

Kittrell watch briefed on child-abuse prevention

- By Kittrell Community Watch
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Gathering after the recent meeting of the Kittrell Community Watch were Scott Ritchey, vice president, Kittrell Community Watch; Linslay Nobles, detective sergeant, Domestic Violence Unit, Franklin County Sheriff's Office; and Edward Woodlief, president, Kittrell Community Watch. Submitted photo

KITTRELL — The Kittrell Community Watch met Thursday, Sept. 23, in the fellowship hall of the Union Chapel United Methodist Church.

President Edward Woodlief opened the meeting with a welcome to all and introduced Franklin County Sheriff's Office Detective Sgt., Lindsay Nobles, who has spent nine years in law enforcement in Vance County and Franklin County. She quickly rose through the ranks of law enforcement and is now in charge of the Domestic Violence Division, which among other things investigates child-abuse cases. Her informative program detailed what is domestic violence and child abuse. Child abuse can be

physical, emotional and sexual, and can include neglect or or a lack of supervision that puts a child at risk. It can also be pornography shown on computer or cell phone.

State law mandates that everyone has the legal duty to report child abuse, including physicians and hospitals, schools and day care centers. Even photo or film processors are mandated to report inappropriate pictures of or the development of them. You can report such acts, or even suspicions, by calling 911, the Department of Social Services, writing an anonymous letter or talking to any law enforcement department. Law enforcement and Child Protective Services work very close together.

A child abuse/sexual assault case is reported every nine minutes in the United States and 65,000 assaults occur each year. Seventy three% of sexual abuse victims don't tell for over a year, 45% don't tell for over five years, and some never tell. These assaults have a long-term impact on the child's physical and mental stability.

Child abuse and neglect can take many forms, such as child witnessing a violent encounter between parents or persons who are in a relationship in rearing the child. Assault cases don't discriminate, but happen more often in rural settings and are higher when the caretaker is unemployed or lives in a lower socioeconomic environment.

Perpetrators involved in these assaults can be anyone: father, mother, grandmother, grandfather, aunt, uncle, caregiver, a trusted family friend, teacher or coach, and other highly respected members of the community such as priests, clergy, doctors or lawyers. Victims often know and trust these people, as they are in their everyday lives. The perpetrator looks for a quiet, lonely child or seeks out children who are very trusting or seeking approval. They often "groom" the child by buying gifts for the child, taking the child for outings and often establish a good relationship with the child's family.

Know your child and know where they are and what they are doing at all times. If your child tells you something, listen — don't question the child intently as this could lead to

the child shutting down. Leave the details to the professionals who are trained in forensic questioning.

Signs to watch for include a child's change of demeanor, becoming fearful, shy, angry, bed-wetting, refusing to participate in normal activities such as going to school or church.

Nobles also passed out fliers and information on the vast resources that are available in our counties such as the S.a.M. Child Advocacy Center, 704 S. Garnett Street, Henderson. This agency specializes in "responding and reporting child abuse and neglect." The "Safe Space" in Franklin County is a place for victims of domestic violence and assault with a 24 hour hot-line (1-800-620-6120 or 919-497-5444). Safe Space provides shelter, helps victims obtain employment to be able to leave the abuser and provides an advocate to help navigate the court system in Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault cases.

The message in these cases is the same as the Kittrell Community Watch message: "If you see something, say something."