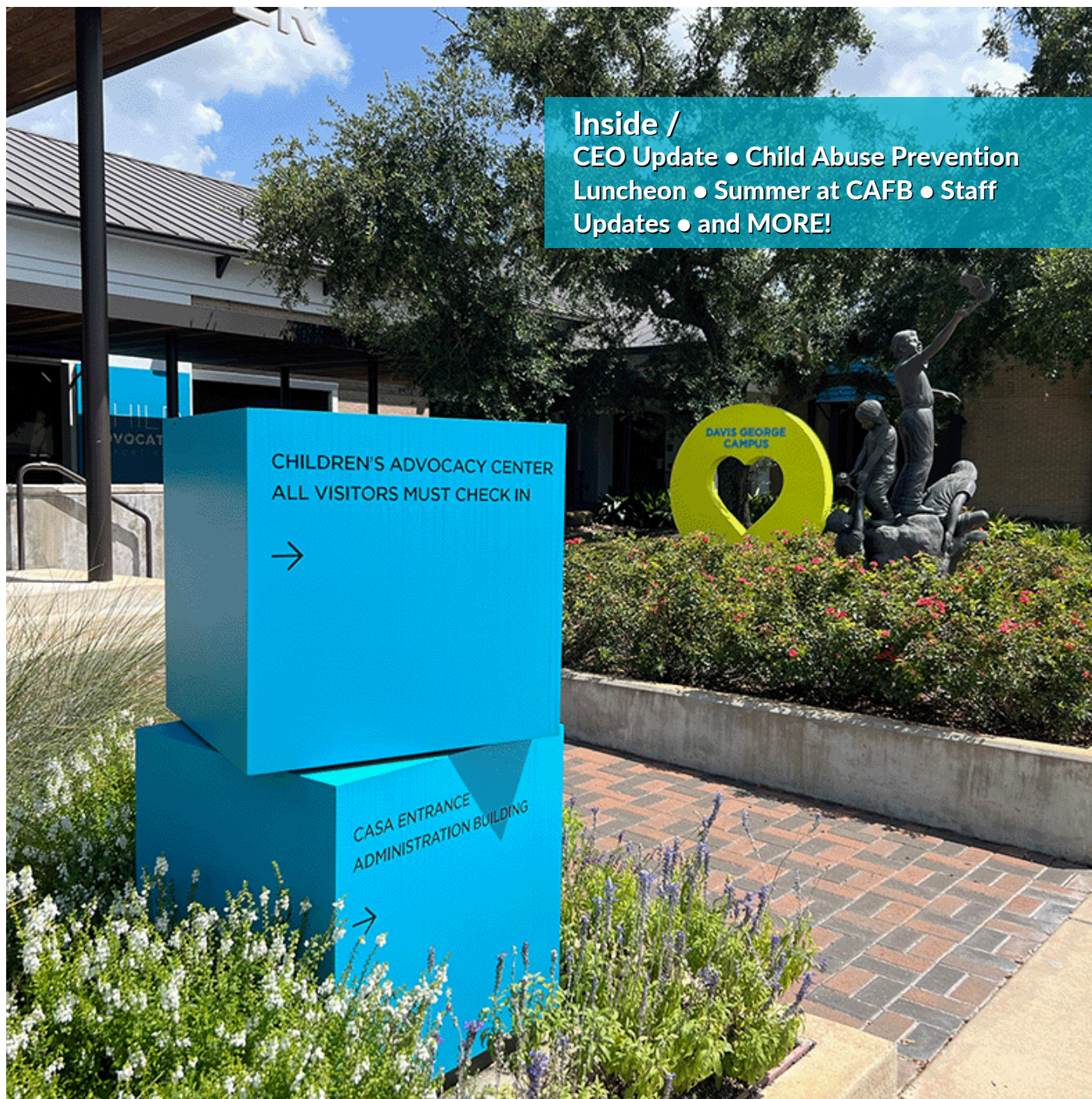


The VOICES of

CHILD **ADVOCATES** OF FORT BEND™



August 2025

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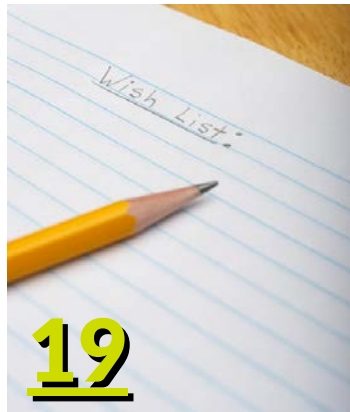


Keeping you informed on our mission:

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.



