

August 2008

OUR MISSION

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

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Advocacy for Classroom Success

Probably many of us can relate to a kindergartner's feeling of homesick anxiety of leaving his parent's arms for the first time as he ventures off into the strange new world of school. Anxiety becomes excitement once a child realizes that school is not all that different from home and even offers answers to the storm of questions that run through a developing early mind. In the case of CASA child Alex, however, he doesn't understand the world his teacher strives to create, and the teacher doesn't understand the rules Alex's father taught him to live by. At home Alex learned to function in a chaotic torment of abusive power struggles. Alex is the baby of seven children who literally fought one another to earn the attention of a father who only respected dominance and fear. On top of all of this Alex also battles ADHD. Alex's mind constantly interrupts itself while he panics in the face of new rules. Alex now lives with his mother who struggles in her efforts to redefine the family without their abusive father. Money is extremely tight, meals are sporadic, and there is little routine in this new dynamic. CASA was appointed to represent Alex's best interests during this fragile and uncertain time.

Alex's case is one example of the critical importance of CASA's advocacy in the educational system. As is often the case, the upheaval in Alex's life, combined with his



own ADHD means that he does not know how to operate in a classroom and his schooling has been disrupted. Alex's behavior can easily deteriorate, undoubtedly related to the abuse he has experienced. When frustrated, Alex uses the only resource he knows and confronts the string of challenges at school with aggression. When aggression is met with consequence, Alex destroys property and eventually is sent home. Unfortunately, Alex's mother struggles with her own learning disability and is intimidated

by the school system. She is unable to be a strong advocate for Alex's educational needs or to encourage his participation in school. Alex is on his fifth CPS caseworker and his third school in one year.

Until CASA was appointed, Alex's academic status was unclear and he was at risk of slipping through the cracks, but CASA volunteer Sue Vaughn has gone the extra mile

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to help Alex in school. Sue attends parent-teacher conferences, and understands that there is a need for volunteer advocacy in the school as much as the courtroom. Sue took it upon herself to sit with Alex throughout his entire school day for a full week. Alex is easily distracted by the busy class environment but Sue has been right beside him to help manage his time. When Alex attempts to play instead of work, Sue is there as a source of encouragement and applause when he completes assignments. Working side-by-side with his CASA volunteer, Alex is able to maintain his behavior well enough to stay in his classroom the entire day. During this valuable time Sue has learned that Alex is more academically capable than anyone previously knew and she has been able to recognize what triggers Alex's outbursts. Sue has dedicated herself to working with Alex's school and his therapist to develop an appropriate education plan to keep him in school and help him succeed.

Sue's commitment to Alex and to his success in school is just one example of the critical role that CASA can play in a school setting, just like the critical role our advocates play in the courtroom. Not everyone realizes that CASA's court-appointed job of protecting and promoting a child's best interest extends to the classroom, but in cases like Alex's, it can make an enormous difference in the life of a child. As we near the start of the new school year, our CASA advocates are preparing to support all of the school-age children we serve, to help them achieve the educational success that will be so important throughout their lives. Just like Alex, all of these children deserve to have someone on their side, to focus just on their needs in school, so that all of our children will have a chance to succeed.

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 April 2008, our volunteers:
 - Served **116** new children
 - Closed cases for **129** children
 - Advocated for a total of **877** child victims of abuse and neglect
 - Donated **12,597** 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, August 13, 6:00 - 8:30pm
- Wednesday, August 27, 9:30 am - Noon
- Wednesday, September 10, 6:00 - 8:30pm
- Wednesday, September 24, 9:30am - Noon
- Wednesday, October 8, 6:00 - 8:30pm
- Wednesday, October 22, 9:30 am- 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, Aug. 6, 10:00am -6:00pm
- Wednesday, Sept. 3, 10:00 am - 6:00pm
- Wednesday, Oct. 1, 10:00am - 6:00pm
- Wednesday, Nov. 5, 10:00am - 6:00pm

Letter from the Executive Director



I've been thinking a lot lately about strength and resilience, and about the hidden opportunities inside each perceived crisis. Judge Darlene Byrne started me thinking about these things at the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner in May and they've been timely subjects for contemplation in the weeks since.

