



The CASA Voice

CASA: Putting Children First June 2015 Issue

CASA For the Highland Lakes Area: Serving Blanco, Burnet,
Lampasas, Llano and San Saba Counties
1719 Ridgeview
Kingsland, TX 78639

CASA Quick Stats

Number of children
being served by our
CASA program today:

202

Number of Active
Volunteers at CASA for
the Highland Lakes
Area:

73

Number of children
currently being served
from each of our
counties:

Blanco - 12

Burnet - 76

Lampasas - 44

Llano - 39

San Saba - 31

In This Issue

Wishes of Hope and Strength	2
Volunteer Spotlight	3
CASA Happenings	3
Applause to Advocates	4
Special Announcements	4
Thank you, Donors	5
CASA Mission/Vision	5
Our mailing list	5

Headline Story: CASA Wishes Hope and Strength to Flood and Tornado Victims and to Child Victims of Abuse and Neglect

Upcoming Events

- **CASA CLASSIC Golf**
Tournament was rained out for May 30th and will now be on June 6th at the Lighthouse Country Club in Kingsland, TX.
- **Pre-Service**
Training for new volunteer advocates begins July 27th. Contact our office to get into this class!
- **Advocates, mark**
your calendars for in-service training on September 17th. The topic will be on locating great foster placements!



Ribbon of Hope

Blanco County relief efforts are underway. If you wish to donate items to the cause than donations can be dropped off at 502 Pecan St. in Blanco, TX. They are particularly in need of mold/mildew type sprays, storage bins with lids, rakes, large sprayers to spray bleach mixtures on walls, packing tape and heavy duty extension cords. Let's keep Blanco County in our thoughts and prayers!



Interested in helping CASA, but can't be an advocate???

Here are some more ways you can help our organization:

1. Help us spread the word about our volunteer program.
2. Donate items from our wish list, or make a monetary donation to CASA. We can now take donations on our website, so check it out! Even \$10 helps more than you know!
3. Help us with a fundraiser.
4. Consider serving on our board of directors. Contact the office for more information.

Interested in Sharing CASA With Your Group or Organization?

Contact the CASA office and we will be happy to come and share what we do. We have spoken to church groups, civic organizations, bible study groups and social groups and we would LOVE to do more! No group is too small!!!! We can also help you plan a "Party with a Purpose"! Contact us!

A Letter from the Executive Director:

CASA Wishes Hope and Strength to Flood and Tornado Victims and Child Victims of Abuse and Neglect

For many, Memorial Day Weekend signifies the beginning of summer, and summer in the Hill Country sure has gotten off to a tragic start. Our hearts go out to all of the flood and tornado victims across the country, but especially in the areas that we serve. Over Memorial Day Weekend rain was coming down in buckets, and storms were all around us. Blanco County, the southern-most county in our service area, received record amounts of rain, which swelled the Blanco River and caused a great deal of devastation for residents in and around Blanco County. While this was going on in the Blanco Area, Lampasas County, our northern-most county, was hit with a tornado that damaged several homes. It is tragedies like these that really put life into perspective and remind us of how fragile human life can be.

The Great Dalai Lama referenced a Tibetan saying when he reported "Tragedy should be utilized as a source of strength." Dalai Lama went on to state "No matter what sort of difficulties, how painful the experience is, if we lose our hope, that's our real disaster." Hope is rising in these areas of devastation as citizens rally together to support and comfort those needing help. Clean-up is underway and rebuilding might be slow, but I am certain that hope and determination will prevail.

Natural disasters, while trying and unfair, are not unlike what child victims of abuse and neglect endure. These children see disaster and devastation in their own homes on a very regular basis - so regularly that, to many children, these everyday disasters become normal to them. Then, when CPS comes in and removes the children from what the child views as "normal" the real disaster begins because the children are removed from what might be scary and devastating, but known, to what is unknown. Their whole world is turned upside down and most do not know how to react or recover. Like those assisting in Blanco and Lampasas Counties, our Volunteer Advocates serve as a light in the darkness for these kids. They provide hope to the hopeless so that hope is NOT lost and so that out of disaster can come strength and beauty.

To all of the flood and tornado victims out there - we are truly sorry for your losses and pray for hope to restore your strength. We at CASA for the Highland Lakes Area hope that each and every one of you have a safe and enjoyable rest of the summer.

Sincerely,

Kristen K. Harris, MSSW

Executive Director at CASA for the Highland Lakes Area

Stand Up for CASA
MASSAGE FUNDRAISER

Ashiatsu Massage is a unique form of massage therapy where expertly trained therapists stand on their clients, comfortably distributing medium to deep pressure, releasing stubborn knots and tight muscles. Fans of Deep Tissue Massage - This is For You!

