

# CASA NEWS



Monthly newsletter of Casa for Kids of South Central Texas



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## CASA and Cultural Awareness

*by Mandy Wright*

The start of February marks the beginning of Black History Month, a time to honor and recognize the accomplishments and history of Black Americans. As we continue into this month and consider history, we must ask ourselves how all of us can contribute to racial equality, and work to address disproportionalities and disparities that negatively impact Black communities.

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) volunteers advocate to ensure the best interests and well-being for a child or sibling group once they enter foster care. CASA volunteers advocate within the Texas foster care system, and we recognize that the system itself reflects inequities in our society. Two current problems within the Texas foster care system are racial disproportionality and disparity. Disproportionality means a particular race or cultural group is over-represented in a system, and disparity refers to the differences in outcomes and conditions for some groups of people compared to other groups because of unequal treatment or services.

We do not limit celebrations of Black history to February, or limit our concern and action about issues like disproportionality and disparity to one month. Black history is an essential part of American history issues facing us, and our neighbors, friends and family every day.

# CASA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



## GAL-ENTINE EVENT 2/10/23

We want to acknowledge the commitment, time, and compassion of our Advocates who serve as Guardian Ad Litem (GAL), CASA for Kids of South Central Texas by hosting our first GAL-entine Appreciation Event on Friday, February 10, 2023. This event provides an opportunity to honor and thank CASA/GAL volunteers who work hard to ensure children and youth in the foster care system have their voices heard every day. Please join us in this celebration! We are offering two separate time so you may attend at the time that best works for your schedule 11:30 – 1:30 or 4:00 – 6:00.

## SWEETS WITH STAFF

We would like to offer our volunteers and community the chance to get to know our dedicated staff. When it comes to the heart of the program, these ladies are invaluable. Join us for light sweets and refreshment on February 24, 2023 at 2pm.



## HAPPY CASA ANNIVERSARY AND BIRTHDAYS!!



We would like to congratulate the following Advocates for celebrating their CASA anniversary in the month of January and February. Our mission could not be carried out if it were not for your time, care and dedication! Thank you! In January **Sherry Whitely** and **John Canning** celebrated 3 years as CASA Advocates. This month, **Sarah Cook**, **Cheryl Harvey** and **Erika Jasinski** will celebrate their first year.



**Paula Fuchs** will celebrate 8 years. **Abbe Ricken**, 9 years and **David Curtis** will celebrate 14 years as a CASA for Kids Advocate! We also want to give a huge Happy Birthday shout out to our February birthdays -**Melanie Mosquinski**, **Dannielle Cantrell**, **Elizabeth Nickles**, **Elysa Evergreen**, **Sherry Whiteley**, **Lynda Duffy** and **Susan Shifflett!**

# CASA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



## Survey Responses and Training Opportunities

by Mandy Wright

Thank you to all of current Advocates who were able to take the time to help us improve and grow our program by filling out our annual survey. We look forward to the chance to fulfill your suggestions and serve you to the best of our ability. One way we are listening is by bringing back in person trainings. We will once again be offering monthly in person trainings on the training side of our office facility. Occasionally we will bring in outside trainers to present on topics such as Trauma Informed Care, Education, Advocating for Older Youth and much more.

Some months, like February, we will host a movie screening of films that pertain to our monthly educational theme. For those of you who are not able to join us in person yet, we will offer zoom trainings and meet ups as well. Our hope is to offer you many opportunities in diverse enjoyable ways to obtain the 12 hours of continued education requirement. Join us this month for a screening and discussion of the documentary "Foster" 2/22 at 12p. Feel free to bring your lunch, we will provide the pop corn and sodas!

## Upcoming Classes and Events

GAL-entire Event -  
February 10th

Sweets with the Staff -  
February 24th

CASA at the Capitol -  
March 1st

Movie Screening and  
Discussion of  
"FOSTER" - February  
22nd



# CASA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



## WHAT'S COMING UP:

### CASA at the Capitol

Join the CASA network in Austin on March 1, 2023. The state of Texas has a \$32.7 billion budget surplus, so hundreds of CASA advocates from all over the state will be visiting their legislative officials to spread the word about CASA and to raise awareness about challenges facing the child welfare system. This opportunity is for local CASA programs to interact with their legislators at the state Capitol in order to support Texas CASA's funding and legislative priorities and to amplify CASA's importance as a key participant in the child welfare system.

## IN THE NEWS...

One of our valued CASA's went above and beyond this year. Elyssa Evergreen traveled all the way to Guatemala to visit the mother of the child she was appointed to ensure the best interests of. Stay tuned for more on this heartwarming story in our next issue.



## COMPLIANCE AND UPDATED STANDARDS



We are part of a membership organization to both National and Texas CASA. As such, our directions and guidance come for the Standards set by National CASA, Texas CASA, Texas Family Code and Texas Administrative Code. The Standards outline the rules and requirements for the operation and advocacy of local CASA programs. Every three years, Texas CASA performs a program audit to ensure each program is performing to its highest standard and fulfilling its duty to the children and families they are appointed to serve. This January, CASA for Kids completed the full audit process by Texas CASA with the help and dedication of its board members, staff and corporation of the volunteers. We should have our full report back by mid-February. Preliminary results show evidence of high advocacy, exceptional dedication of volunteers and staff and pure heart when it comes to fulfilling the mission of CASA for Kids.