

Media Alert

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Prevent Child Abuse America Statement in Response to Madelyne Toogood Child Abuse Case

Tips for stopping abuse in a public place

Statement by:

A. Sidney Johnson III, President & CEO, Prevent Child Abuse America

CHICAGO, IL, September 27, 2002 – “The recent horrific footage of Madelyne Toogood striking her 4-year-old daughter in an Indiana parking lot has made many of us ask what we can do to stop abuse in a public place. The unfortunate truth is that this is an all-too-familiar scene that happens every day in movie theatres, shopping malls and on airplanes. The difference this time is that it was caught on tape.

“Whether we witness harsh words being spoken to or physical force being exerted on a child, we as observers are often left feeling embarrassed for not having intervened and frustrated for not knowing what to do. The public also tends to think that reporting is the only thing they can do when they see child abuse. Fortunately there are several safe and effective ways people can help.

“Start a conversation with the adult to direct attention away from the child, such as ‘Children can really wear you out sometimes. Can I help?’ or ‘My child sometimes gets upset like that too.’ You can also divert a misbehaving child’s attention by talking to the child. Compliments as well as sympathy can also ease a tense moment, but avoid criticism or dirty looks. It only increases the stress on the parent and can make things worse. If you see that the child is in immediate danger contact the appropriate authorities.



“But how do we prevent this kind of abuse from happening in the first place? We as a society need to provide all parents with the appropriate tools, resources and support so they never resort to this kind of behavior. It’s important to remember that abuse usually does not from unloving or inherently bad parents, but often from a lack of knowledge about alternative discipline techniques. While it is clear that children need discipline, they do not have to be hit to learn how to behave. Using corporal punishment, such as hitting, only serves to teach children that violence is acceptable; not how they can correct their behavior.

“There is never a good reason to hit a child. When faced with public displays of abuse, we must remember that we all have a role to play in preventing the abuse and neglect of our nation’s children.”

– INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE –

To schedule an interview or for more information on preventing child abuse and neglect contact:

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Prevent Child Abuse America has chapters in 37 states and the District of Columbia, and can arrange interviews with chapter representatives.

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