

Heart to Heart:

The Community's Heart is Our Children

by Karen Coney Coplin



Like many of us, you may think of Naples as a place where every child is safe and carefree. However, I learned the sobering truth behind the large bright blue pinwheel displays at Lowdermilk Park in the past, from a moving Collier Child Advocacy Center (CACC) presentation I heard at



Baker Park recently. These displays represent children in

our own community who have been affected by abuse.

As the organization behind this message, CCAC exists to improve the lives of children who have experienced abuse, providing a transformative team approach to recovery. Previously, a child might be shuffled between hospitals, police stations, and courtrooms, forced to repeat their story and experience the trauma of "retelling" on multiple occasions.

CCAC changed that by providing a calm, child-friendly space where medical exams, forensic interviews, therapy, and advocacy occur under one roof. Here, a child typically shares their story only once with a trained professional while other necessary agencies observe, ensuring the process moves forward with compassion.



The staff & partner agencies of CCAC remain with families throughout investigations and recovery at no charge. The impact is significant: over 1,400 children and their family members were helped last year to overcome the trauma associated with abuse. Furthermore, caregivers reported that their child felt safe at CACC, and the center's therapy outcomes are among the best in the state.

Despite these successes, misconceptions may persist. No community is immune despite safeguards or its relative crime rate. Abuse happens here, plain and simple. Also, CCAC is not a government agency; it is an independent nonprofit that relies on community support. This support can be financial, but it also includes volunteering, donating comfort items, or spreading awareness. The website, caccollier.org is a helpful resource to visit, share, & offer your support and involvement.

You can see this mission in action at a CACC signature event called "Pinwheels @ the Pier," (held this year at Lowdermilk Park on April 3, 2026, from 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.). The hundreds of pinwheels lining the coast serve as a reminder that protecting children is a shared responsibility. Organizations like CCAC make Naples not just a beautiful place to live, but a safer one.

Whether Naples is your home seasonally or year-round, our community has an enduring history of caring for those in need. Support for organizations like CCAC reflects our shared values and the vital commitment to healing the vulnerable for a better and stronger future for all of us.

As Bryan Lee, the CCAC Director of Development, explained, "The bigger picture is about creating a community where every child is protected and where every case is met with real compassion and coordinated care."

Please contact Karen at NaplesKCC@gmail.com with suggestions for future article coverage, which is often centered on charitable organizations in Naples and the programs/services these groups offer. Additionally, for more vignettes about life in Naples, give her a follow on Instagram @Naplesbythenumbers