



Helping Hands 'n Hearts



Serving the abused and neglected children of Parker County

Winter 2008

Volume 1, Issue 1

Special points of interest:

- CASA of Parker County celebrated their 2nd Birthday!
- Dancing for CASA's Kids was a huge success.
- The Second Annual Judge Chrestman Award Dinner was a smashing hit.
- What it is like to be a CASA?
- Volunteer Advocate Training

Happy Birthday CASA of Parker County!

In February of 2005 Judge Don Chrestman replied to my letter of inquiry concerning starting a CASA program in Parker County, stating he was interested in discussing the possibility. After meeting with me and the Texas CASA Expansion Specialist, our judges agreed to support the effort.

A small but dedicated Steering Committee met for the first time in September 2005. Their duties were to raise the public's awareness about the benefits of CASA and its mission, enlist others in our many communities, raise funds and gather in-kind donations. The committee worked diligently for the next few months writing proposals, projecting budgets, writing by-laws and submitting all the required documentation necessary to become a non-profit organization in addition to fundraising. By the end

of May 2006, the Steering Committee had successfully completed its tasks, recruited a twelve member Board of Directors and the gauntlet was passed to this motivated board to carry on. We officially became CASA of Parker County July first of 2006 with one staff member and a one-room office. Our first advocate was sworn in that October and we were appointed to our first case in November. How far we have come in two short years! We chose to train our own advocates (or Angels as I call them) from the very beginning, 30 of them to date. That is not something a CASA program in its infancy usually undertakes, but then our program has done so many 'firsts'. In the past two years we have served 119 children with 16 advocates on average. We now

have 2 full and one part time staff members, 16 board members, 22 active 'ANGELS', all of whom are dedicated to CASA and the children we serve. There are so many people to thank. They have given so much of themselves; their time, energy and resources to making CASA a reality in our county and continue to support our efforts and help us grow. As our citizens and judicial system becomes more aware of what CASA volunteers are and the roles they play in serving our children, so our circle of supporters grows.

God Bless you for all you have given, continue to give and for your support of our CASA program and the children we serve.

-Kathy Smart

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CASA of PARKER COUNTY RECEIVES GENEROUS GRANT FROM MEADOWS FOUNDATION!

Court Appointed Special Advocates, or CASA, of Parker County recently received a generous grant from the prestigious Meadows Foundation in Dallas, Tex. The Meadows Foundation, known for its thorough evaluation of grant requests, scrutinizes an organization's mission, accomplishments, needs, current number of staff and volunteers, the population served, geographic location and socioeconomic status.

"The one-year Meadows Foundation Grant will allow us to establish a sustainable recruitment, training, and retention program for our CASA volunteers as well as a method of evaluation to ensure its sustainability into the future," says Geneva Martin, executive director. "The strength of any CASA project lies in its firm foundation, so through the generous support of the Meadows Foundation, CASA of Parker County

will further develop our infrastructure. We'll now have the ability to strengthen for future years."

To learn more about the CASA program please call (817)599-6224, visit us at 200 Palo Pinto Street, Suite 107 in Weatherford, or look us up on the web at www.casaofparkercounty.com

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Dancing for CASA's KIDS

Casa brings Dancing With The Stars to Weatherford.

The organization of children's advocates benefited from a fundraising evening that featured a dance competition with local volunteers who trained at Arthur Murray Dance Studio. An after-5 event, the fundraiser also featured live and silent auctions, sit-down dinner catered by Fire Oak Grill, and a show by the Arthur Murray Dancers. The local dancers were Pat Chenault Martin, Becky Hanley, Rick Wilson and Steve Markwardt. Kathy Wiley, of Greater Metro West Board of Realtors community service committee and

co-chair Jason Tuomey led the effort to gather a great list of live-auction items. They included a Steinway piano; a week in Costa Rica; a week in Vail, Colo.; a golf cart with a bag full of clubs and



lots of passes from area courses; a Wave Runner; a 42-inch flat-screen TV; and a large entertainment center. "We want to keep the live auc-

tion to around an hour," Wiley said. "The silent auction included a bed and breakfast weekend with passes to Chandor Garden, dinner at Fire Oak Grill, movie passes and massages for two. There are tons more items."

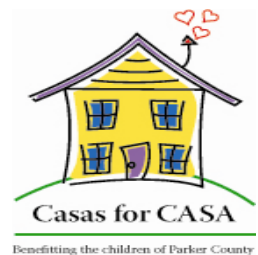
The event took place at the Doss Heritage and Cultural Center on Saturday, July 26. Thanks to the hard work of its members, the GMWAR was able to present CASA with a generous check. Thanks to Kohl's Department Store employees, members of TOTS and volunteers from the Doss Center for their help as servers for this festive evening.

Second Annual Casa's for CASA

Julie Laughlin of Laughlin Homebuilders organized local builders from the Parker County Builders Association to donate their time, creativity and skills to build playhouses for the Second Annual Casas for CASA drawing. Six playhouses were donated courtesy of Adami Custom Homes, Hubbard Olde World Homecrafters, Gibson Home Builders, Mark Farmer Custom Homes, David Carter Custom Homes/CJ Construction, and Laughlin Homebuilders. More builders got involved this year than last year, "I

think they are more familiar now with what CASA is and how important an organization it is for Parker County", Laughlin said. The design and work to build one of these playhouses takes about a month and the builder's do this during their spare time. The playhouses were on display at Super Save food warehouse from April 12 through April 26. CASA board members, advocates and friends sold tickets for the Castle, Noah's Ark, Hannah's Place, The Bank, The Barn, and the Blue Cottage. A drawing party was held on Satur-

day, April 26th with members of the Biker's Against Child Abuse (BACA) riding their motorcycles into the parking lot to show their support of CASA. CASA raised close to \$12,000 from the event. A big thank you goes out to Julie, the local builders and the CASA board of directors.



