

CASA CONNECTION

CHILD ADVOCATES OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Meet Justin and Richie

The police officer noticed the broken down pickup on the side of the road. It was the middle of the night, and the officer stopped to see if anyone was inside the vehicle and if he could provide any assistance. He found two young boys, Justin, age 6, and Richie, age 3, with their father, and the officer graciously offered them a ride home. Surely the boys were up well past their bedtime.

The father explained that they had nowhere to go. The boys had recently been brought down to Texas from Rhode Island. Their mother had agreed to the move, thinking it was in their best interest to live with their father and his new wife. The father told the officer that earlier that evening, he and their step-mother had fought, and she had thrown him and the two small boys out of the house.

The officer had no choice. With no home to return to, he called Child Protective Services to make sure the boys would have beds to sleep in, food to nourish them, and the care they ultimately needed until a permanent solution could be found.

Dana, a CASA Child Advocate, was soon appointed to the case by the court.

Initially, Dana was optimistic about working with the boys' father to ensure he was taking the steps required for Justin and Richie to come back home to him. However, as time progressed, Dana began to realize that the father was not committed to making the changes needed to give the boys a safe and healthy home.

Also, despite the opportunity to see his boys every week through monitored visits, their father began missing these appointments. With their mother and the rest of their family many states and thousands of miles away, the visits with their father were the only chance for Justin and Richie to have family in their life.

During this time, Dana was checking on the boys regularly to see how they were doing in their new foster home. Over the course of several visits, she had noticed the foster mom did not seem to engage or interact with the boys. Dana also noticed the television was normally tuned to a paranormal activity channel. In talking with Justin, she found that he was frequently watching this channel with the foster mom, and these programs, arguably inappropriate in nature for such young children, had scared him very badly. Justin also admitted that he felt like his foster parents didn't like him, and further explained that his foster dad referred to him as a "piece of trash."

These investigations led Dana and CPS to the conclusion to move Justin and Richie to a more suitable foster home.

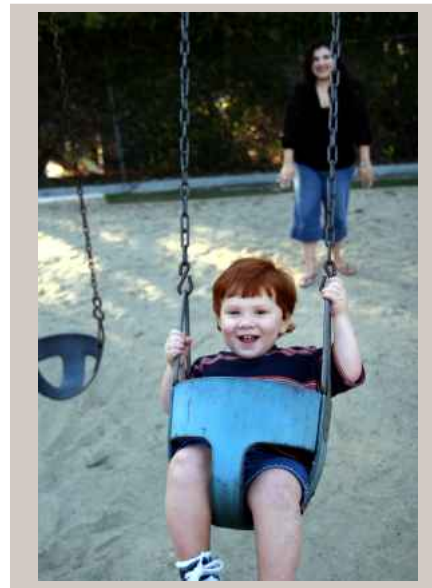
**Names and ages have been changed to protect the identity of the children in this story.*

Dana had begun reaching out to the boys' mother from the very beginning of the case, and with their father becoming less and less likely to be able to take them back, Dana started pushing for Justin and Richie to be returned to their mother. To do this, an Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) would be needed.

The ICPC process normally takes at least 6 months, but Dana once again stepped up for Justin and Richie. Dana reached out to the CASA organization in Rhode Island, and a Rhode Island volunteer Advocate became involved, also wanting to help bring the boys back home. The Rhode Island Advocate conducted a preliminary walk through of the home and advised updates that would need to be done prior to the CPS Home Study. Meanwhile, Dana got busy conducting interviews with the mother and others residing in the home. Because of Dana's diligence to the case, the ICPC process remarkably took less than three months.

Dana, CPS and the case attorneys worked together to gain the Judge's permission and establish court procedures for Skype testimony. The boys' mother was one of the first individuals allowed to testify via Skype in Montgomery County. In the end, the Judge agreed with the recommendations put forth and granted the request for Justin and Richie to be returned to their mother.

