

# Playing, Pinwheels, and Prevention

APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE  
PREVENTION MONTH

by Libby Carty **McNamee**



Christenson

**H**ead on over to Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden during the month of April and there will be a sight to behold—thousands of pinwheels spinning in the breeze in honor of Child Abuse Prevention Month. This year, Prevent Child Abuse America is focusing on prevention rather than on response to abuse that has already taken place. Its new nationwide public awareness campaign, called “Pinwheels for Prevention,” is designed to highlight the importance of play and positive parent-child interaction. With a focus on good outcomes, this unique campaign uses the basic toy pinwheel as a happy and uplifting symbol of the innocence of childhood.

At the beginning of April, the Virginia chapter, known as Prevent Child Abuse Virginia (PCAV), will “plant” more than 3,000 toy pinwheels at the lake edge of Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. Each pinwheel will represent a child served during the past year by PCAV’s Healthy Families Virginia Program in Central Virginia and Tidewater. The pinwheels will be blue, the color that child abuse prevention programs traditionally use to represent the bruises of abused children. Thus, the sea of these blue pinwheels spinning in the breeze will draw positive attention to Virginia’s successful prevention efforts in child abuse.

Like the flowers and plants blossoming at Lewis Ginter this spring, children need nurturing as well as a safe and healthy environment in order to grow and thrive. PCAV’s goal is to help healthy children grow by providing their parents and families with the support and resources they need to be successful. These steps towards prevention are an integral factor in breaking the cycle of abuse. Linda Thomas, public affairs manager of PCAV, explains, “Parenting is a tough job, and we want to make sure all families in Virginia are supported in every way possible. That’s why our free Healthy Families home-visiting services for parents who are particularly overburdened and our toll-free parent helpline, 800-CHILDREN (800-244-5373), are so important. These tools empower families and actively promote positive, effective parenting.”

One of the campaign’s long-term goals is to develop the pinwheel as the new symbol of community support for children. Pinwheels for Prevention also aims to strengthen families and encourage people to take action to prevent child abuse from ever happening in the first place.

Also in the pursuit of prevention of child abuse, the local nonprofit Greater Richmond SCAN (Stop Child Abuse Now) offers a comprehensive Web site, [www.FAMRichmond.org](http://www.FAMRichmond.org), an invaluable resource for Richmond families. FAM provides

a central clearinghouse for local parenting information, upcoming educational opportunities, and links to other helpful Web sites. Karen Coppola, SCAN’s FAM program coordinator, comments, “It’s our goal to create a culture that recognizes that parenting is a difficult job and that it’s okay for parents to ask for help. We’re here to provide the help and support that all parents need.”

With the help of donated supplies from Pleasants Hardware, the unique pinwheel exhibit will be on display in the Ginter Children’s Garden for the entire month of April, included with regular-priced admission. “We are excited to be part of this event as we become more and more a family destination,” comments Beth Monroe, Director of Public Relations and Marketing at Lewis Ginter. Pinwheels for Prevention will also coincide with “A Million Blooms,” Lewis Ginter’s renowned spring program featuring a dazzling succession of daffodils, cherry blossoms, tulips, iris, roses and peonies.

Other groups in the area will also be “planting” pinwheels in support of the child abuse prevention campaign. Greater Richmond SCAN will have 1,000 pinwheels on display in the VCU student commons area on April 1. They will also be distributing over 300 pinwheels at Chesterfield Towne Center’s Club Mom function on April 2. In addition, they are partnering with Reveille Preschool for pinwheel-related activities during the Week of the Young Child, April 14-21. And last but not least, they are coordinating additional festivities with the Children’s Museum of Richmond as well as at some local daycare centers and additional schools.

Interested individuals may buy pinwheels from SCAN for \$1 at area events or by contacting the nonprofit directly at 804-257-7226 or [www.GRSCAN.com](http://www.GRSCAN.com). SCAN offers a myriad of local parenting information at [www.FAMRichmond.org](http://www.FAMRichmond.org).

For further information about the campaign, contact PCAV at [www.PreventChildAbuseVA.org](http://www.PreventChildAbuseVA.org) or 804-359-6166. Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden will be holding extended evening hours during Garden Week as well as on Thursdays during April. For details and directions, go to [www.LewisGinter.org](http://www.LewisGinter.org). **V**

**V** Libby Carty **McNamee** is a local freelance writer, looking forward to seeing a sea of blue pinwheels blowing in the breeze at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden during April. Visit her Web site and parenting blog at [www.libbymcneame.com](http://www.libbymcneame.com)