

Thomas' New Life

By the time Advocate Joe Callison was assigned to Thomas' case, the boy had already experienced a series of tragedies in his young life. When Thomas was only 11 years old, he watched his father slowly succumb to a lengthy illness. For the two years prior to his father's death, Thomas served as the primary caregiver for his dad, which no child should have to do.

After his father's passing, Thomas and his mother moved from Indiana back to Texas. Thomas' mother found raising a child alone to be difficult, and he was sent to an aunt's home to live. Still grieving his father's death, Thomas also proved somewhat of a challenge for his aunt. After only a short time, he was back in his mother's care.

Thomas' mother continued to struggle and ultimately decided that committing Thomas to a group home was the solution. While living in the group home, Thomas was beaten. Surrounded by strangers and missing his mom, Thomas ran away from the facility to find her.

Upon Thomas' return, his mother immediately turned him over to Child Protective Services. Thomas was placed temporarily in a residential treatment center and Joe was assigned to his case.

Once again in a strange place surrounded by people he didn't know, Thomas desperately wanted some of his personal possessions - clothes, collectibles, games, etc. - to remind him of home and family. Joe worked with Child Protective Services to try and convince Thomas' mother to allow them to bring some of these items to him.



However, her mind was made up, and at the second review hearing, Thomas' mother signed papers to relinquish rights to her son. After relinquishing rights, she ended all communication.

Just before beginning his 8th grade year, Thomas was moved yet again from one facility into another. Joe understood that Thomas had not experienced much more than a few fleeting moments of permanency or security during the past 2 years, and described Thomas as, "very closed up, abandoned, and lost."

Although CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County asks volunteers to visit children once a month, Joe made it a priority to stop by and see Thomas every week.

"I just wanted to get him through. He needed to have someone consistent in his life. Someone who would be there for him and not judge him." Joe continues, "Unconditional love - it's so powerful, and that's what I showed Thomas. He hadn't experienced that in a long time."

The following summer, at the age of 14, Thomas went HOME. He was placed with the family that would ultimately adopt him. Before the start of 9th grade, his future adoptive father gained permission to take Thomas to his family's cabin in Arkansas, and for the first time in years, Thomas was surrounded by people who loved him and reminded him what it is to be part of a family.

On January 9, 2013, Thomas' adoption was finalized and he proudly took his father's last name. Today, Thomas is on the track team, plays basketball, and is an Honor Roll student.

Joe is amazed at the transformation, explaining, "You talk to Thomas today, and he is just a new person."

In this issue

Message from the Executive Director	page 2
Congratulations New Advocates	page 2
CASA Salutes FIT Human Performance	page 3
CASA's First Annual Bike Rodeo	page 3
Show Your Love for CASA	page 4
Board Member Spotlight: Judy Larson	page 4
CASA's Impact: First Quarter Report	page 5
Speak for Me: Spread the Word Volunteer Drive	page 6
Meet New Case Supervisor: Saraphina Adkins	page 7
Kathy Hudson Races for CASA	page 7
CASA in the Community	page 8

**Names and details have been changed to protect the identity of the child in this story.*

OUR MISSION

To provide and promote court-appointed volunteer advocacy so that every abused and neglected child can have the opportunity to thrive in a safe, nurturing, permanent home.



Message from the Executive Director: My Little Brother

When I was a kid, (maybe ten?) my little brother broke his arm. He was climbing a tree, fell out, and, snap! His arm, propped on the ground as he waited for help, had an unnatural curve in it. I felt sick looking at David, sick with his pain and sick with my helplessness. Of course my mom whisked him off to the hospital, he was back by that evening with a cast, he was king of the mountain for the next six weeks, and he suffered no lasting effects. (Well, he's not a major league baseball player . . .)

People often say to me, "I couldn't be a CASA Advocate—I'd get too emotionally involved". That's really not how it is. Our Advocates get involved, but they get involved in ways that change the lives of the children they work with and advocate for. In this story, our Advocates are not me at ten—looking on from the sidelines, helpless. Our Advocates are my Mom, assessing the situation, comforting the child in need, efficiently and fiercely doing whatever needs to be done to fix what started out as a nasty situation. It would not have occurred to her to be "too emotionally involved"—she was the fixer!

I've since been in similar situations when it was up to me to call the ambulance or talk someone into seeing a doctor, and I never again had that feeling of helplessness, because "too emotionally involved" happens when you're looking on from the sidelines, not when you're actively making a difference, as our Advocates do.