HOPE, HEALING AND CONNECTION



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WWW.CAFB.ORG



from the ceo

Welcome to our July issue of VOICES. . .

I hope you are having a great Summer and are taking time to relax and unwind, enjoy family and friends, rejuvenate and perhaps escape somewhere cool. It's been a very busy Summer here at Child Advocates of Fort Bend. We've had three weeks of programming for our children and youth including WINGS Campus Crawl, WINGS Lifeskills and NEST Summer Enrichment, continuing education around TBRI, volunteer training for our new initiative working with Justice Involved Youth (JIY), the formation of our new Care Coordination services for Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY), and new Caregiver and Teen Support Groups in our CAC. August is back-to-school and our FRIENDS Council is again organizing the annual Backpack Program. Project Co-Leads Brigit Engleman and Lynn Halford are orchestrating the purchasing and filling of backpacks for over 250 children, each personalized by name, school year and

classroom so that every child starts school with a brand-new backpack filled with everything they need to have a successful school year. As we turn to the Fall, our big news is our inaugural Child Abuse Prevention Luncheon on September 12, where we will announce our new prevention initiative to the public. Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative (CAP-C) unites our community in their commitment to bring awareness to the tragedy of abuse right here in Fort Bend County and to collectively stand "United Against Abuse" to make our community safe for kids. We'd love you to join us at the luncheon, bring your friends and family and let's make this event transformational towards our vision to End the Cycle of Abuse. Enjoy this month's VOICES Newsletter where you'll find stories about our Summer and information about upcoming events.

-continued next page



Thanks for all your support throughout the Summer. As we face uncertainty about continued funding from government grants, we are especially thankful and appreciative to our donors for their continuing support to ensure that we can sustain our services and ensure that children who have been sexually abused, physically abused or neglected receive the life-saving services they need to recover. Now more than ever, your support is critical, and we are deeply grateful to all our

donors and volunteers whose unwavering support has sustained Child Advocates of Fort Bend for 34 years ... and hopefully for many more years ahead.

For the Children's Sake,

Ruthanne

Ruthanne Mefford, CEO





CHILD ADVOCATES OF FORT BEND™

Child Abuse Prevention Luncheon

Join us!

**September 12, 2025
11am until 1pm**

at the Houston Marriott Sugar Land

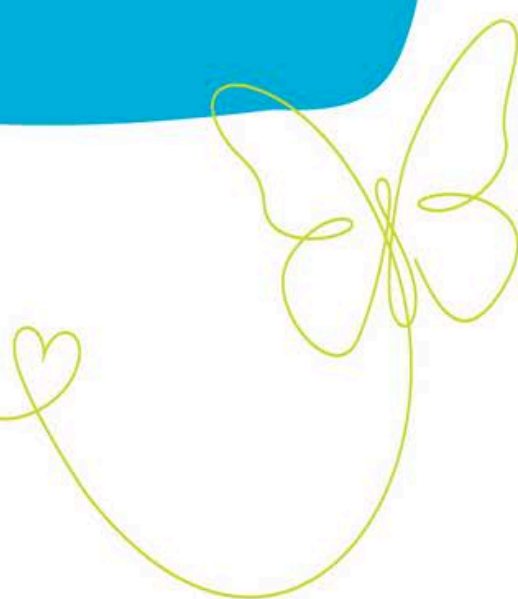
*Featuring Emmy-nominated and award-winning journalist
Sharron Melton as emcee and child abuse survivor
and author **Dr. Greg Williams** as keynote speaker*

**Sponsor
Now!**



This event serves as a fundraising opportunity with proceeds directed toward resources, support for children and families suffering the effects of child abuse, and safety education to prevent children from being abused.

*By participating, you are joining our collective effort to **UNITE Against Child Abuse** and help ensure that every child has the chance to grow up in a safe and nurturing environment.*





Meet Our Speaker

Keynote speaker Dr. Gregory Williams is a nationally recognized child abuse survivor, author, and advocate. Dr. Williams is a member of the Senior Leadership Team at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston and travels the country speaking to thousands about the long-term impacts of abuse, the importance of early detection, and the science behind Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

He is the acclaimed author of Shattered by the Darkness and When the Dark Clouds Come, which have sold over 3.3 million copies worldwide. His newest book, Embracing Your Scars: Learning How to Turn Life's Pain into Life's Power & Purpose, was released in January 2025 and continues to inspire readers globally.

Dr. Williams serves on the Advisory Board of the Institute of Trauma-Informed Practices at Columbia College and is Chairman of the Steering Committee for United Against Human Trafficking. He is a State of Texas certified trainer for medical professionals in Human Trafficking Awareness and a member of Governor Greg Abbott's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force. Most recently, he was appointed to the National Survivor Advisory Board of Street Grace, a leading anti-trafficking organization.

