

Blue Ribbon Campaign to raise awareness of child abuse

By **JUSTIN MUSZYNSKI**
STAFF WRITER

BRISTOL — Those blue ribbons you're seeing around town aren't just a colorful way to welcome the spring weather.

The Parent and Child Center at Bristol Hospital, in partnership with the Bristol Exchange Club, is hosting its annual Blue Ribbon Campaign to raise awareness of, and money to help fight, child abuse. The fundraiser is always held in April, which is National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

"The blue in the ribbons represents the bruises of kids who have been abused," said Beverly Foote, chairwoman of the center's advisory board.

"It is a big issue in the community," said Kimberly Carmelich, director of the Parent and Child Center. "Bristol has a much higher rate of child abuse than surrounding towns. It's sometimes a hidden issue that people don't talk about."

According to data provided by the state Department of Children and Families, Bristol accounted for 1,695 allegations of child abuse or neglect in the 2012-13 fiscal year; 269 of those, said the DCF, were substantiated.

Those numbers eclipse those

of surrounding towns, including Plainville (275 reported, 25 substantiated), Southington (522, 61) and Farmington (152, 34) over the same period.

"We're here to help," Carmelich said. "We offer over 100 parenting classes a year on various issues, anywhere from how to communicate with your child and how to discipline your child to how to deal with your child's anger."

All the funds raised during the campaign will go to educational programs that look to reduce child abuse.

Another way the center supports the cause is by offering The Caring Closet, which provides low-income families with their infants' and young children's basic needs, including diapers, baby food and clothing. All are supplied through community donations.

"Often times child abuse comes about because of stress," Carmelich said. "If you can imagine not being able to meet your child's needs, it can create additional stress that leads to abuse. The Caring Closet just tries to ease the burden."

Anyone interested in donating to the Blue Ribbon Campaign can call the Parent and Child Center at (860) 585-3481.



Justin Muszynski | Staff
Beverly Foote, chair of the Parent and Child Center's advisory board, attaches a ribbon outside of the center as part of the Blue Ribbon Campaign.

Family Sundays offered at the Carousel Museum

SPECIAL TO THE PRESS

BRISTOL — The New England Carousel Museum is proud to offer new Family Sunday programs for children and their parents for 2014.

Each month, the museum at 95 Riverside Ave. will be offering a unique educational and entertaining program designed for families and kids of all ages.

Thanks to a grant from the Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation, each program will be free for a selected area within the Thomaston Savings Bank region, including the towns of Bristol, Bantam, Bethlehem, Harwinton, Litchfield, Middlebury, Morris, Northfield, Plymouth, Oakville, Terryville, Thomaston, Waterbury, Watertown, and Woodbury.

Sunday April 27 at 2 p.m. the museum will celebrate Earth Day

and the warm spring weather by planting some seeds at the New England Carousel Museum. Kids will read from "The Magic School Bus Plants Seeds" to learn about how plants grow, and then kids can paint their own flowerpots and sow some seeds that they can take home and watch blossom.

Admission for the Earth Day program is \$6 for adults and \$5 for children 2 to 14. Children under 2, residents of Plymouth and Terryville and museum members get in free of charge.

All admissions include a free ride on the museum's working carousel.

For more information, call (860) 585-5411 or email info@thecarouselmuseum.org or call Danielle Johnson at (860) 585-5411.

REGISTER YOUR CHILD FOR FALL 2014 NOW!

Imagine Nation Preschool Learning Center



Imagine Nation Preschool Learning Center
Together we nurture...a love for learning.

REGISTER NOW!

- We provide Early Childhood Education for Preschool children
- We provide mixed age group classroom (6 weeks - 3 years)
- We are State Licensed
- We are an **naeyc** Accredited Center
- We have qualified, experienced Early Childhood teachers (1:7 staff to child ratio)
- We provide full time care, Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
- We offer reasonable rates for all families
- We offer financial assistance for families of Bristol with preschool children who qualify for the School Readiness Grant
- We accept Care 4 Kids funding

Free 1 year membership to Imagine Nation with registration!

Financial assistance is available for Bristol families with preschool children through the School Readiness Grant.

Call us to find us how to enroll or come to the

Imagine Nation Preschool Learning Center

located in the Imagine Nation Museum at One Pleasant Street, Bristol, CT (lower level)

860.582.1480



BOYS & GIRLS CLUB AND FAMILY CENTER OF BRISTOL, CT



A Museum for Children and Families