



The CASA Voice

CASA: Putting Children First December 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:

199

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

71

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

Blanco - **16**

Burnet - **67**

Lampasas - **36**

Llano - **55**

San Saba - **25**

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Calendar of Events

- December 5th:
Christmas Party for
the CASA kids.
- December 10th:
Holiday Open House at
CASA for the Highland
Lakes Area. 4-6PM, all
are welcome! See pg 4.
- December 16th: Movie
Day at the CASA
Office. Educational
Videos will be played
all day so that
volunteers can come
and learn more about
how to effectively
serve our CASA kids.
Details on pg 4.
- January 18th: Training
Class for new
volunteers begins.



Christmas should be special for ALL kids, even while many are separated from the only family that they know. At CASA we strive to make Christmas memorable for our CASA kids! Pictured above a young girl served by a CASA advocate gets to visit with Santa at our annual Christmas Party. This photo was taken last year, but the Christmas Party will be held again this weekend! Consider supporting CASA this holiday season and help us make happy memories for our CASA kids!!!



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Merry CASA Christmas: A Letter from the Executive Director!!!

Dear CASA Volunteers and Supporters,

This time of year is so busy for all and today I just want to stop for a moment and reflect on our blessings here at CASA and let you all know how we use what you bless us with to positively impact our CASA kids. Today as I arrived to work I was greeted with a pile of new toys, scarves and hats and goodies for our CASA kids. All of these things were gifts from our wonderful CASA supporters to our CASA kids. This time of year always serves as an amazing reminder to me about the generosity of others here in the Highland Lakes Area. We simply could not provide Christmas for all of the kids we serve without your help and we genuinely thank you all from the bottoms of our hearts for your outpouring of kindness, which will enable us to love on our CASA kids a little more over Christmas.

Yesterday I was driving in the car, listening to Christmas music on the radio. I just love this time of year for many reasons, but Christmas music is one of my favorite things. The song from "The Grinch" came on the radio, the one by Faith Hill called "Where Are You Christmas?" and suddenly I realized how relatable this song is to our precious CASA kids. The Lyrics are as follows:

Where are you Christmas
Why can't I find you
Why have you gone away
Where is the laughter
You used to bring me
Why can't I hear music play
My world is changing
I'm rearranging
Does that mean Christmas changes too
Where are you Christmas
Do you remember
The one you used to know
I'm not the same one
See what the time's done
Is that why you have let me go?

The end of the song is more uplifting because the writer finds Christmas, but what a sad picture the first half of this song paints?! Upon listening to the first half of this song I could not help but think that children in foster care oftentimes feel like they cannot find Christmas and that because of their frequent moves Santa won't find them either. They are filled with sorrow, but longing for holiday laughter. Much like the writer of this song, their world has changed, in fact, it's been turned totally upside down and they've been completely "rearranged" through no fault of their own. They don't feel the same and they often feel that this is all their fault, even though it's not. This is why it's our job at CASA to bring them a little joy and ensure that their Christmas is a memorable one. My hope for all of our CASA kids this season is that they can relate to the end of this song, which goes like this:

If there is love in your heart and your mind
You will feel like Christmas all the time
I feel you Christmas
I know I've found you
You never fade away
The joy of Christmas
Stays here inside us
Fills each and every heart with love

Thank you all for helping us put a little love in the hearts of our CASA kids so that they can feel the joy of Christmas in some way! We are forever grateful!! Merry Christmas to you and yours!

With Warm Regards,

Kristen Harris, Executive Director



CASA Christmas Angels

Gifts from our area Angel Trees have started flowing in and we are so excited at the outpouring of kindness. If you are still interested in choosing an Angel Tree there are Angel Trees at the following locations:

Security State Bank
Marble Falls

Darci's Deli
Marble Falls

American Bank
Kingsland

Ag Extension Office
Lampasas

Grace Fellowship
Lampasas

There are also a number of gift drop off locations and a complete list of these locations is available on our website. You can bring gifts by our office or call our office if you need gifts to be picked up at a particular location.

Thank you to everyone who has helped us to ensure that each child has a gift!!!!

CASA Happenings

The Legacy Banquet was held on November 17th and CASA received the Excellence as a Non-Profit Award. Pictured below are staff and many of our current and former volunteers and board members! We are honored to have received this award and have our wonderful volunteers to thank!!!!



One of our many CASA Angel Trees!



Above:
CASA
dresses as
"The
Incredibles"
for the
superhero-
themed
adoption
day.

Right: The
Judges
dressed the
part also.





Movie Day at CASA!



On December 16th at the CASA office we will be showing educational movies throughout the day. The movies will all address topics that help people to better understand and work with children who have experienced trauma. All are invited to attend. Advocates will receive training hours for their participation.