MYTHS

Abuse doesn't happen here
It won't happen to my child
There's nothing we can do to prevent abuse

Child abuse is a big problem in Fort Bend County
Over 6000 abuse reports made just last year
Abuse happens in all neighborhoods and all demographics

FACTS

We are looking forward to our inaugural Child Abuse Prevention Luncheon on September 12, 2025.

Special thanks goes to the **Current Sponsors** who have signed up to **Unite Against Child Abuse** and will receive a table for 10, their name on a stake in the blue-ribbon awareness field, name on printed banners displayed around the community and social media recognition. We couldn't do the work we do without the generous support of our special donors.

Please join our initiative to **UNITE Against Child Abuse!**



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Betty Baitland / Eileen Akerson

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OCuSOFT, Inc.

Wine Bar Sponsor

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FEATURE STORY

Summer at CAFB

By Jen Brown

While summer often brings a change of pace, Child Advocates of Fort Bend (CAFB) remained active supporting children and families. We continued to expand our new Wrap-around Services, ensuring all clients have access to the resources they need. Here's a glimpse into CAFB's busy summer...

NEST and WINGS Programming

This summer, we empowered youth through our annual summer enrichment programs designed to foster learning, life preparation, and meaningful connections.

For older youth ages 14 and up, the annual Campus Crawl offered a unique opportunity to explore life after high school. Participants visited the University of Houston, Texas State University, Texas A&M University, and Wharton County Junior College. These college tours gave students a firsthand look at campus life, academic offerings, the steps required to pursue higher education, and introduced them to student organizations in place to support foster alumni.

Another highlight for teens was Life Skills Week, an interactive program focused on

building tools for independence and success. Sessions emphasized the importance of healthy relationships, workforce preparation, health and wellness, and planning for the future. Youth engaged in workshops, discussions, and activities that encouraged them to take active roles in shaping their lives and careers.

Meanwhile, younger children ages 6 to 13 participated in the NEST Summer Program, which provided a structured, nurturing environment to help bridge the gap between the school years. Designed to support academic and social-emotional development, the program included fun educational field trips, group learning, and daily routines to ease the transition back to school.

These programs are designed not just to keep youth engaged during the summer, but to build confidence, inspire dreams, and equip them with skills they'll use for a lifetime.

CAFB's summer programs are part of its year-round commitment to supporting children and families impacted by abuse and neglect

[-more-](#)

through advocacy, education, and specialized programs.

New CSEY Advocacy Partners Announced for Fort Bend County Care Coordination

Child Advocates of Fort Bend is proud to announce that BCFS-Common Threads and Unbound Now have been officially endorsed as the CSEY (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Youth) Advocacy Agencies for Fort Bend County's Care Coordination Team.

These two exceptional organizations bring deep expertise, survivor-centered approaches, and strong community partnerships to our multidisciplinary effort to support youth impacted by sex trafficking.

With the addition of BCFS-Common Threads and Unbound Now, child sex trafficking survivors in Fort Bend County will now benefit from specialized advocacy services designed to meet their unique emotional, psychological, and practical needs. Both agencies will provide:

- 24/7 crisis response and emergency advocacy
- Ongoing trauma-informed case support
- Assistance with safety planning, resource navigation, and healing services
- Consistent, compassionate support throughout a survivor's recovery journey

About the Agencies

BCFS-Common Threads

A program of BCFS Health and Human Services, Common Threads focuses on holistic healing for youth survivors of exploitation through trauma-informed care, counseling, and advocacy.

Unbound Now

Unbound Now is a global anti-trafficking organization with a strong local presence,

committed to identifying survivors, building trust, and empowering them through long-term advocacy and restoration services.

The inclusion of these two trusted agencies strengthens Fort Bend's coordinated response to child sex trafficking.

Training Recap

As the summer heat simmered, so did our training at CAFB!

The summer began with the TBRI Caregiver Training, which provided three days of foundational knowledge on the importance of a child's history, practical intervention and application, and interpreting and responding to behavior appropriately.

The training brought together caregivers, foster parents, and child welfare professionals for an interactive session focused on connection, empowerment, and correction—core principles of the TBRI approach. Participants learned practical strategies for building trust, managing challenging behaviors, and promoting healing in children who have experienced trauma. This training helps caregivers see behavior through a trauma lens and respond with empathy and structure to meet the unique needs of each child.

The Fort Bend TBRI Collaborative, brings together local agencies and organizations, continues to lead efforts in providing trauma-informed support to families and children in our community.

