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Innovative New Court Supports Older Teens in Foster Care

AUSTIN, TEXAS (November 14, 2011) - The Texas Bar Foundation has awarded CASA of Travis County \$10,000 to support advocacy for teenagers in foster care participating in SYNC² (Successful Youth Needing Connections & Community) Court, an initiative of the Travis County Courts. This special Court is designed to increase the number of older foster youth transitioning to adoption, reunification or safe and sustainable independence at age 18 – thus reducing the number of youth leaving foster care who become homeless or incarcerated. SYNC² Court allows teens to better voice their own opinions about what’s happening in their lives. Conducted in a more informal and comfortable atmosphere, parties gather for discussion around a table as opposed to official presentations to the judge. This Court is comprised of community members who have specialized knowledge in fields like educational advocacy and preparation for adulthood, and the Court meets more often offering quicker results for the teenagers involved.

“This ground-breaking court system will have a great impact on the lives of teens transitioning out of the foster care system,” stated Laura Wolf, Executive Director of CASA of Travis County. “We appreciate that the Texas Bar Foundation recognizes the need for and supports such innovation in our foster care system, and allows CASA to strengthen our advocacy for our oldest youth.”

Since its inception in 1965, the Texas Bar Foundation has awarded more than \$13 million in grants to law-related programs. Supported by members of the State Bar of Texas, the Texas Bar Foundation is the nation’s largest charitably-funded bar foundation.

About CASA of Travis County

CASA of Travis County speaks up for children who’ve been abused or neglected by empowering our community to volunteer as advocates for them in the court system. When the state steps in to protect a child’s safety, a judge appoints a trained CASA volunteer to make independent and informed recommendations in the child’s best interest. After 33 hours of intensive training, background checks and being sworn-in by a judge, volunteers are appointed to a child or family of children and spend an average of 20 hours a month advocating for these children for at least a year. Created in 1985, CASA of Travis County is now one of the top ten CASA programs in the nation, supporting 500 volunteers who advocate for approximately 1,300 children a year.

Learn more about CASA of Travis County at www.casatavis.org or 512.459.2272.

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