

# Anti-abduction program coming

## Millennium Fund for Children helps with \$1,200

by Bill Lilley

Fran Doll wasn't seeking more projects for Grandparents Against Sex Predators.

Doll and the rest of the 150 or so volunteers in GASP already are heavily involved in fingerprinting children, court observations of sex offenders, working with the Summit County Sheriff's Office on a project to scan files of nearly 1,000 sexual predators, and training with the department in mock abductions, psychological profiling of predators and studying abduction techniques.

"I need another project like I need a hole in the head," said Doll, former owner of Superior Staffing who serves as president of GASP

Doll couldn't resist adding another when she discovered the radKIDS Personal Empowerment Safety Education program.

"I truly believe radKIDS is really the final piece of the puzzle we're putting together at GASP in our quest to educate the community on protecting our children," Doll said.

"We're already stretched to the limit in terms of volunteers and finances, but I am passionate about this program. I really believe this is beyond anything we have, and we have to have it for children in our community."

So does the Millennium Fund for Children.

GASP has received a grant of \$1,200 to help bring the radKIDS program to the Akron area.

Doll said the total cost of the program to GASP would be \$11,000. That would cover training for a maximum of 20 adult volunteers and equipment. She is seeking other donations to absorb the cost.

Doll also is seeking volunteers who would be willing to participate in the adult-training program and then train Akron-area children.

The closest radKIDS programs are in the Cleveland and Garfield Heights school systems.

Child abduction has been a growing problem. A U.S. Department of Justice study — National Incidence Studies of Missing Abducted, Runaway and Throwaway Children — stated in 2002 that "797,500 people under 18 were reported abducted in a one-year period."

GASP Vice President Carl Rakich said the success the radKIDS program has shown stems from the fact it is a "very physical program."

"It teaches kids defensive techniques to fight off any aggressive behavior," Rakich said. "Unfortunately, it's a documented fact that when children are abducted they are usually killed within three to four hours.

"This is definitely a situation in which we have to focus on prevention. The radKIDS program already has been credited with preventing the abduction of 51 kids across the country.

"Even if it is just one child saved, it's worth all the time, effort and money that we will put into it."

Nationwide, nearly 3,000 adults have been trained as instructors and more than 125,000 children ages 3-12 have been trained to defend themselves since the radKIDS program, based in Massachusetts, debuted in 1998.

A 2006 study of 403 attempted kidnappings by strangers or acquaintances in 45 states indicated that about 60 percent of the victims fought back and escaped. About 30 percent were able to run away before any physical contact occurred.

“The key to the program is that it teaches children to empower themselves,” Doll said.

“Normally, when a child is attacked they are totally unprepared to defend themselves. Their minds freeze and they submit to the attacker.

“The radKIDS program helps to empower the children to respond with an instinctive response to any type of accosting. They learn how to elbow, knee and run and scream.

“If a child is grabbed by a stranger in the store, the child has been taught to knock items from the shelves to create a commotion and scream, ‘This is not mommy or daddy.’

“The program is so effective because the kids are programmed so well to respond to any type of aggressive behavior. And the children are taught that nobody has a right to touch them,” Doll said.

She said GASP has fingerprinted more than 3,000 children and college students in the past three years and the group is “swamped with all the wonderful things we’re already doing,” but after seeing the radKIDS program in a three-day training seminar, “I was convinced we had to have it here in Akron and we had to have it now.”

“I am passionate about taking this project on. And we are grateful that the Millennium Fund is helping to make this happen,” she said.

Visit the Web sites <http://radkids.org> and <http://www.gasp123.org> for more information.

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