

Issue 2, April 2013

APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and Child Advocacy groups throughout Texas are taking time during the month of April to tell their communities about child abuse.

The statistics are staggering. In Montgomery County in 2012 there were 794 confirmed cases of child abuse and four children died as a result of child abuse.



40% of all child abuse in Texas happens before the child is four years old.

APRIL 10, 2013 HAS BEEN PROCLAIMED GO BLUE DAY.



Wear blue on April 10 and urge your friends (including your Facebook friends) to do the same. Tell everyone you see what you know about child abuse in Montgomery County and what they can do to help stop it.

Go Blue Day highlights the national Blue Ribbon Campaign which represents the cause of child abuse prevention and awareness. The campaign began in 1989 as a Virginia grandmother's tribute to her grandson who died as a result of abuse. She tied a blue ribbon to the antenna of her car as a way to remember him and to alert her community to the tragedy of child abuse.

- Children with a CASA Advocate are half as likely to spend time in long-term foster care (over 3 years) than other foster children.
- In Montgomery County, it costs \$1,080 per month to provide foster care for one child.
- It costs only \$1,026 per year to provide an Advocate for a foster child.



The Blue Ribbon Campaign has since expanded across the country. Many people wear blue ribbons each April in memory of those who have died as a result of child abuse

Child Advocates of Montgomery County

and in support of efforts to prevent abuse. Increasing public awareness of child abuse led to the passage of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act in 1974. Nine years later April was proclaimed National Child Abuse Prevention Month.



In Texas last year there were 64,366 confirmed cases of child abuse or neglect (approximately half boys and half girls). Texas leads the nation in the number of child abuse fatalities.

How can you help stop child abuse?*

- Get to know your neighbors. Develop friendly relationships with your neighbors and their children and grandchildren.
- Make your neighborhood your extended family. People feel better and safer when support is nearby.

Help out a family under stress.

- Offer to baby-sit, help with chores or run errands.
- Suggest resources in the community such as faith community leaders, doctors, and teachers.

Volunteer in the community.

CASA Volunteer information: 936-441-5437, X209

Get involved with a school near you.

- Join the parent-teacher organization.
- Attend school events such as plays, sporting events, and music performances.

Start a neighborhood watch.

*US Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau

There were 870 children under the care of the state in Montgomery County in fiscal year 2012 due to child abuse or neglect. You can make a difference in the lives of children who need you the most. Thank you for your involvement with CASA.



Development Corner

CASA's annual *I Am for the Child* campaign begins Monday, April 1. This grass-roots, volunteer-led fundraising effort will help us bring together the funds needed to support CASA's work for abused and neglected children in Montgomery County. This year, under the leadership of Judy Larson, Senior Vice President of Woodforest National Bank, our goal is to raise \$50,000.

You have read some staggering facts about child abuse on the front page of this newsletter. This year's campaign will help CASA come to the aid of many local young victims and also help put a stop to the neglect and abuse of these children.

It shouldn't hurt to be a child. Every day we are presented with cases that cut to the core of our hearts. We must be able to provide a trained CASA Advocate for every child who needs one. Recruiting, training, and supporting Advocates takes money - \$1,026 per child per year. More funds means more volunteer Advocates to help more children in need.

Consider this:

From 1997 to 2012, Texas child abuse fatalities increased 122%.

76% of all Texas child abuse cases in 2012 involved children who had yet to see their TENTH birthday.

Will you help CASA stop this madness?

For all of the reasons you have read in this newsletter, we are asking for your generous financial support. Judy Larson and her tireless team of volunteers are proud to tell you that every one of your dollars stays in Montgomery County and helps local suffering children.

We need your help. When asked, please give to the *I Am For the Child* campaign and *Be For the child*. *Be For* all of the children in Montgomery County who need a friend when everything in their lives seems lost. *Be For* the children who need a CASA Advocate.

Thank you for caring now so children will be cared for all year long.

From the Desk of *Ann McAlpin* Executive Director



We've all been there. . . those awkward times at a social gathering when you're talking to a group and suddenly, you run out of things to say. For a few moments there's an uncomfortable quiet until the silence is broken.

I'd like to invite you to talk about CASA Child Advocates and some of the facts we're sharing with you in this edition of our newsletter. Some of the facts we've learned about child abuse in our area and around the state are uncomfortable, but the story needs to be told.

We all read the same horrible occasional headline of a child being abused. It's the cases that don't make the newspapers - cases that happen every day - that leave me speechless. Like the young boy and girl, ages eight and three who were left alone outside an adult book store for over an hour while their mother and her boyfriend shopped. Or, two children both under four years of age, left in a trailer to care for themselves while their parents were passed out from drug and alcohol abuse.

