



FY 2022
**ANNUAL
REPORT**

CASA of McLennan County

Letter from Leadership



Anna Futral

Executive Director

The past fiscal year for CASA included a return to normal in many ways following the worst of the pandemic, as well as opportunities to lean into lessons learned and flexibilities gained, with the goal of enhancing our operations and advocacy.

For the first time since 2019, we hosted our Crawfish for CASA event in person with a sellout crowd, all you can eat, all you should drink, and, of course, high energy entertainment from The Spazmatics. It felt great to bring back the clear community support for this event and for our organization. Let's be honest, Crawfish for CASA is just way, way more fun in person! We are looking forward to another successful event March 31, 2023.



Nick Deaver

Board President

CASA leadership continually evaluates agency priorities, needs, and goals, and has committed to prioritizing organization-wide learning and growth in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion within this new fiscal year. For this season, this commitment is underway in the form of professional consulting and education, a climate and culture assessment of our organization, and executive coaching. Our specific goals for this year include laying a foundation of shared language and adequate understanding to equip the board, staff, and volunteers in our advocacy work, and establishing organizational principles and values that will serve CASA of McLennan County well beyond current staff and board leadership. This work is important, ongoing, and continuous, and we believe the investment and commitment made during this year will greatly inform our path to becoming a diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization.

Through another year of changes in our community and our child welfare system, we are continually grateful for the dedication of our volunteer advocates. These special folks are the heartbeat of our organization, and they provide such care and diligence in their meaningful advocacy for children and families.



MISSION & VISION

MISSION

CASA of McLennan County recruits, trains, and supports volunteers who advocate for the best interest of children in foster care. We seek advocates whose identity and experience mirrors the children we serve, in order to provide informed, quality advocacy in the courtroom and in the community.

VISION

We believe that every McLennan County child brought into the foster care system by abuse or neglect deserves the chance to thrive in a safe and permanent home. For every child who needs us, we envision a Court Appointed Special Advocate.

WHAT IS CASA?

We help ordinary people who want to make a meaningful difference by training and supporting them to advocate for kids in foster care and help keep them from falling through the cracks. Become a CASA and you will make a difference in a child's life – and your own.

CASA Best-Interest Advocacy



THE CASA DIFFERENCE

We know that many of the ways CASA makes a difference in the lives of children and families in crisis is hard to measure. Nevertheless, it is exciting to see the numbers that represent the effect that our work has on the children and families we serve.

110

CASA
volunteers



23,482

Miles driven by
Volunteers



3,773

Hours worked on
cases by Volunteers



269

Children served



134

Families served



257

Supportive donors



1,770

Instances of education,
medical, and legal advocacy



1,357

Contacts with
children



685

Contacts
with families





FAMILIES AND FOSTER CARE COALITION UPDATE

A year ago, CASA began community conversations and a partnership with Prosper Waco, with a focus on launching a Families & Foster Care Coalition for Waco and McLennan County. The dream for this group in those initial conversations and planning efforts was to improve communication among the many excellent agencies, professionals, nonprofits, and ministries already operating in the foster care space, and grow the capacity for service to children and families. CASA leadership has remained integral to this progress and has participated each step of the way.

A year later, our community has come a long way in pursuing our hopes and plans for the Families & Foster Care Coalition, including securing grant funding from the Cooper Foundation, to support a part-time Coalition Coordinator. This was identified as a particular need and next step, to focus the time and effort on a dedicated individual who will actively further connections, educate, increase awareness, engage with faith communities, and work with leaders in the local foster care space to increase community understanding and involvement in foster care.

Quality support and care for children in the foster care system, the foster homes, or relatives who care for them, and the families of origin we hope they can safely return to depends on a community who has rallied around them, understands the challenges and changes, and seeks to serve with empathy and accountability. We believe the Families & Foster Care Coalition is a strong step for our Waco and McLennan County community, and CASA is proud to be involved in this effort.

Any community members who want to participate in or follow the coalition's work can email fostercoalition@prosperwaco.org or follow the Families & Foster Care Coalition on Facebook.

CASA, CLERGY, AND COMMUNITY

CASA of McLennan County participated this past year in the second round of an initiative of Texas CASA called CASA, Clergy, and Community. This initiative aims to build a network of faith communities and leaders that will champion speaking up for local children in foster care and their families. Our goal is to see communities and clergy leaders coming together to live out their calling, be a voice for children who need them, and develop a rich network that engages new volunteers and supporters for the CASA mission. Faith communities are a tremendous resource that CASA programs throughout Texas can turn to. Through this program we can engage, activate, and partner with diverse faith communities to recruit volunteers, as well as to build support for children, their parents, families, foster families, and adoptive families.



