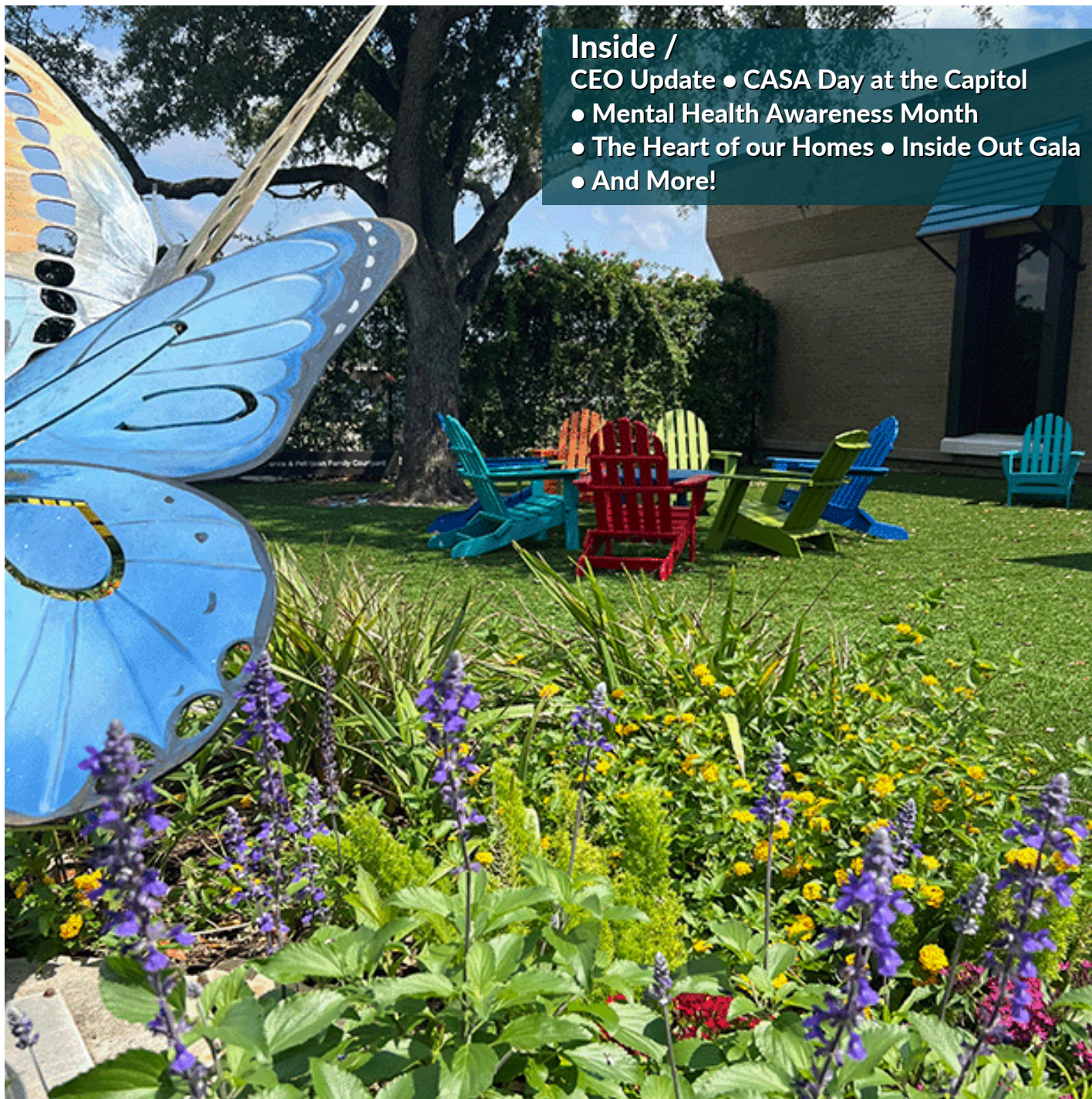


The VOICES of

CHILD **ADVOCATES** OF FORT BEND™



Inside /
CEO Update • CASA Day at the Capitol
• Mental Health Awareness Month
• The Heart of our Homes • Inside Out Gala
• And More!

May 2025

contents

NEWS + FEATURES

3 FROM THE CEO

CEO Ruthanne Mefford shares what we are up to this month

4 CASA DAY AT THE CAPITOL

Learn what we did and why it matters

7 FEATURE STORY

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Supporting Healing at the Children's Advocacy Center

8 CELEBRATING THE HEART OF OUR HOMES

Honoring Mothers and Mother Figures in Fort Bend County

11 HONORING OUR HEROES

Military Appreciation Month

12 INSIDE OUT GALA SPOTLIGHT

It's a wrap... read all about it!

17 MONTHLY SPOTLIGHTS

updates on training, NEW staff and MORE!...

