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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April is National Child Abuse Awareness Month

DAYTON, OH (4/1/2016) – Prosecuting Attorney Mat Heck, Jr. kicked off National Child Abuse Awareness Month at an event at CARE House, Montgomery County’s Children’s Advocacy Center. CARE House is where assistant prosecutors, victim advocates, law enforcement, medical personnel and social workers all work as a multidisciplinary team to assist victims of child abuse and ensure that offenders are held accountable for their actions.

Joining Prosecutor Heck was Montgomery County Commissioner Judy Dodge, Assistant Director of Montgomery County Children Services Jewell Good, Director of the Montgomery County ADAMHS Board Helen Jones-Kelly, and the Executive Director of CARE House Libby Nicholson.

Prosecutor Heck noted that the local and national statistics on child abuse are shocking:

- A report of child abuse is made every 10 seconds
- This year, nearly 1700 children will die as a direct result of abuse or neglect – nearly 5 children every day
- 80% of those deaths are children under 4 years of age
- On average, the Child Abuse Bureau of the Prosecutor’s Office, located at CARE House, files adult criminal felony charges against an abuser once per week.

Prosecutor Heck emphasized that in addition to reporting child abuse, we must be proactive in preventing child abuse. To further the local effort to prevent child abuse and neglect, Prosecutor Heck revealed infant bibs and snack cups emblazoned with the message “Hug me, don’t hurt me.” Additionally, through a generous donation from the Evenflo Corporation in Miamisburg, over a hundred strollers and infant safety seats have been made available. Collaborating with the Prosecutor’s Office are four partner agencies: The Family Services Association, Women, Infant and Children (WIC), the Elizabeth New Life Center, and Catholic Social Services. These agencies will be identifying those families in need of the equipment and distributing the items. Prosecutor Heck continued, “These are community organizations that promote positive parenting to individuals with young children, many of whom are at risk. We all recognize the need for strengthening and protecting families to prevent child abuse.”

Finally, Prosecutor Heck exhibited three new billboard designs that will be appearing across Montgomery County. All of the designed include the message “Hug me, don’t hurt me” and include the phone number to report child abuse or neglect – 224-KIDS. Prosecutor Heck thanked Key-Ads, who designed the signs and will be displaying them countywide.

In closing, Prosecutor Heck commented, “I’m asking every citizen in Montgomery County to get involved in helping us to protect the children in our community. If you know or suspect someone is abusing or neglecting a child, have the courage to report it!”

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