



April 27, 2017: MEDIA ADVISORY

12th Annual Children's Mental Health Carnival Set for May 11 *Celebrating youth mental wellness with free fun for all*

- WHAT:** Kalamazoo Wraps' 12th Annual Children's Mental Health Carnival
WHEN: Thurs., May 11 from 4-7 p.m., rain or shine
WHERE: [Kalamazoo County Expo Center](#), 2900 Lake Street, Kalamazoo, Mich. 49048
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Kalamazoo, Mich. – It's hard to believe the award-winning **Kalamazoo Wraps Annual Children's Mental Health Carnival** started back in 2006 with only about 200 attendees in a conference room. Since then, it's grown into one of Kalamazoo County's premiere family events, drawing up to 4,000 people each spring.

This year's 12th Annual Carnival takes place **Thurs., May 11**, from 4 to 7 p.m. at the [Kalamazoo County Expo Center](#) at 2900 Lake Street.

The Carnival is **free**, open to the public, and packed with activities for kids, entertainment tents, games, giveaways and free treats like cotton candy and hot dogs. It's also an opportunity for community members to learn more about children's mental health issues and how to access local support and services. Dozens of area service providers and businesses will have information available.

[Kalamazoo Wraps](#) is a countywide initiative headed by [Kalamazoo Community Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services](#) (KCMHSAS) to improve care for youth with serious emotional disturbances. Kalamazoo Wraps promotes a "system of care" philosophy: a holistic approach that creates collaboration between youth, family, service providers, schools, counselors, friends and others.

"The Carnival is a great way to celebrate and promote the idea that our whole community is the System of Care," says program manager Michelle Houtrow. "Everyone can be involved in lifting up youth with mental health challenges and their families. Youth, families and caregivers come to the Carnival and have a blast, but they're also learning about youth mental wellness, where to find help and how to connect with the outstanding mental health resources available in our county."

In 2011, the Kalamazoo Wraps Carnival received a Gold ECCO (Excellence in Community Communications and Outreach) Award from the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#). The ECCO program showcases outstanding social marketing efforts of grantees that build community-based programs incorporating [systems of care for children](#), youth, young adults and families.

Last year's Children's Mental Health Carnival drew more than 3,500 participants, including 165 staff, volunteers and community partners, and more than 100 vendors, entertainers, mascots and exhibitors.

Sponsors for 2017 include [Kalamazoo Community Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services](#), [Bronson Healthcare](#), [Kalamazoo County Pre-K](#), [Advocacy Services for Kids \(ASK\)](#), [Family & Children Services](#), [Forest View Hospital](#) and [YWCA Kalamazoo](#). Groups like [Samaritas](#), [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services](#), [The Learning Network of Greater Kalamazoo](#) and [Bair Lake Bible Camp](#) will host information booths.

A few highlights of this year's event include:

- Three entertainment tents with many youth performers, including [Kalamazoo Kappa League Steppers](#) and the [Paul Freeburn School of Music](#).
- Face painting, balloon twisters, bouncy house, a magician, musicians, dancers and a DJ.
- The [Kalamazoo County Sheriff Mounted Division](#), a horse-mounted, volunteer law enforcement unit.
- Reptiles from [Critchlow Alligator Sanctuary](#).

Sponsorships and Booths

The Carnival depends on the support and co-sponsorship of community agencies and businesses that serve youth and families. Organizations can reserve a booth for \$100 and/or purchase a sponsorship starting at \$100. For more information, contact Michelle Houtrow at (269) 553-7122 or MHoutrow@kazoocmh.org.

About [Kalamazoo Wraps](#)

Funded by a federal grant from the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#), Kalamazoo Wraps is a countywide initiative to improve the lives of youth with serious emotional disturbances and their families so they have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Kalamazoo Wraps promotes a "System of Care" philosophy: A holistic approach that creates collaboration between youth, family, service providers, schools, counselors, friends and others. This ensures that the care provided is family-driven, youth-guided and culturally competent.

About [KCMHSAS](#)

For more than 50 years, Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services has worked with youth, families and adults with mental health challenges, intellectual and developmental disabilities and co-occurring disorders to help them achieve their goals. KCMHSAS provides a welcoming and diverse community partnership to share effective resources that support individuals and families to be successful through all phases of life. KCMHSAS serves nearly 6,000 clients and is one of 46 Community Mental Health Services Programs throughout Michigan. More information is available at www.kazoocmh.org or by calling 269-373-6000. KCMHSAS is on Facebook at www.facebook.com/KazoocmhDD.

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