

# Local agencies join forces to fight child fatalities

To combat the rising number of child fatalities in Fort Bend County, representatives from more than 20 agencies gathered at Child Advocates of Fort Bend last week to sign an agreement to work together on behalf of child victims.

Spearheaded by District Attorney John Healey, and led by Assistant District Attorney O Shea Spencer, the Child Fatality Review team will review all child deaths in the county in the hope of identifying ways to prevent future fatalities.

"There are over 50 child deaths in Fort Bend County each year and some of these tragedies are preventable. We want to save as many of these innocents as possible," Healey said.

Team members will con-

tribute detailed information concerning child death cases that come under the charge of their agencies and quarterly meetings will be held to review the deaths.

The team will report its findings to the Department of State Health Services (DSHS).

Data gathered will be used to target prevention strategies and educational initiatives and to contribute to national data on child deaths.

Agencies included in the agreement are Fort Bend County Health and Human Services, Arcola Police Department, Child Advocates of Fort Bend, Fort Bend County Attorney's Office, Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office, Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office, Fort Bend

ISD Police Department, Katy ISD Police Department, Katy Police Department, Meadows Place Police Department, Missouri City Police Department, Needville Police Department, Richmond Police Department, Rosenberg Police Department, Stafford Police Department, Sugar Land Police Department, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Thompson Police Department, Fort Bend County Juvenile Probation, Fort Bend County Adult Probation, Dr. Stephen Pustilnik (Chief Medical Examiner-Galveston County), Dr. Karen Gollaher (Greater Houston Psychological Institute), Dr. Rebecca Girardet (The University of Texas C.A.R.E. Clinic - Houston), and Justice of the Peace Gary Geick.



*Katy Police Chief Bill Hastings is shown signing the agreement to form the Fort Bend County Child Fatality Review Team with Texas Child Fatality Review Coordinator Susan Rodriguez (front, right). Looking on are back row (L to R): Thompson Police Chief James Pirie, Child Advocates of Fort Bend Executive Director Ruthanne Mefford, Fort Bend County Assistant District Attorney O Shea Spencer, Rosenberg Police Chief Dallis Warren, Fulshear Police Chief Scott Head, Richmond Police Chief Bill Whitworth, Needville Police Chief Michael Dickerson, Fort Bend County District Attorney John Healey, County Attorney Roy Cordes, Meadows Place Police Chief Mike Baker, Missouri City Police Chief Joel Fitzgerald, Sheriff Milton Wright, and Arcola Police Chief James Bartley.*