These stories happen far too often in Montgomery County. We need to stop stories like this from ever occurring. We must stop this from happening to our children.

You can make a difference by telling your friends, even the ones you have just met at a gathering, about the work that CASA does to save our children. The more people know about CASA, the more we can stop child abuse in Montgomery County, and the more we can help kids who have been hurt. We must make everyone aware - child abuse and neglect is happening in our neighborhoods.

When you tell your friends about CASA, tell them why you're a friend, or donor, or a volunteer, or an Advocate. Let them feel your passion about children. Join us during April to share how CASA is changing lives. . . forever.

Thank you for all that you do for children. Together, we'll leave a lasting impact on the victims of child abuse in Montgomery County. Together we will, we do, make a difference.

Thank you to the Gala Committee for a wonderful event!

Sally Adams	Amy Lampman	Sabina Rahman-Garcia
Chris Albrecht	Glenda Lehigh	Odessia Ross
Judith Bartok	Shirlyn Makar	Doinita Sanders
Deanne Biles	Sherry Mayhill	Cheryl Sellers
Rae DeBrock	Staci Mayhill	Patty Spahr
Kathi Douglas	Darlene Morgan	Mary Ann Turner
Pat Fain	Julie Narjes	Paula Taggart
Mary-Lou Fitch	Dora Nuerminger	Charlene Thrasher
Rhonda Fitch	Susan Olver	Chris Vintzel
Denise Inman	Genevieve Peters	Colleen Waymel

These great volunteers worked for many months to present the **2013 CASA Dancing Under the Stars Gala**. Our deepest appreciation goes out to each of them for giving their time and talent to make the evening a success, raising nearly \$250,000 to help victims of child abuse in Montgomery County. Thank you! Congratulations to Deanne Biles for being selected as the 2014 Gala Chair!

WELCOME ADVISORY COUNCIL

Welcome To all the new members of the Advisory Council for Child Advocates of Montgomery County. This year CASA set up our first Advisory Council. The Advisory Council is a resource to the CASA staff and Board, playing a significant role in our ability to serve the children in the county who need us. Our Advisory Council is composed of individuals from a wide spectrum of Montgomery County's business, civic, professional, academic, and volunteer communities. Current members are:

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Kim Angle | Karla LaFitte | Kara Richmond |
| Gordy Bunch | Judy Lawson | Steve Sanders |
| Michelle Bunch | Dennis Leary | Rob Short |
| Rosemary Bundscho | Mark Malambri | Richard Taylor |
| R. Bruce Callender | Michelle Leary | Roger Taylor |
| Scott Creasman | Sherry Mayhill | Brandon Thomas |
| George Danner | Terry Mayhill | Cindy Tice |
| Robert G. Evans | David McWilliams | John Tombari |
| Pat Fain | Ellen Nodwell | Jay Tompkins |
| Mary-Lou Fitch | Gus Nodwell | David Trice |
| Anthony Garcia | Chris Osborne | Judge Mary Ann Turner |
| Sharon Geib | Elizabeth Padgett | Monica Vils-Brawner |
| Russ Gunther | Wes Padgett | Rich Wales |
| Scott Harper | John Palilla | Mark Walker |
| Patrick Jaggars | Rick Raanes | Colleen Waymel |
| Richard Judge | Patti Rascon | Lindsey Witt |
| Natalie Kamps | Kammy Reece | |
| Renee Kelley | Paul Resurreccion | |

Running for CASA

Child Advocates of Montgomery County made a big statement at The Woodlands Marathon held April 2! All of our fearless, mighty runners braved the cold weather to raise money and awareness for CASA. CASA of Montgomery County was one of the partners in this year's marathon. A giant "thank you!" goes out to the following runners who together collected \$11,087 and secured another \$1,500 from The Woodlands Marathon Management in donations for CASA:

- Kathy Hudson (\$4,437)**
- Gabriela Coates (\$3,055)**
- Rebecca Williams (\$2,870)**
- Rob Johnson (\$600)**
- Ana Calderon (\$125)**



