

FALL
2024



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

DENTON COUNTY

The mission of CASA of Denton County, Inc. is to advocate for the best interests of children who have experienced abuse and neglect. Our trained and supported community volunteers build a strong, consistent relationship with each child and their family, promote community resources, and make informed recommendations to the court.



I can
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A BEACON OF HOPE: RICHARD BOYER'S DUAL ROLE IN COMMUNITY SERVICE

In the bustling community of The Colony, Mayor Richard Boyer stands as a figure of leadership and dedication. Yet, beyond his duties in local government, Boyer has embraced a profoundly impactful role that extends to the most vulnerable members of our society. For the past four years, he has volunteered as a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) with CASA of Denton County, a role that exemplifies his deep commitment to improving the lives of children who have experienced abuse and neglect.

Under the Texas Family Code, a Guardian ad Litem is a person appointed by the court to represent the best interests of a child in legal matters, particularly in cases involving child welfare. In Denton County, CASA advocates serve as Guardian ad Litem for every child entering the child welfare system due to abuse or neglect. This role requires a unique blend of empathy, diligence, and dedication, qualities that Boyer has demonstrated throughout his tenure as a CASA advocate.

Boyer's journey into this critical volunteer work is deeply personal. Raised in a family that provided foster placements for children, he has long been familiar with the challenges and needs of vulnerable youth. His initial inspiration to become a CASA came from his wife, who, despite her enthusiasm, was unable to commit the time required. Recognizing his own availability, Boyer stepped up, driven by a sense of duty and an opportunity to make a tangible difference.

Over the course of his advocacy, Boyer has served on three cases involving three children in crisis, including two newborns. His reflections on each of these experiences are deeply moving. "I can make a significant positive impact on a child's life that might be in a really bad situation," Boyer shares. "Being able to help turn that situation into a positive outcome for a child is very fulfilling." This sentiment underscores the heart of CASA's mission—transforming adversity into hope and opportunity.

When asked why he continues to serve in this role year after year, he shared a story about his experience at the conclusion of his most recent case, which ended in adoption. "There's nothing quite like the feeling of leaving that courtroom and walking to my car, knowing I will likely never see that child again after advocating for their needs for two years of their life." He continues, "It leaves me ready to help the next child who will be looking to CASA for help."

Boyer's perspective on the importance of CASA is a compelling call to action for others. "If you have the ability to do this, ask yourself, if not me, then who will do this?" he challenges potential volunteers. His words highlight a crucial truth: the success of CASA's mission relies on the

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Debbie Jensen
Executive Director

EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY

As we continue into the new school year, the importance of CASA’s educational advocacy for children affected by abuse and neglect cannot be overstated. Children who have been placed in foster or substitute care often face unique challenges that can hinder their academic success and overall well-being. According to state reporting by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), students in foster care are graduating at lower rates than their peers statewide and are four times more likely to drop out of school. CASA of Denton County is bridging the gap between these vulnerable children and their educational needs.

According to the Texas Family Code, CASA volunteers have specific rights and responsibilities that are unique and crucial. These rights allow them to do things like attend school meetings, correspond with teachers and school administrators, and monitor children’s academic performance alongside any behavioral challenges. Their duties are vital because they foster an environment of support for children and facilitate communication between educators and caregivers.

In 2023, CASA advocates gave more than 800 hours advocating for the educational needs of the children they served. Without their CASA advocate looking out for their educational best interests, many children would fall behind.

School can be particularly daunting for children who have experienced abuse or neglect; thus, having an advocate who understands their unique circumstances is critical. CASA advocates know the children they serve. They know their assigned children’s history and carry it alongside them as they help pave a path of hope during a very challenging time. As students return to school this year, remember that CASA of Denton County is dedicated to providing the children we serve with the resources and guidance necessary for a successful academic experience.

Every child who needs for our services after experiencing abuse or neglect will look to us for help. You can help us ensure that a CASA is available for every one of those children by becoming an advocate, referring a friend, or making a donation to CASA of Denton County.

