

Caring for children nationwide



“As long as there is evil in the world, there will be crimes against children. Children are humanity’s defenseless prey, unable to prevent their own abuse at the hands of adults. Unlike adults, children cannot solve their problems on their own. Children without loving, capable parents, especially need men and women of goodwill to stand up for them, in every aspect of their lives. They will not be safe, secure, well fed or educated without us.

“It is our duty to protect children who are exposed to violent adults, and to limit the access violent and abusive adults have to children. The protection of the innocent is not a political priority: it’s a moral imperative, a cornerstone of civilization, and a test of our culture’s respect for the sanctity of human life.

“Eight years ago, my wife Christine became a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for foster children, and we have also been foster parents ourselves to several children over the years. In that time, we have seen the damage, pain and despair abused children carry on their backs like crosses. We have seen the toll abuse takes on their education, their ability to trust, and their outlook on the future. The cruel reality of abuse steals from children their greatest gift: childhood itself.

“The worst effects of child abuse are the invisible ones. Victims of abuse often grow into abusers themselves, spawning a new generation of boys and girls stripped of their innocence and hope.

“Abused children are thrust into a foster care system that has become as much a part of the problem as a part of the solution.

“Through our work as foster parents, my wife and I learned that there are three major flaws in the foster care system:

1. Federal financing of foster care is filled with incentives for states to keep children in the system, rather than to get them into permanent homes.
2. Too many foster care placements are temporary, so children – abused by the people who are supposed to love them most – learn through the foster care system that affection and support from adults is always fleeting. The children get bounced from one home to the next, never putting down roots or establishing long-term relationships.
3. Too many teenagers are emancipated from foster care at 18 with no high school diploma, no job skills and no future. Too often, these kids end up in homeless shelters, prison or worse.

“In short, the system is broken, and the lives – the very lives – of hundreds of thousands of children rely on our willingness and courage to fix it. We can not ignore the problem of child abuse in America nor allow ourselves to become desensitized to it. We must act now.

“So what can we do? First of all, we can improve our scientific study of the problem, refining our data collection processes to properly gauge the size and scope of child abuse in America. That knowledge will help us better target the billions we spend annually to prevent child abuse, detain abusers and maintain children in foster care. With better information, more money will get to the heart of the solution: actual prevention of abuse. We can – I believe we must – reform the perverse foster care financing structure. We can support the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s work to prevent child abuse and neglect, as the House has since I’ve been in its leadership, especially the work of its National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.

“But more than that, federal officials can use the megaphone of their offices to draw public attention to child abuse and neglect and what families and communities can do to erase these sins from our society.

“We can inform people of the organizations at work in their communities that prevent child abuse and neglect and support families. We can promote services that help abused children. We can develop legislation – as Congress did this spring.

“The PROTECT Act established a national AMBER Alert System and stiffened penalties for abusers, and the Keeping Children Safe Act will augment federal assistance to victims of abuse and foster children.

“And, most important of all, we can lead.

“America needs to take the problem head on, in our communities, and in our own lives. The government will continue to do all it can, but the real work has to be done by you and me, our friends and families.

“Hundreds of thousands of kids are relying on us all, and we can’t let them down.”

Over the years, Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-TX) of the U.S. House of Representatives has been an invaluable supporter of child abuse prevention. He has made a personal and professional commitment to bring legislative action and federal funds to programs that help prevent child maltreatment and shorten the stays of children in foster care. DeLay has supported several important pieces of legislation integral to the work we do at the national and local levels, including the reauthorization of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, the reauthorization of the Safe and Stable Families Act, and the Child Abuse Prevention and Enforcement (CAPE) Act.

Most importantly, he led the successful effort to reserve and then increase funding to the CDC for child abuse and neglect prevention research; one of the most important steps to understanding and ultimately stopping abuse from happening in the first place. In April, DeLay and his wife Christine were recognized by the CDC for their extraordinary leadership in child advocacy and their dedication to the prevention of child maltreatment. DeLay was also honored for his role in developing child maltreatment definitions, collecting important data in the National Violent Death Reporting System, and conducting a multi-level parent training effectiveness trial to teach positive parenting strategies.

PCA America is grateful for DeLay’s leadership and dedication to preventing the abuse and neglect of our nation’s children.