



Photo by Debbie Hightower

C.A.R.E., founded in Randolph County in 1992, stands for Child Abuse Reduction Effort. Through C.A.R.E. second grade students, their teachers and parents all learn to identify what abuse is through teaching materials, such as drawing, coloring, playing games and singing songs. Here, Addison McCoy holds up a sign while she is joined by other JLE students during the C.A.R.E. graduation ceremony.

JLE holds C.A.R.E. graduation

BY DEBBIE HIGHTOWER

ARCHDALE — Principals, teachers, students, parents and grandparents, were all on hand for C.A.R.E. graduation held at John Lawrence Elementary last month. The 12-week Child Abuse Reduction Effort has been proven to reduce both physical and sexual abuse and abduction

among Randolph County's most vulnerable residents.

Also on hand for the graduation were Traci Baker and Deputy Fletcher Swaim of Randolph County Sheriff's Office, who eventually work with all second graders in the county. The program founded in Randolph County in 1992 is designed to teach kids about physical and sexual

abuse on a second-grade level.

A 1990s study found that 27% of women and 16% of men report being sexually abused. The median age of abuse was 9.9 years for boys and 9.6 years for girls. The C.A.R.E. program is founded on the principle that it is easier to prevent abuse than to try and fix broken adults.

According to Randolph

County Sheriff Gregory Seabolt, each year more than one million children are victims of serious neglect or abuse.

"C.A.R.E. helps empower children and build their self-esteem," he said. "We need to create an atmosphere in which children feel safe to learn about abuse and



John Lawrence Elementary teacher Ann Callicutt was proud of CARE graduates Graycie Garvin and Jenny Zou.



Second graders memorized plans to be used when they feel that their safety is threatened. In the above photo, Ann Callicutt holds the microphone as William Allen recites the safety plan.

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practice skills that will help them avoid abusive situations.”

“We teach them how to say safe, how to recognize child abuse and what to do if someone makes them feel uncomfortable,” said Baker. “We talk to them about safety rules at home or if you are out shopping with family.”

We teach them don’t open the door for a stranger and how to call 911 if they have an emergency.”

JLE second-grade teacher Paige Hopkinson, who has been involved in the C.A.R.E. program for the past 20 years, feels that C.A.R.E. lessons are effective because children love working with the RCSO officers in their classroom, especially Carey the giant puppet whose antics reinforce each week’s lessons.

Second graders recite the C.A.R.E.

principles so they will know how to prevent abuse. Scarlett Baker has five carefully-chosen trusted adults who are part of her safety plan.

“I learned that I can get away from people if they make me have the uh-oh feeling,” she said. “I can get away from them and tell a trusted adult.”

Hopkinson has evidence that the program is effective in keeping students safe.

“I have had kids who have come back and told me that the C.A.R.E. program helped them and prevent them from having the abuse because they walked away from that person,” she said. “Nothing is so terrible and so scary that they can’t talk with someone in their help network of trusted adults. Those are the ones they can talk to if someone makes them feel uncomfortable.”

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Proud parents, grandparents and members of the community attended the CARE graduation in the John Lawrence Elementary Auditorium. Pictured with Tony Santolaya-Mora is his father Loreto Mora.



At the C.A.R.E. graduation, Jake Hollingsworth thanked Deputy Fletcher Swaim, who worked with John Lawrence Elementary second graders during the 12-week program.