For more information on future trainings or to get involved, visit [Fort Bend TBRI Collaborative | The heartbeat of TBRI® is connection.](#)

In July, the informative and attention-grabbing **training, "The Ideal Victim,"** explored common misconceptions about

[-more-](#)



victims and challenged personal biases, fostering a deeper understanding of what it truly means to be a victim. As volunteers and staff sought more information, the training "Recognizing and Responding to Abuse" was presented. Youth Mental Health First Aid followed a week later, with Darkness to Light trailing a couple of days after that. The final training of July was a panel that provided insightful information on Educational Advocacy.

CAFB delivered the heat during the summer training series, allowing our staff and volunteers to work with the children served by CAFB with a cool demeanor while packing a wealth of knowledge.

Child Advocates of Fort Bend recently held its first training session for the **Justice Involved Youth (JIY) Pilot Program**, where 12 CASA volunteers received specialized instruction on supporting youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

The training offered insights into the structure of the juvenile justice system and introduced volunteers to a new advocacy role tailored to these youth. It also reinforced key concepts such as Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI), educational advocacy, and Collaborative Family Engagement—equipping volunteers to make

JUSTICE INVOLVED YOUTH TRAINING



a lasting, positive impact on the lives of justice-involved youth and their families. We are excited to grow the impact of CASA in our community through this important new advocacy initiative and look forward to the positive change it will bring.

The Community Engagement Team has been hard at work continuing our mission to protect children and prevent abuse through education and outreach. We're grateful for the opportunities we've had to connect with our community and share the vital work our agency does.

-more-

In June, we partnered with the Women's Ministry at Rosenberg First Methodist Church to deliver a training focused on child abuse prevention. Attendees received an overview of our agency, including the services we provide to children and families, the types of abuse we encounter, and how we work in the community to keep kids safe. Their warm welcome and strong engagement showed just how committed local faith communities are to being part of the solution.

We also had the privilege of training the staff and board of directors at Nery's Promise, a fellow nonprofit serving families in Fort Bend County. Our Recognizing and Responding to Child Abuse training helped participants better understand the signs of abuse and the important steps to take when there are concerns. It was a powerful session and a great example of organizations

coming together to strengthen our safety net for children.

Finally, we hosted a Prevention Speaking Team "Train the Trainer" session on the *Child Safety Matters* curriculum. We are proud to announce the addition of six newly trained team members who are now equipped to help us educate students across Fort Bend County. These volunteers will play a key role in teaching children how to recognize unsafe situations and speak up for themselves and their friends.

Each of these events reflects our commitment to empowering the community with knowledge and tools to help protect children. Thank you to all the individuals and partners who made this summer's outreach a success. Together, we are making Fort Bend County a safer place for every child.



ROSENBERG FIRST METHODIST CHURCH PREVENTION TRAINING



Hope, Healing and Connection This Summer

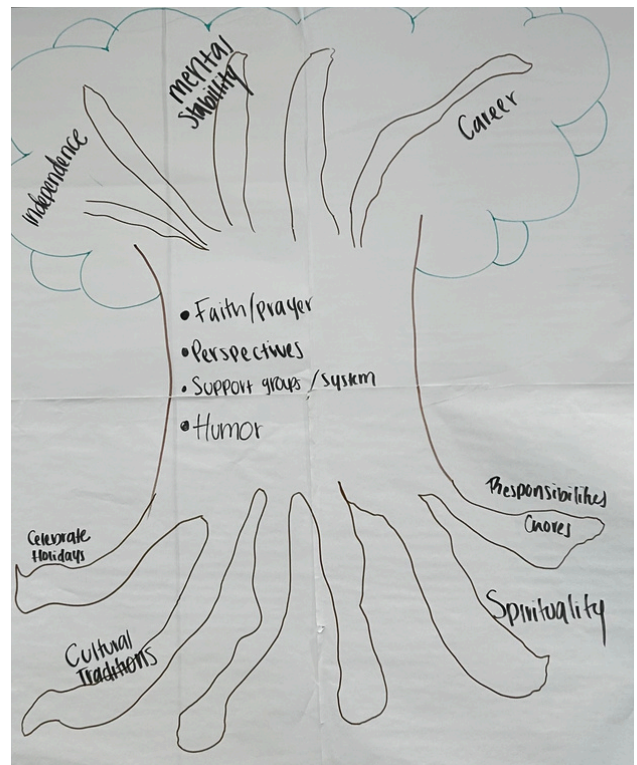
By Megan DeYoung

This Summer, our Family Advocacy team was excited to bring back Support Groups in a new and accessible way. After the positive response we received from our last round of groups over the Fall, we returned to the drawing board to explore how we might expand support to even more families in our community.