Newsletter Calendar

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
April is Child Abuse Prevention Month!	April 1 CASA / Am for the Child Campaign	2 CASA / Am for the Child Campaign	3 CASA / Am for the Child Campaign	4 CASA / Am for the Child Campaign	5 CASA National Convention April 5-9 CASA / Am for the Child Campaign	6
7	8	9 CASA-Northside Lexus Invitational Golf Tournament, Carlton Woods Country Club	10 Go Blue Day! Advocate Pre-Service Flex Training 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.	11 Advocate In-Service Training 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	12	13
14	15 CPS Child Welfare Board Golf Tournament, Woodforest Golf Club	16 Advocate Pre-Service Flex Training 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.	17 Advocate Pre-Service Flex Training 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.	18	19	20 Community Child Abuse Awareness Event – Run for Hope – Market Street
21	22	23	24 Advocate Pre-Service Flex Training 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. Fostering Futures Training 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.	25 Breakfast With The Judge 10:00 a.m. Volunteer Council Meeting 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Brown Bag Lunch	26	27
28	29	30	May 1 Advocate Pre-Service Flex Training 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.	2	3	4
5	6	7	8 Advocate Pre-Service Flex Training 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.	9 Advocate In-Service Training 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	10 CASA Advisory Council Meeting 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	11
12	13 New Advocate Swearing In Ceremony 8:15 a.m.	14	15	16 CASA Board Meeting 4:30 p.m.	17	18
19	20	21	22	23 Volunteer Council Meeting 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Brown Bag Lunch	24	25
26	27 Memorial Day Office Closed	28	29	30 Breakfast With The Judge 10:00 a.m.	31	June 1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10 Advocate Pre-Service Training 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.	11 Advocate Pre-Service Training 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.	12 Advocate Pre-Service Training 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.	13 Advocate Pre-Service Training 8:30 – 4:00 p.m. Advocate In-Service Training 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	14	15
16	17 New Advocate Swearing In Ceremony 8:15 a.m.	18	19	20 Helping Hearts Training 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 Breakfast With The Judge 10:00 a.m. Volunteer Council Meeting 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Brown Bag Lunch	28	29

CASA'S NEEDS LIST

Children's Books

Duffle Bags

Gift Cards for Teenager Birthdays
(\$25 & \$50 increments)

Network Capable Scanner

Network Capable Color Laser Printer

New Back Packs

Writer/Editor

Office & Administrative Help

Teenager Books

Toys

Videographer

One Advocate's Story

Montgomery County CASA Advocate Heather, met 8-month old Ryan as soon as he was discharged from the hospital. He had been admitted for severe bowel obstruction, had undergone surgery and remained in the hospital to gain strength. He was severely malnourished. Ryan had just been placed in the care of a bubbly, outspoken foster mother. He appeared apprehensive and tired, not eager to play and unwilling to meet Heather's gaze.

Prior to a decision by CPS to possibly dismiss the case, Heather reviewed his medical records and discovered Ryan was extremely underweight and certainly met the criteria for "failure to thrive." Heather knew that Ryan's condition was most likely the result of underfeeding and neglect. Heather determined that Ryan's grandmother had been providing the child whole milk instead of formula, despite the doctors and nurses educating her multiple times that this would harm him by causing malnutrition and constipation. Heather advocated for CPS to continue the case and investigate further.

Because of concerns about the child, Heather asked CPS to have the grandmother take a psychological evaluation. A major drug raid occurred on the grandmother's property resulting in CPS taking custody of Ryan's two siblings, John and Scott, and Heather eagerly agreed to advocate for them as well. At about the same time, the grandmother was determined to be mentally unstable and thought to have several behaviors characteristic of adults who abuse children.

Heather, who had previously visited the boys several times, visited John and Scott at their foster home. The boys were very excited to see a familiar face. She was able to bring comfort to them, letting them know that she

was always going to be checking in on them. She would make sure they were doing well. Heather was hopeful that her continued and active presence would eliminate any feelings of being cast away, lost or forgotten.

After additional evaluations, it was determined that the grandmother was mentally and emotionally unable to care for her grandchildren. Because no other family members were willing to care for them, the three children were placed for adoption. Since she knew the boys well, Heather was able to provide valuable input on the type of family that would best fit their needs.

The day the boys met their new adoptive parents was truly moving. As Heather looked on, the boys were no longer scared, timid children. They immediately took in the love and affection given to them by these people. She stood overwhelmed at the boys' immediate familiarity and love for these total strangers who wanted to adopt all three of them and make a new family! By the time the final placement hearing took place, the boys had developed deep bonds of love and affection for this generous, loving couple.

Heather has been welcomed into the home of the new family and given the opportunity to visit frequently. She feels she is a lucky Advocate. She had the privilege of seeing the children blossom into carefree, happy little boys, quite unlike the reticent and withdrawn children she first met. Heather likes to say she'll advocate again, simply to see the light turn on in the faces of children like Ryan, John, and Scott.

