



April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

Please join the Blue Ribbon Campaign

Bonnie Finney's Story

NO! It isn't true. It simply cannot be true. They are telling me that my grandson is dead, but there must be some mistake. But deep in my heart, I knew it was true for I have not seen him in weeks. It's been so long since I sat by his side in the hospital. Of course I knew something was wrong as I sat there. I saw the fear on his face, the bruises on his body, and the healing cigarette burns on his hands. His doctor did not believe my daughter's story "he fell in slippery water in the bathtub." I felt sick...I didn't understand. Are my granddaughters all right?

I only had one child. She was a beautiful little girl - the light of our eyes. We knew she had entered into a stormy marriage, for we brought her home several times in the 5 years it lasted. We suspected heavy use of drugs BUT in those five years, 3 beautiful healthy children had been born. I loved them dearly and they loved me. The children were 16 months, 3 years and 4 years.

After the ordeal at the hospital, my grandson was placed in foster care for 3 weeks. He cried when they came to return him to his mother. He told his foster mother, "My mamma don't love me" and begged to stay. I ached for his dilemma, but I wasn't physically able to care for him. The courts believed that home was the best place for him, but I knew better and I told, no I BEGGED them, not to return him to his mother. But I was overruled - my grandmother's instinct didn't count.

I never saw Bubba again.

My 16 month old granddaughter was hospitalized after being beaten severely her leg broken in four places, and her hand burned from the tips of her fingers to her wrist. It was only then that the "search was on" for Bubba. We learned he had been killed, wrapped in a sheet, stuffed into a toolbox, and dumped into the Dismal Swamp 3 months earlier.

My grandchildren had suffered and battled so much throughout their young lives that it sickened me. My life was turned into physical and mental chaos.

My efforts to understand became a plea to stop abusing children. I tied a blue ribbon on my van antenna to make people wonder. It caught on locally with restaurants, businesses, police, and TV and radio stations supporting me in my efforts to make it a real awareness campaign.

Why blue? I intend never to forget the battered, bruised bodies of my grandchildren. Blue serves as a constant reminder to me to fight for our children.

Please wear a blue ribbon...put one on your car...give one to your friends...tell them what it means. You may save a child's life! If you suspect ANYTHING is happening to your children...your grandchildren...the child next door...PLEASE ACT! If you get no response, try again! You may not hear their screams...you may not see their bruises...so check for the hidden pain and watch for the silent screams in their eyes.

PLEASE TAKE A BLUE RIBBON AND WEAR IT DURING THE MONTH OF APRIL to help make others aware of the problem of child abuse and neglect. For more information call Owens House, the Shelby County Children's Advocacy Center, Inc. at 669-3333.

www.owenshousecac.org