What emerged was our Summer Support Group Series - a new take on group programming designed to meet families where they are. By shifting to an open-style, drop-in format focused on psychoeducation, we were able to offer a more flexible experience while still providing meaningful connection and support.

Throughout four sessions held throughout the Summer, we invited teens (ages 13-18) and caregivers who have experienced and been impacted by trauma to explore topics centered on healing after trauma. Our group sessions combined practical tools with compassionate discussion, creating a space for participants to learn and connect with others who have had similar experiences. Each week focused on a different trauma-related topic covering themes such as emotional awareness, self-worth, boundaries, and resilience—all to equip families with skills they can use in everyday life.

In total, we had 11 caregivers and 10 teens participate in various sessions throughout this series - each bringing their unique insights, questions, and experiences to the group sessions. We were happy to welcome back some returning participants from our previous group series and were grateful for their continued interest.





What makes this group format so valuable is its balance of flexibility and purpose. Participants can attend as needed while still gaining tools, support, and a sense of community. For many, it's a rare opportunity to feel seen, heard, and supported alongside others who understand.

While the future of group programming at CAFB is still being shaped, the Family Advocacy team is excited about what's ahead. We continue to work towards creating spaces where healing can happen - and where families can find connection, community, and support along their healing journey.



The feedback we received after the first few sessions was incredibly encouraging.

"Attending group was the first time I realized other parents are struggling with the same things I am. I didn't feel so alone."

"I appreciated the lessons and am looking forward to the remaining sessions."

"I was initially nervous to open up at the start of group, but the icebreaker prompts at the beginning helped me open up."

"My teen said she enjoyed being in a group with other girls her age."

"I haven't seen my teen this excited and happy in a very long time. She made a friend she really connected with."





monthly spotlights

updates from the programs and MORE!

Looking for a way to honor or memorialize someone you love?

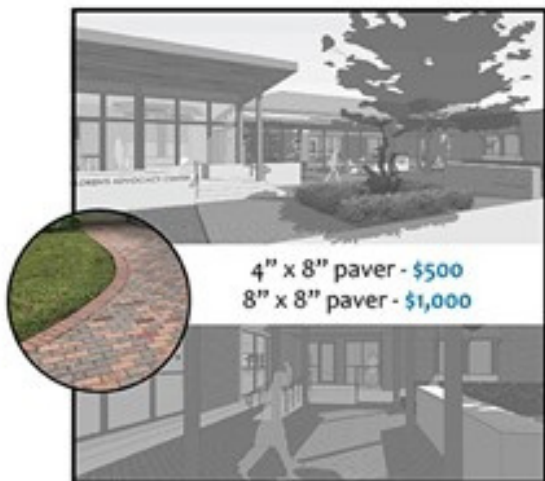
Would you like to pay tribute to someone by honoring or memorializing them for a life well lived or a special occasion? Send a donation in any amount with their name, address, and a note about why you are honoring them. We'll send an acknowledgement letter letting them know that you donated on their behalf. Honor someone today by [donating online](#) or by mailing a check to Child Advocates of Fort Bend, 5403 Avenue N, Rosenberg, TX 77471.

What are some permanent honorarium choices?

Pavers. Your \$500 or \$1,000 gift can purchase a medium or large paver in our front walkway engraved with your name or message. Purchase your paver today and someone will contact you to discuss your inscription. If you have already purchased a paver, we thank you!

If you wish to honor or memorialize someone special in a more significant way, why not name a room in our building after them? We have a variety of room naming opportunities available including private offices, therapy rooms, family meeting rooms, conference rooms and more.

For more information, please contact **Lisa Moore** at Lmoore@cafb.org



STAFF UPDATE



Stephanie Helton, LMSW, LCDC Clinical Family Advocate

Stephanie has a strong educational background in both Education and Social Work. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Houston, Victoria, and a Master of Social Work from the University of Houston.

Stephanie is a Licensed Social Worker and a Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor. She recently transitioned to her current role as a Clinical Family Advocate at the Children's Assessment Center (CAC), where she provides vital victim and family advocacy.

Previously, as an MDT Coordinator at the CAC, Stephanie was responsible for reviewing all referrals and coordinating teams for forensic interview appointments.

Stephanie now offers crucial support to families navigating the challenging experience of child abuse as a Clinical Family Advocate. She meets with families to help them process their feelings and cope with the trauma. Stephanie and other family advocates are dedicated to supporting families throughout their entire journey with the CAFB, from their initial arrival until they achieve healing or their case is resolved.