24 NEEDS + OPPORTUNITIES

Check out what we need this month and how you can help us

27 SAVE THESE DATES

Save these dates and plan to join us for these upcoming events

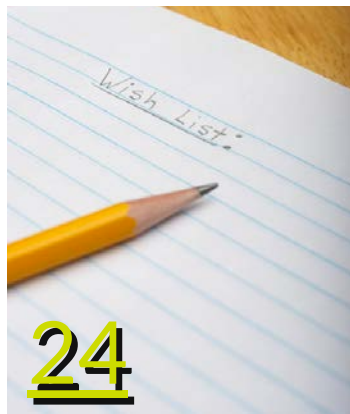


Keeping you informed on our mission:

Strengthen the Child's Voice, Heal the Hurt, and Break the Cycle of Abuse and Neglect for Children and Families in Fort Bend and surrounding counties.



INSIDE OUT GALA SPOTLIGHT



NEEDS + OPPORTUNITIES



5403 AVENUE N
ROSENBERG, TX 77471
281-344-5100



WWW.CAFB.ORG



from the ceo

It's National Foster Care Month. . .

Welcome Friends,

We kick off our May edition of VOICES Newsletter by recognizing this month as National Foster Care Month. This is a time to raise awareness about the needs of children and youth in the foster care system and to celebrate the dedication of foster parents and others who support these children. The month also serves as an opportunity to highlight the human stories of foster care and break down barriers surrounding the issue. There are currently more than 400,000 children in foster care in the country and more than 28,000 children in foster care in Texas. This month, it's important to recognize foster parents and families, the children who are currently in the foster care system and those young people who are preparing to leave foster care. It's critical that the many people in these children's lives work collaboratively to listen to children and understand their needs, to engage youth in their own plans, to create lifelong connections and to work with the children's families of origin, teachers, medical professionals and child welfare professionals to ensure the

wellbeing of these children. CASA Advocates are a key resource to facilitate this collaboration, to engage family members, to work towards family reunification when possible, and to strengthen the child's voice in the courtroom so that the best interests of these children are understood, acknowledged and actualized. May is also National Mental Health Month and CAFB provides a variety of trauma therapies and mental health services to our children and families. May is Mother's Day and we appreciate all the mothers and grandmothers in our lives and in the lives of the children we serve. The mother-child relationship is a fundamental cornerstone of children growing up healthy and happy. We salute our mothers and thank you for your love and support. Happy Reading!

For the Children's Sake,

Ruthanne

Ruthanne Mefford, CEO





CASA Day at the Capitol

By Aly Ferrante, CASA Program Director

Child Advocates of Fort Bend had the opportunity to attend CASA Day at the Capitol on March 27, 2025. On this day, CASA Programs from around the state travel to Austin to meet with their respective legislators. Child Advocates of Fort Bend had meetings with the offices of Representative Suleman Lalani, Senator Borris Miles, Senator Joan Huffman, Representative Ron Reynolds, Representative Gary Gates, Representative Stan Kitzman, Senator Lois Kolkhorst, and Representative Matt Morgan to advocate for bills that will provide critical funding and support for families involved with the child welfare system and the programs that serve this vulnerable population.

Texas CASA has outlined its funding priorities for the 89th Texas Legislative Session, focusing on enhancing support for children and families involved in the child welfare system. These priorities aim to strengthen services, improve

outcomes, and ensure the safety and well-being of vulnerable populations.

1. Support for Local CASA Programs

Texas CASA advocates for increased funding to support local CASA programs, which are essential in providing volunteer advocacy for children in foster care. Specifically, the organization requests:

- An additional \$1.5 million in biennial funding under the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to cover the costs associated with implementing fingerprint-based background checks for CASA volunteers and staff, as mandated by HB 4123 from the 88th Legislative Session.
- \$62 million in general revenue for the Office of the Governor's Trusted Programs to maintain level funding for Victims of crime.

-cont'd



- Continued funding of \$643,600 for Family Finding/Collaborative Family Engagement under the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to support efforts in connecting children with permanent family placements.

2. Family Preservation and Reunification

Texas CASA supports policies and funding that promote family preservation and reunification, aiming to minimize the time children spend in foster care. Priorities include:

- Funding for additional family preservation services, such as evidence-based parenting programs, in-home wrap-around services, and behavioral health and substance use treatment.
- Increased funding for post-adoption supports to provide stability and prevent foster care reentry.
- Policies and funding efforts to increase mental health services in communities, particularly in rural areas, to support both children and families.



3. Safe and Stable Placements

Ensuring children have access to safe, stable placements in their communities is a priority. Texas CASA advocates for:

- Support for the successful implementation of the Texas Child-Centered Care System (T3C), which is beginning its rollout in our region.
- Ongoing monitoring of the number of children without placement and the policy solutions being implemented by DFPS.
- Efforts to keep children placed close to their home communities and improve processes to locate at-risk youth who run away from their placements.
- Policies aimed at preventing case dismissal when children are on runaway status.

-cont'd



4. Support for Kinship Caregivers

Texas CASA emphasizes the importance of supporting relative caregivers and advocates for:

- Increased daily reimbursement rates for kinship caregivers.
- Expanded access to concrete services, childcare, and respite care for kinship caregivers.
- Implementation of new licensing standards for relative or kinship foster family homes in Texas.
- Expansion of Kinship Navigator programs to provide caregivers with information, education, and referrals to a wide range of services and supports.
- Streamlining and improving the licensing process to allow more kinship caregivers to become licensed foster parents and receive full state and federal foster care benefits.