EMERITUS

On July 24, Carrell Ann Simmons and Greg Studer were sworn in as Emeritus Board Members for CASA of Denton County. This recognition reflects their dedication, leadership, and commitment to our organization's mission. As Emeritus Board Members, Carrell Ann and Greg will continue to lend their expertise and passion to CASA of Denton County as non-voting, permanent board members, providing a wealth of knowledge and experience to support our ongoing efforts.



A BEACON OF HOPE:

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willingness of individuals to step forward and amplify the voices of children who might otherwise go unheard.

CASA advocate Richard Boyer offers a tangible example of what it means to serve with compassion and purpose. His dual role as mayor and CASA advocate demonstrates that leadership can extend beyond formal positions and into the personal acts of kindness and advocacy that truly transform lives. For those considering becoming a CASA, Boyer’s journey is a powerful reminder of the profound difference one person can make.

CELEBRATING THE HEART OF CASA: ADVOCATE APPRECIATION DINNER

On May 14, we honored our dedicated advocates at the annual Advocate Appreciation Dinner. We gathered to show our gratitude for the essential role they play in the lives of the children and families we serve.

Advocates were celebrated for their remarkable service with milestone recognitions for 2, 5, 10, and 15 years of commitment. Each of these milestones represents countless moments of advocacy, compassion, and dedication that have profoundly affected the lives of the children and families in our community.

As we celebrated our advocates' incredible achievements, we were reminded of the profound difference their commitment makes.

2 Year Awards

- Everhart, Kathleen
- Greig, Brenda
- Hughes, Kimberly
- Littrell, Sheri
- Marost, Michelle
- Martin, April
- Meynard, Cindy
- Noguchi, Mami
- Oliver, Bobby
- Ragsdale, Eddie
- Rogenes, Lisa
- Sotelo, Paula
- Young, Ashton

5 Year Awards

- Garcia, Kyle
- Harpool, Kelli
- Hayward, Linda
- Schmidt, Staci
- Sizelove, John "Mitch"

10 Year Awards

- Byers, Angela
- Covich, Darlene
- Hill, Holly



SWEARING IN



This summer, we welcomed one of our largest New Advocate classes, swearing in twenty passionate individuals ready to make a difference in the lives of children that will look to them for help after experiencing abuse and neglect.



If you have thought about becoming a CASA advocate, remember to register for a one-hour info session to learn more about what it's like to be a CASA.

Our last New Advocate Training class of the year begins October 25.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Volunteer

Lift up the voices of children affected by abuse and neglect, attend one of our info sessions to start your journey as a **Court Appointed Special Advocate!**



Scan here to
get started!





PRESENTED BY



A RECORD-BREAKING SUCCESS!

The 23rd Annual Pulling for Kids clay shooting tournament, presented by LeadsOnline, took place on May 3 at Elm Fork Shooting Sports, and it was a tremendous success. This year's event saw great results, with dedicated teams, loyal sponsors, and the Pulling for Kids Committee coming together to raise over \$194,000. These funds will directly support our mission to provide advocacy for children affected by abuse and neglect.

Despite a bit of rain, the event was filled with camaraderie and enthusiasm.

Participants and supporters enjoyed a day of friendly competition and community spirit, all in support of a crucial cause. CASA of Denton County Executive Director Debbie Jensen expressed her gratitude, stating, "We are beyond grateful for our loyal sponsors, attendees, and the Pulling for Kids Committee. Your unwavering support and participation made this event fun and successful, ensuring we can continue to provide court advocacy for the children who will look to CASA for help."