In June we partnered with the Families & Foster Care Coalition to host two days of events, networking, a keynote speaker, and tables for community organizations at St. Alban's Episcopal Church. This included an informational interest meeting to form a Faith Outreach team to work toward greater engagement and involvement from local churches and faith leaders in ministries related to foster care. Because of the work that the Families & Foster Care Coalition is also doing to build community engagement and involvement, we are partnering with them to develop this outreach team. We are very excited about what this initiative and partnership can do to support our advocacy work and increase the engagement and involvement of faith communities in our area.





It's Not Just A Rocking Chair

“When I first visited the home, Naomi* couldn’t sit still. She was always moving and very agitated,” said Kimberly Witt, Advocate Supervisor for CASA of McLennan County.

Naomi was removed from her home due to abuse and neglect when she was two and a half years old. For the next year and a half, she went through several different foster families and was kicked out of her school and daycare because of her problems with aggressive and violent behavior. At two and a half years old Naomi had only recently learned to walk and talk. She had barely begun her life but was already experiencing so much difficulty just getting along and making it through each day. What was going wrong? What could be done to help her?

In these early years, developing healthy attachment and emotional bonds with parents or caregivers is crucial for normal social and emotional development. Having adults that respond to an infant or child’s needs allows them to develop a sense of security and safety. This creates a base for the child to explore their world and continue to grow and learn. When children experience abuse and neglect, especially at such young ages and early stages of development, they can have difficulty forming attachments and emotional bonds with their caregivers. Naomi isn’t a bad kid. She just didn’t have the tools to cope with what the world had thrown at her.

We don’t always know the reason or how to help, but every child’s behavior is an attempt to meet a need that they have. In Naomi’s case, she might be needing to feel safety and security. Perhaps her acting out was a way to test whether the adults in her life would stay or leave. We can also imagine that there are a lot of feelings going on for a child who has experienced abuse and neglect, and not had a stable home environment so early on in their life. Without healthy attachment and bonding with caregivers, Naomi also didn’t have the tools to deal with and process these feelings.

Thankfully, Naomi's grandmother, Rose*, was able to bring her into her home at four years old. "It's been very challenging having her at home. It's going to take a while. She had tantrums that lasted an hour and a half to two hours, and she would lose her voice. This happened two or three times a day," Rose explained about the difficulties she has faced providing a home for Naomi.

Rose found that the only thing that would calm Naomi was for her to hold her and rock her. There is research that rocking and swinging stimulate the body's vestibular system which helps alleviate stress and anxiety and helps with sleep and cognitive functions. Because of her age, Rose found it difficult to rock Naomi for longer periods of time. She explained this to her CASA volunteer and asked if there was any way that CASA could help provide a rocking chair since she was unable to afford one herself.

CASA trains ordinary people to advocate for children in the foster care system and help keep them from falling through the cracks. Part of CASA's advocacy work is to notice the needs of the families they serve and advocate for ways that those needs can be met. In this case, CASA used funds earmarked for direct needs to purchase a rocking chair for Rose.

"Since that rocking chair came and when I started rocking her, we haven't had any tantrums in two weeks. I never knew it could make such a difference. She's healing now, and I can talk to her and work with her now," Rose shared, getting emotional about the difference this piece of furniture made for her. "It's not just a rocking chair. It's the stuff she never got from her parents. That rocker is huge and opened the door to let her love me."

*All names have been changed to protect privacy



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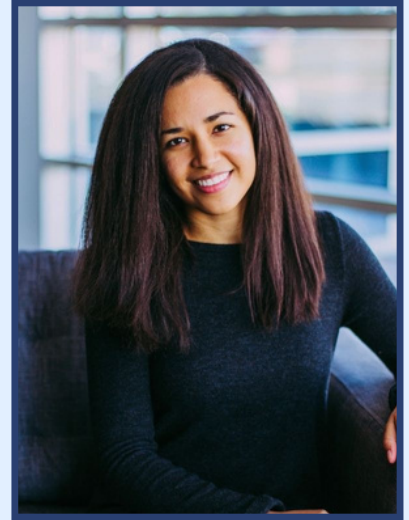
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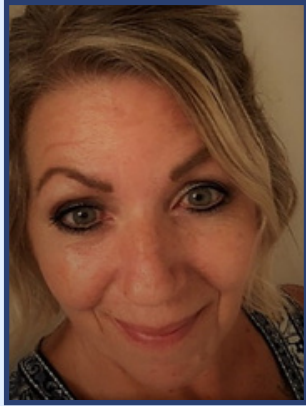