If you admire what our Advocates do but think that you could not yourself do it, I urge you to think again. I'm willing to bet that you'll surprise yourself at what you can accomplish when you're working on behalf of someone who needs your help—particularly when that someone is a child.

Sure, you'll get emotionally involved. And when you do, you'll change the life of a child who desperately needs someone to be involved in an active, mature, caring, productive, and yes, emotional, way. And how could that involvement not be good all around? Call us if you think you might like to be involved in changing the world for a child!

Ann McAlpin
Executive Director

Congratulations New Advocates

February Training Class



February Swearing-In Ceremony (Front Center: Judge Jerry Winfree; 2nd Row, L to R: Saraphina Adkins, Susan Harris, Kari Pesch, Catherine Miller, Renee Runcie, Tricia Straughn, Susan Hill; 3rd Row, L to R: Tom Barnes, Donna Kerchner, Elizabeth Chapman, Tonya Fletcher, Holly Hochhauser (Not Pictured: Ines Perez & Carol Brooks)

December Training Class



December Swearing-In Ceremony (Front Center: Judge Jerry Winfree 2nd Row, L to R: Helen Caddock, Julie Brown, Kathryn Bullard, Stephanie Encinia, and Suzette Nielsen)

Training Schedule

June Class (Tuesdays & Thursdays)

Tuesday (June 10) 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Thursday (June 12) 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Tuesday (June 17) 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Thursday (June 19) 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Swearing In & Celebration: Monday, June 23 at 9:00 a.m.

August Class (Tuesdays & Thursdays)

Tuesday (Aug. 12) 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Thursday (Aug. 14) 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Tuesday (Aug. 19) 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Thursday (Aug. 21) 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Swearing In & Celebration: Monday, August 25 at 9:00 a.m.

October Class (Saturdays & Evenings)

Saturday (Oct. 11) 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Monday (Oct. 13) 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Tuesday (Oct. 14) 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Wednesday (Oct. 15) 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Thursday (Oct. 16) 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Saturday (Oct. 18) 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Swearing In & Celebration: Monday, Oct. 20 at 9:00 a.m.

To register or for more information contact Wanda Smith, Wanda@CASASpeaks4Kids.com

CASA Salutes Small Business Partner F.I.T. Human Performance



Bob Geib and his wife, Sharon, opened F.I.T. (Functional Individualized Training) Human Performance in The Woodlands in 2010. Bob, a physical therapist for more than 30 years, was frustrated with the industry and dealing with insurance companies. He wanted to open a facility that would bridge the gap between the medical community and the fitness industry, providing well-rounded training for clients.

F.I.T. provides clients with specific, individualized, functional assessments and ongoing optimal performance training, helping clients achieve their highest level of human performance. F.I.T. provides goal-setting supervision for cardiorespiratory conditioning, flexibility training, and musculoskeletal resistance/strength training.

Bob and Sharon first learned about CASA Child Advocates through a family friend. Sharon, a CPA, was looking for ways to become more involved in the community. Bob says after learning about the work that Advocates do to support abused children through the court and foster care system, he and Sharon have developed a passion for telling others about the organization.

Bob and Sharon continue to support CASA in a number of ways. F.I.T. Human Performance has donated multiple services and training sessions as auction items for fundraising events. Bob and Sharon also regularly attend the annual CASA Speaks for Kids Gala, and this year, they brought friends, hoping to further increase support within the community for CASA. Bob questions, "Who is going to help these children? Someone else? There is no one else. And that's why CASA Child Advocates are so important."

For more information about F.I.T. Human Performance and Bob and Sharon Geib, please visit their website: <http://fitwoodlands.com> or call (832) 813-8010.

Upcoming Events

May

15 Young Professionals for CASA Social: America's from 5:30pm-7:30pm

15 CASA Board Meeting

21 Potluck Premier: CASA Training Room beginning at 11:00am

23 Montgomery County Women of Distinction Luncheon: The Woodlands Marriott beginning at 10:30am

June

11 Conversations with CASA: La Madeleine at Market Street from 5:30pm-7:30pm

18 Coffee with CASA: La Madeleine on Market Street from 9am-11am

26 Judge's Brunch: CASA Training Room beginning at 10:30am

27 Young Professionals for CASA Lunch and Learn Series featuring Gigi Woodruff, Vice President of Development and Training for YMCA Houston: Location TBA from 11:30am-1pm



Children Rope In Bike Skills at CASA's 1st Annual Bike Rodeo

More than 40 children in foster care from Montgomery County participated in the Annual CASA Bike Rodeo on April 26th. A Bike Rodeo is a skill building obstacle course developed for the purpose of teaching children basic bicycle riding skills like stopping, balancing, signaling, and turning. The rodeo also features bike and helmet safety inspections.

