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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Prosecutor Recognizes April as Child Abuse Awareness Month**  
*Local Citizen Awarded Annual Champion of Children Award*

**DAYTON, OH (4/3/2018)** – At CARE House, Montgomery County’s Children’s Advocacy Center, Prosecuting Attorney Mat Heck, Jr. kicked off National Child Abuse Awareness Month.

Present were representatives from the other CARE House partners, which include the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office, the Dayton Police Department, Montgomery County Jobs and Family Services, and Dayton Children’s Hospital.

Prosecutor Heck noted that since 1983, April has been designated as Child Abuse Awareness Month in order to call attention to the problem of child abuse and neglect. More importantly, Child Abuse Awareness Month serves to remind the public of the signs to look for to identify child abuse and neglect and to make the public aware of ways they can become involved and help. Prosecutor Heck challenged every citizen in Montgomery County to help protect the children in our community by reporting suspected child abuse or neglect to authorities. “Help us! See something, say something!”, he added.

Prosecutor Heck also presented the 2018 Champion of Children Award to acknowledge the extraordinary results that can be obtained when citizens become involved. This year, the award went to Lucie Gaye Gerren. Gaye has been a guidance counselor at the Miami Valley Career Technology Center for the past 20 years. She takes great pleasure in actively supporting the well-being of students, and especially when they have been a victim of abuse of sexual assault. Gaye has encouraged students to contact the Prosecutor’s Victim/Witness Division 24-hour crisis line from her office when they do not feel safe at home to make that call. Gaye has been a liaison for students who need a safe place to make a difficult phone call. She has often reached out to the Prosecutor’s Office whenever a student has been a victim of sexual assault or domestic violence and has called looking for advice or for referral information. Most importantly, she has also always willing get involved and report any criminal behavior to law enforcement or Children Services.

While acknowledging Ms. Gerren’s actions, Prosecutor Heck commented, “I want to personally commend Gaye. She recognizes the importance of protecting children from the dangers of abuse, and is not afraid to get involved.”

“I am thankful for brave advocates for children like Gaye. She is very deserving of this year’s Champion of Children Award.”

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