

Group helps those who may not get state aid

By KRISTYN ECOCHARD
Staff Writer

EASTON — Talbot Community Connections has helped countless struggling men, women and children to get through tough times over the last eight years and now more than ever their services are needed.

The fundraising arm of the Talbot County Department Social Services, TCC has three main functions: to fundraise for the Talbot County Department Social Services, to educate the public and service workers about how to enhance the safety of the county's children and to promote the Talbot County Children's Advocacy Center.

Recently the number of individuals applying for aid through social services has increased and so has the number of people who for one reason or another don't qualify. It could be their age, or the amount of money they make, but often there are people who seem to have a genuine need for temporary help that would provide long-term stability.

"They just need a little bit of money to get over a bump," Nancy Wilson, TCC board member and past president said. "We're expect-

"They just need a little bit of money to get over a bump. We're expecting a lot of bumps in this economy."

**Nancy Wilson, Talbot Community Connections,
board member and past president**

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The money raised by TCC goes toward items that typically are not covered by the state budget and to help those who apply for assistance but do not qualify under state or federal guidelines.

Since Nov. 1, TCC has raised about \$12,608 and the board is completely volunteer so all of the money goes to help Talbot County residents.

Board members include Ruth Sullivan, liaison to Shore Health Systems, Sally Vermilye, Joseph Carrico, CPA, William Banks, Kathleen Francis, former Talbot County Council member Hope Harrington and James O'Brien.

In 2008, TCC raised \$ 27,476.00 through three fundraisers and a two-year pledge. The funds raised helped roughly 137 children, families and adults to experience a

more safe and secure environment.

Grants were made available to several social services programs including \$4,000 for foster care, \$5,000 for adult emergency services, \$2,000 for local respite, \$3,000 for family emergency grants and \$1,000 for the fatherhood program; a total of \$15,000.

Each year, the nonprofit holds a community program to address child safety issues and there is a different topic at each program. In the past, programs have been held featuring the Children's Advocacy Center, children and internet safety, how poverty impacts the brain and bullying.

This year's program, presented by Dr. Frank Kros, is entitled "The saddest song: teens, suicide and the developing brain." It will focus on the latest research about connections to struggling children and how their brains operate.

Recent advances in neuroscience are important for human services employees, guidance counselors and others who work with children to learn, said Social Services Director April Sharp.

"TCC tries to have an affordable option to train locally and the Talbot Family Network offset the cost with a training grant and Shore Health Systems has continuously offered support," Board President Ellen Kelley Smith said.

Kros is a career child advocate, and is president of The Upside Down Organization and executive vice president of The Children's Guild, the largest private provider of special education services in Maryland.

The program will be held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. March 27 at Krystal Q. It is open to the public but geared toward those who work with children.

The registration fee is \$75 and the deadline to register is March 20. Contact Jeanne Bromwell at 410-221-2600 ext. 108.

To donate, visit the TCC Web site at www.talbotcommunityconnections.org or e-mail esmith@goeaston.net. Donations may be mailed to Talbot Community Connections, PO Box 2615, Easton, MD 21601.

Open house offered at Talbot County CAC

EASTON — Talbot Community Connections along with the Shore Health System and the Talbot County Department of Social Services will host an open house from 4 to 6 p.m. Wednesday, April 8, at the Talbot County Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) in Easton. The CAC is located in the Nick Rajacich Health Education Center at the Memorial Hospital at Easton. The open house commemorates Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Attendees will meet with mem-

bers of the multidisciplinary team responsible for investigating and prosecuting child abuse in Talbot County and have an opportunity to tour the interview and medical examination facilities.

"In 2008, the Children's Advocacy Center served 106 victims of child abuse," said April Sharp, director of the Talbot County Department of Social Services.

"This open house is an opportunity for members of the community to learn more about the services available through the center. They

will also find out how they can support this valuable resource to our community."

The Talbot County Children's Advocacy Center is an accredited member of the National Children's Alliance.

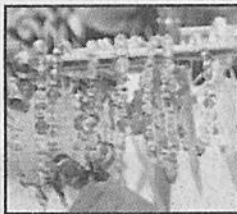
The center is funded by the community through Talbot Community Connections and various grants.

To register for the open house, contact Kawana Molock, CAC coordinator at 410-770-5227 or e-mail kmolock@dhr.state.md.us.