Over 50 bikes with helmets were donated by Waste Connections Inc. for the event. The children attending the event had a chance to take home one of the bikes at the conclusion of the rodeo.

This Rodeo would not be possible without the donations from our generous community partners: Conroe ISD Police Department, HEB, Subway, Party Events and Rentals Too, TETRA Technologies Inc, Affordable Signs, Waste Connections Inc and The Woodlands Cycling Club.

Thank you to our 2014 Bike Rodeo Steering Committee

Casey Barrons
Art Castro
Fawn Dennis
Nina Dixon
Stefani Foster

Bob Hurt
Jennifer Lee
Chrissy Mafrige
Cynthia Mandel
Monica Ramos

Patti Sexton
Susan Sherman
Mandy Stegint
Alli Stephens
Sargent Julie Wright



Board Member Spotlight Judy Larson

Judy Larson, Senior Vice President of Private Banking at Woodforest National Bank, has always been visible and active in the local community, raising money for various charities and chairing numerous events. In addition to serving as a member of the Board of Directors of CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County, she also serves on the Board of the South Montgomery County YMCA and the Rotary Club of The Woodlands.

Judy was appointed to the Board in the spring of 2013. When asked what drew her to CASA Child Advocates, Judy explains, "There is nothing more important to our future than our children.

Abuse - physical, emotional, or sexual - changes who they become as adults, and what can be worse than that?"

As Board Development Chair, Judy hopes to continue to increase funding for CASA from current sources. Her ongoing mission is to find new and creative methods to raise money to benefit the abused children that CASA Child Advocates serves. Judy's ultimate goal? "To see every abused child in Montgomery County who needs an Advocate supported by one," Judy continues, "And to see the cycle of child abuse finally broken for good."



Board of Directors 2013-2014

Shane Bayless
Chair

Jim Funke
Vice Chair, Governance Chair

Bill Friebel
Past Chair

Patrick Cahill
Treasurer, Finance Chair

Steven Earl
Secretary

Daniel Vertrees
Legislative Chair

Judy Larson
Development Chair

Cheryl Sellers
Development Committee

Robyn West
Governance Committee

Sabina Rahman-Garcia
Development Committee

Show Your Love For CASA:

Young Professionals for CASA Fundraiser Also Raises Awareness In The Community



New Young Professionals members enjoying appetizers provided by Crescent Moon



From L to R: Crescent Moon Owner Rodney Anderson, Cheryl Sellers, Whitney Montgomery, and Sonia Carr



Attendees learning about wine varieties provided by Glazer's Distributor Co.

Over 50 guests came out to Crescent Moon Wine Bar and Restaurant to support Young Professionals for CASA's "Show Your Love for CASA" Valentine's wine tasting on February 12th. The evening included live music, 4 wine tasting selections and delicious appetizers. This was the first fundraiser for Young Professionals for CASA, and the event raised close to \$1,000.

The evening kicked off with opening remarks from Young Professionals for CASA Fundraising Chair, Blake Myers. Then, led by Jeannie Podraza, Representative from Glazer's Wine Distributors, guests were introduced to an assortment of red and white wine from around the globe. Guests also enjoyed networking with one another throughout the evening. This event was made possible through the generosity of Crescent Moon owner, Rodney Anderson.

You can join Young Professionals for CASA at the next after-work networking social on May 15th from 5:30pm-7:30pm, or at the new quarterly Lunch & Learn Series on June 27th, 2014. For more information contact Alli Stephens, Alli@CASASpeaks4Kids.com. Join our Facebook group www.facebook.com/groups/YP4CASA.

CASA's IMPACT

April is National Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month. Not only did local and county officials issue proclamations, The White House also issued a Presidential Proclamation in early April recognizing this important month:

"We all have a role to play in preventing child abuse and neglect and in helping young victims recover. From parents and guardians to educators and community leaders, each of us can help carve out safe places for young people to build their confidence and pursue their dreams."