5. Support for Older Youth in Foster Care

To assist older youth in foster care and those transitioning out, Texas CASA supports:

- Increased funding for events, education, and other programming for youth preparing to exit foster care.

- Increased funding for post-secondary education activities, including transportation to college campus events across Texas.
- Higher rates for supervised independent living programs for young adults in extended foster care.
- Removal of the requirement to be age 25 to secure the tuition waiver for youth who exit foster care at 18, as recommended by DFPS and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.
- Removal of the requirement that a young person must have been adopted or in Permanent Managing Conservatorship on or after 2009 to access the tuition and fee waiver for youth who experienced foster care.

These funding priorities reflect Texas CASA's commitment to enhancing the child welfare system and supporting the needs of children and families across Texas.

If you are interested in reading further about each bill, visit the following link: [Bill Tracker - Bill Tracker](#)





FEATURE STORY

Mental Health Awareness Month

Supporting Healing at the Children's Advocacy Center

By Jheri Walters, LCWS-S

Every May, we pause to recognize Mental Health Awareness Month—a time to talk openly about emotional well-being and the support that helps us through life's hardest moments. At the Children's Advocacy Center, we have the privilege of walking alongside children and families who've been through trauma, helping them find safety, strength, and hope.

Our mental health team uses several approaches to support healing, always starting with where the child is and what they need most. One of the core therapies we offer is **Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)**. It's a mouthful—but at its heart, it's about helping kids make sense of what happened, learn new ways to cope, and reconnect with the people who care about them.

We also offer **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)**—a gentle but powerful therapy that helps kids reprocess painful memories so they don't feel so big and

scary anymore. For some children, especially those who struggle to put their trauma into words, EMDR can be a game-changer.

For children who have engaged in **problematic sexual behaviors (PSB)**, we provide **Phase-Based Treatment**—a structured, therapeutic approach designed to help them understand boundaries, develop empathy, and learn safe, respectful behaviors. These children often come from backgrounds of trauma themselves, and with the right support, they can develop healthy boundaries and emotional attachments.

As the author Brené Brown reminds us, "Owning our story and loving ourselves through that process is the bravest thing that we'll ever do." This Mental Health Awareness Month, we honor the bravery of the children who walk through our doors—and the dedication of the therapists who walk beside them.

Recovery is possible. And at the Children's Advocacy Center, recovery truly happens here.





Celebrating the Heart of Our Homes:

Honoring Mothers and Mother Figures in Fort Bend County

By Sandra Glenn & Dana Mersiovsky

May is a time to reflect, recognize, and uplift the incredible women who shape our lives with unconditional love, strength, and compassion—our mothers and the mother figures who guide us. At Child Advocates of Fort Bend, we celebrate the powerful role that mothers and caregivers play in nurturing and protecting children. They are the heartbeat of our homes and the everyday heroes who inspire resilience, courage, and kindness.

In Fort Bend County, we are surrounded by amazing women – mothers, grandmothers, aunts, foster moms, CASA volunteers, mentors, and caregivers—who show up day after day, often sacrificing their own needs to ensure the well-being of the children in their care. We honor you, and we thank you.

As one foster mother so beautifully shared:

"Motherhood looks different for me, but the love is the same. Each child who enters my home brings their own story—and I'm here to remind them they're worthy of love, safety, and belonging."

– Mrs. L., Foster Mom of 4

Honoring Every Role

At CAFB, we also want to recognize that not all mothering roles look the same—and not every Mother's Day feels easy. To those who are missing their moms, navigating loss, or healing from complex family relationships, we see you. Your strength is just as worthy of celebration.

[-more](#)



And to the foster mothers, CASA volunteers, social workers, educators, and neighbors who show up to love, protect, and uplift children—you are mother figures in the truest, most impactful sense of the word.

Join Us in the Celebration

This Mother's Day, help us spotlight the incredible women who nurture, protect, and inspire our children.

- Share a message of gratitude on social media and tag @CAFB_TX
- Post a photo with your mom or mother figure and tell us how she has impacted your life
- Use the hashtag #MomsOfFortBend so we can celebrate together!
- Let's flood our feeds—and our hearts—with love for the women who do it all.

Happy Mother's Day from all of us at Child Advocates of Fort Bend!

Fun & Innovative Ways to Celebrate the Mother Figures in Your Life

Looking for fresh ways to celebrate the amazing moms and mother figures in your life this May? Here are some meaningful and creative ideas:

- **"Love Letter Garden" Project**

Have children write heartfelt notes or draw pictures for their moms or caregivers and plant them on sticks in a flower pot. Each "bloom" carries a message of love.

- **Memory Jar Craft**

Fill a jar with favorite memories or reasons you love her. Add a touch of sparkle and ribbon, and it becomes a treasured keepsake.

- **Breakfast in Bed... Delivered by Kids!**

Let the kids take the lead (with a little supervision!) in preparing and serving breakfast in bed. Add a handmade menu and a fresh flower for a sweet touch.

