



Dear Friends of Mary Lee's House,

On behalf of the Department of Children and Families, I would like to thank you for your recent partnership publicizing our Florida Abuse Hotline throughout Hillsborough County, as well as the trainings you have coordinated providing child welfare professionals with information about their role as mandatory reporters of abuse and neglect. We rely on these professionals to be the eyes and ears in the community and to take the difficult but crucial step of advocating for abused and neglected children by informing the abuse hotline when they suspect a child may be in danger. All of our combined resources cannot save a child unless someone first is willing to make that critical call.

Both our agency and Mary Lee's House recognize that our responsibility does not begin and end at any single point in the lives of these children. So often, child abuse is the symptom, and issues like mental health, substance abuse, and economic insecurity are the diseases that ravage families from the inside out. Far too often parents cope with everyday stressors through substances such as prescription drugs that ease their pain and numb their minds, leaving children with no one to turn to for the support and love they so desperately need.

Through organizations like Mary Lee's House and your partners, child protection and advocacy go from theory to reality, and our children and families are offered the resources needed to both prevent abuse and to heal from it. I am grateful you have built such a strong community that is more than up to the task for which it has been called.

Sincerely,

Secretary David Wilkins



MLH Awarded Technical Assistance Grant

The Children's Board of Hillsborough County awarded MLH \$5,000 to help raise awareness of the programs and services provided at MLH and to educate the community on the ways they can make a difference in the lives of abused and neglected children.

With the grant, we are expanding newsletter content and distribution and upgrading the brochure. Other initiatives include publishing electronic communications to announce trainings, events, volunteer opportunities and community news, implementing online registration for trainings and events, upgrading constituent database software, and providing staff training.

More than 14,500 reports of child abuse were made in Hillsborough County in 2012. This is a conservative estimate because child abuse and neglect cases are underreported by 50% to 60%. We are grateful to the Children's Board for this grant, which will allow us to raise awareness of MLH in the community.