-President Barack Obama

During CASA's first quarter (December 2013 - February 2014)

170 Advocates served **411** children in **272** cases

Advocates were able to find safe, permanent, loving homes for **44** children

53 children that came into care during this quarter were provided an Advocate

Advocates are needed because a child in Texas becomes a victim of abuse and neglect every **8** minutes

Once a year, CASA conducts an annual volunteer survey for feedback on how CASA is doing in supporting the work of volunteer Advocates. Here are just a few responses....

"(CASA Children) have opened my heart and CASA has given me hope that there is a better life for them."

"My CASA Supervisor is amazing and so passionate!"

"Supporting the family and spreading love to the child has shown me a change is possible, therefore an impact is made."

"Love giving these kids a voice in the system."

"The CASA Staff always show appreciation for what we do; I feel like family."

"I'm so impressed by the high level of dedication, professionalism, and compassion exhibited by CASA Supervisors."

"I don't know where kids in Montgomery County would be without CASA."

"I am very happy to be a CASA -- one of the best things I do."

"(CASA Children) are what makes it all worth it."

"Knowing I can make a difference in my child's life -- doing something good for others -- gives me a sense of fulfillment."

"I have had several supervisors through the years and I am very happy with all of them! I always felt supported. Thank you!"

Thank You, Advocates for your overwhelming response.

The work you do for abused and neglected children is amazing!

“Speak for Me: Spread the Word” Volunteer Drive Brings New Faces to CASA

Thank you, Advocates, for participating in the 2014 “Speak for Me: Spread the Word” volunteer drive! The 2-month volunteer campaign focused on Advocate referrals and recruitment outreach initiatives. Participants were encouraged to speak about CASA at their church or to organizations to which they belong, send out postcards to friends, and place brochures around town.

Over 46% of Advocate recruitment comes from current Advocate referrals. Advocates actively embody the CASA mission at work and are the lifeblood of CASA.

Through the efforts of 31 Advocates, CASA has received 10 new Advocates, 4 speaking engagements (St. Anthony of Padua, The Woodlands British Ladies Club, Vitruvian Corporation, Houston ExxonMobil Spouses Club), and was featured in 2 publications (The

Woodlands British Ladies Club newsletter, Conroe ISD websites).



Thank you to all the Advocates who participated in the 2014 Volunteer Drive

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Kelley Bond | Kathy Kunzig | Ron Rush |
| Helen Caddock | Sherry Lane | Iona Russell |
| Stephanie Encinia | Sherry Mahill | Laurie Schoepf |
| Bob Evans | Terry Mahill | Carol Seltz |
| Brenda Getty | Paige Mann | Katie Stavinoha |
| Susan Giacona | Anna McDonnell | Debbie Stuard |
| Joseph Hass | Beverly Mentzer | Joseph Suga |
| Robyn Hass | Catherine Miller | Charlotte Tabarini |
| Mary Beth Hughes | Bonnie Moore | Shari Wood |
| Bob Hurt | Monica Piccardo | |
| Debbie Jaeger | James Pung | |

Special Thanks to our Community Partners

Thank you to Frost Bank for honoring CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County with a \$5,000 donation at the grand opening of their new Woodlands financial center. We appreciate your generosity to the community.

Thank you to Vitruvian Exploration II, LLC President and CEO, Richard Lane, for making a \$2000 corporate donation to CASA, and his wife, Sherry, a CASA Advocate, for scheduling an information session for the company’s employees.

Thank you to Crescent Moon Wine Bar for being an outstanding CASA partner! Special thanks to Rodney Anderson for hosting the “Show Your Love For CASA” Wine Tasting and the “Volunteer Your Voice” Information Evening.

Thank you to Whitney Montgomery for making CASA her “charity of choice” as part of her reign as Mrs. Texas International 2014.

Thank you to La Trattoria Tuscano for hosting the “Speak for Me: Spread the Word” Launch Party and the inaugural Young Professionals for CASA Lunch and Learn Series. Special thanks to James Pung for his engaging presentation to the YPC group.

Thank you to Dr. Jaime Marshall and Quality of Life Chiropractic for donating your first quarter proceeds (\$2,000) to CASA.

Thank you to the Woodlands Waterway Art Festival for donating a portion of the proceeds of the Festival Market sales to CASA. Thank you to all volunteers who manned the “Market” booths April 12th & 13th.



Meet Saraphina Adkins: CASA's newest Case Supervisor

Location: Spring, Texas (previously from Fort Collins, Colorado)

Family: Married to her husband, Wes Adkins, for a year and six months. Has two dogs, Ernie and Duke.