The children we serve at CASA are obviously in a state of crisis at the moment that we enter their lives. They have been removed from their homes, their worlds turned upside down, and they find themselves in the midst of a system and a process that is difficult even for adults to understand. These are crises not of the children's choosing or of their making, and our job at CASA is to try to find an opportunity, out of that crisis, for each of these children. To find an opportunity for safety, for health and happiness, for a permanent, loving home for each child is the goal that pre-occupies our dedicated volunteers and staff. This is why CASA exists.

One trait that our volunteers and the children they serve share, and that amazes me regularly, is incredible resilience. Every day, we see children overcome tragedy, grief, and

fear to surpass expectations in school, in placements, in activities. And every day, we see volunteers overcome enormous obstacles in the system in order to see to it that a child's best interest is promoted and protected. I think about Nancy, one of our committed volunteers, who saw that the mother of the two children to whom she was appointed was struggling with the return of her children, trying to maintain her sobriety and stability while dealing with her teenage daughter and younger son who are grappling with their own impacts from the upheaval in their lives. Nancy stepped in to help this family succeed, by offering the mother some brief respite; Nancy transported the teenage daughter every day to a counseling session or support group meeting and made sure that the son got to his T-ball games on time with all his gear. Nancy's resilience in turn offers this family the chance to build their own resilience, to find their own strength.

We at CASA take our strength and inspiration from these children and from the volunteers with whom we work every day. It is an honor and a privilege to advocate for these children and to support the volunteers who make CASA possible. In May, Judge Byrne told us and our volunteers that she hoped we'd never stop looking for opportunities for children in crisis. With your help, we never will.

- Laura Wolf

The Voice

Announcements

- CASA is now accepting applications for fall and spring Internships in Program, Development and Administrative areas. If you are interested in applying, please send your information to apply@casatravis.org.
- The CASA 5K planning committee is in need of volunteers for our 3rd Annual Speak Up For Kids CASA 5K on September 7, 2008. Shifts available on September 4,5,6 and 7th. Visit www.casatravis.org or call 512-459-2272 for more information
- CASA is working to update our email lists! Please email updated contact information to theresa.couch@casatravis.org.

Register Today for the CASA 5K!



On September 7, 2008 CASA will host our 3rd Annual Speak Up For Kids CASA 5K **presented by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas** at the Domain Shopping Center in North Austin. The theme this year is "Healthy Living." The day will include a 5K, Kids 1K, and lots of activities for the entire family to enjoy that showcase the idea that healthy living can be fun! The 5K will be at 8:00 am with the 1K at 9:00 am.

Families are encouraged to stay after the 1K and participate in healthy living activities including kids' yoga, basketball, watergun play and much more.

New this year- we are asking all runners to raise money for CASA! Encourage your friends and family to sponsor you as a participant in the 5K. Register today for more details. Prizes will be handed out as goals are reached and a grand prize will be awarded to the runner that raises the most funds.



To register or sponsor a runner, please visit our website at www.casatavis.org. To volunteer at the race, call 512-459-2272 for more information.

The Voice

Major Donors

The following donations were received after April 1 and before July 4.
On behalf of CASA of Travis County, thank you!

ABE Charitable Foundation
Austin Pain Associates
Austin Sales, Inc
Ball-Peoples
Bank of America
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas
BMW of Austin
Boulette & Golden, L.L.P
Boon Insurance Management Services, L.P.
Concept Services
Conway & Associates, Inc.
Covenant Benefits, PLLC
Dr. Pepper/Seven Up, Inc.
Dupont Group
Fox Austin
Freescale Semiconductor
Guaranty Financial Services
Humana
Jamail Smith Construction
Jimmy Evans Construction

Kasling, Hemphill, Dolezal & Atwell, L.L.P.
Lola Wright Foundation
Long Foundation
Lowe Foundation
Mazda South
McWilliams & Associates, Inc.
Reid's Laundry and Dry Cleaners, Inc.
Texas Redwood Lumber
Topfer Family Foundation
Travis County Women Lawyers' Foundation
United Heritage Federal Credit Union
Wall Tech
Mr. and Mrs. David Allen
Mr. and Mrs. Tom Ball
Mr. David Chasis and Mrs. Bonita Griffith
Mr. and Mrs. Robert D. Finley, III
Mr. and Mrs. Lance Hughes
Mr. and Mrs. Peter H. Kappler