Bike Hike readies Scouts for fall ride

Forty members of Easton Troop 532 participated in a Bike Hike in the Trappe district to prepare for a fall bike-a-thon that will benefit Talbot Community Connections. The Scouts traveled either the 25- or 50-mile loop. The Scouts are required to perform community service for their rank advancement. Easton Troop 532 meets at the Elks and are led by Scoutmaster Chris Potthast.



Crystals in blue and white are featured on this year's fundraising bracelets, designed and created at The Chesapeake Center.



The main conference room of the Krystal Q is packed with a sold-out crowd during Girls Night Out.

Krystal Q packed for 'Girls Night Out'

Story and photos

By **CHRIS POLK**

Staff Writer

EASTON — It was girls, girls, and more girls from one end of Krystal Q Café's enormous conference room to the other Friday night when Soroptimist International of Talbot County presented its fourth annual Girls Night Out.

Ladies and their friends, daughters, sisters, and mothers packed the room, making a sell-out crowd of more than 200.

They were there to indulge in a gourmet buffet dinner, peruse jewelry and fashions, pamper themselves and revel in all-female hobnobbing.

Being raffled this year was a dazzling one-of-a-kind necklace designed by Robert Wolcott of Colonial Jewelers especially for the event. It featured 16 round brilliant cut diamonds, a large South Sea pearl, and retailed for \$4,000.

Other dazzling items could be found in door prizes, the wares of 15

jewelry, beauty products and home gadgets to cruises and getaways.

A line formed to purchase the event's new special bracelet, designed and made by workers at The Chesapeake Center each year to help with fundraising.

This year's bracelet sported crystal beads in blue and white, Soroptimist colors, and a traditional kite charm, which in some cultures signifies the rising of the human soul.

Another line formed for representatives from the Headrush 180 beauty salon to attach pink hair extensions on the heads of Girls Night Out patrons. The selling of pink extensions is part of Headrush's October fundraising drive to aid breast cancer research, the Pink Hair for Hope program.

After dinner the girls settled down over dessert to watch a fashion show featuring the best of Talbot County's dressing.

Models walked the room, wearing creations from the most exclusive

Chesapeake Bay Outfitters, La De Da!, Lizzy Dee, M. Randall & Co. and Mimi's Closet.

Proceeds from the event benefit the Soroptimist biennial fundraising project, which since 2008 has been the Talbot County Children's Advocacy Center through the Talbot Community Connections organization.

Located in the Memorial Hospital at Easton, the Children's Advocacy Center provides a safe, child-friendly environment and an effective collaborative response to allegations of child abuse.

Soroptimist International of Talbot County is a volunteer organization for business and professional women who work to improve the lives of women and girls in our community. Members represent a wide array of ages, cultures and ethnic groups. Many are health care professionals, accountants, planners, teachers, business owners and government officials who are leaders in the community. For information,



Ford and Friends raise funds for Talbot Community Connections

The acoustic folk, rock and blues group, Ford and Friends, donated \$115 to Talbot Community Connections to be distributed through the Talbot County Department of Social Services to answer unmet needs that are fundamental to the safety, security, health and well-being of Talbot County's children and adults. The funds were raised through tips collected at the Amish Market where the group played last Friday night. Pictured from left are friends Clark Bjorke, Johnson Fortenbaugh, Debbie Campbell and Ford Schumann. For more information, contact Ellen Smith at 410-827-5822.

