

Child advocacy center gets financial boost

United Way chapters work together to support initiative

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SAUKVILLE — The Lakeshore Regional Child Advocacy Center has received \$103,500 to continue its mission of helping

children who have faced trauma.

The United Way chapters of three counties – Ozaukee, Washington and Sheboygan – announced the donation to the Lakeshore Regional Child Advocacy Center last week. Lakeshore Regional, established last year, is the only child advocacy center in those three counties.

Previously, cases of child abuse, neglect or trauma often had to be handled in other counties that had more resources. That required children and their families to travel for assistance, often to places that already struggled to handle their own case loads,

according to information from United Way.

With Lakeshore Regional, residents of Ozaukee, Washington and Sheboygan counties can access those resources, specifically designed to help children in a way that minimizes further trauma.

“It’s all about putting the child first,” Lakeshore Regional Child Advocacy Center Executive Director Amanda Didier said. “Our comprehensive program is unique because we bring all the partners involved in child abuse investigations into one family-friendly,

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neutral environment. We’re able to provide the children and families with services they need to heal and thrive after dealing with all the trauma and legal issues.”

Before the Child Advocacy Center was established, Didier spent two years with Ozaukee County as a forensic interviewer working with children. Much of the equipment and methods used by the county went with Didier to the CAC. Last year, when the advocacy center was opened, Didier said one of the major changes for the county was the addition of an on-staff health professional working to help children involved in investigations.

According to information from United Way, the advocacy center model in use by Lakeshore Regional is considered a best-practice standard nationwide, because the model uses trained professionals in a system not only designed to collect legally defensible information, but to

do so in a way that minimizes any further trauma to the children involved. “It’s a shocking reality, but hundreds of children in our community are victims of physical, sexual or emotional abuse every year,” United Way of Washington County Executive Director Kristin Brandner said.

“Our local United Ways recognized this growing and unmet need,” United Way of Northern Ozaukee Executive Director Barbara Bates-Nelson added. “United, we’re taking action to ensure that abused children – some of our most vulnerable community members – have the support and advocacy they need.”

Lakeshore Regional Child Advocacy Center provides many services, including forensic interviews, medical exams, child and family advocacy and mental health services. The center serves Ozaukee, Washington and Sheboygan counties. More information on the center and its work can be found on the organization’s website, www.lakeshorecac.org.