

Vigil at CCCC recognizes fight against child abuse, sexual assault

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... WAS RECALLED AS James Lowell Willis of Holly Springs.

Police reported the death at 6:05 p.m.

The man had been using the restroom and happened to be noticed by a manager. After several hours, the manager returned, and noticed the man was still there.

The manager was able to open the stall, but unable to rouse the man and called 911.

Police and first responders arrived but the man was already dead.

Police are waiting for autopsy results to determine a cause of death but have ruled out foul play, according to Pittsboro Police Chief David Collins.

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More than fifty community members came together at the Pittsboro Campus of Central Carolina Community College recently for the fifth annual Stand Together: An Event to Mark Child Abuse Prevention and Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The event capped off a month of activities highlighting Chatham County's efforts to address both of these issues.

Sponsored by the Coalition for Family Peace and the Focus on Family Support Committee of the Chatham County Partnership for Children, the

event remembered children across the state lost to child abuse in 2009 and promoted prevention activities addressing child abuse and sexual assault.

Chair of the Chatham County Board of Commissioners, Sally Kost, opened the event, sharing proclamations signed by the Board of Commissioners earlier in the month.

"I have always been impressed with how strong our county is in working with victims and preventing abuse," said Kost. "You have the support of the Board of Commissioners."

Assistant District Attorney Kayley Taber was the keynote speaker. She addressed the group sharing her experience in prosecuting both child abuse and sexual assault case in Chatham County.

"One of the major changes over the past years I have seen is in our ability to prosecute these cases," said Taber. "We have learned how to do a better job of prosecuting them and are getting convictions."

Taber encouraged those gathered to do their part in dealing with abuse. "If you see something that makes you uneasy, hear something that hurts your heart or know about something that makes you feel queasy, tell someone. Often victims of child abuse

and sexual assault are not able to speak out. It is your job to help them," she said.

Jennie Kristiansen from the Chatham County Department of Social Services talked about Chatham County's response to child abuse. "Last year in Chatham County we had 381 reports of child abuse and neglect, with 75 families needing ongoing services," said Kristiansen. "We are continually looking at how to make things better for children and families in Chatham County."

Rob Powell, Prevention Coordinator for Family Violence and Rape, shared information about Chatham County's efforts to prevent sexual assault. "I am excited to be working in a county that has such strong support for prevention," said Powell. "Here we are moving toward a culture that does not support sexual assault, through our work with schools and church."

Also participating in the event were Father Jim Fukes of St. Julia's Catholic Church, and Sisters Voices, a group of community girls, ages 8-12, who perform at community events, under the direction of Leandra Strope.

To join in community efforts to prevent child abuse and sexual assault, contact the Coalition for Family Peace at 919-742-7320.



CHATHAM AGAINST ABUSE AND ASSAULT... Chair of the County Board of Commissioners, Sally Kost (far right), leads a vigil for child abuse prevention and sexual assault awareness.