

April 2008

OUR MISSION

is to provide trained community volunteers as advocates for abused and neglected children in the court system.

Advocacy Without Borders

Kate, a young teenager, came into care following allegations of sexual abuse by her adoptive father as well as disinterest and animosity towards her by her adoptive mother. CASA was appointed to represent her best interests and to provide advocacy and support. Kate's CASA advocate is Lucy Hargis, who has been with CASA now for 4 years, and in that time has served 8 children. When Lucy talks about Kate it is obvious how special Kate is to her.



Kate has had many disappointments in her life. She felt abandoned by her biological family, and the adoptive mother who had "chosen her" now saw Kate as a threat to the relationship she had with her husband. Kate has been in many placements including residential treatment centers, emergency shelters, and foster homes, as well as being a frequent runaway. Through it all, Kate consistently maintained contact with her CASA. Lucy was the only person on her case that Kate felt she could confide in and trust. Lucy spent many hours worrying about Kate's future and began to work with all the pertinent parties on Kate's case to develop a permanency plan, which included locating Kate's biological family in Mexico.

Lucy worked with the Mexican Consulate and others to find Kate's biological family. There was some hesitation though, because no one knew if Kate's family would want contact or be appropriate adults in Kate's life. Once they were located, Kate's family told a very different story from the original reports of the adoptive family. Kate's biological mother regretted her decision to give Kate up for adoption – she loved and missed Kate. There was a large extended family eager to meet and welcome Kate home. The next step was for Kate to visit her biological family, however, this could not happen without someone first going to Mexico to meet the family to ensure this would be a good placement for Kate. Lucy was the obvious choice as she knew Kate so well, was the only party on the case who spoke Spanish and was eager to fill this role. Judge Meurer was so pleased with this plan that she ordered the State to pay Lucy's expenses for the trip.

Lucy spent a few days with Kate's family in Mexico. She returned with pictures and a positive report. Once CASA and others were able to determine the family would be a safe and positive influence in Kate's life, she was finally told about her family. Kate

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immediately began making phone calls to get acquainted and learn more about her biological family. In July 2007, Lucy and Kate boarded a plane to visit Kate’s family for the first time in fourteen years! Two days into the visit, Kate decided to spend the rest of the summer with her “new” family with approval from Judge Meurer.

Kate returned to the United States at the beginning of this school year. She has chosen to continue her education in the States with the promise of college tuition. However, the knowledge that she has a family that loves and wants her has resulted in a dramatic change in her outlook. With Lucy’s support and encouragement, Kate now looks forward to holiday visits with her family. Kate is now optimistic about her future and no longer exhibits the same emotional and behavioral problems she did before she was reunited with her family. If it had not been for the extraordinary advocacy of Lucy Hargis, Kate’s future would have likely continued with placements in residential treatment centers and episodes of running away. Because of Lucy’s determined desire for a better future for Kate, she is a different child today.

Volunteers In Action

- The staff members and Board of Directors continuously applaud the tireless work of our volunteers! A CASA volunteer is sometimes the only stable adult in the life of a child speaking up for the child’s best interest in court as well as in educational, medical and therapeutic settings.
- Since November 2007, our volunteers:
 - Served **148** new children
 - Closed cases for **133** children
 - Advocated for a total of **883** child victims of abuse and neglect
 - Donated **15,546** hours of service
- Thank you for all of your hard work and dedication to helping find safe and permanent homes for the children in our community. We couldn’t do it without you!

CASA University & Open House

CASA University is our 9-class training program for volunteers who want to work directly with children. If you are interested in becoming a CASA volunteer, contact Heather at heather.frye-kelley@casatravis.org.

CASA 101’s:

- Wednesday, April 9, 6:00 - 8:30pm
- Wednesday, April 23, 9:30am - Noon
- Wednesday, May 7, 6:00 - 8:30pm
- Wednesday, May 28, 9:30 - Noon
- Wednesday, June 11, 6:00 - 8:30pm
- Wednesday, June 25, 9:30am - Noon

CASA also hosts open houses for community members to stop by our offices and talk with Heather, our Volunteer Coordinator. You can ask questions, talk with other staff members and determine if this is the right volunteer opportunity for you.