- **Mom & Me Creative Day**

Visit a local art studio, take a pottery class, or spend the day painting canvases together. Bonus: You get memories and masterpieces!

- **Shoutout Wall of Fame**

Create a "Mother Figures Wall of Fame" at your school, workplace, or community center with photos and short blurbs about what makes these women special.

- **Plant It Forward**

Celebrate by planting a tree or flowers in honor of a mother figure. It's a lasting symbol of her love and impact on your life.

- **Open Mic Night: Moms Edition**

Host a family-friendly event where kids (and grownups!) can read poems, sing songs, or share stories celebrating their moms and mentors.

"Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can."

– Arthur Ashe

Mother's Day can be a particularly challenging time for children who are separated from their mothers or grieving their loss. This day, often filled with celebrations and family gatherings, can amplify feelings of loss, abandonment, and trauma. Understanding and addressing these emotions through a trauma-informed lens is crucial for supporting these children.

The key principles of trauma-informed care include **Safety, Trustworthiness and Transparency, Peer Support, Collaboration and Mutuality**, and **Empowerment**.

What does this look like?

- **Acknowledge Their Feelings:**

Validate their emotions and let them know it's okay to feel sad, angry, or confused. Please encourage them to express their feelings in a safe and supportive environment.

- **Create a Safe Space:**

Provide a quiet, comforting space where they can retreat if the day becomes overwhelming. This can help them feel secure and supported.

- **Encourage Remembrance:**

Allow children to honor their mothers in a way that feels meaningful to them. This could include creating a memory box, writing a letter, or participating in a special activity that reminds them of their mother.

- **Offer Supportive Activities:**

Engage children in activities that promote healing and connection, such as art therapy, journaling, or mindfulness exercises. These activities can help them process their grief and find moments of peace.

- **Provide Consistent Support:**

Ensure that children have access to consistent and reliable support from caregivers, therapists, and other trusted adults. This stability can help them feel more secure and less isolated.



Honoring Our Heroes: Military Appreciation Month in Fort Bend County

By Sandra Glenn

At Child Advocates of Fort Bend, we believe in honoring those who dedicate their lives to protecting and serving others. This May, during **Military Appreciation Month**, we celebrate and recognize the brave men and women of Fort Bend County who have served or continue to serve in the United States Armed Forces.

Service members embody the values of courage, dedication, and sacrifice—principles that resonate deeply with our mission to advocate for children who have experienced abuse and neglect. Just as our military stands guard to protect our country, we stand committed to protecting and empowering the children of our community, ensuring they have the safety, stability, and support they deserve.

A Community of Service

Fort Bend County is home to countless military personnel, veterans, and military families who continue to make a difference beyond their time in uniform. Many of these heroes bring their sense of duty and leadership into their communities, mentoring children, supporting local nonprofits, and advocating for a brighter future for the next generation.

This Military Appreciation Month, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to all active-duty and former service members, reservists, veterans, and military families for their sacrifices and unwavering commitment to our country.

Ways to Show Your Appreciation

We encourage our community to come together to recognize our local service members. Here are a few meaningful ways to show your support:

- **Say Thank You** - A simple “thank you for your service” can go a long way.
- **Support Military Families** - Offer assistance, whether through a kind gesture, a meal, or childcare help.
- **Attend Military Appreciation Events** - Show support by participating in local parades and ceremonies.
- **Volunteer for a Veteran or Military Organization** - Many service members continue to serve in civilian life. Partner with them in community service.
- **Encourage Veterans and Service Members to Share Their Stories** - Listening is one of the greatest ways to honor their experiences.

Standing Together for a Stronger Future

At Child Advocates of Fort Bend, we recognize the importance of service in all forms. Whether in the military or in advocacy, our collective efforts create safer, healthier environments for children and families in Fort Bend County.

To all the service members and military families in our community—we honor you, we appreciate you, and we thank you for your sacrifice, your bravery, and your dedication to protecting others. Your strength and service inspire us every day.

SPOTLIGHT



WOW what a special night we had at our Inside Out Gala.

The Marriott was packed with over 650 guests and volunteers. We were treated to a beautiful performance from dancers from Cookie Joe's Dancin' School, an acapella version of the Star-Spangled Banner from Oma Ikoma, music and dancing from DJ C-Love and pure JOY from all who were there.

This is the biggest fundraiser for our agency to help fund programs and services for the children and families we serve. It takes all the community to make this happen - and BOY did they help make it happen.

We give special thanks to these generous individuals and companies for their extra support which helped the event run smoothly: Eileen Akerson, All Star Storage, Michelle Cano, Cookie Joe, Cookie Joe's Dancin' School, Mary Favre, Michele Fisher, Liz Furman, Bev & Rick Martinez, Jill Paquette, Stefanie Pride, Annie Rippitoe, Nancy Schultz, Pat Somers, and Lisa Ybarra

Special thanks to ALL the incredibly generous auction donors and to the Inside Out Gala Sponsors.

Thank You Sponsors!

Imagination Presenting Sponsors

Exchange Club of Sugar Land
OCuSOFT, Inc.

