

NOVEMBER IS FAMILY COURT AWARENESS MONTH

SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON THE FAMILY COURT SYSTEM

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA, UNITED STATES,
September 21, 2021 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- November is [Family Court Awareness Month](http://www.familycourtawarenessmonth.com) which is an opportunity to raise awareness on one of the most important branches of our judicial system. The very system that was established to govern family law cases and make decisions that are "in the best interest" of children, has some undeniable shortcomings that warrant awareness, conversation, solutions and ultimately, change.



“

The first step towards change is raising awareness that there is a problem. There is no oversight, no regulatory board, and no checks and balances for our family court system.”

Tina Swithin

Over one-hundred children in the United States have been murdered by a parent after a custody court rejected the other parent's plea for protection, according to the Center for Judicial Excellence. These deaths were preventable had judicial officers or family court professionals heeded the warnings. Shockingly, there is little, if any, requirements for judges to be educated on domestic violence and post separation abuse. Children are losing their lives because the present-day family court not only lacks critical training, but it continues to prioritize parental rights over a child's right to safety.

The Leadership Council on Child Abuse and Interpersonal Violence estimates that more than 58,000 children per year are ordered into unsupervised contact with physically or sexually abusive parents following divorce. "The available research and statistics are undeniable," says Tina Swithin, founder of Family Court Awareness Month. Swithin goes on to explain, "This is a social justice issue and it's a world-wide crisis. The failings of the family court system are a problem that belongs to all of us, regardless of whether someone is directly affected by the family court system or not."

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in families experiencing domestic violence, there is a 30 to 60 percent chance of co-occurring abuse directed at both an adult and child victim. A prior history of domestic violence is the number-one risk factor in family homicide cases. When victims of domestic violence make the brave decision to leave their abusive partner and there are children involved, the only resource available is the family court system. In its current state, the system is failing the most vulnerable members of society.

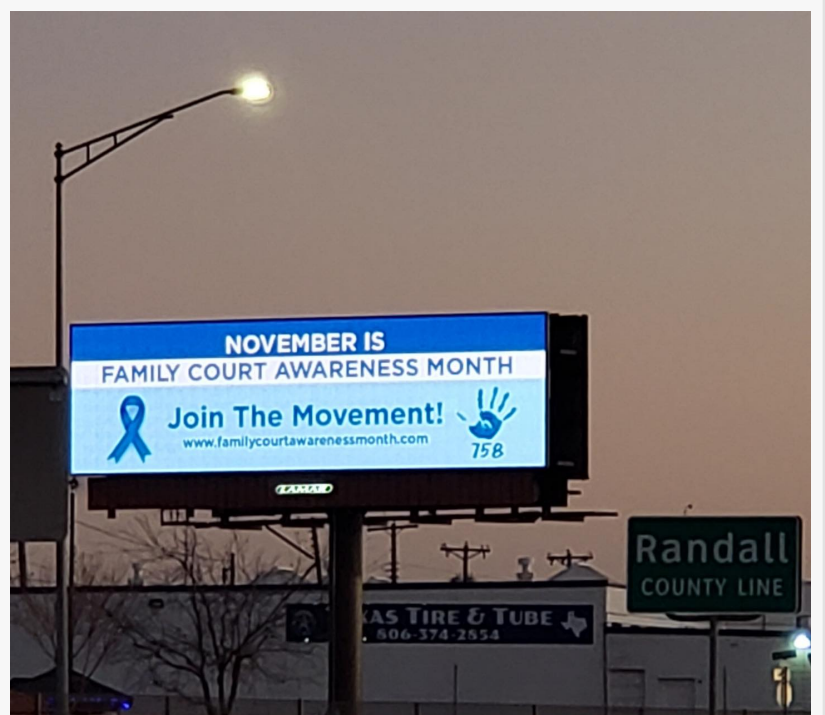
Sandra Ross of California Protective Parents Association shared her

perspective as a long-time advocate, "Everyday children across the US are suffering grave harm, whether physical, emotional, or sexual as they are misguidedly court ordered into the arms of an abusive parent. Ross continued, "It is undeniably a systemic issue when parents in paternity or divorce cases, are commonly warned to remain silent about abuse happening in their cases, even with solid evidence, parents are told that you will not be believed, which often results in the placement of the child with the abuser full time. The only thing worse than handing a child over to your abuser, is being court ordered to hand a child over to her abuser."

Professor Joan S. Meier, Esq, Professor of Clinical Law and Director, National Family Violence Law Center at George Washington University Law School said, "Our research confirms that overall the courts reject mothers' abuse claims the majority of the time. Widespread complaints from protective parents (mostly mothers) have been that their reports of family abuse, especially child sexual abuse, are not only ignored and rejected, but often trigger punitive responses, including custody reversals, granting custody to the alleged abusive fathers. Our data confirms this, and also show that when there are cross-claims of parental alienation, approximately one in two mothers loses custody of their children to the alleged abuser."

About Family Court Awareness Month

Family Court Awareness Month was created in 2020 by Tina Swithin, founder of [One Mom's Battle](#). In collaboration with Sandra Ross of California Protective Parents Association, the inaugural year was memorialized with a cross-country tour that started in California and ended in North Carolina. Along the way, Swithin stopped in seven major cities to meet with media, domestic violence advocates, family court professionals, and with survivors of post separation abuse.



Family Court Awareness Month Billboard

Efforts to coin the month of November as Family Court Awareness Month received support and recognition from California Congresswoman Judy Chu, Senator Susan Rubio and Assemblywoman Blanca Rubio. At the Los Angeles press conference on November 1, 2020, Senator Rubio and Assemblywoman Rubio were in attendance and spoke prior to the ribbon cutting ceremony. The goal for the 2021 Family Court Awareness Month campaign is twofold: to highlight the latest research and provide education on post separation abuse.

Such research includes:

□ Child Custody Outcomes in Cases Involving Parental Alienation and Abuse Allegations (Joan S.

Meier, George Washington University Law School)

□ The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study (Centers for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente)

□ Child Custody Evaluators' Beliefs About Domestic Abuse Allegations: Their Relationship to Evaluator Demographics, Background, Domestic Violence Knowledge and Custody Visitation Recommendations (Daniel G. Saunders, Ph.D. U.S.)

□ Confronting the Challenges of the High-Conflict Personality in Family Court (Esther Rosenfeld and Michelle Oberman, Santa Clara University)

What is Post Separation Abuse: Domestic violence does not end when a person leaves an abusive relationship. The abuser's need for power and control doesn't dissipate, it transitions into post separation abuse. The family court system becomes the platform for the abuse and the children become the pawns or the weapons.

Swithin believes that the first step towards change is raising awareness that there is a problem. The problem, as she sees it, is that there is no oversight, no regulatory board, and no checks and balances for our family court system. Swithin explains, "I could present my case to ten different judges and receive ten entirely different outcomes even though all of the facts and evidence are the same. Children's lives are in the hands of a judicial officer who may skim through a stack of paperwork and hand down a ruling that could be a matter of life or death. There are more safeguards in place for someone adopting a pet than there are when placing children in the hands of an unsafe parent."

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