Open Houses:

- Wednesday, April 2, 10:00am -6:00pm
- Wednesday, May 7, 10:00 am - 6:00pm
- Wednesday, June 4, 10:00am - 6:00pm

Board of Directors

- | | | | |
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| Denise Conway, President | Lissa Adams | Dhananjay Adhikari | Shawn Ball |
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Letter from the Executive Director



April is National Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month and we view this time of heightened awareness with somewhat mixed responses. On the one hand, it is always good to call the community's attention to issues of child abuse and neglect.

On the other hand, we are confronted with these issues every single day and we recognize clearly that only when our community is aware of child abuse and working to prevent it --- every day, every month --- will we have any hope of giving all the children around us the opportunity to play hard and dream big.

Child abuse and neglect can have incredibly damaging consequences, ranging from obvious physical harm to deeply challenging emotional and psychological implications. Children who have experienced abuse and neglect can show impaired brain development, poor physical health, social difficulties, juvenile delinquency, alcohol and drug abuse, and may themselves behave abusively. Many of these challenges can follow children into adulthood, affecting their ability to have safe, healthy, happy and productive lives.

There is hope, however. Research shows that some children demonstrate remarkable resilience and can overcome the traumas of their childhood. One of the factors that can contribute to a child's resilience is the presence of a caring adult in that child's life. That

is where CASA comes in. CASA advocates are the caring adults --- often the only constant caring adult --- in the lives of the children we serve. By speaking up for their best interests, for however long they may be in the court system, we are helping those children to beat the odds. You can see this in the cover story about Kate and Lucy, in the story about Cedric Wilson at CASAblanca and in Key Richardson's article celebrating Volunteer Appreciation Week later this month.

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services is reporting that 1,777 children in Travis County were in the State's custody in 2007. CASA of Travis County served 1,241 of those children, a record for us. We could not begin to serve this number of children, approximately 70% of those in care, without a legion of volunteers, and we are grateful for our volunteers every day, not just during Volunteer Appreciation Week! Only with the financial and volunteer support of our community will we be able to meet the needs of all the children in the Travis County courts.

So it is only fitting that I close this letter by expressing our enormous gratitude for all of those supporters who have contributed to the 2007-2008 Children's Campaign here at CASA. We are pleased to report that we have met the challenge issued by the Topfer Family Foundation by raising \$25,000 more in this year's Children's Campaign than last year. To all of you who made this possible --- thank you! We could not do this without you!

- Laura D. Wolf

Announcements

- Light of Hope, a community awareness event to kick off National Child Abuse Prevention Month, will be held on April 1, 2008 at the George Washington Carver Library from 5:30 to 7:30pm. Come join us for this powerful event featuring CASA and other community organizations that address child abuse and neglect. There will be refreshments and activities for kids!
- CASA is pleased to welcome Elizabeth Hummer as our new Development Director. Elizabeth has a long history of nonprofit work here in Austin, and we couldn't be happier to have her on board. Welcome!
- CASA is currently accepting applications for Summer Internships in Program, Development and Administrative areas. If you are interested in applying, please send your information to apply@casatavis.org.

Signs of abuse may include sudden changes in behavior and frequent absences from school.

CASAblanca 2008



This year's CASAblanca Gala, held on February 16, was a record-breaking success for CASA, raising more than \$200,000 to support our important services. 350 attendees helped us honor and celebrate Olga Campos

for her many years of excellent work raising awareness of children in foster care. Everyone enjoyed live and silent auctions, a casino, dinner and dancing.

Cedric Wilson, a former CASA child, spoke to the rapt audience about his experiences with his CASA volunteer, David Chasis. Cedric's own words capture our mission: "At first I felt like it was

me against the world, and now I feel like it's me *with* the world".