During the month of May, the Ashiatsu Therapists of the Marble Falls Massage Therapy Center are going to donate \$20 from every 30, 60, or 90 minute Ashiatsu massage service they perform to help give back to an organization that does so much to stand up for the abused and neglected children in our community.

Hosting:
Marble Falls
massage therapy center
2108-A US HWY 281 North
512-289-0219

Benefiting:

CASA FOR THE HIGHLAND LAKES AREA

30 min	\$50
60 min	\$80
90 min	\$120

Help Us Raise \$2,000



Left: Thank you to Marble Falls Massage Therapy Center and for everyone who participated in this fundraiser! Marble Falls Massage Therapy Center raised \$600 for CASA for the Highland Lakes Area, which will help us to train more volunteers over the next several months! Thanks for Standing up for CASA and our CASA kids!!!!



Become a superhero to a child in need and help spread strength and hope! Contact our office to learn about volunteering!

CASA For the Highland Lakes Area



CASA Wish List

Visa Gift Cards for
Teens in Care

Paper Products

Snack Items

Table Top Podium

Conference Table

Used Jet Ski

Trailers - 2 trailers
in good condition for
mobile billboards
that we plan to have
made.

See full wish list
on our website!

CASA Happenings



Above and Right: Judge Mabray with our newest CASA volunteers! Above: Emily Johnson, Terri Behrmann and Cindy Howard. Right: LeeAnn Johnson.



Left: We are sad to see our office manager, Kathryn Stephenson, go. She has taken a new position with the Llano County Attorney's Office. We will miss her, but wish her well!!!! Kathryn plans to continue volunteering with our CASA program, so we will see her around! Below: Juli Gilson talks about personalities at the CASA de Mayo Retreat!



Right: Volunteers enjoy the outdoor group exercise provided by Amy Seguno at the CASA de Mayo Retreat on the Llano River.



Volunteer Spotlight

Meet Soc and Susan Gonzalez!!

CASA Involvement: Susan has been a volunteer with our CASA program for 2 years, but she served as a Dallas CASA prior to moving here. Susan has worked with 16 children during her time with our program. Soc, Susan's husband, joined Susan as a CASA advocate after they relocated to the Hill Country. He has been a CASA advocate for 2 years and has served 4 children on his own since starting with our program, but he also helps Susan with the many children that she works with. They truly are one of our Powerhouse CASA Couples!

What made them decide to volunteer with CASA? Susan decided that volunteering with CASA was something she wanted to do after she retired in Dallas County. She reports that her daughter, who is a prosecutor,



Thank you to Soc and Susan, for all that you do for CASA and for your CASA Kids! Y'all are such an asset to us!

told her more about CASA after Susan saw an ad for CASA volunteers in the Dallas News. After relocating to the Hill Country Soc was inspired by Susan's work with CASA and realized the critical need for male and bilingual advocates in our area. Both of them have been excellent to work with and have made such a difference!

The most surprising thing you've encountered as a CASA: Susan says that she has been surprised and gratified at how highly the court values a CASA Advocate's opinion and also how some of the kids show so much more maturity than the adults in their lives. Soc has been most surprised by the resilience of the children and the dedication of the caregivers who are entrusted with the care of these kids.

Little known tidbits about this wonderful couple: Susan is a retired CPA and is involved with the community volunteer fire dept. She also loves to kayak and play MahJongg. Soc is retired, but enjoys part-time employment. He also enjoys a daily fitness routine, including sculling Lake LBJ. They also have 3 wonderful grandkids!

Applause to Advocates!!!!!!!



Our Advocates do amazing things each and every day. Here are just a few things that we at the CASA office have been amazed about over the past month!!!!!! Let's give each of these volunteers a great BIG round of APPLAUSE!!!!!!

Happy Birthday to Our Advocates and Staff!