Never losing sight of her role to find a safe and permanent home for Justin and Richie, Dana kept their best interest at heart. Less than 6 months after coming into care, the boys were escorted by their CPS case worker to their mother's Rhode Island home and back into her arms. Because of Dana's efforts, Justin and Richie can now grow up in a safe and healthy home, surrounded by loving family.



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.

19th Annual CASA Speaks for Kids Gala

Presented by TETRA Technologies Inc.

Saturday, January 25, 2014
The Woodlands Waterway
Marriott Hotel & Convention
Center
6:00 PM

A Night in



There's No Place Like Home

Be prepared to be transported to the magical Land of Oz! Enjoy fine dining while being entertained by an amazing show. The live and silent auctions will offer exclusive and exciting finds sure to delight all who attend.

Come early and try your luck at the games or dance the night away to the energetic sounds of Yelba and the Latin Fire Band.

Become a sponsor, underwrite a part of the evening's fun, donate to the silent or live auctions, and get your ticket now to one of Montgomery County's most elegant evenings for a great cause!

Visit www.casaspeaks4kids.com/gala or contact Cliff Hazel via email: cliff@CASASpeaks4Kids.com or phone: 936-441-5437, Ext. 212 for more information.

Young Professionals for CASA

Member Spotlight: Blake Myers, Vice Chair

When not busy with Young Professionals for CASA, my days are filled with....

My week days consist mainly of working at Aon Hewitt and mentoring new colleagues who join the firm. I always strive to keep a healthy work/life balance by volunteering, playing golf, and visiting family and friends.

I got involved with CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County because....

I want to give back to the community, and what better way than joining a fantastic organization that helps abused and neglected children find a permanent home.

Additionally, I want to be a voice for these kids to raise awareness about child abuse while working to support CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County's capacity to advocate on behalf of children.

As a YPC member, I hope to achieve....

I hope to assist in the successful founding and growth of the Young Professionals for CASA committee. This is a great opportunity to work with other young professionals in community service and fundraising for CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County.

Also, I hope to make new friends with positive energy and a vision for fighting to end the cycle of child abuse.



Blake Myers



When the community comes together

Recently, I attended a magnificent event at WoodsEdge Church, put on jointly by many of our community partners. It was a day of coming together to learn what it means to be a child in foster care, and what we in the community can do about it. The day included plenty of prayer for kids who've been abused, and many stories from heroes who've rescued children or been rescued themselves. There were opportunities to sign up to be a foster or even adoptive parent, to do respite care, to become a mentor, to help with kids aging out, and of course—to volunteer with CASA!

As I write this, I'm still humbled by the great love and practical outreach of people who, like us, really want to help these kids. There's an African proverb that says "When spider webs unite they can tie up a lion". I saw that the other week, as we worked together to tie up the lion of child abuse. Not everyone can adopt kids—but we can all play a part in changing the world for our children in Montgomery County.

To those of you at CASA who've worked together to donate your time, your dollars, your energy, your creativity, your hearts, and sometimes even your sleep—I remind you that you are part of a bigger team in our community who is actively making a difference. Together, we can tie up the lion of child abuse, and we can make life better for our kids and for our community!

Ann McAlpin
Executive Director

Montgomery County Advocate Named Jane Quantan Piper Volunteer of Year

On October 25th, over 71 CASA programs from across the state convened in San Marcos for the annual state conference. That night, more than 2,500 volunteers, staff, and directors watched as the Jane Quantan Piper Volunteer of the Year award was presented to CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County Advocate, Jane Funke.

Named for the founder of Texas CASA, the award recognizes the exceptional work of a CASA volunteer who makes a difference in the lives of abused children.

"When we recruit CASA volunteers, we ask ordinary people to commit to take extraordinary action on behalf of children, infants and teenagers that they've never met," said Vicki Spriggs, Chief Executive Officer of Texas CASA.

"It's a tough job, sometimes heart-wrenching and often thankless. But it is also immensely rewarding for people who really want to make a difference in the lives of children who, through no fault of their own, end up in the foster care system."

