



## Notes from the Chief

*What I'm working on for You*

Osiyo -

In an effort to bring awareness of the prevention of child abuse in the Cherokee Nation, a tree in front of the tribal complex has been adorned with blue ribbons. This is in conjunction with the Oklahoma State Department of Health to build a "Blue Ribbon Tree" state.

Cherokee Nation's blue ribbon tree will blossom throughout the month of April, which is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. The blue ribbon is the international symbol for child abuse prevention and serves as a constant reminder that all of us have a responsibility to help protect children. This year hundreds of organizations and communities are expected to support the "Blue Ribbon Tree" mission across the state.

It is the first year for the Cherokee Nation to participate in the statewide education awareness effort, and our participation is being spearheaded by the Cherokee PARENTS (Positive and Rewarding Educational Nurturing Tribal Services) program. It is a grant-funded program within the tribe's Human Services division that helps with in-home training for Cherokee parents in order to provide a safe and nurturing home environment.

Our efforts are to keep Cherokee homes safe so that children are not thrust into the foster care system. If we can train and educate families about how to safely care for their children, then we can help ensure families stay together. No one is born knowing how to care for children, and sometimes mistakes are made. But as a parent, relative or even a care provider, we can all learn the skills to make a positive and lifelong difference.

All of us need to work together to stop child abuse because no one ever wants to see a child grow up in fear or neglected. That means state and tribal governments working in tandem to preserve the innocence of our vulnerable citizens. It's our moral obligation to protect children from abuse and our

responsibility as leaders and adults to make sure no child is threatened by violence or assault.

If you are at the tribal complex during the month of April, I encourage you to get a ribbon at Cherokee First and tie it to our blue ribbon tree to amplify our message about protecting Cherokee children.

Additionally, on April 14 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Norris Park in Tahlequah, our Cherokee PARENTS organization is hosting a community picnic aimed to raise public awareness about child abuse prevention. Dinner will be provided as well as activities for children, including games and art.

For more information about Cherokee PARENTS or how you can help, contact program coordinator Amy Thilges at 918-453-5078.

Wado,

Bill John Baker



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