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## Nonprofit, officials speak out during joint proclamation ceremony

Atzimba Morales 15 hrs ago



Representing Congressman Will Hurd, Carmen Gutierrez hands San Felipe Del Rio CISD Superintendent Dr. Carlos Rios a certificate honoring the school district and its employees for the efforts they put into protecting the students from child abuse at the Val Verde County Proclamation Ceremony for National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Photo by Atzimba Morales

Children are vulnerable to many things, physically, mentally and emotionally. When organizations get together for the sake of the children, it is to address the concerns revolving around said children and how to better their situation.

Tuesday, the BCFS Health and Human Services-Del Rio hosted the Val Verde County Proclamation Ceremony to promote awareness and speak out against child abuse in Val Verde County for National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Organizations, such as Child Protective Services (CPS), San Felipe Del Rio Consolidated Independent School District, the Mexican consulate and the Guatemalan consulate, joined in on the occasion.

Val Verde County Judge Lewis Owens, Del Rio Mayor Bruno Lozano, representing U.S. Rep. Will Hurd was Carmen Gutierrez, and representing State Rep. Poncho Nevárez was Layla Ozuna; each read a statement declaring the month of April as Child Abuse Prevention Month.

In 2018 there were 402 investigations in Val Verde County involving accusations of child neglect, 108 investigations involving physical abuse, and 118 cases involving sexual abuse.

"I questioned if we (the city) had that many cases and one CPS caseworker told me they had 140 cases on their load," Owens said. Child abuse and neglect affect children of every age, income and race; when multiple risk factors are present, the risk of child abuse is higher.

Some common risk factors for children are parental immaturity, unrealistic expectations, stress, substance abuse and poverty. By strengthening familial bonds, the community is helping make it a safer environment for children.

"For many of us, they're not just numbers, they're not just statistics; they're our neighbors, families, friends and relatives," Gutierrez said in regards children in need of help. Gutierrez stated it was important to acknowledge the people that help at every hour.

“As the judge and state representative said, it is really unfortunate as to why we are here today, but I celebrate everybody for providing their services to the community. I am honored to have everybody provide their services, to insure these children have a fighting chance at not being abused anymore,” Lozano said.

Lozano reminded the audience that as a community they are here for the children. He stated that as adults it becomes harder to speak up and children should not be ignored.

While the city of Del Rio has a low rate of child abuse reports, it was mentioned this was likely due to the lack of child abuse actually being reported. Citizens are encouraged to be observers and reporters and to trust their instinct when something does not feel right; services and information can be provided at [discoverbcfs.net/delrio](http://discoverbcfs.net/delrio)

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Ruben Cantu