Shemia Rodriguez
Program Assistant

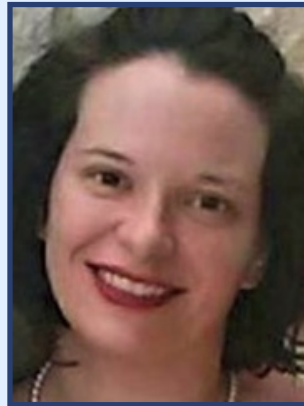
CASA Staff



Tara Ashworth
Advocate Supervisor,
Collaborative Family Engagement
(CFE) Coordinator



Rhonda Ayers
Advocate Trainer



Sonya Cooper
Advocate Supervisor,
New Supervisor Mentor



Trena Goldsmith
Advocate Supervisor



TiEsha Irby
Advocate Supervisor



John Moorman
Advocate Supervisor,
Legislative Advocacy Team (LAT)
Liaison



Kimberly Witt
Advocate Supervisor

SUPPORTERS OF CASA

SPECIAL THANKS! \$20,000 AND ABOVE

Baylor Kappa Alpha Theta

Cooper Foundation

Bernard & Audre Rapoport Foundation

CHAMPIONS \$5,000 - \$15,000

Ascension Providence

United Way of Waco-McLennan County

TFNB Your Bank For Life

Waco Theta Alumnae

PROTECTORS \$1,000-\$5,000

Alexandra Jones Adesina
Airport Transportation of Waco
American Bank
Atmos Energy
Melanie Bauer
Baylor University
Bird Kultgen Ford
Sally Bledsoe
Bowen Family Foundation
Tom & Helen Chase
Clark Roofing & Construction
Community Bank & Trust
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Nick Deaver

DuPuy Oxygen
First National Bank of Central Texas
Bryan Fonville
H&B Packing
Jordan Hannah
Nancy Harrison
Holy Ship Giving Fund
Insurors of Texas
John Houston Custom Homes
JRBT
July Business Services
Magnolia
Eddie & Sharron Odom
Helena Pinson

Erik Romanov
Scanes Yelverton & Talbert LLP
Sport Clips Haircuts
STRATA Trust Company
T&W Tire, LLC
The Ray & Ellen Deaver Charitable Trust
Waco State Employees Charitable Campaign
Waco Syrian Lebanese Association
Waco Towing & Wrecker
Walmart Return Center 9153
Wardlaw Claims Service
Bob and Nicole Woodard

VOICES \$500-\$1,000

Alpha Lambda Delta Academic Honor Society at Baylor University
Bears Subs II LLC
Camille Johnson Group, LLC
Ann & Jay Campbell
Central Texas Buick Pontiac GMC Dealers
Chad Latino DDS
Chiparoc LLC
Mandi DuPuy
Virginia DuPuy
Georgio's
Gilliam Contracting, Inc.
Scott Grimes
Michelle Hetherington
Home State County Mutual Insurance Group
Emily Iazzetti
Independent Financial

Kasparian Underground, LLC
Karen Keith
La Fiesta Restaurant
Marty Land
Scott Livesay
Lonestar Truck Group
Martinez & Martinez Law Firm
Mark & Jennifer McCuniff
McLennan County Young Lawyers Assoc.
Mike Mellina
Karen Melton
Paul and Jane Meyer Family Foundation
Milam & Fanning, PLLC
Carol Miller
Mark Mitchell
Andrea Owen
Deborah & Jim Peevey

Reagan Ramsower
Stephen Rispoli
Specialty Restoration of Texas
Marissa Stovall
Christina Swanson
Tailhunter Sportfishing
Rudy Tisdale
Eric Vrba
Walmart Corporate Foundation
Jennifer Whitlark
Wolfe Florist
Women Information Network Nafe
Debbie Wright-Hood
Zeta Tau Alpha



YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

1. ADVOCATE

Once screened and highly trained, CASA Volunteers are appointed by judges to represent and advocate for a child's best interests in the child protection system. CASA volunteers are each assigned to help one child or set of siblings at a time, so they can focus on giving that child or sibling group the individualized advocacy and attention they need.

Go to **becomeacasa.org** to get started!

2. NOMINATE

Spread the Word! *Sign up for our email newsletter, follow us on social media, and most importantly tell your friends and family about the critical work that CASA does to serve children and families in crisis in our community. Know someone who would make a great CASA?*

Nominate them by going to **nominateacasa.org**.

3. DONATE

As our organization continues to grow its capacity to serve every child in McLennan County that needs a CASA, we will have to grow our sources of income to pay for the staff and resources that make that possible. YOU can join us in reaching that goal by becoming a donor.

Go to **casaforeverychild.org/give**
to give today!

Connect With Us

To learn more visit www.casaforeverychild.org



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CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

MCLENNAN COUNTY

Make a Difference in a Child's Life!

1208 N 5th St. Waco, TX 76707 | casaforeverychild.org | (254) 304-7982
