



## PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Teri Retana, Asst. Vice President for Strategic Marketing & Communications Valley Baptist Health System  
Phone: (956) 389-1950 or 371-1017  
[teri.retana@valleybaptist.net](mailto:teri.retana@valleybaptist.net) [www.valleybaptist.net](http://www.valleybaptist.net)

# **CHILD ABUSE, SEX TRAFFICKING AMONG TOPICS AT FORENSIC SCIENCE SEMINAR IN VALLEY THIS NOVEMBER**

***Speakers to include woman who was brutally assaulted when 8 years old, who now advocates for crime victims; Conference for Valley police, CPS, attorneys, nurses, doctors***

**SOUTH PADRE ISLAND** – Child abuse prevention, intervention and investigation in the Valley – including the story of a Texas woman who was brutally raped and left to die when she was only 8 years old -- will be addressed during the 8th Annual Rio Grande Valley Seminar in Forensic Sciences, which will be held Nov. 9 to



11 at the Isla Grand Beach Resort (formerly the Radisson) on South Padre Island.

The symposium, which is hosted by Valley Baptist Health System, will provide current information to those involved in child death investigations, including police, Child Protective Services workers, social workers, attorneys, nurses, pediatricians, medical examiners, forensic pathologists, coroners,

psychologists, EMS personnel, clergy, and other professionals. The special three-day conference will address ways to prevent child abuse, techniques used in child death investigations, and other current issues involving child abuse.

Presenters at the conference will include **Jennifer Schuett**, who was abducted out of her bedroom window by a man in Dickinson, Texas, in 1990, when she was only eight years old. The assailant raped Jennifer, slit her throat and left her to die. Jennifer lay helpless in a field for more than 12 hours – covered with fire ants and blood and barely alive -- until she was found by a group of children who was playing nearby. She was airlifted to a hospital in Galveston, spending several weeks in intensive care before being able to finally go home.

Jennifer's hope was that no other child would have to suffer what she did – and justice was finally served 19 years later, in 2009, when police used new DNA technology to arrest the attacker, who by then was 40 years old. The man -- who had also been previously convicted of kidnapping a woman in Arkansas -- confessed to the brutal crime.

Jennifer is now an advocate for victims of crime and child abuse, speaking out against abuse in appearances across the country, and through her website, [www.JusticeForJennifer.com](http://www.JusticeForJennifer.com).

At the conference, Jennifer will speak along with **Detective Tim Cromie** of the Dickinson Police Dept. on *"Building Bridges ... Solving Cases"* on Friday, Nov. 11 from 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon.

In addition, **Chief Juan Gonzalez** of the San Juan Police Department will speak on *"Investigating Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking"* on Wed. Nov. 9 from 10:30 to 11:15 a.m.

Other presenters will include **Efrain Guerrero**, also known as **"Happy the Clown,"** a stand-up comedian and motivational speaker from Corpus Christi. "Happy" will deliver the keynote luncheon address on the opening day of the conference, Wed., Nov. 9, from 12 noon to 1 p.m., incorporating laughter and magic into his presentation. He will also speak that same afternoon at 4:30 p.m. on *"Ethics in Communication and Technology."* Mr. Guerrero has worked with nationally-known comedians such as Bill Cosby.

**Chuck Mattingly, JD**, Chief 1st Assistant District Attorney for Cameron County, will speak on *"Reflections on Prosecuting Child Abuse,"* on Wednesday, Nov. 9 from 2:30 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. Mr. Mattingly's office was involved in the prosecution and re-prosecution of John Allen Rubio, who was re-tried last year for the brutal stabbing, suffocation, and decapitation of three young children in Brownsville in 2003.

In addition, **Anna Jimenez, JD**, former District Attorney for Nueces County, and now Assistant Public Defender for the Regional Public Defender's Office for Capital Cases, will speak on *"How to Effectively Prosecute A Case"* on Wed. Nov. 9 from 11:15 a.m. to 12 noon.

Also speaking at the conference will be **Dr. Nancy S. Harper, MD, FAAP**, a Forensic Pediatrician and Medical Director for the Child Abuse Resource & Evaluation (CARE) team at Driscoll Children's Hospital in Corpus Christi. Dr. Harper will speak on "*Abusive Head Trauma*", on Thursday, Nov. 10 from 11:15 a.m. to 12 noon. She will also open the conference on Wednesday morning, Nov. 9, at 8:15 a.m. with a talk on "*Skinny Jeans, Stupidity, and Scapegoating*".

**Dr. Reena Isaac, M.D.**, a Pediatrician with the Child Abuse Pediatrics Team at Texas Children's Hospital, will speak on Thursday, Nov. 10 at 10:15 a.m. on "*Smoke and Mirrors*."

**Joseph LaBeau**, M. Ed., LPC, NCC, a Child and Adolescent Counselor in Harlingen, will speak on "*Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder – Related to Victims and Caregivers*" on Thursday, Nov. 10 at 3:30 p.m.

Also speaking will be **Dr. Matthew Cox, M.D.**, Associate Professor at Children's Medical Center in Dallas, who will talk on "*Unusual Genital Findings*" on Nov. 10 at 1:15 p.m. and on "Burns" on Nov. 11 at 8:15 a.m.

Other presenters will include the following:

- **Walter Lambert, M.D.**, of the University of Miami School of Medicine and Medical Director of the Child Protection Team for Miami-Dade County, on "*Assessing Child Maltreatment in Multi-cultural Populations*" and "*The Neglect of Neglect: Ethical Considerations*"
- **Detective Justin Mazzeo**, Coordinator for the Texas Alliance for Drug-Endangered Children in Dallas, on "*Drug-Endangered Children*"
- **Steve Pliszka, M.D.**, Professor and Chief of the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, on "*Psychotropic Drugs for Foster Children*"
- **Dr. Reade Quinton, MD**, Forensic Pathologist and Dallas County Medical Examiner, on "*Examination and Interpretation of Injuries: The Differences Between Clinicians and Forensic Pathologists.*"
- **Ricardo Jimenez**, Lead Forensic Interviewer for the Children's Advocacy Center in Nueces County
- **Jane Burstain, Ph.D.**, Senior Policy Analyst for the Center for Public Policy Priorities on "*Legislative Update: Budget and Child Protective Services*"
- **Jamie Ferrell, BSN, RN, DABFN, CA/CPSANE, SANE-A, CMI-III, CFN**, Clinical Manager for Forensic Nursing Services at Memorial Hermann Health System in Houston, on "*Medical Pediatric Image and Case Review*"

- **Sonja Eddleman**, RN, CA/CP SANE, DABFN, SANE-A, CMI-III, CFN, Child Abuse Resource & Evaluation (CARE) Team Clinical Coordinator for Driscoll Children's Hospital and Clinical Manager for the Child to Adult Abuse Response Team (CAART) at Valley Baptist Medical Center-Harlingen, on "*Medical Pediatric Image and Case Review*"

**Dr. Stan Fisch**, Pediatrician and Medical Director of the Child to Adult Abuse Response Team (CAART) at Valley Baptist, said the forensics symposium will help attendees become "better prepared to deal with the many issues surrounding injuries to children and help provide a basis for the prevention of child abuse."

Continuing education credits for the seminar will be available for nurses, social workers, physicians, and law enforcement officers. For more information on the seminar, as well as [registration and fees](#), please contact David Smith, Training Specialist with Valley Baptist's Nursing Education Dept., at (956) 389-1767 (e-mail: [David.Smith@ValleyBaptist.net](mailto:David.Smith@ValleyBaptist.net)); or go to [www.valleybaptist.net](http://www.valleybaptist.net).