



Muskingum County Prosecutor's Office

Ronald L. Welch
Prosecuting Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Community sees justice in action during Heroes Landing open house

Members of the community had the chance to tour Heroes Landing, Muskingum County's first children's justice center, and learn about the programs and resources the center has to offer during an open house Wednesday.

The opening of the Heroes Landing in Zanesville was a long-time goal for Muskingum County Prosecutor Ron Welch, who has worked more than 15 years to bring this facility to life.

The Malouf Foundation, the charitable arm of Malouf Manufacturing, played an integral role in making that dream become a reality when they enthusiastically embraced the project several years ago. In addition to the Malouf Foundation, the Muskingum County Commissioners, several local foundations, organizations and donors played a vital role in establishing Heroes Landing.

"This is a celebration – a celebration of the combined efforts from Malouf Foundation, our Advisory Board and the Multidisciplinary Team who have been committed to bring this to life since early 2021," Executive Director Evonne Saunders said.

At Heroes Landing, survivors of sexual assault meet with members of the multi-disciplinary team equipped with knowledge and expertise to treat children and seek justice, in a single, age and emotionally appropriate atmosphere.

"The work of the forensic interviewer, medical professional, mental health therapist, advocate, and law enforcement allow us to support the prosecution efforts of Muskingum County's Prosecutor's Office," Saunders said.

A forensic interviewer has received specialized training in how to interview children that have been sexually abused. Amongst other things, the specialized training includes how to ask age appropriate questions, how to provide a comfortable setting for a child to talk and how to ask questions that do not suggest answers to children.

The integration of a children's justice center locally is a milestone for this community as it centralizes and localizes services and reduces some of the stress families face by keeping the necessary treatment and assessment appointments close to home.

It also allows for more immediate care, leading to timelier prosecution.



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“The primary goal of the center is to address the well-being of the child medically, mentally and emotionally. Our objective in prosecuting sexual assault cases is to always achieve justice but not at the expense of the health and well-being of the victim,” Muskingum County Prosecutor Ron Welch said. “Heroes Landing gives our community a resource to not only provide care for victims but to protect them. Heroes Landing also has the added benefit of allowing our office to more effectively prosecute child sex offenders.”

When a child comes to Heroes Landing, it is the CJC’s mission to empower survivors by providing evaluations and coordination of advocacy and care at the facility with all relevant service providers at once, including the physical and mental health providers, law enforcement and Children’s Services.

The interview room is equipped with non-evasive recording devices and offers a neutral setting where the child tells their story of abuse *once* to the trained forensic interviewer. “Each time the victim talks about being abused it has the effect of re-traumatizing the victim.”

In the room next door, a child is seen for a medical evaluation where forensic findings may be recorded.

“Our lobby and kitchen offer space for the child’s caregiver to meet with an advocate to address any questions,” Saunders explained. “One of the most important spaces is the second floor conference room, this is where the multidisciplinary team meets monthly for case review.”

After only one month in full operation, Heroes landing has filled all its appointments for the month of June and is beginning to book for July.

“Eradicating sexual exploitation and breaking cycles of abuse is our combined vision and we are well on our way,” Saunders said.

There are many ways to help survivors of abuse and our efforts at Heroes Landing. Guests who attended the open house had the opportunity to select donation requests from a giving tree, including items such as toys, snacks and an air conditioner for the center, in addition to monetary donations. Those who could not attend that would still like to get involved can email info@heroeslandingcjc.org.

Heroes Landing is located at 1041 Beverly Ave. in Zanesville, next to the Carr Center. Information can also be found online at heroeslandingcjc.org.