

Elder Abuse is a Reality in Newport-Cocke County

You've seen the stories in the newspaper – an elderly person is physically, emotionally, sexually abused or financially exploited by a family member. You've seen the reports on TV – a patient in a long-term care facility victimized by a staff member.

As you shook your head and turned the page, you wonder “How could this happen? Couldn't someone help before now”? The truth is, someone could – and should – have helped long before it became a tragedy.

Currently in Tennessee, only 1 in 23 cases are reported. Many times it's because the victim lives with someone who controls their access to the outside world, plus her finances, meals, medication, and everything else. No one sees the bruises or the frightened looks in their eyes. The abuse goes on. More than 2/3's of elder abuse perpetrators are family members.

Elder abuse is a reality in Newport-Cocke County and we as a community must step up and stop the frequency of this crime in our community. We can address this problem by partnering with each other in empowering our seniors to know that **they can refuse to be abused!**

We are pleased to announce our new **elder abuse awareness** campaign. It is the goal of the Newport-Cocke County Office on Aging and community partners to heighten the awareness of this crime against senior citizens in our community. We want to be about the business of preventing abuse where we can and to listen for the silent cries. This crime is often never reported because it is often a family member inflicting the pain. Through education, awareness and partnering with community leaders we can prevent the frequency of this crime in our community.

Our new **elder abuse awareness** program asks every business, agency, church and organization etc. to help us by purchasing a sign and posting it. There are two signs and two ways to support this effort. You can buy an interior sign to be posted in a storefront window or you can sponsor a neighborhood sign that will be posted in a neighborhood of your choice and will acknowledge the sponsor on the bottom of the sign. The neighborhood sign is an exterior sign that is two sided and reflective. Both the interior and exterior sign are 12 X 18 in size. The interior sign is made of corrugated plastic and the cost is \$25 dollars and the exterior sign is made of hard weatherized plastic and has the reflective coating on both sides and the cost is \$50. Step up and be a part of the solution.

To order a sign you can call the Office on Aging at 623-7296 or email Carlene at rcarlene@yahoo.com. Make checks payable to the Cocke County Senior Center and mail to 386 E. Main Street, Newport, TN 37821