

Fall 2026 • • • • •

Friends of CASA Newsletter



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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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August 27

**North Texas Giving
Day - Giving Begins**

September 17

**North Texas Giving
Day**

October 25

**Evening of Elegance
presented by Exeter**

November 1

**Fund a Child
Campaign Begins**

A WILLINGNESS TO LEARN:

**How Debbie Vallejo brings her experience in
Special Education to CASA advocacy**



Debbie Vallejo
CASA Volunteer

CASA volunteer Debbie Vallejo might have been sworn in during May of 2024, but her advocacy started years before she ever became a CASA. Throughout her career, Debbie has worked with children facing different challenges; from youth who had run away from home or experienced abuse to children with special needs and college students struggling academically. Now, she works as a children's minister and is in the process of building a special education program at her church, while also volunteering her time as a CASA Advocate.

When Debbie began her first case, she discovered her experience could be an invaluable tool. With the child and his parents living in different states, Debbie navigated a complex situation to better ensure the child received consistent support. But she was able to draw on years of experience, recognizing that the child needed developmental support. "Early intervention is key to getting kids the support and fundamental skills they need," Debbie says.

Read more on page 3



Debbie Jensen
Executive Director

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In June and July, CASA of Denton County experienced a record number of new cases assigned to our program. These aren't just numbers. At the heart of every case is a child facing uncertainty, and now more than ever, children in our growing community need caring adults to stand beside them.

We'd be remiss not to recognize the incredible outpouring of support from our community during this time. Current CASA volunteers have stepped up to take on additional cases, former advocates have committed to return, and local organizations, churches, and community partners have helped spread the word about the need for more volunteers.

While our community has answered the call, the need continues. We don't yet know what the future holds in case numbers, but we do know children from our community will continue to need advocates who will stand up for their best interests.

Everyone can do something for children in our community. Attend an Info Session to learn more about becoming a CASA volunteer, or share our message with someone you know who may be ready to take the first steps. Every action helps connect more children with the support they deserve.

Together, we can ensure every child who needs a CASA will have one. Rest assured, CASA of Denton County remains committed to improving the lives of children and families to make our community a better place for us all.



October 25, 2026

at 6:00 PM

BISTECCA

2300 Highland Village Road
Lewisville, TX

Join us for an unforgettable evening of fine dining, inspiring stories, and meaningful impact at **Evening of Elegance**, CASA of Denton County's signature fundraiser.

Guests will enjoy an exciting live auction, a five-course menu curated by Chef Salerno, and the premiere of this year's Fund a Child videos, and meaningful opportunities to help give children the dedicated advocacy they deserve.

Sponsorships are available now by scanning the QR code. Individual tickets will be available soon.

Questions? Contact Michelle at MRocha@casdenton.org for more information.



From the Cover: **A WILLINGNESS TO LEARN**

"I was able to get him to a place that sets him up for success. My background definitely helped, but any CASA can learn the education system and how to navigate it."

Her Casework Supervisor, Mary Eure, saw that impact firsthand, "Debbie played an important role in securing early childhood special education services after the child qualified," Mary says.

Debbie knew securing those services was only part of her job. When the child was reunited with his family out of state, she worked to make sure the support he had received didn't disappear with the change in placement. "She ensured his Texas ARD paperwork was completed so his services could transfer and coordinated with the Oklahoma school district to help make the transition seamless," recalls Mary.

Following the closure of that case, Debbie is advocating for another child on a case she says is completely different than her first. Her advice? "Don't be afraid of it— don't be afraid to learn something new. Each case is different," she says.

That willingness to learn has become just as important to Debbie as the experience she brought with her. She continues to serve as a resource for other advocates, teaching CASA training courses on Special Education and helping others navigate systems she has spent years learning herself.

And while the work can be difficult, Debbie knows why she keeps showing up. "There will always be a need," she says, and despite the challenges, "The 'hard' is worth it, because you do it for the child."

FROM THE CASA BLOG



Early Advocacy Explained

Read about how a new type of case is affecting CASA's advocacy.



Celebrating Graduates and The Impact of Educational Advocacy

Learn how CASAs help youth meet their goals.

