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## **April is National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month**

*Join CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County's commitment to helping victims of child abuse and neglect heal and to making sure all children feel safe and loved*

**CONROE, Texas (March 27, 2014)**--Anytime a child is abused or neglected, it's a tragedy – one that all too often scars victims for a lifetime. The latest [statistics from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) are sobering:

- Child Protective Services agencies across the United States received some 3.4 million referrals of abuse or neglect involving 6.3 million children in 2012.
- An estimated 1,640 children died from child abuse or neglect in 2012, nearly three-quarters of them younger than age 3.
- In Montgomery County in 2013, 796 children were removed from their homes and 1 child died as a result of abuse and/or neglect.

Studies have shown that children who have suffered abuse or neglect are more likely to struggle in school, have run-ins with law enforcement, experience homelessness or abuse drugs or alcohol. Research also shows that abused children are more apt to grow up to abuse their own kids.

At CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County, we speak up for the best interests of abused and neglected children so they can live happier, safer lives. Our CASA volunteers – court-appointed special advocates – make sure kids don't get lost in the overburdened legal and social service systems or languish in unsupportive foster homes. CASA volunteers stay with children until their court case is closed and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home.

During National Child Abuse Prevention Month, we invite our community to learn more about the work we do and consider becoming a CASA volunteer. CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County volunteers will be at the Market Booth at The Woodlands Waterway Arts Festival on April 12th and 13th, or speak with CASA representatives at the Run for Hope event on Market Street on April 19th. Join CASA Advocates for coffee and conversation about becoming an Advocate for abused children on Wednesday, May 7th, 9am-11am at La Madeleine in The Woodlands.

Perhaps not everyone feels they can become a CASA volunteer yet, but everyone can be an advocate by taking steps to make our community safer for our children:

- Be mindful of the signs of abuse and neglect in children (lack of adult supervision, extreme passivity/aggression, poor hygiene).
- Be aware of warning signs in parents (showing indifference or rarely touching/looking at their child, constant verbal criticism, demands for perfection, blaming the child for family problems, other irrational behaviors).
- If you think a child is in immediate danger, don't hesitate. Call 911.
- If you believe a child is being abused or neglected, report your suspicions confidentially to our state's toll-free child abuse hotline at (800) 252-5400 or go to [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org).

Working together, we can end abuse and neglect so that every child has a chance to thrive. For more information about CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County, visit the website at [www.CASASpeaks4Kids.com](http://www.CASASpeaks4Kids.com) or call (936) 441-5437.

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*Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) are appointed by the Court to speak up for the best interest of children who have been removed from their parents and are under the Court's jurisdiction. CASA's goal is to provide a court-appointed volunteer to serve as Guardian ad Litem for every child in the foster care system. For the past 23 years, CASA has been training volunteers, raising awareness in the community, and working to stop the cycle of child abuse in Montgomery County. Learn more about CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County at [www.casaspeaks4kids.com](http://www.casaspeaks4kids.com) and on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CASACHildAdvocatesofMontgomeryCounty>*