Jane's dedication has truly been remarkable. Since 2009, Jane has advocated for 25 children in 11 family groups.

She has tirelessly spoken up for children suffering emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. No matter how egregious or complicated the case, Jane steps up to the plate.

When an unclaimed, unnamed child was found in a trailer after a police drug raid, without hesitation, Jane stepped up. When a case came to CASA with six children in four different locations, five different fathers, without hesitation, Jane stepped up. When already advocating for nine children in seven different locations, another case was presented to the CASA office with no Advocate to take it, and without hesitation, Jane stepped up.

In addition to her work as an Advocate, she is a member of the CASA Volunteer Council and is working on a coloring book which will explain CASA to children.

"Jane exemplifies the mission of CASA and the heart of volunteerism," said Pat Creighton, Program Director of CASA. "She truly believes in CASA and has shown the difference an Advocate can make in the life of a child."



Texas CASA State Conference Awards of Excellence presentation (from L to R): Vicki Spriggs, Jane Funke, Jim Funke, and Ann McAlpin.

Upcoming Events

December

19 Young Professionals for CASA Social - 6:30PM/ please contact Lauren Paine for more information: lauren.paine@aonhewitt.com

January

16 Young Professionals for CASA Social - TBD; 6:30PM

25 CASA Gala 2014 - The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel and Convention Center; 6:30PM. For more information: www.CASASpeaks4Kids.com/gala.html

February

11 Advocate Training Begins - February Advocate training sessions will be on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9AM-4PM. Swearing-in Ceremony will be on Monday, February 24th.

13 Young Professionals for CASA Social - TBD; 6:30PM

19 Closed Case Luncheon- Advocates who have recently closed cases are invited to celebrate their successes and enjoy lunch with CASA Staff.

21 Advisory Council Luncheon - TBD 11:30AM

28 Judge's Brunch - CASA Offices, 10:30 AM

March

4 Advocate Open House- This is an opportunity for prospective volunteers to learn more about CASA and how to impact the life of a child. TBD; 6PM-8PM

13 Young Professionals for CASA Social - TBD; 6:30PM

April

5 Advocate Training Begins - April training sessions will be two Saturdays (April 5th and 12th), and weeknights April 7th through the 10th from 6-9PM. Swearing-in Ceremony will be on Monday, April 14th.

Meet John Wingenbach

New CASA Case Supervisor



Previous Work: Sales for print and advertising
Family: Father of two, grandfather of two, and married 44 years in January
Location: An adopted Houstonian, originally of Buffalo, NY
Other: Lifetime Member of Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo

An active Advocate for over five years, John joins the CASA staff having advocated for over 23 children. He's no stranger to promoting CASA's work either, both speaking at recruitment events and avidly enlisting male Advocates.

John will be partnering with Fawn Dennis in leading the Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC) unit, which is devoted to helping children transition from the foster care system to adulthood.

"CASA has given me a strong sense of giving back," John says, "After a life of printing sales, I now feel like I'm contributing to mankind – not just the community but to all mankind. It's about ensuring a better future through all our kids."

Meet Kim Ayres

New CASA Case Supervisor



Previous Work: Guidance Counselor, Teacher, and Educational Diagnostician
Family: Mother of two, grandmother of two
Location: Native Houstonian
Other: Member of the Fellowship of The Woodlands

After retiring from 30 years in K-12 education, Kim went back to school. While studying family law, professors recommended she volunteer for CASA to gain experience with the court system.

Kim has been an Advocate for the past two years for CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County, but standing up for others is something that came naturally to her prior to volunteering.

"I'm the one who would confront the bullies growing up," says Kim, "I'm the one who would speak up for people."

Joining CASA as a new Case Supervisor, Kim brings the perspective of an educator, expertise operating within the educational system, and experience working with special needs children.

Board Member Spotlight Bill Friebel

By Alli Stephens

When a friend first invited Bill Friebel to become involved with (CASA) Child Advocates over 14 years ago, he had never heard of the organization. Previously serving as a volunteer for Big Brothers, Big Sisters and Junior Achievement, Bill was drawn to CASA as he learned more about their role in speaking up for children in need.