Memories

Classic Chevrolet Sugar Land & Houston Chevy Area Dealers
Mike & Polly Hrebenar
Lynne & Aaron Spiwak **STAGE & ENTERTAINMENT SPONSOR**

Friendship

Pamela Printing **SPONSORSHIP KIT**
Paul and Manmeet Likhari
Onyx Supply Solutions **PHOTO BOOTH**
Razorback Direct Oilfield Solutions and Services LLC **AUCTION TAKE HOME BAG**
The Thankful Ones **AUCTION PADDLE**

Honesty

Narmin & Naushad Kermally **LIVE AUCTION**
Jill & Sandy Curtis **SIGNATURE COCKTAIL**
Sewell Audi Sugar Land **VALET**

Joy

Farha Ahmed, Attorney at Law PLLC
Eileen Akerson
Alings Chinese Bistro
Amegy Bank **MISSION BANNER**
Dr. Betty Baitland **MISSION BANNER**
BGE, Inc.
Chiang/Meyer Law Firms **MISSION BANNER**
Douds, King, McClellan, Somers **MISSION BANNER**
Early McClintic & McMillan, LLP **SOCIAL MEDIA**
Exchange Club of Fort Bend
Frost Bank **MISSION BANNER**
Susan & Rick Greer
Sue & Mike Hilliard
Maggy Horgan **SOCIAL MEDIA**
Hunt Law Firm
Grayle & David James
Johnson Development
Kinetic
KW Southwest
Tommy & Rhonda Kuykendall

Linebarger, Goggan, Blair & Sampson
Todd & Julianne Maguire
Suzy Morton & Dell Toelkes
Entech Civil Engineers, Inc.
Jason & Hanni Nelson
OakBend Medical Center
Nancy & Pete Olson / Patti & Gary Tuma
Primeway FCU
Rejuven8 Medical
Charles Schwab **SOCIAL MEDIA**
Charlene & Bruce Smith **MISSION BANNER**
Stellar Bank
Sterling McCall Lexus
May & Lindsey Tape / Christy & Larry Willman
University of Houston
John & Jolene Vanderzyl
Nizar & Shiroz Virani
David & Renee Vogelsang
Tracy Walker State Farm Insurance Agency

"Inside Out" Gala - It's About Emotions

By Lisa Moore

You may wonder how we choose the creative themes for our Galas. A lot of thought goes into it each year and we tie it to our mission. We just held our 25th annual Gala and the theme was Inside Out based on the movies which highlight the many emotions of a young girl named Riley - with colorful and whimsical characters depicting these emotions. Leading the charge is the exuberant bright yellow Joy with her optimism and energy. But Joy is in opposition to the bespeckled blue Sadness with her melancholy, downturned face. Rounding out the emotional team is an intense, raging red Anger, the jittery purple Fear, a bright orange Anxiety overwhelmed by stressful situations and a blushing pink Embarrassment hiding under his blanket. As Riley faces her daily challenges, her emotions become memories stored as colored orbs sent into long-term memory each night and as "core memories" which are often in conflict with each other.

Joy acts as the leader and tries to limit Sadness's influence. But Sadness prevails when Riley moves across the country from her beloved childhood home and is lonely, homesick and embarrassed when she is seen crying in class. With Joy and Sadness in conflict, they eventually overtake each other during a struggle. In their absence, Anger, Fear and Disgust step in but the results are disastrous, distancing Riley from her parents and making her even more isolated, alone and scared. . Over the next year as Riley navigates her new life in a new school in a new city, Joy and Sadness work together to



create a new core memory that is both happy and sad. Eventually, Riley adapts to her new home, makes new friends and acquires new hobbies. Her core memories contain a mixture of emotions working together as a team.

"Inside Out" is an analogy for the complex, often colliding, emotions that our children at Child Advocates of Fort Bend experience as victims of sexual abuse, physical abuse or neglect. When children's lives at these young ages should be filled with Joy and love, these emotions are challenged and often overtaken by debilitating Sadness or intense emotions of Fear or Anger.

1 in 6 children in the state of Texas will experience sexual abuse by the age of 18 years old - and the vast majority of these children, over **90%**, know their abuser - often a father, stepfather or family friend. These are adults that the child loves and trusts, and yet they also hurt them. A child may be torn between feelings of love . . . and shame, embarrassment, anxiety and depression.

We know from trauma research that when adverse childhood experiences happen to children at these young ages, they can have lifelong effects. These children are **200 - 300x** more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, PTSD and serious mental health disorders throughout their lives which in turn can give rise to far higher rates of physical disease.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

At Child Advocates of Fort Bend, we transform these children's lives.

From Sadness and loneliness for a little boy in foster care who has been placed in a foster home away from everything that was familiar, we provide a CASA Volunteer - to walk with him on his journey so that he can



go to school and achieve, make friends, and ensure his voice is heard by the judge. Although this little boy might still have some Sadness for what happened to him in the past, it is now complimented by Joy for having his CASA there for him when he needs her the most.