Presenting Sponsor

- LeadsOnline

Raffle/Prize Sponsor

- DEX Imaging

Leaderboard Sponsor

- SVN Verus Commercial

Golf Cart Sponsor

- Snaveley Forest Products

Dinner & Awards Sponsor

- Humphrey & Associates

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- Title Resources

Volunteer Sponsor

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- Ciera Bank

T-Shirt Sponsor

- Toyota of Denton

High Velocity

- Furst Ranch
- Guild Mortgage
- North Texas Shooters Association
- Surface Materials
- The Koehler Company
- Wallace Accounting & Advisory

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Thank you to our amazing local community businesses for supporting the mission of CASA of Denton County!



Enterprise Mobility Foundation awarded us a \$25,000 grant for our Court Advocacy program, and a few Enterprise team members visited our office to deliver two bicycles to meet the specific needs of two CASA children.



One of our amazing supporters from Allied Solutions nominated us for the RUUD – RHEEM Difference Maker Award.



BCI Mechanical chose CASA of Denton County as one of their BCI Cares beneficiaries! We received the most votes of any beneficiary, which meant a \$2,000 donation from BCI Mechanical and their company match!

25TH ANNUAL EVENING OF *Elegance*

PRESENTED BY
 **DATCU**

Join us at Bistecca on
October 20, 2024
as we honor

Chef Morris Salerno

On Sunday, October 20, we will host the 25th Annual Evening of Elegance, presented by DATCU, at Bistecca – An Italian Steakhouse. This landmark anniversary celebration promises an unforgettable evening of gourmet dining, heartfelt stories, and meaningful impact.

This year's event is particularly special as we honor Chef Morris Salerno, a pillar of culinary excellence and community support. We are thrilled to celebrate his remarkable contribution to the Evening of Elegance over the past 25 years. His dedication has

played a vital role in the continued success of this event, which raises crucial funds to provide advocacy for children navigating the child welfare system after experiencing abuse and neglect.

The evening will commence with a wine reception at 6 PM, providing guests with a chance to mingle and enjoy a selection of wines. Following the reception, attendees will be treated to a gourmet 5-course meal showcasing Chef Salerno's culinary artistry. As the night unfolds, a live auction will offer exclusive items and experiences, with

Event Features:

- Wine Reception
- Gourmet 5-course meal prepared by Chef Salerno
- One-of-a-kind live auction
- Denton County Celebrity Waiters

Limited seats and tables are available. Reserve your spot today!



all proceeds benefiting the mission of CASA of Denton County.

Throughout the evening, we will share stories that illustrate the profound impact of our efforts on the lives of the children we serve and raise funds to continue making that impact in the future.

Join us as we celebrate a quarter-century of elegance, generosity, and unwavering support. Your presence at this special event will not only honor Chef Morris Salerno but also contribute to a brighter future for children in need.

Holiday Gift Card Drive

Help provide gifts and much needed supplies to over 200 children affected by abuse and neglect this holiday season!

Donate Target, Walmart, Visa or Mastercard gift cards in \$25-\$100 denominations.

OR

Make a donation online by scanning the QR Code.



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DENTON COUNTY

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CASA of Denton County is a member agency of Texas CASA, Inc., the National CASA Association, and the United Way of Denton County.

If you received two CASA newsletters, please give one to a friend and notify CASA at 940.243.2272 or info@casadenton.org. Thanks!

SPEAK UP FOR ME IN COURT

EVERY CHILD DESERVES A CHANCE — IT'S YOU.

As a Court Appointed Special Advocate, or CASA volunteer, you can keep abused and neglected children safe while they reach a safe, permanent home.

VOLUNTEERS RECEIVE PRESIDENTIAL SERVICE AWARDS



Three CASA advocates and one CASA board member were honored with the Presidential Service Award for their dedication to our mission. Their countless hours and unwavering commitment over the years have made a profound impact on the lives of the children we serve.

- **Dixie Berry**, Board Member - Lifetime Certificate
- **Darlene Covich**, CASA Advocate – Lifetime Certificate
- **Holly Hill**, CASA Advocate (not pictured) – Gold Certificate
- **Angela Byers**, CASA Advocate – Gold Certificate

