

Billboard in Henrietta advertises Grandfather's CPS campaign

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(Photo: Meaghan M. McDermott)

The grandfather of a 3-year-old homicide victim is continuing his advertising campaign to bring attention to the plight of child abuse victims.

John Geer, of Irondequoit, has mounted a national drive to draw attention to the pressures faced by the often understaffed, overburdened government agencies charged with ensuring the safety and well-being of children.

With child protective services in his crosshairs, Geer is not only railing against what he says is a broken system that lets children like his granddaughter, Brook Stagles slip through the cracks, he's also hoping to attract attention to the issue from President-elect Donald Trump.

► [Brook's grandfather seeks Trump's attention on abuse \(/story/news/2016/12/30/brooks-grandfather-seeks-trumps-attention-abuse/95995056/\)](https://www.fox42.com/story/news/2016/12/30/brooks-grandfather-seeks-trumps-attention-abuse/95995056/)

That's why he purchased and is advertising the domain name trumpforchildren.com (<https://trumpforchildren.com/>), where Geer has created a web page devoted to what he's calling a "national crisis."

Over the past few weeks, he's had billboards erected in cities including Chicago, Cleveland, Allentown, North Orlando, Myrtle Beach, Jacksonville and Tampa. He has plans for more in Buffalo, Atlanta, Boston and Los Angeles. One was erected earlier this week in Henrietta, along West Henrietta Road near Methodist Hill Drive.

And, on Friday, he purchased an ad with the image of his granddaughter and his message "Don't let children die from child abuse like Brook Stagles" on the front page of the *Democrat and Chronicle*.



Advertisement in the Jan. 6 Democrat and Chronicle purchased by John Geer. (Photo: Meaghan M. McDermott)

"People need to be made aware of this," said Geer. His daughter, Ashley Geer, is Brook's mother. So far, he said, his campaign has drawn a lot of attention from other families both here and across the country who have complaints and concerns about child protective services. He's still hoping for a call from someone with the President-elect's team.

But, he did sit down on Thursday with Monroe County Legislature President Anthony Daniele, R-Pittsford. Geer said he brought up the recent report by the Children's Agenda that showed the county experiencing a dramatic spike in the number of reports of child abuse and neglect. And, he questioned whether the county should increase the number of caseworkers in the Department of Human Services. The most recent state data shows at least 31

percent of Monroe County's caseworkers have caseloads higher than the recommended benchmark of 15 concurrent investigations.

In a written statement, Daniele said "The loss of a child is a terrible tragedy and I am very sensitive to the grief this family is facing. At Mr. Geer's request, I accepted a meeting to listen to his concerns. During the meeting, I assured him that fully-funding CPS positions was a priority in the County Executive's 2017 Budget and I was happy to support that budget along with the practice of over-hiring CPS workers to minimize vacancies in the department. These proactive measures demonstrate this commitment to protecting children in our community."

Brook Stagles died Nov. 14 of injuries allegedly sustained while she was staying with her father Michael Stagles and his girlfriend Erica Bell at their home in Rochester. Michael Stagles is charged with criminally negligent homicide in connection with her death, while Bell has been charged with second-degree murder and manslaughter. Trials for both have been scheduled to begin May 15.

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Still, Geer said his campaign will march on. He has more billboards planned for the Rochester area and is working to secure advertising on six buses that will circulate near Trump's inauguration on Jan. 20 in Washington, D.C.

"And after that, it's over," he said. "Or at least I hope it's over and I can go back to work. Or maybe it won't be over, and this will just be my life now."

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