The schedule is as follows:

10-11:30AM
Sensory Integration

1-2PM
The Neurochemistry of Fear, Pt. 1

2:30-3:45PM
The Neurochemistry of Fear, Pt. 2

6-7:30PM
Children From Hard Places

Popcorn and Drinks will be provided, so come join us for a day at the movies!!!!



CASA for the Highland Lakes Area Holiday Open House

Meet our Staff and find out what CASA is all about

**Bring a friend to introduce to
CASA for the Highland Lakes
for the many**

**Volunteer Opportunities
we have available!**

When:
December 10, 2015
4:00pm – 6:00pm

Where:
CASA for the Highland Lakes
1719 Ridgeway
Kingsland, Texas 78639
325-388-3440

Volunteer Spotlight

Meet Debbie Kane, one of our Kingsland volunteers!!!!

CASA Involvement: Debbie has been an advocate with our CASA program for 1.5 years now and has served 7 kids in 5 different cases since she began. Debbie is, of course, great with her CASA kids, but she also has been a huge source of support for the caregivers with whom these kids have been placed. Debbie is known to go above and beyond in helping the caregivers of her CASA kids navigate the system and meet the needs of the children that they care for on a daily basis.

What Made Debbie Decide to Volunteer with CASA? Debbie reported that her decision to volunteer with CASA was really three-fold. She reported that she has an elderly, crippled friend in San Antonio who volunteers with the CASA program there. Debbie stated that she is amazed that her friend travels all over the "big city" for the sake of her CASA kids and because of her friend's dedication she knew that CASA must be something special. Secondly, Debbie



said that when she started spending more time in Kingsland she was looking to make new friends from this area while also giving back to the community. Lastly, Debbie reports that she loves the idea that she can have a small impact on improving the lives of these beautiful, innocent kids! Debbie is making a BIG impact, not just a small one! We are so blessed to have her as part of our CASA team!!!!

The Most Surprising Thing for Debbie Since Serving as a CASA Advocate: Debbie states that the most surprising thing for her as been realizing just how many grandparents are "stepping up to the plate" to adopt children that cannot be returned to their parents. She adds that she personally cannot imagine "starting all over" with a second family and she feels that these grandparents are the REAL heroes to her.

Little Known Tidbits About Debbie? Debbie can say the alphabet backwards!!!! We told her she may have to prove it ☺





**Happy Birthday to
our Volunteer
Advocates!!!!**



John Saint
December 1st

Jimmie Rushing
December 14th

Susan Maughan
December 19th

Penny Wimberly
December 22nd



Boots and BBQ
February 20, 2016

If you missed it last year you don't want to be left out again this year! Boots and BBQ is now one of our annual events and it is a LOT of fun! It is a BBQ dinner and raffle event with a lot of western and BBQ inspired prizes!!! See you there!!!!

Applause to Advocates!!!!!!!



- Our first applause goes out to **Doris Allen** for helping us to organize the Angel Tree Toy Drive. **Doris** has been incredibly helpful with this project and we could not have gathered so many donations without her help!!!
- Another applause is in order for **Christa Collins**, who was already serving 3 children on 2 separate cases, but came to our rescue when we needed a specially assigned advocate to cover a very difficult case! Thank you, **Christa**, for stepping up to the plate and standing in for yet another child in need!!!!
- Thank you, **Vicki Strevey**, who has been an advocate with us for 6 years and has made a difference in the lives of several CASA kids! **Vicki** is currently serving as an advocate for a young boy in a difficult situation. She has made sure that her CASA kid has a voice and that his situation is under control while she also serves on our board of directors here at CASA. **Vicki** is currently chairing a fundraiser for CASA while ensuring that her duties as an advocate for her young CASA kid are all complete. **Vicki** works hard for our organization and we appreciate all that she does!!!!



Special Announcements

- Our new advocate training class is scheduled to begin on January 18th in Marble Falls, TX. If you know anyone interested in becoming a volunteer advocate, please have them contact our office now to get the process started so that they can begin training on January 18th!
- All volunteers and board members are invited to participate in Painting with a Twist with CASA staff on January 9th in Austin. More information will be coming your way, but save the date if you are interested in having a little fun with CASA and tapping into your creative side!
- 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 at our website at highlandlakescasa.com/ways-help/donate/. If every person in our 5 county service area donated just \$10 to CASA we would have enough money to 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!
- For more updates and information about what is going on in our program, find us on Facebook and Like our Facebook page! Our Facebook link is <https://www.facebook.com/CASAHighlandLakes/>



CASA For the Highland Lakes

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

Hal and Sue Harton
Anonymous
Robert and Nadene Hudson
Jerry and Debbie Pennington
Christ Redeemer Fellowship - Marble Falls
Trinity Episcopal - Marble Falls
Highland Lakes Service League
Jessica Miller
Paceline Collision Systems
Flat Creek Enoteca
Don and Anita Cruver
Ann Holt
Bonilee Key Garrett
Sovren Group of Marble Falls
Douglas Peoples
Darci's Deli - Marble Falls

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.