



CASA CONNECTION

Court Appointed Special Advocates

Spring 2021 Update

Letter from Lee Ann

Executive Director, Lee Ann Millender, LMSW-IPR



As we begin 2021, I want to applaud the tremendous work being done by our child advocate volunteers and the impact that your contributions to CASA are making in the lives of children.

The stories lived out by children in the child welfare system are difficult to hear. But as we see every day at CASA, having a caring, trusted individual to help each child on their journey, can truly make the difference between hope and despair.

Gregg's* CASA volunteer has helped him successfully graduate from high school, apply for community college, and secure financial aid. He is currently working on a degree in software design and looking forward to a bright future. His advocate has played a critical role in opening doors, removing barriers and giving him hope.

Kaylee*, a freshman in high school, went from a successful advanced placement student to failing after her mother's drug addiction resulted in termination of parental rights. Depression and psychotropic medications for an undiagnosed condition caused her CASA to request a court hearing to help secure much needed therapy and nonpharmacological means to address her depression. Today, Kaylee is back on path to having hope and a brighter future all because her CASA, with the court's help, said, "we want better for Kaylee."

These stories are just simple glimpses into the impact our volunteers have in the lives of these children.

I welcome the opportunity to visit with you individually to tell you more about the great work of our volunteers and staff at CASA. I am so proud of their tireless dedication. Hats off to you for supporting CASA in accepting the call and the battles waged. If you were hoping to create a miracle in a child's life, you certainly did. We are all so grateful for your open hands and open hearts.

In late 2020, Judge Rotenberry swore in 12 new volunteers to serve as CASA advocates in Taylor County! We are excited to add to our CASA family and to serve more children in foster care.



January of 2021 kicked off with a new round of training with 8 highly qualified future CASA advocates!

Among other qualifications, all CASA advocates must:

- Successfully complete 30 hours of training, 5 hours of courtroom observation & 12 hours of continuing education
- Learn about trauma informed care, child development, and the court system.
- Successfully pass screening and background check requirements.



CASA staff at a public recruitment event.

45
new volunteers
in 2020

151
children found
permanent
homes
in 2020



CASA advocate, Teresa Dodderer, delivering a gift and balloons for a foster child's birthday.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, our primary consideration remains how to best advocate for the interest of children and families and provide information to the court while ensuring a safe environment for children, families, volunteers and staff. Our advocates are conducting virtual in-home visits as well as socially distanced and outdoor face-to-face contacts during this time.



Celebrating the partnership between 2INgage and CASA as we launched one of our kids into his college journey. This car was packed with all sorts of items to set up a dorm room! Items were provided by 2INgage, CASA and the generous contributions of the Junior League of Abilene. We are grateful for the Abilene community working together to help children succeed.

In loving memory of Martha Jean Forman



Martha was one of Big Country CASA's most dedicated advocates, serving from 2014–August 2020. She served on 5 cases, helping 7 children, and covering 1,193 miles as she stayed connected to each child in her care.

She will be deeply missed and never forgotten.

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