Amanda Diaz, LMSW

I have recently upgraded my license, and I am now a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. For those who may not be so familiar with this term, it essentially means that I can practice independently and utilize the wealth of knowledge and experiences I've garnered in the last two years. My time at CAFB has been incredibly meaningful and I feel so lucky and privileged to have been under the supervision and guidance of some amazing and wonderful people who have made me feel so supported in every way as I worked my way to this point. The last two years and the mission of CAFB have allowed me to stay true to my values and what's important to me and, in doing so, I've been able to find my niche and focus on the kind of work that I truly enjoy. Outside of CAFB, I love spending time at home with my fur babies. I've really been getting into baking in the last year, and I love sharing my bakes with others. I also enjoy reading and watching re-runs of my favorite shows."



Do you like to decorate?

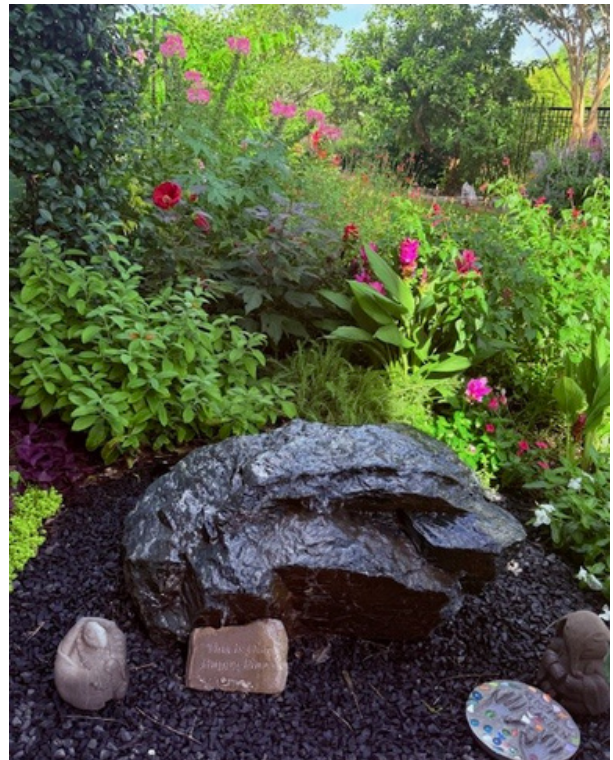
Interested in having your home featured on the Home Tour or know someone who would like to get more information?

We would love to talk to you. Please contact **Tarina** at TSheridan@cafb.org to chat!

June CAC Meeting at Chinnu's

By Heather Waterwall

Child Advocates of Fort Bend truly has the most exceptional human beings who dedicate their hearts, time, and talents to supporting the work and mission of the agency. Chinnu Mejer-Homji opened her beautiful home and breathtaking garden to the Children's Advocacy Center team in June for their team meeting. Chinnu along with Elizabeth Barrow and Teresa Mason went above and beyond to host the CAC. They welcomed everyone with enthusiasm, smiles, hugs, breakfast, and gifts all before 9am! They absolutely went out of their way to take care of the team, so the team can continue to take care of the children and families who walk through our doors. The entire staff, children, and families are forever indebted to our volunteers at Child Advocates of Fort Bend. We could not do this work without them!



UPDATE



Fort Bend County Unites to Prevent Child Abuse

In a groundbreaking move to protect its youngest residents, Fort Bend County has launched the Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative (CAP-C)—a county-wide alliance of agencies committed to stopping abuse before it starts. Spearheaded by Child Advocates of Fort Bend (CAFB), this initiative marks a strategic shift from intervention to prevention, bringing together law enforcement, social services, educators, healthcare providers, and community leaders under one unified mission.

Education & Outreach at the Core

CAP-C focuses on proactive education, early intervention, and community engagement. Through community-based programs, parent workshops, and professional training, the collaborative aims to dispel myths about abuse—like the dangerous belief that “it doesn’t happen here”—and empower families to recognize and report warning signs.

A History of Healing, A Future of Prevention

For over 30 years, CAFB has served more than 25,000 children through its nationally recognized Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC)

and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) programs. Now, with CAP-C, the organization is expanding its reach to prevent trauma before it occurs. Research shows that over 70% of child abuse is preventable, and CAP-C is determined to make that statistic a reality in Fort Bend.

Voices for Change

To rally support, CAFB will host its annual Voices for Children Luncheon on September 12, 2025, in Sugar Land. Featuring keynote speaker Dr. Greg Williams—a survivor and national advocate—the event will raise funds to expand prevention education to hundreds more children and families.