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**Scan to
explore these
& more CASA
stories!**



HANDBAGS FOR HOPE

PRESENTED BY



Our second annual Handbags for Hope designer handbag bingo event took place on June 13, 2026, raising over \$51,000! Thanks to our generous sponsors and donors, this year had several new additions, including Mystery Bags, a game of Heads or Tails, and a fabulous Louis Vuitton Neverfull grand prize. Congratulations to all of our bingo winners, and thank you to everyone who made the event such a success!



**Thanks to our
Event Sponsors:**

Irwin Steel, Exeter, The Standard, Veteran's Valet, DATCU, Modern Woodmen of America, & Kuzmich Law Firm, P.C.



**Care
4KIDS**

Presented by



As families prepare for a new school year, many children in our community are getting ready for a fresh start, but not every kid has the resources they need. The **Care4Kids Fund, presented by Exeter**, provides for children on CASA cases when other resources of support cannot meet a child's needs, helping provide essentials like back-to-school clothes, shoes, school supplies, & more.

Your gift to the Care4Kids Fund can help ensure a child starts the school year prepared, confident, and ready for a brighter future.



PULLING FOR KIDS

PRESENTED BY **LEADS ONLINE**

For 25 years, CASA of Denton County has hosted the Pulling for Kids Sporting Clay Tournament, and this milestone year was truly one to remember. We were joined by incredible teams, sponsors, volunteers, and supporters for a day filled with friendly competition, community and a shared commitment to making a difference. Together, we raised over **\$214,000** to support CASA's mission of providing trained Advocates for children who have experienced abuse or neglect.

We are so grateful to everyone who joined us on May 1st, 2026 at Northlake Shooting Sports and to everyone who helped make this 25th anniversary celebration such a success. Thank you for standing alongside CASA and the children we serve. We can't wait to see you all at next year's tournament on May 7, 2027!



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WELCOME, NEW ADVOCATES!



April's Training Class was sworn in on May 12 by Judge Hill



Two volunteers from April's Training Class were sworn in on May 21.



June's Training Class was sworn in on August 12 by Judge McFarling

• • • • • NORTH TEXAS GIVING DAY • • • • •

Early giving begins August 27.

North Texas Giving Day is almost here! Join CASA of Denton County for North Texas' biggest day of giving. **Early giving starts August 27, with the big day on September 17!**

This year, three staff teams are competing to raise funds for one shared mission: helping provide a CASA advocate for every child who needs one. Support your favorite team or make a general donation, either way, your gift helps children in our community.

Follow along on social media and subscribe to our emails for team updates, match announcements, and more ways to make an impact!

Scan the QR code to learn more and make a donation.



• • • • • MEET THE TEAMS • • • • •

GREEN TEAM
Sponsored by

DATCU

GREEN TEAM ROSTER:

Ashley Brannon, Brandy Jonak, Mary Eure, Pattie Huestis, Robyne Maffia, Ryan Wofford, Savannah Carper, & Wednesday Turbeville

RED TEAM
Sponsored by

**RED DOOR
OPERATIONS**

RED TEAM ROSTER:

Ashlee Muhlberger, Celeste Salsman, Debbie Jensen, Ed Coffey, Jeannine Jaramillo, Keri Willerton, Lara Willner, & Meliyah Markley

BLUE TEAM
Sponsored by

**TEXAS REGIONAL
BANK**

BLUE TEAM ROSTER:

Beth Potter, Bethany Hartung, Lucy Fernandez, Mary Cartright, Meme Collins-Tabuena, Michelle Rocha, Sam Belton, & Teresa Brown

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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.



STAY IN TOUCH!



SEPTEMBER INFO SESSIONS



Virtual Info Session

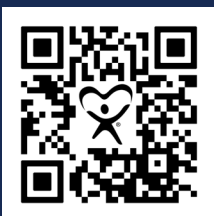
via Zoom
12 PM - 1 pm



Virtual Info Session

via Zoom
5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

SCAN TO RSVP
Take the first step.



94 CHILDREN ARE WAITING FOR A CASA

This summer has brought an unprecedented number of new cases, and the need for CASA volunteers has never been greater.

Our staff is working hard to support these children, but volunteers provide the dedicated, one-on-one advocacy that helps a child feel seen, heard, and supported throughout their journey.

Could you be a CASA?

Start by attending an **Information Session** to learn more and see if becoming a CASA is the right fit for you, or email Bethany at BHartung@casadenton.org with any questions.