From Fear and Anxiety for a little girl who has been sexually abused by her uncle and told that she's going to be taken to a place where she'll have to tell an adult what awful things happened to her, we provide a nature-filled playroom with a blanket and teddy bear for her to hold and a furry, four-legged therapy dog to hug- and gradually, she relaxes and feels like she's a kid again and it's going to be okay.



"because I love it here."

We provide a team of professionals in our Children's Advocacy Center who listen to her in her forensic interview, validate her in therapy, and advocate alongside her in the courtroom as she faces her abuser and tells the judge and jury what her uncle did to her.

At Child Advocates of Fort Bend, we recognize the complexity of emotions that our children experience at such young ages. We introduce opportunities to feel positive emotions to replace the negative ones that prevent them from moving past their abuse. We help them learn to trust adults again, to connect with people again, and most importantly to love themselves. We help children rebalance these conflicting emotions through evidence-based trauma care so that their core memories contain the full complement of emotions that can work together for recovery and lifelong health.

A couple of weeks ago, a little 9-year-old boy graduated from his therapy sessions and wanted to paint a rock to place in our Wellness Garden. He painted "Love" in bright colors and when our therapist asked him why, he said, "because I love it here."

Talk about JOY!





monthly spotlights

updates on training, NEW staff and MORE!



Child Abuse Prevention Town Hall

Child Advocates of Fort Bend was honored to participate in this community outreach event to kick off Child Abuse Prevention Month in Fort Bend County. The Honorable Argie Brame, 434th District Court, led a panel discussion of child welfare providers to help the community understand the signs of child maltreatment and how community members can be active in keeping children in Fort Bend County safe.

Presenters included:

The Honorable Monica Rawlins, 328th District Court; Jessica Ramos, Assistant District Attorney, FBCDA's Office; Dana Mersiovsky, Outreach and Prevention Manager, Child Advocates of Fort Bend.

STAFF UPDATE



Welcome Jessica L. Dixon Therapist

My name is Jessica Dixon and I am a Licensed Master Social Worker, currently in supervision to obtain clinical licensure. I graduated with my Bachelor's in Social work from the University of Houston Downtown in 2020 and received my Master's in Social Work from Stephen F. Austin State University in 2024. I specialize in working with children and adolescents addressing effects of trauma, life transitions, low self-esteem, stress, anxiety and depression. I was drawn to Child Advocates of Fort Bend because of our shared commitment of eradicating child abuse. The organization's mission aligns perfectly with my values, and I am truly excited to contribute to this vital cause. I consider this role to be the realization of my professional aspirations. Outside of CAFB, I enjoy spending quality time with my two daughters (#girlmom) and my 5 fur babies.



Welcome Deidra Lyons-Lewis - Training Specialist

My name is Deidra Lyons-Lewis. I am a retired educator passionate about volunteering with CAFB, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and the Grambling Alumni Association-DLW Chapter. I am a board member of the Fort Bend County Child Welfare Board.

I have volunteered with CAFB as a CASA for several years and have always wanted to be a part of the transformation that delivers on healing the hurt as an employee.

I love to laugh, help others, play with my dog, Jaxxon, and spend quality time with my family and friends, but especially with my son, Jordan.

Are you interested in joining our team? We have openings.
Click [here](#) for more information or to apply today.

STAFF UPDATE



Welcome Claudia Ramos Program Innovation Lead

My name is Claudia “Cloudy” Ramos, and I’m so excited to be joining the team here at Child Advocates of Fort Bend! I spent nearly fifteen years as a teacher and reading interventionist. I have always been drawn to work that empowers and uplifts children, so transitioning to this role felt like a natural next step.

Outside of work, I love getting lost in a good book—especially fantasy, horror, and thrillers—and am totally down for a book club. I also enjoy walking, yoga, and spending time with my family and my two spoiled chocolate labs, Bain and Willow. When I’m not chasing after them, I’m probably watching a documentary or settling in for a good horror film.

I’m looking forward to being a part of this amazing team and all the great work being done here!



Jamie Schuerg Therapist

My name is Jamie Schuerg, and I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker from Houston, Texas. I’m returning home after living in Waco for 6 years and a short stint in Austin. I attended Baylor University for both my BSW and MSW with a focus on clinical mental health in children and families. I’ve had experience working with children and families in schools, private practice, and community mental health.

I enjoy spending time with my family at our bay house and snuggling with my dog. If I’m not working at my full-time job, I am almost always taking or teaching a Pure Barre class. I am excited to be closer to home and working with CAFB!

*Are you interested in joining our team? We have openings.
Click [here](#) for more information or to apply today.*



FRIENDS SPRING FLING

New friends and longtime supporters gathered at the home of Pat & Brad Somers on Thursday, April 10, for a lively social event while deepening their understanding of how membership dollars directly impact children served by CAFB.

One of the most impactful moments of the evening came through a role-play exercise, where guests gained insight into the experience of a child in the Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program. This interactive activity provided a glimpse into the challenges and uncertainties faced by children navigating the child welfare system.

To become a member of FRIENDS or learn more contact **Pat Somers** at Tootsomers@gmail.com or [click here](#)



SIENNA PLANTATION'S RUN FOR THE ROSÉ 5K

The second annual Sienna Run for the Rosé 5K was held on Saturday, April 12th. Over 1,000 runners, walkers and their fan squads participated in this community wide event. Participants donned their best Rosé attire - tutus and pink bling included.