Thank you Cedric, for sharing your story with all of our guests! Thank you Olga, for letting us express our admiration of you! We are grateful to our Underwriters, Bryan & Debbie Holley and Austin Sonics and to our Sponsors, Harutunian Engineering, The Boon Group, Strong Productions and Quik Print. Finally, enormous thanks to CASAblanca 2008 co-chairs, Shari Butler and Mavis Ball, without whom the event would not have been possible.



The Voice

Major Donors

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Upcoming CASA Events

Kid's Golf Classic

Please join us this April for our Kid's Golf Classic. The event kicks off on Sunday, April 20 for the pre-party at the Zilker Clubhouse. There will be two tee times on Monday, April 21 for all of our golfers. We will be featuring games and contests at each hole.

Thank you to Dr. Pepper, Austin Sonics, Fox 7, United Heritage Credit Union, Coca-Cola, Kasling, O'Toole, Hemphill & Dolezal and Guaranty Financial Services for sponsoring this great event. There are still opportunities to become a sponsor, purchase a team, play as an individual or volunteer at the Kid's Golf Classic!

Jackson Ruiz Cut-A-Thon

On June 8th, CASA will host the 7th Annual Jackson Ruiz Cut-A-Thon! This is a great family-focused hair-styling event at the Jackson Ruiz location at 5th Street and Lamar and the JR location on Burnet Road.

All proceeds from the event benefit CASA. We look forward to seeing you at the Jackson Ruiz Cut-A-Thon with a fabulous new haircut!

If you would like to learn more about our events or become a sponsor, please contact Anna at anna.otsuki@casatavis.org. Call 478-7744 to make your appointment today!

Special Thanks...

...to Texas Realty Capital. This is the second year the staff at Texas Realty Capital selected CASA to receive support from their philanthropy fund. This significant ongoing support makes our work possible!



...to Payton Merriman and her daughter, Harper. Harper recently turned 2-years old, and the birthday guests were asked to bring books. Harper generously donated all of the books to CASA kids! If you are interested in donating in-kind items, please contact Rozenna at rozenna.sanders@casatavis.org.



...to Debra Slapak and her daughter, Grace. Debra and Grace wanted to raise funds for CASA in a fun and creative way, so they created Grace's Gifts, a jewelry fundraising project. Debra and Grace design beautiful hand-made jewelry with high-quality beads and materials, and they give all proceeds to CASA! Debra and Grace also donated an amazing necklace to our CASA-blanca Silent Auction. Thank you for all of your time and support.



...to Bob Otto, CASA volunteer, and H&R Block. Bob invited CASA to speak at his office after H&R Block conducted a charitable giving campaign, with proceeds benefiting CASA.

...to our local Kappa Alpha Theta chapter for hosting an Egg Hunt for our CASA kids. The event featured treats, jewelry making, moonwalk, egg/spoon races, and of course, there was an egg hunt! Thank you for providing such a fun day for our CASA kids.

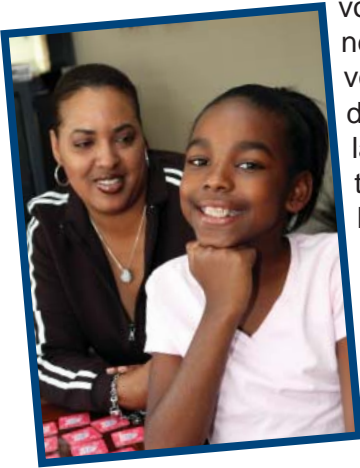
The Voice

Volunteer Appreciation Week

by Key Richardson, CASA Program Director

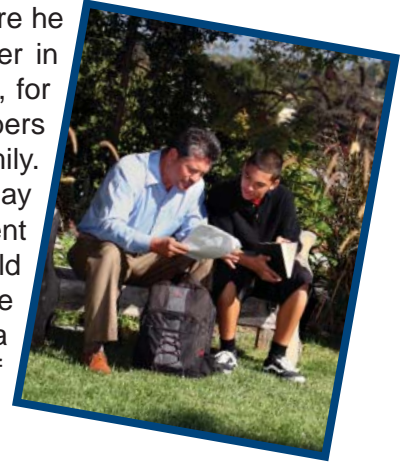
April 28 – May 3, 2008, is National Volunteer Appreciation Week. At CASA of Travis County, every day is a day to appreciate our volunteers! We have the opportunity to know about the extraordinary work the volunteer advocates are doing on behalf of their children, quietly behind the scenes and always with the “best interest” of the children foremost in their minds.