A Community-Wide Commitment

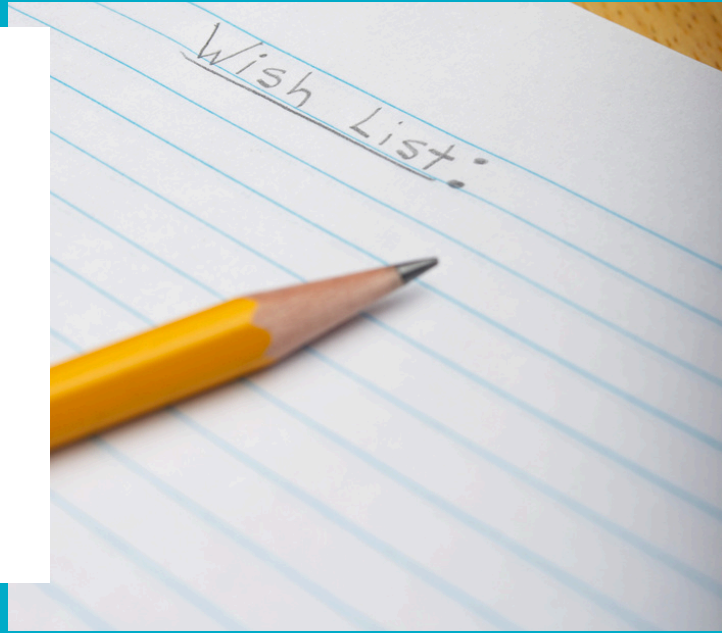
CAP-C is more than a program—it’s a movement. By coordinating efforts across agencies and engaging residents in meaningful action, Fort Bend County is setting a powerful example of how communities can come together to protect their most vulnerable.

To learn more or get involved, visit the Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative website at www.cap-collaborative.org.

our needs

This month, we have immediate need for:

- **Gift cards**
VISA/ MasterCard, Walmart, HEB

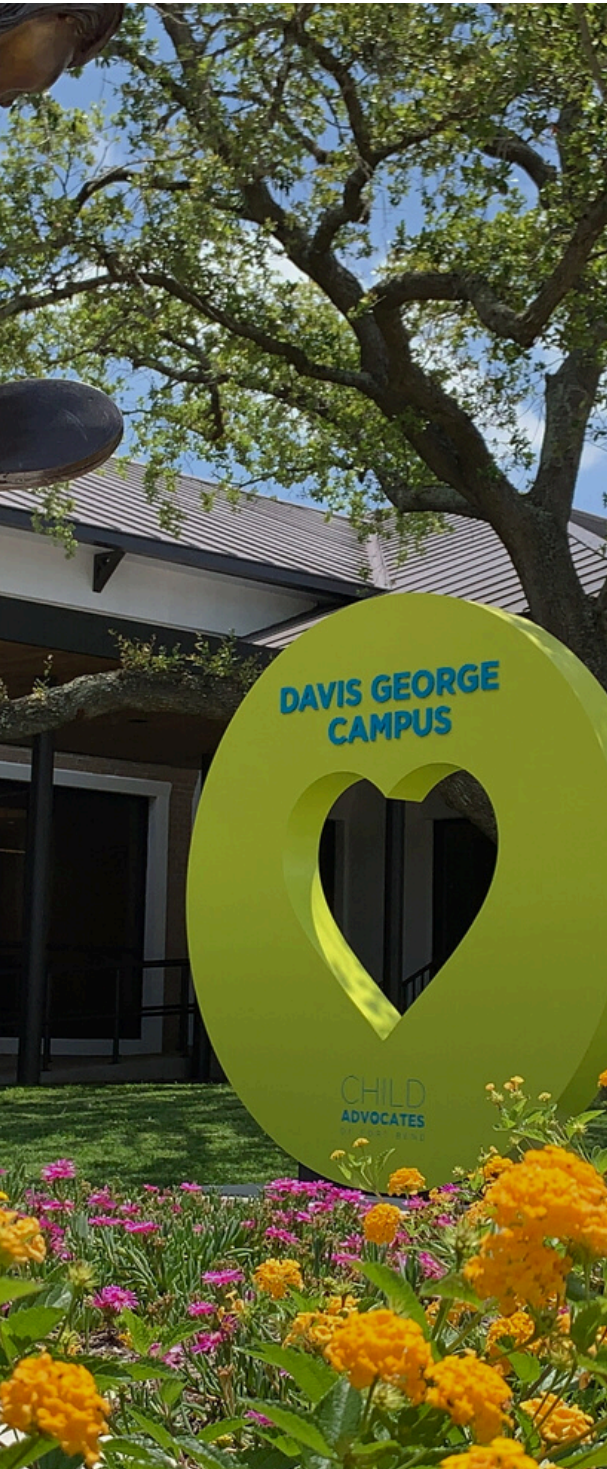


Did you know that you can donate cars, airplanes, boats, motorcycles or trucks and select Child Advocates of Fort Bend to receive the proceeds?

