

Statement on the Sentencing of Jerry Sandusky

The sentencing of Jerry Sandusky following his conviction on multiple counts is an important component of our community's response to the reality of child sexual assault. Holding perpetrators accountable through the investigation, prosecution, conviction and sentencing sends a clear message to all those who would abuse children that child sexual abuse will not be tolerated in our community. We must be clear, however, that child sexual abuse and its tragic aftermath continue every day in our community. Children continue to be abused behind closed doors by trusted adults. Adult survivors continue to struggle with the impact of their childhood abuse. While the sentencing of Jerry Sandusky was just and a necessary step in the healing of his victims and our community, much more remains to be done.

Over the past few months, many in Centre County have begun to work toward a community that takes seriously its responsibility to protect children. The CCWRC, the Youth Service Bureau, the YMCA of Centre County, the Centre Co. United Way and other organizations have partnered to educate the community about child sexual abuse. The Stewards of Children program addresses the dynamics of child sexual abuse, how to recognize it and how to develop and implement procedures that help keep children safer. The Child Safety and Protection Collaborative, under the leadership of Judge Brad Lunsford, has made consistent progress toward establishing a Child Advocacy Center which will significantly enhance the services and care provided to children who are abused. The CCWRC has launched support groups for adult survivors of child sexual abuse and their significant others and will work to continue to enhance these services. We are moving closer to becoming a community that prioritizes child safety.

But too many children still suffer in silence and fear; too many adults continue to battle their demons alone. While it is our fervent hope that the conviction of Jerry Sandusky brings a sense of justice and a measure of comfort to those whose lives he damaged, our responsibility as a community is by no means complete. Until we are all engaged in the creation of safe environments for our children, in appropriately caring for children who have been abused, and in supporting those who continue to struggle with the effects of child sexual abuse, our work as a community is not finished.