"I think they are more familiar now with what CASA is and how important an organization it is for Parker County."

-Laughlin

Upcoming Events



Breakfast With SANTA

CASA's third Annual Breakfast With Santa will be held on Saturday December 6, 2008 at Central Christian Church-1602 S. Main, Weatherford. Two separate serving times are available, 8:00-9:30 AM or 10:00-11:15 AM.

Children 12 and under- \$10 (includes signed photo with Santa) and Adults- \$5.

Mrs. Claus Story Corner, Crafts, Hayrides, etc.

All proceeds benefit CASA of Parker County.

Advance Tickets may be bought at the CASA office and Super Save.

Second Annual Judge Chrestman's Award Dinner

I was presiding over a CPS Permanency hearing today while a jury was out deliberating on a major case dealing with millions of dollars of property and other very complicated issues. The attorneys waiting on the jury verdict were in the courtroom and heard the child, Attorney Ad Litem, CPS worker, CPS attorney and CASA testify. They were deeply touched by the child's remarks and all of the other testimony. They actually offered to make a monetary contribution for the child's best interest. However, it is important to note that they were highly impressed with the CASA and her obvious concern for the child, her knowledge of the case and the needs of the child. This points out the appreciation society has for the BEST INTEREST OF OUR CHILDREN and the need for the public to know more about the goals and suc-

cesses of CASA.

The Annual Awards dinner that is in my name is an honor beyond measure. I appreciate the honor but even more I thank the public for its support of CASA and their goal of advocating for the "best interest of our children". Congratulations again to the 2008 award winners. -DMC



Congratulations Robyn Jackson for receiving 2008 CASA Volunteer of the Year and Elisa Ortiz for 2008 DFPS Case Worker of the Year awards.

What it is like being a CASA Advocate

Being a CASA Volunteer has been a PRIVILEGE for me. Most of us who are involved with CASA have a 'story' of our own of why we became involved; loss of a child, involved in the rescue of a child being abused or neglected within our own families or through life altering experience of the people closest to us.

As a CASA during one of my many visits to see 'my boys', the other children in the foster home asked: "Why don't we have a CASA - we want a special friend like you?!"

Another case; my child was placed with an adoptive foster mother at birth. Near the end of the 12 month case a biological aunt was approached by DFPS to take this little girl permanently and plans set in motion to relocate this child from the foster mother to this relative.

I visited with this family member, talked to an ex-spouse, friends and other family members, schools and neighbors and discovered this aunt had 'a past' pertaining to her own children that had not been disclosed or discovered. I reported my findings to DFPS, and my

concerns and recommendations to the judge, who ruled; the child will remain with the foster mother. One of my happiest moments was standing in front of the judge holding my little girl as this foster mother promised to love and cherish this child forever!

Yes, being a CASA Volunteer can be heartbreaking, but we also shed many tears of joy. We know we are making a difference in the lives of the children we serve and no amount of money could ever equal that feeling of accomplishment.

"...they were highly impressed with the CASA and her obvious concern for the child, her knowledge of the case and the needs of the child."

CASA's Kids Corner

CASA's Kids Poster Contest

CASA of Parker County is holding a poster art contest.

Theme: "My Winter Holiday"

Deadline: December 1, 2008

Poster Size: 8.5" X 11"

Ages: 3-17

1st place, 2nd place, and 3rd place prizes will be awarded!!



CASA's Toy Box

The CASA office has an array of different toys, books, and stuffed animals for our kids, big and small.

Advocates come by and check it out.



CASA of Parker County

200 Palo Pinto Street
Ste. 107
Weatherford, TX 76086

Phone: 817-599-6224
Fax: 817-887-5541

E-mail: Casa@casaofparkercounty.com

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.CASAOFPARKERCOUNTY.COM

CASA/DFPS Meet and Greet

CASA of Parker County got together on October 24, 2008 for a Meet and Greet with the Department of Family and Protective Services. CASA volunteers and DFPS workers shared wonderful food, fun and conversation. Thank you to everyone who donated food and decorations. Everyone had a blast.



CASA/ DFPS Meet and Greet October 2008

Volunteer Advocate Training

CASA of Parker County works to recruit, train and support citizen volunteers who serve as Court Appointed Special Advocates, or CASA Volunteers. CASA's are ordinary men and women from all walks of life who volunteer to advocate, in court, for children who have been abused and neglected, who have been removed from their homes by DFPS and are under the protection of our courts.

CASA's fall training class consisted of 6 wonderful women who have a love and passion for children and children's advocacy. Classes began on September 16, 2008 and ran through October 16, 2008. The ladies were sworn in as friends of the court on October 17, 2008 by the Honorable Judge Jerry Buckner. Each of these ladies brought something special to class and are eager to receive their first cases.



Our next training session will start in January 2009. Please contact casa@casaofparkercounty.com for more information .