

CASA Critical

Critical Information for CASAs

#25 September-October 2019



KEY CONNECTIONS

MARK YOUR

CALENDARS

01•30•20

We are now set for the second Key Connections event on **January 30, 2020, 1-4 p.m.**

We have a slate of speakers who will address the theme of **Mental Health** as it relates to children in the foster system. Since we were an overflow crowd in the jury room at the courthouse at our first meeting in 2018, this event will take place at Southern Hills Church of Christ, where there will be more room and seating. This is a “Save the Date” announcement—more information will follow later with details. This is a great opportunity for CASA to interface with attorneys, CPS employees, and numerous organizations who offer services to children and families in foster care. Plan to come and be a part of this informative event!

CASA CAFÉ

October's CASA Café will be Tuesday, October 8, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Sara Reiling, CVS Supervisor, and Victoria Aubin, CVS Adoption/PMC Specialist, will share information about the adoption process and CASA's role when your child enters this phase of the case. They will also discuss benefits children have post-adoption and what services may drop at the time of adoption. Plan to come – 1.5 hours CEUs!



Big Country CASA volunteers: We have two advocates registered with BCC paying \$100 of the fee. If you are one of the **FIRST FOUR** of our volunteers to register, **Big Country CASA will pay \$100 of your registration fee.** Just send us your confirmation e-mail to determine registration dates and “winners” of the \$100 prize for your registration.

Register at <https://texascasa.org/conference/>

We had someone share some great educational information with us that will help you navigate some of the meetings you may be involved in with your CASA children. See *Rebel's e-mail for the complete document as well as two other documents.*

3 simple steps of the IEP process

The IEP process in a nutshell:

- determine needs (evaluations)
- draw up goals, strategies, and services to meet those needs and reach goals
- determine placement based on where the strategies and services can best be implemented

Can the child stay in their current placement and still have their needs met? I have seen some districts and staff do some really crazy (in a good way!) and out-of-the box thinking when it comes to accommodating a child. Those people are rare, from my experience. Our special ed system is in crisis and we are in what I call the “culture of no.” Districts just say no over and over and over to wear you down, hope that you go away. Don’t go away. Keep fighting and keep advocating.



That's Italiano!

Please join us for
Big Country CASA'S

*Volunteer
Appreciation
Dinner*

Sunday, November 3, 2019
5:30 in the evening

THE GRACE MUSEUM
102 Cypress Street
Abilene, Texas

Gratefully hosted by Big Country CASA
Board of Directors and CASA Friends

RSVP to 677.6448 or
adminassist@BigCountryCASA.org

ITALIAN CASUAL ATTIRE



Volunteer of the Quarter



Congratulations to Evette Orren, named Volunteer of the Quarter for Summer 2019. Her BCC supervisor, Rob Marcelain, presented Evette to the Board of Directors: Evette has been a CASA since 2017 and is currently working on her third case. Evette's current case is a young girl who was sexually abused by her father for a number of years. She was isolated from society and "homeschooled" for several years. Her schooling consisted of watching the same videos over and over. Evette used her former profession and connections in the AISD to get the girl tested to see exactly what her education level was and what help she would need when the new school year began. Evette has spent time with this girl on outings to help reintroduce her to society.

When you get a new case, or make a visit to your child on a case you are already working, don't forget to stop by the office and pick up a handmade quilt, a book or two, or a stuffed animal or toy for your child(ren).



Court is in session! Judge April Propst heard her first case in the new **Child Protection Court** on September 26, 2019. The courtroom is located on the second floor of the Taylor County Courthouse.



Judge Paul Rotenberry swears in April Propst as the judge for the new **Child Protection Court** in the 326th District of Taylor County. Judge Propst began hearing cases on September 26 in the newly remodeled courtroom (previously the Commissioners Court) on the second floor of the courthouse.

***Domestic Violence Awareness Month in Abilene
Begins with Candlelight Vigil***

Thursday, Oct. 3, 7 - 8 p.m. Front Steps of the Taylor County Courthouse

Noah Project will begin a month-long series of events and activities to commemorate Domestic Violence Awareness Month with a candlelight vigil to remember domestic violence victims killed by their abusers during the last year. Abilene Mayor Anthony Williams opens the event by issuing and reading a proclamation against domestic violence in Abilene.

During the vigil, **Noah Project** staff will name each victim who died at the hands of their abuser, then read a poetic testimony from a victim of domestic violence. Materials will be provided for attendees to write letters of encouragement to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault currently in residence at Noah Project's shelter. Attendees can also contact state lawmakers with pre-printed postcards asking to strengthen laws for the benefit of domestic violence victims.

All participants are encouraged to **wear purple** – the color of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The event is free and open to the public. No advanced registration required.



Judge Paul Rotenberry administers the guardian ad litem oath to the largest Big Country CASA class to date on October 2, 2019. Scroll down for the entire group picture of our newest advocates. Thanks to Rebel Taylor for her invaluable training!

BCC Board of Directors



BCC CASA outgoing Board of Directors president Janet Ardoyno was honored at a recent board meeting and incoming president Jeannette McQueen was welcomed to the leadership of the Board. BCC CASA owes Janet a huge debt of gratitude for her tireless efforts on behalf of the program during her term.

Janet pictured with Jeannette on left.

BCC CASA staff (below) thanks outgoing Board president Janet Ardoyno for her service to the program.



2020 Advocate Training Calendar

Winter 2020 – January

Monday January 13	5:45 – 9:00pm
Thursday January 16	5:45 – 9:00pm
Monday January 23	5:45 – 9:00pm
Thursday January 26	5:45 – 9:00pm
Monday January 30	5:45 – 9:00pm
Thursday February 2	5:45 – 9:00pm
Saturday February 4	9:00am – 3:00pm

Spring 2020 – March

Monday March 16	5:45 – 9:00pm
Thursday March 19	5:45 – 9:00pm
Monday March 23	5:45 – 9:00pm
Thursday March 26	5:45 – 9:00pm
Monday March 30	5:45 – 9:00pm
Thursday April 2	5:45 – 9:00pm
Saturday April 4	9:00am – 3:00pm

For more information, please contact Rebel Taylor at Big Country CASA @ 325-677-6448, or visit us at www.bigcountrycasa.org. Applications may be completed through our website: <https://bigcountrycasa.org/applicationforms/>

Talk to your friends and family members about becoming an advocate for vulnerable children in Taylor County. Our next training begins in January. You, as a current advocate, have the best perspective on what being a CASA really means—share that information with others. Remember our goal: to provide an advocate for every child in Taylor County who is removed! How far can we move toward that goal in 2020?



Largest Training Class to Date! Judge Paul Rotenberry swore in 19 CASA trainees on October 2, 2019. New advocates are as follows: **Front row:** Rebel Taylor, BCC Advocate and Events Director, Cindy Murphree, Mollie Zavaleta, Dixie Mabry, Kayla Kohutek, Susan Barnhart, Chrystal Welch, Jane Allred, Haley Bradshaw, Sheryl Kimbrough, Debra Jones.

Back row: Tammy Marcelain, Joel Navarro, Erin Snider, Marcus Slade, Glynn Walker, Lisa Walker, Teresa Dodderer, Ron Kimbrough, Judge Paul Rotenberry, Eddie Weaver. Thanks to Rebel Taylor, Advocate and Events Director, for navigating these awesome advocates through rigorous training, prepared to take on cases and make a difference in the lives of children.