

# PROCLAMATION

**WHEREAS**, in Federal fiscal year 2016, the US Census Department reported an estimated population of 139,582 children in Williamson County, Texas, and the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services reported 3,119 completed child abuse investigations in the county and 695 confirmed cases of child abuse or neglect; and the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center forensically interviewed 638 children in the same time period; and

**WHEREAS**, our children are our most valuable resources and will shape the future of Texas; and

**WHEREAS**, child abuse can have long-term psychological, emotional, and physical effects that can have lifelong consequences for victims of abuse; and the impact of abuse and neglect has long-term personal, economic, and social costs, and therefore threatens our future; and

**WHEREAS**, child abuse and neglect is a serious problem affecting every segment of our community, and finding solutions requires input and action from everyone in our community; and

**WHEREAS**, effective child abuse prevention activities succeed because of the meaningful connections and partnerships created between child welfare, education, health, community- and faith-based organizations, businesses, and law enforcement agencies; and

**WHEREAS**, we acknowledge that we must work together as a community to increase awareness about child abuse and to promote programs and activities that benefit children and their families that foster the social, emotional, and developmental well-being of children and families in a safe, stable, nurturing environment; and

**WHEREAS**, prevention remains the best defense for our children and families; and

**WHEREAS**, all adults, 18 and over are considered mandated reporters in the State of Texas and are charged with officially reporting any and all suspected cases of abuse to the 1-800-252-5400 Abuse Hotline so that local professionals can properly investigate and intervene in a timely manner to keep children safe from abuse in Williamson County; and

**WHEREAS**, Children's Advocacy Centers were created in the Texas Family Code to work with government agencies in a unified effort to investigate cases of child

abuse in a manner that reduces trauma to young victims; and the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center, a non-profit organization which was formed in 1997 to serve all cities and rural areas in Williamson County, exists to provide a child friendly, safe place to disclose child abuse, reduce emotional trauma for children and their non-offending family members, and extend professional services that protect the integrity of an investigation; and

**WHEREAS**, the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center, Williamson County Sheriff's Department, Child Protective Services, CASA, Emergency Medical Services, the Williamson County Mobile Outreach Team, the County Attorney's Office, the District Attorney's Office, and the Judges and all of their staff, foster parents, teachers, and others work together and play a critical role in the prevention and healing of abused and neglected children in our community to ensure that they have the opportunity to grow up in safe, loving, permanent homes;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, the Williamson County Commissioners Court do hereby proclaim April 2018 as NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION MONTH in Williamson County and urge all citizens to recognize this month by dedicating ourselves to the task of improving the quality of life for all children and families by that recognition; and, hereby recognize the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center for its outstanding service to protect the unprotected, seek justice against child maltreatment and encourage all citizens to be vigilant in recognizing and reporting child abuse in Williamson County.

Signed on this date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Dan Gattis, County Judge

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Terry Cook, Commissioner Pct. 1

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Valerie Covey, Commissioner Pct. 3

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Cynthia Long, Commissioner Pct. 2

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Larry Madsen, Commissioner Pct. 4