



AURORA POLICE DEPARTMENT NEWS RELEASE

Office of Public Information

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Aurora Police Mark Child Abuse Prevention Month with Pinwheel Garden; Highlight Know2Protect Day

Aurora, IL — The Aurora Police Department partnered with Prevent Child Abuse Illinois (PCA-IL) and Homeland Security Investigations' Know2Protect campaign to plant a pinwheel garden outside police headquarters on April 8, 2026, in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month.

The installation aligns with Know2Protect Day, observed annually on the third Wednesday of April — April 15 this year — to raise awareness and prevent online child exploitation. The campaign, launched by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, provides tools and resources to help families recognize risks and report concerns.

“Protecting children from exploitation is a responsibility we all share,” said HSI Chicago Special Agent in Charge, Matthew Scarpino. “Know2Protect Day is an opportunity for communities to come together, raise awareness, and empower families with the knowledge and resources they need to keep children safe online. HSI is proud to partner with local law enforcement and organizations like Prevent Child Abuse Illinois to help prevent child abuse and safeguard our most vulnerable.”

Blue pinwheels, the national symbol for child abuse prevention, represent the safe and healthy childhood every child deserves and serve as a visual reminder of the importance of protecting children from abuse and neglect — both in person and online.

Detective Jennifer Hillgoth, a Child Abuse Investigator with the Aurora Police Department and organizer of the event, emphasized the lasting impact of abuse and the importance of early intervention.

“Every time a child experiences abuse or neglect, they are exposed to trauma that can follow them into adulthood. Each exposure impacts a child’s mental health, shaping how they navigate the world, see themselves, and trust others. These effects can extend beyond mental health, increasing the risk of long-term health issues, including chronic disease. Children are vulnerable and depend on us for their well-being, which is why prevention and early intervention are so critical.”

“This effort reflects our ongoing commitment to protecting children and supporting prevention through education, partnerships, and community awareness,” said Aurora Police Chief Matt Thomas.

“Working with organizations like Know2Protect and Prevent Child Abuse Illinois allows us to bring important resources and conversations directly into our community.”

The event included participation from local and regional partners, including child advocacy centers in Kane and DuPage counties, highlighting the coordinated approach required to support victims and reduce the risk of abuse.

Aurora Police Department
1200 East Indian Trail, Aurora, IL 60505



This year's Child Abuse Prevention Month theme is "Pinwheels of Possibility." Provided by Prevent Child Abuse Illinois (PCA-IL), which is marking its 35th anniversary, the pinwheels symbolize childhood joy and reflect a statewide commitment to prevention, education, and family support.

Jen Samartano of Prevent Child Abuse Illinois (PCA-IL) highlighted the importance of early support.

"Every child is born full of promise. When families have support early — before stress becomes a crisis — children grow up safer, healthier, and full of hope. Preventing child abuse and neglect is a shared responsibility, and it takes strong partnerships across our communities to make that possible."

Interviews and b-roll video from the pinwheel garden planting are available at:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1OM18k6aF1hkVUT9YjXHrUwSo0BnYYFO3?usp=sharing>

For more information about child abuse prevention and online safety:

- Prevent Child Abuse Illinois: <https://www.preventchildabuseillinois.org/>
- Know2Protect Campaign: <https://www.know2protect.gov/>

The Aurora Police Department remains committed to prevention, education, and partnerships that help ensure every child in the community has the opportunity to grow up safe, supported, and protected.

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Jim Levicki, Public Safety Media Manager