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## **Blue Bow Ceremony Marks Child Abuse Prevention Month**

Officials, Advocates Kick Off Month-Long Campaign to Protect Illinois Children

(CHICAGO) — Dorothy Brown, Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court today joined Children's Home + Aid President and CEO Nancy Ronquillo and Prevent Child Abuse Illinois Executive Director Roy Harley for the fourteenth annual Blue Bow Ceremony at the Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago in observance of National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Following an interfaith prayer service, participants stressed the ongoing need for child abuse prevention programs and community resources for parents, particularly as the economic crisis puts strain on fragile parents and caregivers. According to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, more than 27,000 Illinois children were found to have suffered abuse or neglect last year.

"Nothing hurts my heart more than knowing that child abuse is occurring every day," said Dorothy Brown, Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court. "This month, I encourage all citizens to reach out to children in need in their own families and communities. Our court system, justice system and community resources are ready to help."

"As parents struggle with job loss, foreclosure and mounting debt, child abuse prevention must be one of our top priorities," said Nancy Ronquillo, President and CEO of Children's Home + Aid. "Child Abuse Prevention Month is a chance for advocates across the state to connect every family in crisis with the support and resources to keep children safe and take the strain off of caregivers in these tough times."

"Our hope and promise is that every child be raised in a healthy, safe, and nurturing home," said Roy Harley, Executive Director of Prevent Child Abuse Illinois. "More than ever today, we need to be vigilant and to insist that children in our state be cared for. Our promise and hope for them is meaningless if we don't live it out."

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Following the service, guests and volunteers tied thousands of Blue Bows, the national symbol of child abuse prevention, on the trees in front of the church along North Michigan Avenue. The first Blue Bow Ceremony was held in 1996, led by Gale Kryzak, a member of the Fourth Presbyterian Church, and Sue Walton, chair of the Blue Bow Committee and trustee of Children's Home + Aid. The Women at Fourth Connect of the Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago have hosted the Blue Bow Ceremony since its inception.

Child Abuse Prevention Month activities will take place around the state during the month of April. Visit [www.childrenshomeandaid.org](http://www.childrenshomeandaid.org) or [www.preventchildabuseillinois.org](http://www.preventchildabuseillinois.org) for a list of statewide events or for information on parent support and child abuse prevention programs.

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**Children's Home + Aid** is a leading child and family service agency in Illinois. Each year, it protects, educates and counsels more than 40,000 children, youth and families to improve their lives. Since 1883, Children's Home + Aid has been a compassionate advocate helping to shape public policy in child welfare, early childhood and juvenile justice. Children's Home + Aid is recognized for establishing best practices and achieving outstanding results through its programs and services that focus on child abuse prevention, healthy child development and strengthening families. For more information, please visit [www.childrenshomeandaid.org](http://www.childrenshomeandaid.org).

**Prevent Child Abuse Illinois** is a statewide organization established in 1990 and is the Illinois state chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America. PCA Illinois focuses on the prevention of child abuse and neglect across the state through public awareness campaigns, community education, volunteer and professional training, program technical assistance, and community prevention services. To learn more about child abuse prevention, visit [www.preventchildabuseillinois.org](http://www.preventchildabuseillinois.org).