. Thanks to Bob Huneke, Publisher Emeritus/General Manager, the newspaper is proud to co-sponsor this monthly nonprofit spotlight in celebration of its 100th anniversary year.

"Community Strong represents an opportunity to celebrate the entrepreneurial and collaborative spirit of nonprofit organizations in our region," said Huneke. "It is a privilege to showcase what so many people are doing to lift up one another in support of the greater good. I think our readers have been pleasantly surprised to witness firsthand the bottom-line economic impact of nonprofits in our community."



**Carol Felzien**



**Julie Seymore**



**The Child Advocacy Center of Northeast Missouri, Inc.**

This month, our nonprofit spotlight conversation is with Julie Seymore from The Child Advocacy Center of Northeast Missouri based in Wentzville with office locations in Hannibal and Memphis, MO.

Serving as Executive Director, Julie talks about the Center's coordinated team approach to supporting children and families in our community. She also discusses the recent opening of their new Therapy Office in Wentzville, local speakers bureau opportunities, and upcoming fund-raising events for this year and next.

**Carol Felzien (Carol) – Thank you for taking the time to talk today, Julie. For everyone's easy reference, let's begin with some general background on your Center, including where you provide services.**

**Julie Seymore (Julie) – The Child Advocacy Center of Northeast Missouri is one of 15 Child Advocacy Centers statewide. We serve 14 counties, including St. Charles, Lincoln, Warren, Montgomery, Pike, Ralls, Marion, Monroe, Shelby, Lewis, Clark, Knox, Scotland, and Schuyler.**

Since opening our doors in 2000, our staff and community partners have been the front-line responders to reports of child abuse. Our organization exists to protect children, heal families, and prevent abuse.

We're also currently in the process of implementing a new program focused on child exploitation and human trafficking. Next year, we plan to expand our local school presentation offerings by providing a new High School Program focusing on healthy relationships, and also tailor our presentations for use in Special Education settings.

The Child Advocacy Center is a child-focused place where a comprehensive, coordinated approach is taken in response to allegations of child sexual and physical abuse occurring in our service area.

**Carol – If you would, please describe the services you provide at the Center, along with your coordinated team approach.**

**Julie – The core services we offer include forensic interviews, children and family advocacy, mental health therapy, and school and community-based prevention education programs.**

Our Multi-Disciplinary Team or MDT consists of members of law enforcement, Children's Division workers, the Prosecuting Attorney's office, Juvenile Justice Center staff, Medial SAFE Providers, child and family advocates, and mental health therapists.

Our mission is to respond to child abuse through a supportive team approach to reduce the trauma to children and their families. At the Center, our primary goal is to ensure children disclosing abuse are not further victimized by the intervention systems designed to protect them.

For example, each child that we see for a forensic interview is referred for therapy with one of our therapists or a contracted therapist. We work with

family members to arrange therapy that is close to home, and free of charge. The therapy sessions continue as long as needed.

**Carol – Earlier this year your team opened a new Therapy Office located at 1451 Wentzville Parkway. Let's talk more about your therapeutic services.**

**Julie – Our therapists face a continual challenge of keeping children, who need to cope from past trauma, off waiting lists. With the recent opening of our new Therapy Office, we're able to provide additional mental health options to meet the needs of the children and families we serve.**

Our Therapeutic Services allow children to process their experience in a safe, supportive environment. Children participate in evidence-based, trauma-informed therapy modalities to reduce the harmful effects of the trauma they have experienced.

While working with their therapist, children develop healthy coping skills, gain self-confidence, learn to understand and effectively express emotions, and are able to identify and draw on their own strengths to leave them better equipped to handle life's challenges. Last year, The Child Advocacy Center provided 1,525 client hours in therapy.

**Carol – No doubt funding is paramount for the Center and donations must be critically important in order to keep your services going and your doors open. How can the community be supportive?**

**Julie – We aim to help every child who comes through our doors, and it definitely takes support from the entire community to make this happen. In fact, we encourage local organizations to request a speaker in order to become better educated members of the community, a community where all children are safe from harm.**

Our Speakers Bureau is a grassroots way for local schools, community groups, corporations or places of worship to learn more about what we do at the Center. It's also an opportunity to highlight the needs of our ongoing operation, empower children, and educate the community at large on how we can work together to end child abuse.

In addition, we have several upcoming events, including our Rock n Roll Bingo Night, which will be held on Friday, November 5 at the Pezold Banquet Center in Cottleville. Your readers can visit our website at [cacnemo.org](http://cacnemo.org) for complete details and in addition to participants we can always use volunteers.

Then we would ask that everyone mark their calendars for Saturday, April 30 of next year for our One With Courage Gala to be held at the Ameristar Casino in St. Charles. Registration for this annual event will be available online soon.

**Carol – In closing, let's discuss any ongoing effects of the pandemic and the local impacts on children and families in our community.**

**Julie – We're so thankful for this opportunity to tell our story. Let me wrap up by saying we have the best team. Our staff members listen to and serve children on a daily basis, and they make every effort to ensure we have the capacity to continue serving and never find ourselves in the position to tell a child 'no.'**

Unfortunately, we've seen an increase in the complexity and severity of cases due to the pandemic. As of August 31, forensic interviews in St. Charles County increased 74% over the same time period last year. Granted, the pandemic affected interviews in 2020, but as of this past August, forensic interviews increased 53% over the same time period in 2019, which we would classify as a normal, pre-pandemic year.

In 2020, our team managed 926 forensic interviews, and as of August month-end, we've already completed 808 interviews. That's 808 children who were sexually or physically abused. That's 808 small voices we provided a safe place to disclose the abuse they endured. Thank you for supporting our mission, as most importantly, we never ever want to turn away a child in need.

## The Child Advocacy Center

Reducing the trauma to child abuse survivors since 2000.

**Office Hours:**  
Monday-Friday –  
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

989 Heritage Parkway  
Wentzville, MO 63385

For more information  
or to make a donation:  
636-332-0899  
[cacnemo.org](http://cacnemo.org)

*The Child Advocacy Center of Northeast Missouri serves child victims of sexual abuse, physical abuse, and children who experience violence.*

**NOTE:** In November, the Community Strong column will feature The Sparrow's Nest. If you would like to nominate a St. Charles County nonprofit organization to be highlighted in a future issue and/or would like to provide financial support for your group's feature article, please contact

Carol Felzien at:  
[carolfelzien@gmail.com](mailto:carolfelzien@gmail.com)  
or visit  
[MajesticConsultingCo.com](http://MajesticConsultingCo.com).

A digital version of this column can be found at [MyCNews.com](http://MyCNews.com).

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