On a daily basis the Child Advocacy Specialists, who are the volunteers’ contacts within CASA, have stories about the remarkable work of their



volunteers – like Whitney Faldon, a CASA volunteer, who immediately drove to Dallas to see her CASA teenager when she heard that he had received news of his mother’s death. Within hours the volunteer had rearranged her schedule so that she could fly with him

to South Dakota where he could be a pall bearer in the funeral and meet, for the first time, members of his extended family. These contacts may produce a permanent placement for the child and definitely have provided him with a lifetime memory of his family.



CASA volunteers cheer for their kids at sporting events and meet with teachers and counselors as they create a strategy for success. The volunteers explain “the system” to confused families, provide that consistent contact to other professionals assigned to the family and report to the court. CASA volunteers answer a thousand emotional questions from children as they drive them back to their foster home following a visit with their parents. They are the ones who comfort children who have lost the only family they know and then celebrate with them in their new and safe permanent home. The energy and love with which the tasks are approached are endless.

New Advocates

Welcome to our newest volunteers, sworn-In by Judge Darlene Byrne in December 2007. At Swearing-In, new CASA volunteers pledge to always protect and promote the best interests of children.

- Kelli Andrews
- Ponda Bethke
- Angela Bradford
- David (Justin) Bravi
- Kathryn Burch
- Lari Burson
- Gerri Caputo
- Barbara Dickens
- Rachel Gale
- Kelly Gourley
- Linda Hart
- Amy Herzog

- Gregory Herzog
- Catherine Hotard
- Rodney Kapanga
- Ashley Koetter
- Lisa Medlin
- Laura Mueller
- Sara Sams
- Shanda Scott
- Laurie Shannon
- Alise Spence
- Kathryn Tesar
- Marie Wilson

During 2007 there were 399 volunteers assigned to children by CASA of Travis County. Only with the many thousands of volunteer hours contributed by these wonderful people was CASA able to serve 1,241 children during 2007. Volunteers, congratulate yourselves for the wonderful work you are doing for the children of Travis County. The rest of us will stand by in respect and with sincere appreciation.



Honoraria & Memorials

J.R.S. Enterprises, INC. In honor of Dolores Ponsati	Marvin Hoepken In memory of Marle Hoepken	Ms. Donna Snyder In memory of T.A. Brown & Frank Douglass
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Anonymous in honor of Pickett-Gaily-Ard Christmas	Mr. Ed Jones In honor of Denise Conway	Ms. Diane Tatem In honor of Fred Aus & Laura Wolf
Anonymous in honor of Mom	Mr. & Mrs. Larry Lynch In honor of Jennifer Lynch Rountree & In memory of Mildred Lynch	Mr. & Mrs. Martin Tenney In memory of Frank Falck, Toby & Sid Pollack, Herman & Florence Auslinder
Ms. Kathy Anzaldua In honor of Micheal Whellan	Mr. Joseph C. Lynch In memory of Mildred Lynch	Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Thompson In honor of
Mr. Robert Aus in honor of Mr. Fred Aus & Ms. Laura Wolf	Mr. & Mrs. Don Martin In memory of Mildred Lynch	Mr. & Mrs. Carroll Baird, Mr. & Mrs. Mike Craddock, Mr. & Mrs. William Davidson, Bishop & Mrs. Sam Hulsey, Mr. & Mrs. Calvin Kimbrough, Mrs. Paul Mason, Mrs. George Meihaus, Mr. & Mrs. Cecil Munn, Mr. & Mrs. Maurice Mercer, Rev. & Mrs. William Nix, Mr. & Mrs. Earle Shields, Mr. & Mrs. Clyde Seaton, Mrs. Leonard Wilson
Ms. Nancy Broughton In honor of Mr. & Mrs. G. Clendenen	Mr. & Mrs. Don Neely In honor of Nathan A. Neely	Ms. Jane Wolf In honor of Laura Wolf
Mr. & Mrs. Dave Clafin In honor of Matthew & Benjamin	Mrs. Mary-Louise Piner In honor of Lucia White	
Mr. & Mrs. Brian E. Damelio In memory of Mildred Lynch	Ms. Linda Prosser in honor of Mr. & Mrs. Robert Thompson	
Ms. Sarah Dickson In honor of T, B&B Black	Mr. & Mrs. Ross Rountree In memory of Mildred Lynch	
Mr. & Mrs. Scott T. Dupuie In honor of Rich & Sandra Johnson	Ms. Alison Schaub In honor of Patti Schaub	
Mr. & Mrs. Randall G. Hatley In honor of Lorie & Rick DuPont	Mr. and Mrs. Shane H. Sewell In memory of Mildred Lynch	
Mr. & Mrs. Ronald L. Herrington In memory of Mildred Lynch		