Juli Gilson
June 6th

Julie Biggs
June 11th

Karon Justice
June 20th

Deena Weems
June 22nd

Ginner Boswell
June 23rd

Amy Perkins
June 26th

- We'd like to give a big round of applause to **Mike Lubawski**. **Mike** is currently advocating for 3 children on 2 separate CASA cases. One of these cases involves a young boy who needs weekly therapy and **Mike** transports this young boy to all of his therapy appointments and also keeps up with his other duties as a CASA advocate for these children! The child's therapist has found **Mike** to be extremely helpful because **Mike** has invested a lot of time into this case and knows a great deal about the history of the family and the current needs of his CASA kid. The foster mother greatly appreciates the support that **Mike** provides and this young boy is being forever changed in a very positive way by **Mike's** involvement and dedication! Let's give **Mike Lubawski** a big CASA Thank You!!!!!!
- Another round of applause is in order for **Juli Gilson**, who is doing a great job with her 3 CASA kids and has been advocating on behalf of these children regarding their placement. These 3 children were with a relative who could not continue to keep them and **Juli** worked hard to try to find the best alternative possible for these kids. She completed countless hours of research on out of state placements because relatives in Virginia wanted the children, but Virginia's regulations are much different from ours here in Texas and the process was delayed. **Juli** was able to advocate for this placement effectively in court because of all of her work and the children are now on their way to Virginia to be with relatives instead of moving into an unfamiliar foster home!!!! **Juli** also recently helped us with our CASA de Mayo retreat and she led the advocates in a group exercise regarding personalities and how to work with kids who have various personality types. Her presentation was both informative and enjoyable and we certainly appreciate all of the extra time she spends in making sure that our organization and our CASA kids are all well taken care of. Thank you, **Juli!!!!!!**
- We have one last applause, which is bittersweet. Many of you know **Mance Bowden**, who worked here at CASA for the Highland Lakes for some time and has continued to volunteer with us. We are happy for **Mance** because it was recently announced that he has been hired as the Executive Director for CASA of Bell and Coryell Counties. He has made a difference in the lives of so many CASA kids here in our program. He will be missed, but the CASA kids of Bell and Coryell Counties have a great advocate in their corner! Congratulations, **Mance!!!!!!**

Special Announcements

- **CASA Advocates**, we have several new cases where the children are placed out of the area and there is no volunteer assigned to these cases at this time. If you are interested in taking a new case, or even if you normally travel to the locations listed below and can help us cover visits with these CASA kids, please let us know! The case information is as follows for these cases:
Blanco Case - 1 girl, age 4 - placed in Dickinson, TX
Burnet Case - 3 girls, ages 6, 10 and 12 - placed in Corpus Christi, TX
Burnet Case - 1 boy, age 6 and 1 girl, age 4 - placed in Lampasas
San Saba Case - 1 girl, age 1 month - placed in Luling, TX
Lampasas Case - 1 girl, age 13 - placed in Garland, TX
San Saba Case - 2 boys, ages 16 and 12 - placement is not yet known
San Saba Case - 2 boys, ages 3 and 5, placement is currently in Leander, but they may be moved to Houston
- Pre-Service Training for new volunteer advocates will begin on July 27th. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer advocate with our program, please contact our office immediately so that we can start the process of getting you approved for training! Also, if you are interested in supplying snacks or a meal for this class, let us know!
- If you wish to support CASA for the Highland Lakes, monetarily, it is now easier than ever! You can simply make a donation with your credit or debit card on our website at <http://highlandlakescasa.com/ways-help/donate/> If every person in our 5 county service area donated just \$10 to CASA we could provide advocacy for over 800 children in foster care!!!!!! Check out our website for other ways to get involved with CASA for the Highland Lakes Area as well!



CASA For the Highland Lakes Area

Thank You to All of Our Donors!!!! **With Special Thanks to the Following:**

The Church at Horseshoe Bay
Hal and Sue Harton
Anonymous
The Family of Jean Willoughby
Sovren Group - Marble Falls
Christ Redeemer Fellowship - Marble Falls
Flat Creek Enoteca - Marble Falls
Pedernales Electric Co-op United Charities, Inc
Tammi Gripton
Lee S. Keller
Thomas Storey
Ben and Vicki Dewitt
St. Peter's Women's Group

Also, a huge "Thank You" to ALL of our CASA CLASSIC Golf Tournament Sponsors. A complete list of sponsors will be available in our July newsletter, but we sincerely appreciate all of your support!

Our Mission:

The mission of CASA For the Highland Lakes Area is to recruit, train and supervise court appointed volunteers to advocate for children who come into the court system as a result of abuse and neglect. Those volunteers, who serve as

Guardians *ad Litem*, will make recommendations to the court, based on fact finding and investigation, in the best interest of the child.

Our Goal:

That every child that enters into foster care in our 5-County Area continue to be able to be served by our CASA Program. No child should go without a CASA to advocate for their needs!!

Become a CASA today!!!!

Be In The Know: Get the CASA Voice Newsletter!!!!

We are pleased to provide this CASA newsletter each month to all of our CASA Volunteers, Board Members, CASA Friends and supporters!

If at any time you decide that you want to be removed from our email list, please send an email to the following email address and you will be removed from our list:

kristen@highlandlakescasa.com

If you or someone you know would like to be added to our email list, please send a request to the same email address.

We have every respect for your privacy, and we will not share your information with any person on business.