Child Advocates of Fort Bend was proudly named the beneficiary of proceeds from the event. Thank you Johnson Development-Sienna for your dedication and support of our mission. We are grateful.



FUNDING UPDATE FROM NATIONAL CASA

Every day, local CASA programs across Texas stand up for children who've been placed in foster care through no fault of their own. National CASA was recently informed that it will no longer receive federal grand funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). This decision impacts the national association's operations but does not dictate or control the work being done by local CASA programs across Texas. These federal funding shifts reflect broader national priorities - not the value, stability, or effectiveness of CASA advocacy at the local level. Local CASA programs in Texas operate independently of National CASA. For years, programs across our state have been built on a foundation of diverse, reliable funding - primarily from the State of Texas, the Governor's Office, Crime Victim Funds and local community support. Child Advocates of Fort Bend serves our local community and is not impacted by this decision. We will continue to remain in the courtroom, advocating for our children and staying focused and committed to ensuring that every child who has experienced abuse and neglect in Fort Bend County receives the services that are so critical for their healing and recovery. **Thank you for your continued support.**

Did you know that you can donate cars, airplanes, boats, motorcycles or trucks and select Child Advocates of Fort Bend to receive the proceeds?

Visit [HERE](#) for questions or contact
Lisa at lmoore@cafb.org





"To DAF or QCD... That is the Question?"

Supporting charitable causes in retirement can produce lots of surprising benefits. Many who are philanthropic report experiencing a higher sense of belonging and purpose, joy in setting an example for future generations, and a boost to both their emotional and physical health.

Two very popular options for retirees who want to support causes are

- **Donor-Advised Fund (DAF)**, which allows you to donate a wide variety of assets such as cash, stocks, and real estate, and
- **Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)**, where a donation is transferred directly from your IRA.

Both strategies offer donors a chance to support charitable causes important to them... but how do you know which one is right for you?

Both QCD's and DAF's can offer benefits for retirees who want to maximize their charitable donations as well as potentially receive tax benefits.

- Key benefits of a QCD include satisfying your annual required minimum distribution (RMD) without increasing your taxable income.
- Key benefits of a DAF include flexibility, streamlined recordkeeping, the ability to donate appreciated assets, and the option to make multiple donations over time.

The following guide may help you decide whether a DAF or a QCD—or a combination of the two—is appropriate to help you maximize your charitable donations and tax benefit:

A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) might make sense if you...

- Are age 70 ½ or older
- Want to reduce your non-Roth IRA assets in anticipation of your future RMDs
- Anticipate RMDs may push you into a higher tax bracket
- Anticipate RMDs may subject you to higher surcharges and surtaxes on Medicare premiums
- Want to make immediate gifts to one or several charities

A Donor-Advised Fund (DAF) might make sense if you...

- Could potentially get tax benefits from the donation by itemizing or eliminating capital gains
- Own long-term, highly appreciated assets (such as stocks or bonds) in taxable accounts
- Can fund multiple years of giving up front
- Want to give to one or more multiple charities over time
- Want to integrate charitable giving into your legacy planning

Before making any decision about charitable giving it is best to seek advice and council from a licensed financial advisor.

If you would like to learn more about making a planned gift to Child Advocates of Fort Bend and becoming a member of the Forever Angels Legacy Society, please contact plannedgiving@cafb.org

our needs

This month, we have immediate need for:

- **20 Hand Held or neck fans**
(for summer programming with youth.)
- **20 Reusable water bottles**
(for summer programming with youth.)
- **Gift cards** - VISA/ MasterCard, Walmart, HEB, fast food, Ubereats, Uber
- **NEW medium-sized stuffed animals for the CAC**



License to Help!

Did you know that Child Advocates of Fort Bend participates in the TX CASA Specialty License Plate Program? You can order a custom license plate with the phrase "Big Voices for Little Texans". Not only can you spread awareness and show your support for us but a portion of the cost of the plate goes to Texas CASA and the local programs to increase our statewide efforts to advocate for



every child in the foster care system. To order your plate go to <https://www.txdmv.gov/motorists/license-plates> and search for CASA under specialty plates OR visit your local tax assessor's office and ask for the Court Appointed Special Advocate license plate.



Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®) Training

June 10 - 12, 2025

10am until 4pm

**Child Advocates of Fort Bend Training Room
5403 Avenue N, Rosenberg, TX 77471**

This two day training is specifically designed for those working with children who come from 'hard places,' such as maltreatment, abuse, neglect, multiple home placements, and violence, but can be used with all children. TBRI® offers practical tools for parents, caregivers, teachers, or anyone who works with children, to see the "whole child" in their care and help that child reach his highest potential.

TBRI® is an attachment-based, trauma-informed intervention that is designed to meet the complex needs of vulnerable children. The Fort Bend County TBRI Collaborative offers free training for professionals and caregivers who work with children who have experienced trauma.