Bill served on the Board for Child Advocates, Inc. in Harris County for 9 years before his career brought him to The Woodlands, and he became involved with CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County in 2008. He was appointed to the CASA Board that same year and over the next 5 years, Bill proved instrumental in the formation of the Advisory Council and CASA Child Advocates' "Technology Taskforce," as well as the development and growth of the Board itself.

Bill previously served as Development Chair, most recently as Chairman of the Board, and is currently the Past Chair. When asked about his biggest accomplishment as Board Chair, Bill responded, "CASA is now serving a greater percentage of Montgomery County's abused children than ever before. We are so close to being able to serve all [Montgomery County] children in need."

Although CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County has grown and changed in countless positive ways under his leadership, Bill continues, "It would be great if no one remembers my name years from now because CASA Child Advocates was no longer necessary...if we had eventually worked ourselves out of existence because we forever broke the cycle of child abuse - one child, one family at a time."



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2013-2014

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Special Thanks

CASA SuperHero 5K - Thank you to our wonderful 5K Race Committee- Gus Nodwell, Ellen Nodwell, Nancy Harris, Cheryl Sellers, Whitney Montgomery, and Kimberly Eich. Thanks to our community for the generous in-kind donations: Luke's Locker, Academy Sports and Outdoors-Conroe, Bayside Printing, Chick-fil-A, Dosey Doe Café, Jerry Built Burgers-The Woodlands, Kroger, Lowe's, Signs Now, Texas Forest Service, The Egg & I-The Woodlands, and Trader Joe's.

Thanks to **Jerry Built Burgers** for donating 10% of every bill following the CASA SuperHero 5K, October 19th to CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County.

Thank you to **Taco USA** for donating a portion of their profits on October 6th, Service Sunday.

Thanks to **America's of The Woodlands** for hosting Young Professionals for CASA Kickoff and providing drink specials and delicious empanadas.

Thank you to **The Woodlands Elite Master Chiefs** for hosting a toy drive benefitting our CASA kids.

Cut-N-Shoot Cowboy Church will be hosting a toy drive during their Cowboy Christmas Ball. Thank you for keeping CASA kids in your thoughts this holiday season.

Thank you to **Woodforest National Bank** for hosting a toy drive on behalf of CASA. Special thanks to Christie Hunt for organizing this initiative!

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

Become an Advocate.

Contact Wanda Smith, email Wanda@CASASpeaks4Kids.com



October Training Class I (from L to R): Brenda Getty, Casey Callham, Andrea Wilcox, Ashley Fehrle, Jim Farrell, Robyn Hass, Joseph Hass, Rebeca Hernandez, Joseph Suga, Kelley Bond, Kimberly Eich, Ron Rush, Tammy Sisson and Thomas Haisten.



October Training Class II (from L to R): Art Castro, Alli Stephens, Carol Seltz, Desiree Blache, Lancelot Chin, Reashelle Williams, Karen Gordon, and Katie Stavinoha.

Congratulations to Advocate Classes of 2013

Alli Stephens
Andrea Wilcox
Angela Pung
Art Castro
Ashley Fehrle
Bonnie Moore
Brenda Getty
Brenda Teas
Brittany Atkinson
Carol Seltz
Casey Callaham
Charlotte Tabarini
Che' Williamson
Chuck Simmons
Courtney Cronkhite
Dave Teall
Debbie Jones
Deborah Kelley
Debbie Stofcheck
Diana Green
Desiree Blache
Genia Osborn
Francis Bourgeois
Gary Fultz
Iona Russell

Jim Farrell
James Pung
Janet Loeffler
Janet Rubio
Jimmy Rye
Joan Floyd
Joseph Hass
Joseph Suga
Joyce Lyle
Judi Barr
Kahne Smith
Karen Gordon
Karen Rye
Karen Vegas
Kathryn Wynns
Katie Stavinoha
Kelley A. Bond
Kimberly Eich
Kimberly Thigpen
Kristin Buck
Laura Preusse
Linda Irvine
Lisa Chagala
Lisa Josefsen
Lancelot Chin

