



Greene County Prosecutor Steve Haller & Cynthia Gevedon, Michael's House Child Advocacy Center Team Coordinator Speak to Rotary Club of Beavercreek

Greene County Prosecuting Attorney, **Steve Haller**, spoke to the club at its October 22nd meeting. Steve is also a trustee for Michael's House, a Child Advocacy Center.

Michael's House, dedicated in December 2008, is named in honor of **Bill and Elaine Mercurio's** son Michael who passed away unexpectedly on July 4, 2007 at the age of 37. Michael devoted his life to improving the lives of others, particularly children. As an endodontist, he traveled to Romania each year to give dental care to children in orphanages. In 2006, he was recognized as Rotarian of the Year for his efforts to help children.

The Center is located in Fairborn and provides a child friendly place for any Greene County child that is abused or neglected. Since Jan., 2009, they have served 420 children.

Children across the country are abused at an alarming rate. According to the Children's Defense Fund, a child is abused or neglected every 36 seconds. That is 3,000,000 reports of abuse are received by child protection agencies every year. In Greene County alone, over 1,200 reports are received by Greene County Children Services.

There are 23 Children's Advocacy Centers in Ohio, but Michael's House is unique. It offers ground breaking solutions for improved investigations and treatment for children. It provides a single place for doctors, police, prosecutors, children's services, and mental health officials to come together so that a child only has to be interviewed once, rather than a multitude of times. The interviews are also taped for future use.

It has specially equipped rooms for interviews, playrooms, offices, private meeting rooms, and a mock courtroom so that children will be more comfortable in upcoming trials. It also has a living exhibit of fish and turtles to provide a relaxing distraction for children.

The center works with other jurisdictions, states, and even the FBI. It also partners with Children's Medical Center.

The facility was built by **Bob Mills** with all private funding. No public money was used. The land was donated, as were, other aspects of the center.

(From the *Rotary of Beavercreek Meeting Minutes, October 22, 2010*)