FBI agent delivers talk on sexting, teen Internet use

By **BECCA NEWELL**
Staff Writer

MONDAY,
APRIL 12, 2010

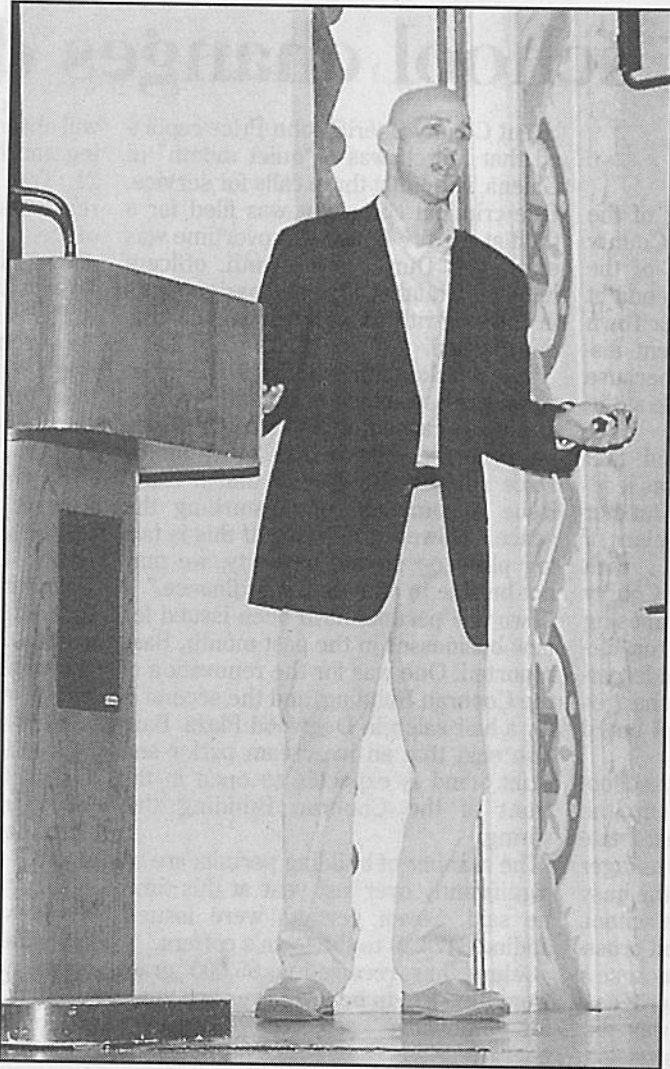


PHOTO BY BECCA NEWELL

FBI agent Marc S. Southland discusses sexting and Internet safety at the Avalon Theatre.

EASTON — It's hard to find a house that doesn't have Internet access or a teenager without a cell phone, and it's this technology that's threatening children's safety, according to Agent Marc S. Southland of the FBI Baltimore division cyber squad.

At the sexting and Internet safety presentation held Thursday evening at the Avalon Theatre, Southland warned attendees about the dangers lurking on the Internet and the consequences that come with sexting — the act of sending an explicit image of oneself via cell phone — that's rising in popularity among middle and high school students across the country.

"It's very prevalent. Everyone at least knows someone who's done it," Southland said.

A 2008 survey of 1,280 teenagers revealed that 20 percent of 13-to-19-year-olds and 33 percent of 20-to-26-year-olds have sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves, according to Southland. "I would imagine this number's risen since then," he added.

Southland emphasized that sexting can result in the sender being charged with the production of child pornography and the receiver being charged with possession of child pornography or explicit images — both of which can earn the recipient fines, jail time or registration as a sex offender.

"The bottom line is nothing good can come from it," Southland said.

And sexting isn't the only issue. Social networking sites, such as Facebook, can be unsafe for children since predators can use posted information to locate a child, Southland explained.

"Never share personal information online. Never provide

an address, school information or a phone number," he said.

Southland also told parents to talk to children about their use of such sites and to tell them if anything happens online that makes them feel uncomfortable.

He mentioned looking through pictures posted on these sites with their children and deleting any inappropriate ones.

"Colleges are looking at these profiles and pictures. I'm not saying they make admission decisions based on what they see, but they are looking at them," he said.

The seminar was presented by Talbot Community Connections, a non-profit that raises and distributes funds to children and families identified by the Talbot County Department of Social Services. Kawana Webb, Talbot County Children's Advocacy Center coordinator, expressed to DSS the need for an Internet and cell phone safety presentation and asked Southland to present the seminar.

"Kids can be ignorant to how prevalent these issues are and it's new technology to us, so parents don't always know what's going on," she said.

Webb also asked Southland to present a seminar earlier in the day for teachers and professionals in the area to help them teach kids how to be safe online and aware of predators.

"The majority of kids have no interest in what I'm saying, so it's important for parents and teachers to know so that they can talk to their kids," Southland said.

The Children's Advocacy Center will host an open house from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 14. The center is located on the third floor of the Memorial Hospital at Easton. For more information on Internet safety, visit www.fbi.gov/innocent.htm or www.netsmartz.org.