

The Villages

Advocacy center to benefit from breakfast

By DAISY MOON
DAILY SUN

THE VILLAGES — During the past year, the Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center served more than 725 children in Lake and Sumter counties, according to the center's executive director Diane Piszczek.

To ensure that the free services remain readily accessible to abused children, the center will host a fundraiser pancake breakfast from 8 to 10 a.m. Jan. 22 at R.J. Gator's in Lake Sumter Landing.

"I think all nonprofits are looking for creative ways to bring some more funding into their organizations," Piszczek said.

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PANCAKE BREAKFAST

A benefit pancake breakfast will be held from 8 to 10 a.m. Jan. 22 at R.J. Gator's in Lake Sumter Landing. Tickets are \$5 per person to benefit the Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center. Tickets can be purchased at The Villages Home Warranty Department, 340 Heald Way, Suite 214, The Villages. For information, call 323-8303.

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BREAKFAST, from C1

Because Villages residents have lent their support to the Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center during past fundraising events, Piszczek feels confident they will do so again during the upcoming pancake breakfast.

The breakfast is "something new" the center has decided to do in an effort to raise money, advocacy center board member Katie Stradinger said.

Tickets are a "requested donation" of \$5 per person, according to Stradinger.

Piszczek said 100 percent of proceeds will benefit the organization.

The Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center provides a variety of services to children up to 18 years of age who have suffered abuse, according to Piszczek.

"The whole idea behind our center is to provide services in one location the child or family may need," she explained.

Those services include both long-term and crisis counseling, interviews and medical exams.

Services are up 33 percent from the previous year, Piszczek said.

"It is a significant amount, and I think you would find in talking to other social serv-

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— **Diane Piszczek**
executive director of Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center

es, all of us have seen an increase," she continued.

"It could be, in part, due to tough economic times (and) stress on families," Piszczek said, adding, "more children are being helped."

Clients do not pay for any services offered through the center.

"It's important to know that it is all provided at no charge," Piszczek said, "and that we continue to try to respond to the needs of the community."

Tickets for the pancake breakfast can be purchased at The Villages Home Warranty Department, 340 Heald Way, Suite 214.

For information, call 323-8303.

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The Villages Fundraiser benefits center to help fight child abuse

By J.R. DUREN
DAILY SUN

THE VILLAGES – The fight against child abuse in Lake and Sumter counties became a little more even Saturday.

More than 300 people attended a pancake breakfast fundraiser Saturday at R.J. Gator's at Lake Sumter Landing. Proceeds from the \$5-per-ticket fundraiser went to Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center. The donations from the event help the battle against an alarming rise in abuse cases, said Diane Piszczek, CAC's executive director.

"It is extremely heartwarming that folks, even in these times, are willing to support the advocacy center," she said. "The community support is invaluable to us."

Piszczek's center offers abused children from Lake

See **FUNDRAISER**, C3



J.R. Duren / Daily Sun

Village of Amelia residents Walter and Janice Martin, left, Village of Sunset Pointe residents Bill and Maria Satterfield and son Derek, rear, enjoy breakfast Saturday at R.J. Gator's. The breakfast was part of a pancake fundraiser that benefited the Lake Sumter County Children's Advocacy Center.

FUNDRAISER, from C1

and Sumter counties supervised visitation, forensic interviews, counseling, medical evaluations and other resources, all free of charge.

Donations from the fundraiser will help fund all of these services, Piszczek said.

The money comes at a critical time, she said, as the center took in 725 children last year, a 33 percent increase from the previous year.

"When the economy dips, the incidents of child abuse increase," CAC Assistant Director Donna Richey said. "Although we have more children to see, we have less disposable income with which to address those (cases)."

In a 2008 fact sheet released by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, research indicates abused or neglected children are 11 times more likely to be arrested for criminal behavior as a juvenile, are

more likely to have behavioral problems, are more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs and are more likely to have unprotected sex.

Donations like the ones Villagers gave to CAC are critical, as they fund services that can intervene in a child's life and redirect that young person toward a restored life said Ben Tanzer, senior director of strategic communications at Prevent Child Abuse America, a national child abuse awareness group with a chapter in Tallahassee.

"It's a big deal to support organizations like (CAC), because it impacts lives," he said. "An investment in children is an investment in a community. Playing a role at any level can have a ripple effect across the country. That's exciting and that's important."

Village of Sunset Pointe residents Bill and Maria Satterfield attended the fundraiser.

The Satterfields have experience in working with abused and neglected teens –

Bill as a member of a community task force in New York City, and Maria as a former principal of an Englewood, N.J., high school.

Bill said retirement gives them more time to find causes like the advocacy center's.

"We have a background working with kids. We understand," Bill said. "When you're retired, other than your grandkids, what else do you have to do? This is the best place in the world to support a cause like this."

As a former principal, Maria encountered many abused or neglected students who felt they had nowhere to turn for help.

"If you have an agency like the one we're sponsoring, kids will have somewhere to go," she said.

"When you can intervene early," Piszczek said, "the cycle does not have to continue."

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