Mr. and Mrs. Jim Kruger
Mr. and Mrs. Bill La Rosa
Mr. and Mrs. Kirk E. Lewis
Dr. and Mrs. John Maxwell
Mr. and Mrs. Stephen K. Bronner
Mr. Robert Otto
Mr. and Mrs. David Rubin
Mr. and Mrs. Leon Schmidt
Mr. and Mrs. Dale Spivey
Mr. and Mrs. Frank J. Stabile
Mr. Charles O. Swanson
Ms. Karen Tyler
Mr. Scott Woodbury



Fun and Fundraising for CASA

Golf Classic 2008



Art Horlick, David Chasis, Quan Dang and Chris Nixon

On April 20th and 21st, CASA hosted our 9th Annual Golf Classic at Flintrock Falls Golf Course in Lakeway. The pre-party was at Zilker Clubhouse and was a great success. A big thanks to **Mazda South**, our pre-party sponsor and **El Arroyo** for providing drinks and dinner! Volunteer Bob Otto spoke of his experience as an advocate and reminded us all of the importance of CASA in children's lives.

On Monday, golfers enjoyed a beautiful day on the course with prizes, food, caddies and great weather. Thank you to our major sponsors **Dr. Pepper, Sonic, Fox News Austin, Guaranty Financial Services, United Heritage Credit Union, Kasling, Hemphill, Dolezal and Atwell and Coca-Cola.**

This year, with leadership from Jerry Conway, David Chasis, David Rubin and Kate Connolly, we raised more than \$150,000. We hope you'll join us in 2009 to make it our most successful year ever!



Flintrock Falls Caddies



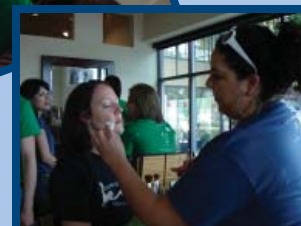
Jerry Conway and David Allen



Jackson Ruiz Cut-A-Thon

On June 8, 2008, Jackson Ruiz Salon Spa, JR Salon and CASA hosted our 7th Annual Cut-A-thon. Hundreds of people came out to support CASA and get a great haircut at a great price! A big thanks to Serrano's for providing breakfast, Mr. Gatti's, Opal Divines, Chipotle and Sweet Leaf Tea for providing food all day.

*CASA is extremely grateful for the efforts of Jackson Ruiz Salon Spa staff. Without your tireless dedication, this event would not be possible. Thank you to the **ABE Family Foundation, BMW of Austin, Matt Luckie, Randy and Stan Schlueter, Susan T. Hile, Judy's Foundation, Neill Corporation, Herron Williams, Laura Wolf and Fred Aus, and BOB FM** for your support!*



The Voice

Volunteer Appreciation Party



Child Advocacy Specialists working as wait staff

CASA celebrated our amazing volunteers with our Volunteer Appreciation Party on May 21. Almost 100 volunteers and their guests attended the event and our Child Advocacy Specialists were pleased to be the servers, thanking the volunteers for all of their service!



Judge Darlene Byrne and Volunteer Kay Trostle

All of us were thrilled to welcome Judge Darlene Byrne, Judge Rhonda Hurley and Judge John Hathaway who generously gave their evenings to be with us; it is always an honor to be with our judges and we very much appreciate their taking time to help us honor CASA volunteers!



Volunteer Steven Mangold and Judge John Hathaway

Judge Darlene Byrne gave our keynote address and inspired us all with her vision for CASA. She spoke eloquently of the persistence of CASA volunteers and her conviction that CASA's persistence is one key to finding opportunities in the midst of crisis for the children we serve. She then issued a call to action to all of us, sharing her great hope for CASA's growth --- she looks forward to the day when CASA has capacity to be appointed to every child that comes before her in a CPS case and particularly to children who find themselves in the permanent custody of the State and those who are aging out of foster care. Recognizing that we won't be able to reach this vision without more advocates, Judge Byrne closed her remarks by urging our advocates to recruit more volunteers!

We are very grateful to Austin Flower Company and Floral Renaissance for lovely flowers we used in centerpieces, to Pok-E-Jo's for supplying us with delicious barbecue and to Upper Crust Bakery for providing beautiful and tasty cakes for dessert.

Special Announcements

On April 27th, the **David Chapel Village Ministry**, presented "**DREAM BIG AND LIVE YOUR DREAMS.**" The group presented a speaker panel which included two successful young adults who grew up in foster care. Their stories were compelling, inspiring, and, at times, heart-wrenching, and definitely something every child in care who sometimes can't see the light at the end of the tunnel needs to hear.