Other: She is an archaeology buff and is especially interested in North and Central American archaeology.

After graduating from University of Northern Colorado, Saraphina started work at a Colorado accounting firm that did pro bono filings for a local CASA program. Working closely with CASA opened Saraphina's eyes to the kind of difference an Advocate makes in a child's life.

"My job in accounting was not making an impact. On an emotional and spiritual level, I never felt completely fulfilled." Saraphina began volunteering but knew that she wanted to do more. When a position opened at the CASA office in Colorado, she immediately applied.

Saraphina has always been devoted to CASA's mission of providing an Advocate for every child in need of one. In her previous job with Larimer County CASA and Adams-Broomfield CASA, she led the Young Philanthropist Project, coordinated recruitment and training programs, and facilitated outreach initiatives.

"To me, meeting the Advocates and hearing their stories are the best parts of working at CASA. CASA volunteers are truly selfless people who choose to immerse themselves in parts of the community that are easy to ignore. They enter those situations with an open mind, determined to work for the best interest of a child."

When Saraphina's husband was transferred to Houston, her first move was to call CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County. She joined the CASA team as a Case Supervisor in February.

Specializing in community resources, Saraphina will be focusing on making resources readily available for families and Advocates.



Kathy Hudson Races for CASA!

Kathy Hudson, a personal trainer and business owner in The Woodlands, will compete in IronMan Texas triathlon on May 17, 2014, but crossing the finish line is not her only goal. As she prepares for IronMan Texas, Kathy will also be raising funds and awareness for CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County.

Exercise has been part of Kathy's life for more than 25 years. In 2008, she became a Personal Trainer and opened her own training studio. She has competed in half marathons, marathons and triathlons since 2006. When IronMan Texas first came to The Woodlands, Kathy wondered, "Could I do that?" Two years later, she took the plunge and signed up for IronMan Texas 2014, her first full IronMan.

For Kathy, fitness is an essential part of her life. She is grateful for the support of her family (husband, Sonny, and children, Chelsea and Jordan). However, Kathy explains, "When you have a wonderful family and so many blessings, it's hard to imagine what life must be like for abused and neglected children in our community."

When Kathy first heard about CASA, she says she felt "a strong pull on [her] heartstrings" to help in some way. She learned about the work Advocates do to speak up for the best interests of abused children, and then came up with an idea.

In 2013, Kathy competed in The Woodlands Marathon. She decided to reach out to friends for support and asked them to sponsor her efforts. By the time Kathy ran the marathon, she had raised over \$5,000 for CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County.

It costs \$1215 to provide an abused or neglected child in Montgomery County with an Advocate to speak up for his or her best interests for one year. Kathy's goal is to raise funds to provide as many children as possible with a CASA Advocate, and you are invited to help her reach this goal. Visit Kathy's fundraising page at: <http://www.firstgiving.com/fundraiser/kathy-hudson-2/ironman-texas> to make a donation. All proceeds will benefit CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County.

With your support, as Kathy swims, bikes and runs 140.6 miles, she will know she is making a huge difference in the lives of abused and neglected children in our county.



SAVE THE DATE
The CASA SuperHero Run will be on October 18th, 2014



Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

Child Advocates of Montgomery County

412 West Phillips
Suite 107
Conroe, TX 77301

*If you believe that every child
deserves to be safe and loved...*

Become an Advocate.

*Contact Wanda Smith, email
Wanda@CASASpeaks4Kids.com*

www.CASASpeaks4Kids.com
936.441.5437

CASA in the Community



Executive Director Ann McAlpin receives a \$2000 donation from Dr. Jamie Marshall and Staff of Quality of Life Chiropractic on April 10th, 2014



Wanda Smith, Recruitment & Training Director, presents Rosemary McMullen, Executive Assistant & Office Manager for Vitruvian Exploration II, LLC, with a commemorative certificate, recognizing the company as a Corporate Member of CASA's Blue Ribbon Society.



CASA Board Chair Shane Bayless (far right), and Legislative Committee Chair, Dan Vertrees, (second on right) were in attendance as Mayor Webb K. Melder proclaimed April as Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month during a City Council Meeting at Conroe City Hall on March 27th, 2014.



CASA supporters receive a \$5,000 donation at the grand opening of a new Frost Bank Financial Center in The Woodlands on April 3rd, 2014. (From L to R: Sabina Rahman-Garcia, Lauren Trice, CASA Executive Director Ann McAlpin, Ellen Nodwell, and Whitney Montgomery)