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Press Release

Matthew Sandusky to Speak at Annual Gainesville Gone Austin Event

Child Advocacy Center of Gainesville welcomes child sexual abuse survivor, Matthew Sandusky, to share his story during their signature fundraising event on Thursday, October 26, 2017.

Gainesville, Fla., October 4, 2017 – The Child Advocacy Center in Gainesville is honored to host child sexual abuse survivor, Matthew Sandusky, during their 9th annual signature fundraiser, Gainesville Gone Austin, on Thursday, October 26, 2017.

Matthew, Founder and Executive Director of Peaceful Hearts Foundation, was a victim of childhood sexual abuse from the age of 8 to 17 at the hands of his adopted father, Jerry Sandusky. Matthew is working to turn his traumatic personal experience into a mechanism to prevent childhood sexual abuse and help other survivors heal.

Through his work with Peaceful Hearts, Matthew, raises awareness around child sexual abuse in local communities, supports the life-saving work of children's advocacy and sexual assault treatment centers, and advocates for legislative changes. Matthew works with researchers, clinicians, the media, politicians, social workers, and child protection professionals to raise awareness and improve the quality and availability of services to survivors nationwide.

In addition to his advocacy work, Matthew is committed to empowering and educating children to use their voices and help protect them against abuse. He is working with other advocates to implement an in-school curriculum to empower children to use their voices as a first line of defense, along with parents and teachers.

Matthew is also an accomplished author, chronicling his years of abuse in his memoir, *Undaunted: Breaking my silence to overcome the trauma of child sexual abuse*, which sheds light on the truth about abuse and the healing journey that a victim goes through to become a survivor.

As an internationally recognized spokesperson, on the topic of child sexual abuse, Matthew is asked regularly to comment on breaking news. He has done a one-on-one interview with Oprah Winfrey, been featured in two documentaries, *Happy Valley* and *Invisible Scars*, and is regularly published in major newspapers across the country.

Matthew attended Penn State University, studying Business. He along with his wife and children currently reside in State College, PA. Through his work with Peaceful Hearts Foundation, Matthew Sandusky has moved from victim to survivor of child sexual abuse.

Child Advocacy Center President and CEO, Sherry Kitchens, is excited to have Matthew speak at this year's Gainesville Gone Austin. In July she, along with several staff members, had the privilege of hearing Matthew speak at the annual Crimes Against Kids conference in Orlando.

"After hearing Matthew, I just knew he would make a wonderful presenter for our event. There may be males out there who want to talk about the abuse they've experienced and I think it's important for men to know that they're not alone," said Kitchens.

The 9th annual Gainesville Gone Austin will be held on Thursday, October 26, 2017 at Santa Fe River Ranch in Alachua, Fla. More information about the event can be found online at gainesvillegoneaustin.org.

About Child Advocacy Center, Inc.

The Child Advocacy Center in Gainesville provides a child-friendly, safe and supportive environment for abused and neglected children. The Center is a place where professionals – social workers, counselors, law enforcement officers, state attorneys, victim advocates, medical professionals and others – work as a team to coordinate investigations and interventions for each child abuse case. This collaboration expedites each child's time in the legal system and ensures that children are not re-victimized by the system and that they and their families are provided the support and services needed. The Center offers a multitude of services including forensic interviews; advocacy and case management; therapy; and case tracking. In 2016, the Center served approximately 2,224 child victims, conducted 317 forensic interviews, and provided over 3,300 therapy hours.