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



save these dates



August 22

Sip & Stroll
noon - 1:30pm

Contact [Lisa](#) at LMoore@cafb.org to reserve your spot

September 12

Child Abuse Prevention Luncheon
11am - 1pm

Contact [Lisa](#) at LMoore@cafb.org to reserve your spot

September 29 - October 10

New Volunteer Training
Apply or for more [info](#)

September 30

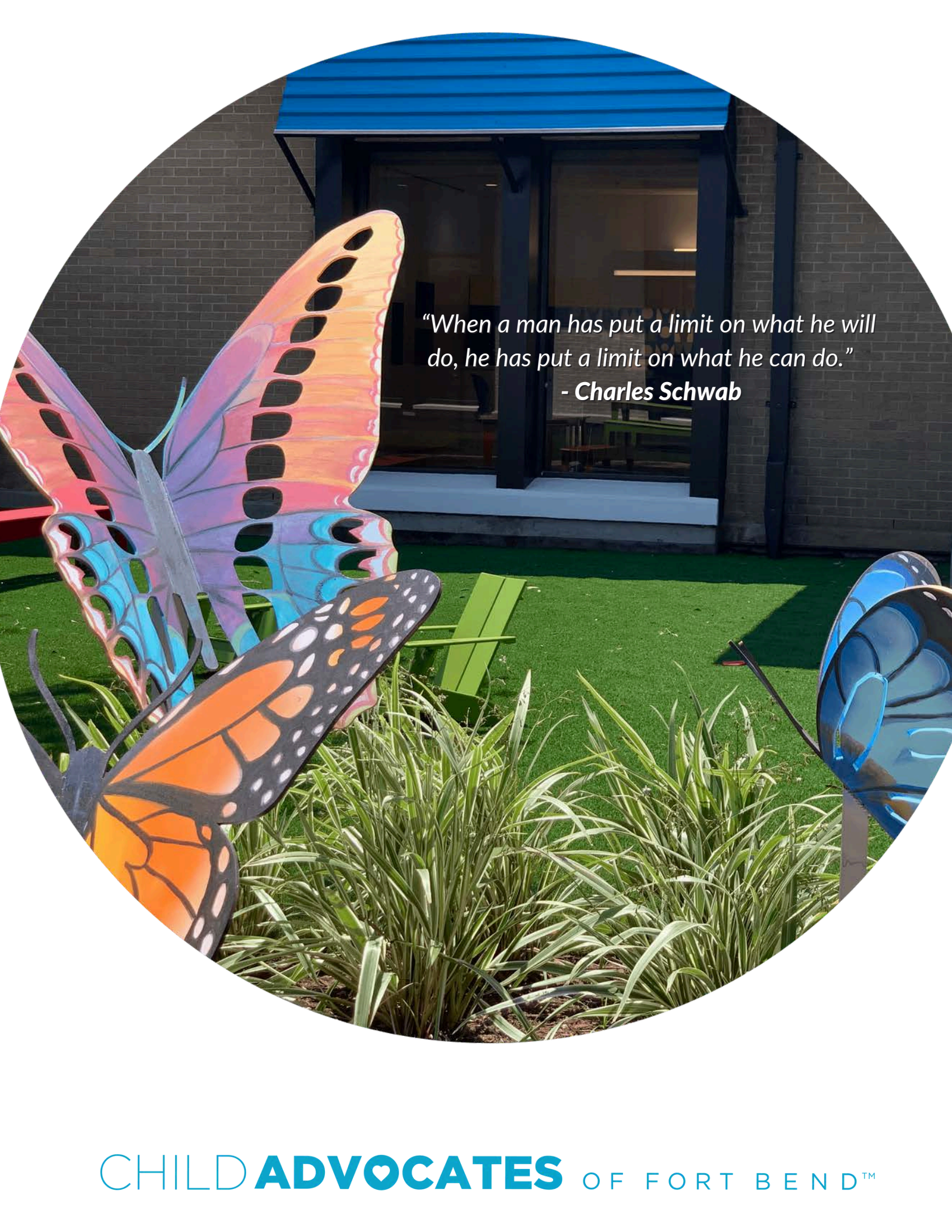
Youth Mental Health Training
9am - noon
More info or to register [here](#)

September 30

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

December 5 + 6

Christmas Home Tour



"When a man has put a limit on what he will do, he has put a limit on what he can do."

- Charles Schwab