If you missed this one, don't despair, the speakers have agreed, and we are committed to repeating it in the fall. Be on the lookout for future details, you won't want to miss this.

Charlie Stein and family celebrated his bar mitzvah and graciously donated 100 board games from the special day to CASA of Travis County. The board games will be gifts for the children CASA serves.

Board of Directors

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Denise Conway, President | Lissa Adams | Dhananjay Adhikari | Shawn Ball |
| Shari Butler | David Chasis | Kate Connolly | Yolanda Conyers |
| Bobby Garcia | Kemp Kasling | April Kubik | Jim Kruger |
| David Laibovitz | Joyce Lindsey | Ron Moss | Darrell Nichols |
| Danielle Niolet | Lee Potts | David Rubin | Susan Spivey |

Honoraria & Memorials

The following donations were received after April 1 and before July 4.

On behalf of CASA of Travis County, thank you!

Marie Alkis In Memory Of Martin (Marty) Alkis	Donna Cowling In Memory Of Beverly Cowling	Gwen Kinney In Honor Of Allan King	Alicia Perez In Honor Of Alice Grace
Christopher Atwell In Honor Of Anthony Atwell	Laurel Eiler In Honor Of The Children	Heather Ladner In Memory Of Jennifer Salazar	Marie Price In Memory Of Lois Hoover
Shawn Ball In Honor Of Ken Ball	Leslie Gage In Memory Of Mom and Dad MacIver	Margery Lindsey In Honor Of Mack C. Lindsey	Breck Record In Honor Of CASA
Mary Bonomi In Honor Of Vernon Bonomi	Trisha Goodman In Honor Of CASA	Lorri Lucas In Honor Of Fellow Reporters	Raymond Ross In Memory Of Raymond L. Ross, Jr.
Candis Bradshaw In Honor Of Fellow Reporters	Megan Griffith In Honor Of David Chasis	Kristine Marshall In Memory Of Lois Hoover	David Rubin In Honor Of Norma Carroll
Kathy Buchhorn In Honor Of Fellow Reporters	Julia Haller In Honor Of Bob Peek	Annamarie Menicucci In Honor Of Michael Whellan	Mr. and Mrs. Leon Schmidt In Honor Of Joyce Schechter & Sylvia Schwartz
Cathy Casey In Honor Of Laura Wolf	Sean Henry In Memory Of Lois Hoover	Andrea Murphy In Honor Of CASA	Lawrence Tu In Memory Of Chris Crutcher
Bergan Casey In Honor Of Laura Wolf	Paula Juba In Memory Of Lois Hoover	Laura Wolf and Fred Aus In Honor Of Robert M. Aus & Pool Webb	Lisa Wood In Honor Of James Michael Wheeler
Robert M. Aus In Honor Of Laura Wolf	Laura Wolf and Fred Aus In Honor Of Deb Johnson, Jane Wolf, Kathryn Wheeler, & Diane Tatem	Sarah Silva In Honor Of Bedichek Middle School	Shawn Ball In Honor Of Mavis Ball, Judy Ball-Robinson

The Voice

Closed Cases

Congratulations to the following volunteers who closed cases in the last few months! Your hard work and dedication made a life-changing difference for children.

Julie Biggs	Dorothy DeLaGarza	Amber Houmes	Madelyn Morey
Katherine Bohannon	Valerie DiFabio	Rose Ireland	Nancy O'Neill
Carol Brady	Karen Foster	Genny Joyce	Lisa Ripley
Andrea Buckley	Heather Fulkerson	Carter King	Shantell Rose
Helen Carvell	Carolyn Greer	Marilla King	Linda Vaughn
Carol Cates	Tracy Guthrie	Wade Lorber and	Denise Wade
Jeannie L. Center	Jim Haws	Melissa Prentice	Nancy Warren
Katherine Clossman	Amy Herzog	Lorber	Sandy Welford
Teri Cochran	Greg Herzog	Catherine McCoy	Kristen Wicke
	Catherine Hotard	Virginia Mindieta	Deborah Williams

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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.casatrails.org for a volunteer application.
E-mail Volunteer Coordinator Heather at heather.frye-kelley@casatrails.org.**