For more information, contact [Alli Waterwall](mailto:AWaterwall@cafb.org) at AWaterwall@cafb.org



"There is hope, even when your brain tells you there isn't."

– John Green

CHILD **ADVOCATES** OF FORT BEND™

The Labels We Carry Lunch and Learn Series

The labels we carry are the identities and perceptions assigned to us by society, our experiences, and our own self-perceptions. These labels can be empowering, such as "writer" or "leader," or limiting, like "troublemaker" or "failure." Recognizing and challenging these labels is essential for personal growth and self-acceptance. By shedding restrictive labels, we can embrace our true selves and realize our full potential.

Tuesday, March 4

Crucial Conversations

Tuesday, June 3

Every Child, Every Family

Tuesday, September 9

We all have Mental Health

Tuesday, November 4

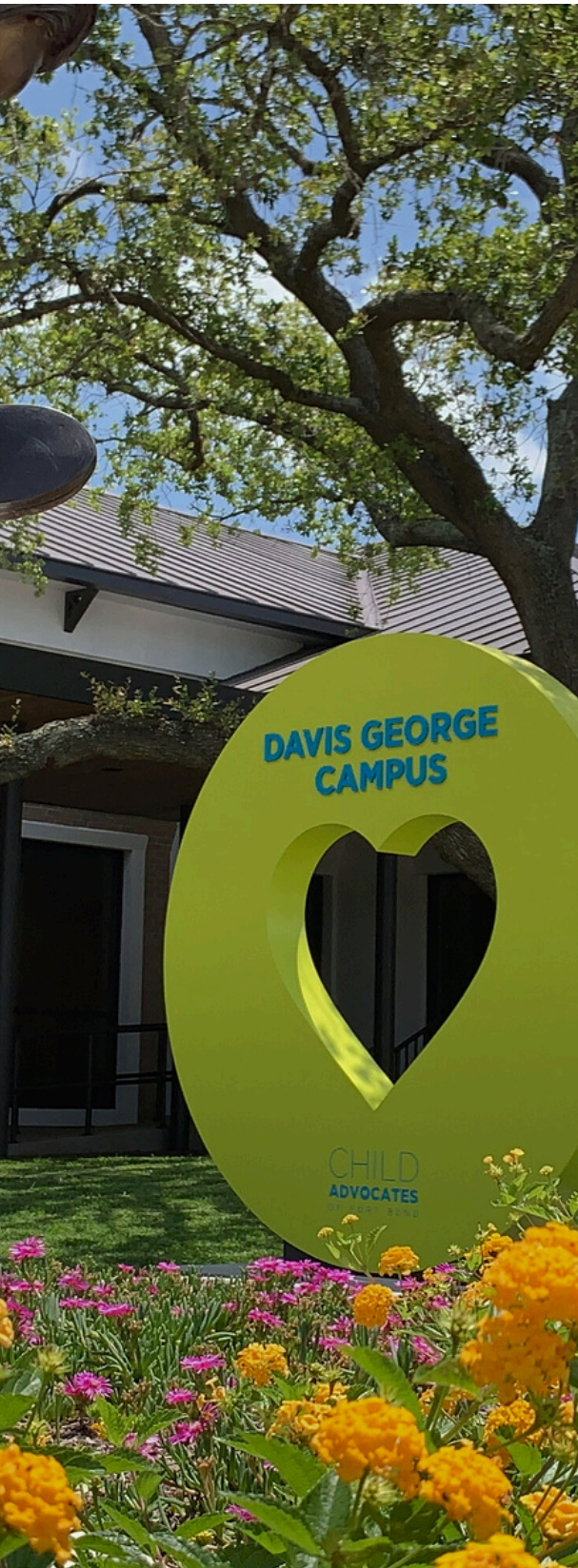
Sometimes You're a Caterpillar

11:00am-1:00pm, CAFB Training Center

Lunch Provided

To register contact Dana at DMersiovsky@cafb.org

save these dates



May 8-9, 2025

Building Resilient and Trauma-Informed Communities
RSVP [here](#) to reserve your spot

May 22, 2025

Sip & Stroll
9:00am - 10:30am
Contact [Lisa](#) at LMoore@cafb.org to reserve your spot

June 10-12, 2025

Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) Training
10:00am - 4:00pm
CAFB Training Room
Contact [Alli](#) at AWaterwall@cafb.org to reserve your spot

June 24

Sip & Stroll
5:30pm - 7:00pm
Contact [Lisa](#) at LMoore@cafb.org to reserve your spot

July 15

Summer Education Series: Recognize and Respond with Tour
11:00am - 1:00pm

July 22

Youth Mental Health First Aid
8:30am - 5:00pm
RSVP to Deidra Lyons-Lewis at dlyonslewis@cafb.org

July 24

Darkness to Light: Stewards of Children
10:00am - 1:00pm
[Register here](#)

July 29

Sip & Stroll
5:30pm - 7:00pm
Contact [Lisa](#) at LMoore@cafb.org to reserve your spot

July 30

Summer Education Series: Best Practices in Educational Advocacy
11:00am - 1:00pm



"Vulnerability is not winning or losing. It's having the courage to show up when you can't control the outcome."

- Brene Brown