Lori Begin
Lori Blythe
Lydia Lothrop
Nichole McEntire
Nina Dixon
Paige Mann
Pat Evans
Paul McKelvey
Reashelle Williams
Rebeca Hernandez
Bob Evans
Robyn Hass
Ron Rush
Shari Wood
Sharon Howerton
Shelly Lynch
Sherry Lane
Sue Purkis
Susan Canter
Susan Edwards
Tamara Ashmore
Tammy Sisson
Tammy Turner
Thomas Haisten
Wanda Woodworth

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\$6,000 - \$12,000

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Shane and Becky Bayless
Bayside Printing, Inc.
Magnetiks Search Marketing
Terry and Sherry Mayhill

Giving Thanks this Season

By Cliff Hazel

I have had the opportunity to visit with executives representing various corporations the last few weeks to talk about CASA and the vital work that we do for abused and neglected children in Montgomery County. Everyone with whom I have met has been very receptive and interested in our mission. When I explain how our Advocates change children's lives, they are always amazed.

In 2013, we served more children in need, recruited a record number of Advocates, and through the efforts of our state legislators, helped make changes in the law, enabling us to better advocate for children.

All of this, and so much more, was made possible because of you.

During this holiday season of giving, we want to give thanks to all of you. Your gifts of time, talent, and treasure allow wishes to come true for children who need it most. On behalf of the smiles and laughter we were able to provide to children in Montgomery County, thank you. Have a great holiday season. You honor us – you honor children – everyday.

Kroger Community Rewards Program

Kroger is giving up to \$1,500,000 to non-profit organizations this year. Help CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County get its share! It's easy...

If you use your Kroger Rewards card to get the sale price on groceries and earn fuel points already, now all you have to do is register CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County as your "charity of choice". Every time you shop for groceries and swipe your card, the agency will automatically start earning a rebate. (If you do not have a Kroger Plus card, visit the customer service desk at any Kroger store to sign up or visit www.KrogerCommunityRewards.com)

To register online, follow these instructions:

- Visit krogercommunityrewards.com.
- Click on your state under the "Please select your location" column. (If your card is already registered to a different charity, click "Sign In" to access your account and change your charity to CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County.)
- Click the link to "Enroll now for the Kroger Community Rewards Program."
- Sign into your account, or click the link on the right to create an account and follow the instructions for creating an account.
- Designate CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County as your recipient by entering the NPO (Nonprofit) number 80791 and click on "Confirm."

804 CHILDREN IN CPS CUSTODY



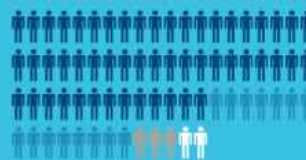
623 CHILDREN SERVED BY CASA



AGE BREAKDOWN OF CASA CHILDREN

0-5 (45%) 6-12 (33%) 13-17 (19%) 18+ (3%)

65 NEW ADVOCATES



15 MALE
3 AFRICAN AMERICAN
2 HISPANIC

CURRENT ADVOCATES 40%

INTERNET / MEDIA 21%

RELIGIOUS ORGS. 7%

TOP SOURCES FOR NEW ADVOCATES

- To verify you are enrolled correctly, you will see CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County's name as the designated recipient.

Remember, purchases will not count for your group until after you register your card(s). Members must swipe their registered Kroger Plus card or use the phone number that is related to their registered Kroger Plus card when shopping for each purchase to count.





CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

Child Advocates of Montgomery County

412 West Phillips
Suite 107
Conroe, TX 77301

www.CASASpeaks4Kids.com
936.441.5437

**Montgomery County Adoption Day
November 20th, 2013**



Montgomery County Adoption Day was held Wednesday, November 20, 2013. This year marked the 9th annual event at the Montgomery County Courthouse and included adoption consummations for 38 children by 26 families.