Closed Cases

Congratulations to the following volunteers who closed cases in the last few months! Your hard work and dedication helped place children in safe and permanent homes.

Kelli Andrews	Shari Chambers	Cheryl Grayden	Carolyn Nicewarner	Paula Sini
Jackie Ballard	Meredith Cinert	Judy Gromer	Michael Owens	Leslie Sirrianni
Rachael Bernstein	Joel Cisneros	D' Ann Harris	Stephanie Peco	Cheryl Smith
Shannon Bevans	Chris Conyers	Steve Hearn	Karina Perez	Nancy Stalker
Elizabeth Billups	Jemel Dean	Marvin Hoepken	Pam Rago	Ferd Stehling
Sharon Boone	Virginia Duggins	Sammuel Jarmon	Steve Rambo	Juanita Stehling
Katherine Bradley	Carolyn Eary	MiQuelle Kappel	Timothy Repard	Jeffry Strunk
Shirley Bradshaw	Emmett Eary	Keith Keily	Klaus Riedel	Chris Tillinghast
Mark Brandon	Frances Ebbers	Jessie Kuhn	Nancy Ring	Carole Vogel
Terri Burditt	Michelle Ellis	Dell Lawhead	Jennifer Rountree	Stephanie Wagers
Jeremy Cantu	Nancy Ellis	Frances McIntyre	Linda Sabins	Leah Wallace
Christina Carvell	Carol Faget	Leslie Mester	Buddy Schroeder	J. Denise' Warren
Helen Carvell	Lorna Fike	Darlene Murphy	Gina Schroeder	Lois Welch
Peter Carvell	Wanda Fletcher	Carl Nelson	Margie Schuyler	Gayla West
Jessica Cassidy		Luis Nevarez		Gina Wey

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CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF TRAVIS COUNTY, INC.

Become an Advocate



A Self-Paced Volunteer Training for Child Advocates

CASA of Travis County is currently recruiting volunteers for CASA University, a self-paced volunteer training program that includes nine 2 1/2 hour classes. Beginning with CASA 101, the training covers everything from child abuse to the legal system. After receiving 30 hours of training, CASA volunteers, or Court Appointed Special Advocates, are sworn in by a judge to speak for the best interest of abused and neglected children in court.

CASA volunteers lend their hearts, hands and voices, working with one child or family of children for one year for an average of 20 hours each month. Each volunteer spends time with the child, searches for safe family members and works with therapists, schools, caseworkers and placement staff. Throughout the child's case, the CASA volunteer gathers information to bring before the judge. CASA of Travis County helps ensure that no child slips through the cracks of the system. As a volunteer, you can help a child find a safe and permanent home!

**Call CASA at 459-2272 or visit www.casatavis.org for a volunteer application.
Email Volunteer Coordinator Heather at heather.frye-kelley@casatavis.org.**