

Sue Paterno personally funds more than \$200,000 in child sexual abuse prevention training

By Meghan Garrity | Collegian Staff Writer | Posted: Thursday, April 16, 2015 3:00 am

Sue Paterno, wife of late Penn State football coach Joe Paterno, is spearheading a new initiative to end child sexual abuse on college campuses.

“We really want to get a dialogue going,” she told the Collegian on Wednesday. “After everything we’ve been through, it makes me happy to see people want to talk about [child sex abuse].”

Paterno personally funded \$220,000 to start Circles of Safety for Higher Education — a pilot program between Stop It Now! and Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education to train child abuse prevention training, according to a release from Circles of Safety.

Stop It Now! — a non-profit organization dedicated to eradicating sexual abuse against children — and the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education started collaborating on Circles of Safety, which is a “first-of-its kind,” and “multi-disciplinary team approach” to child sex abuse prevention, in 2012, according to the release.

So far, nearly 150 people from each of Pennsylvania’s 14 state-funded universities, which does not include Penn State, and leadership administrators from the Dixon University Center in Harrisburg have undergone training, according to the release.

“We are happy to see other institutions adopting programs related to educating and training on this issue,” Penn State spokeswoman Lisa Powers said via email. “The incorporation of such programs can only make our communities safer and stronger.”

The two-day training program involves system leadership and 14 individual leadership teams consisting of faculty, students, summer camp directors and representatives from several on-campus departments including student affairs and residence life, according to the release.

It is designed to prepare “prevention squads,” which would lead abuse prevention and awareness efforts on-campus, according to the release.



Sue Pa at the lion shrine

Sue Paterno explains the tradition of guarding the lion shrine in this 2012 file photo.

Anne Ard, executive director for the Centre County Women's Resource Center, said recognizing signs of abuse is integral when working on a college campus.

“What's really critical is having every adult understand the dynamics of it, and what to do if they suspect a child is being abused,” Ard said. “Everyone who works with kids, who cares about kids or who knows a kid, needs to be aware of that.”