

Sue Paterno spearheading child abuse awareness program on college campuses

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HARRISBURG — Sue Paterno, the widow of legendary Penn State football coach Joe Paterno, has paid \$220,000 to set up a child abuse prevention project in 14 state-owned universities.

The program, called Circles of Safety for Higher Education, is part of her effort to prevent other children from being molested by a pedophile like Jerry Sandusky, the former Penn State assistant coach who was convicted in 2012 of abusing 10 boys.

The program uses curriculum developed by a 20-year-old anti-abuse nonprofit, Stop It Now!, to train students and adults in spotting and reporting abuse.

"You get guilt trips," Paterno said Thursday about Sandusky's abuse.

The entire community was fooled by Sandusky, added son Scott Paterno, but child abuse affects children in all segments of society. The Paternos spoke after a presentation at a meeting of the Pennsylvania System of Higher Education's Board of Governors.

Scott Paterno credited the PASSHE board with setting up a pilot program and expanding its own policies mandating that many more types of workers have to report to authorities suspected child abuse cases. Setting up the program in the PASSHE schools made the most sense, Scott Paterno said, because they serve 109,606 students in rural, suburban and urban areas such as Kutztown and East Stroudsburg.

Sue Paterno said she would like to see the program expand to Penn State, too.

The program centers on five topics: How to Speak Up and Keep Children Safe from Sexual Abuse; Recognizing and Responding to Children's Sexual Behavior; Recognizing and Responding to Adults' Behavior; Fostering a Culture of Prevention in Your Organization, and Team Action Planning.

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