

The logo for the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle. It features the word "ROCHESTER" in a small, sans-serif font at the top. Below it is a stylized illustration of a city skyline with several buildings of varying heights. The main title "Democrat and Chronicle" is written in a large, bold, blackletter-style font, with "Democrat" and "Chronicle" being significantly larger than the word "and" which is placed between them.

Speaking Out

Saturday, April 22, 2018

What Could Have Saved Abraham's Life?

The heartbreaking life and death of Abraham Cardenas, a first-grader at Brockport's Barclay Elementary School, is a sobering reminder that good intentions — and a system designed to protect vulnerable children — do not always prevent tragedy.

Plenty of good people are wondering if they could have done more to protect Abraham.

According to Prevent Child Abuse New York, more than 100 children die from abuse or neglect in the state every year. Complicated problems rarely have simple solutions, and the issue of child abuse and neglect — where poverty, substance abuse and mental illness exacerbate the problem — is especially complex.

The good news? Everyone agrees that protecting children is one of our highest priorities. Each of us can work together. We can and should:

- Rigorously educate the public about recognizing signs of child abuse and neglect, and provide easy-to-access resources.
- Raise awareness about abuse to generate support, public and private, for initiatives that protect children.
- Promote community-based responses that include parents, caregivers, law enforcement and health and human service professionals and that focus on prevention, awareness and service delivery.
- Support common-sense legislation that strengthens at-risk families and reduces the likelihood of abuse.
- Provide trained supervisory and front staff with the tools and support to make informed decisions.
- Maintain a public, frank and ongoing dialogue about our local and state child protective system and day-to-day practices, reviewing and improving existing systems to avoid future tragedies.

New York has made great strides in creating a child welfare system second to none. Child protective services have saved and improved the lives of countless children. But we can do better.

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