

The VOICES of

CHILD **ADVOCATES** OF FORT BEND™



Inside /
CEO Update • Child Abuse Prevention
Luncheon • Bullying Prevention Month
• and MORE!

October 2025

contents



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.

NEWS + FEATURES

3 FROM THE CEO

CEO Ruthanne Mefford shares what we are up to this month

6 CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION LUNCHEON

We did it!

11 FEATURE STORY UNDERSTANDING BULLYING

How to spot it and what to do...

16 MONTHLY SPOTLIGHTS

see what we've been up to...

21 READY, SET, GO!

Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative has launched!

22 NEEDS + OPPORTUNITIES

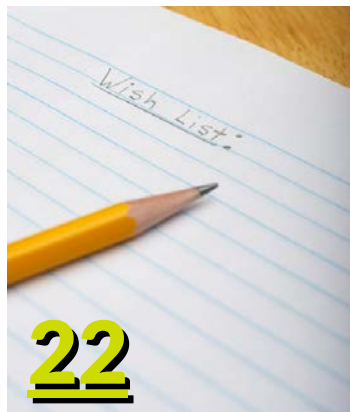
Check out what we need this month and how you can help us

24 SAVE THESE DATES

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



READY, SET, GO!



NEEDS + OPPORTUNITIES



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



WWW.CAFB.ORG



from the ceo

Welcome to our September issue of VOICES. . .

Welcome friends,

Fall has officially arrived, and we have a full calendar of Fall activities. We had a fabulous inaugural Child Abuse Prevention Luncheon on September 12 where we launched our countywide Child Abuse Prevention Initiative. It was a blockbuster event with over 500 guests, an "Immersive Experience", a powerful keynote by Dr. Gregory Williams and engaging Emcee Sherron Melton from CW39. The event was very successful exceeding our goal of \$600,000 which will help fund services for children who have experienced abuse and for prevention services so that other children are safe from being abused. Read inside for all the upcoming events.

We kick off the Fall season by recognizing October as Domestic Violence Awareness and

Prevention Month. Many children exposed to violence in the home are also victims of physical abuse themselves and experience emotional abuse, as well, through exposure to violence.

Both domestic violence and child abuse are considered two Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and the intersection of these two forms of adversity are highly correlated. Children in homes where a parent is abused may feel fearful and anxious. They may always be on guard, wondering when the next violent event will happen. This puts them at risk to develop trauma symptoms including anxiety, depression and even suicidality. These children are at serious risk for long-term physical and mental health problems and may also be at greater risk of being

-continued next page



violent in their future relationships and repeating the cycle as adults by entering into abusive relationships.

At Child Advocates of Fort Bend, we serve children who are witnesses to domestic violence at our Children's Advocacy Center, where they receive services to help them process their experiences and heal from their trauma symptoms. We offer forensic interviews so they have the opportunity to speak to a trained professional and share what they have observed, which can be the first step in their healing process. Our team of therapists and clinical family advocates work to help children feel safe, affirm that it is not their fault and help them and their abused parent access critical community services. The child may access our psychiatric services with our on-site Psychiatric Resident Fellow from the UT Health Sciences Pediatric and Adolescent Program. We know that children do best in a safe, stable, loving environment and we work with survivors of

domestic violence to support them during this difficult time.

October is also Bullying Prevention Month. See inside our VOICES Newsletter for more information, tips, and red flags to help children who are experiencing an unprecedented increase in bullying by their peers, online and in social media.

Thank you for all you do to support Child Advocates of Fort Bend and the children we serve. Your time, talent and treasures are the greatest gift these children can receive to help them move beyond their abuse or neglect, heal and find safety and stability.

For the Children's Sake,

Ruthanne

Ruthanne Mefford, CEO





FRIENDS

OF CHILD ADVOCATES OF FORT BEND

fall coffee

TUESDAY OCTOBER 14, 2025
10:00am - 11:30am

At the home of Lynn Halford
1906 Silver Pond Court
Sugar Land, TX 77479

Bring a friend and join the FRIENDS Council for coffee, light bites and a style show courtesy of our friends at Fabulous You. In addition, you will learn about FRIENDS and the many ways your membership dues help support children in our community who have been abused and neglected.

Bring a friend who joins or renews and you will both be entered in a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card.

To **RSVP** or for more information
contact Judy Maddison at **jbm951@icloud.com**
OR 713-516-2043



Child Abuse Prevention Luncheon

On September 12th Child Advocates of Fort Bend hosted its inaugural Child Abuse Prevention Luncheon. This luncheon held at the Houston Marriott Sugar Land featured emcee Sharron Melton, a news anchor at CW39, Clements High School Chamber Choir, and keynote speaker and child abuse survivor Dr. Greg Williams who shared how prevention could have spared him from a childhood of abuse. A new CAP-C resource and safety campaign, "You Have The Power" were unveiled.

The concept for CAFB's fundraising luncheon was to be an impactful catalyst to sustain the services we provide to children who have experienced sexual abuse, physical abuse or neglect and to announce the county-wide Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative (CAP-C) in order to reach children and parents with life-saving prevention information, tools and resources.

It was a success!

The ballroom was full of over 500 guests, and we topped our goal of raising \$600,000.

THANK YOU to those who were part of the special group of community leaders, sponsors and guests who have come together to support the inaugural Child Abuse Prevention Luncheon!

Your participation helps raise awareness about the tragedy of child abuse in Fort Bend County and how we can prevent children from experiencing abuse. Our focus is to bring this issue to the forefront, break the silence around child abuse, and create a community in which every child is safe in Fort Bend County and beyond.

-more-

Community Impact

Earlier that morning a press conference was held at the Marriott announcing the launching of CAP-C by our CEO Ruthanne, and included support from Precinct 4 Commissioner Dexter McCoy, District Attorney Brian Middleton, and Sheriff Eric Fagan. Press in attendance were KPRC2, Fox 26, Telemundo, and the Fort Bend Star.

The fundraising event began with a gallery inspired display of facts, myths, statistics and stories related to child abuse. As attendees silently strolled through the immersive experience, we shared the staggering facts about child abuse and the outdated myths that are putting our children's lives in danger.

Myth #1: Abuse doesn't happen here.

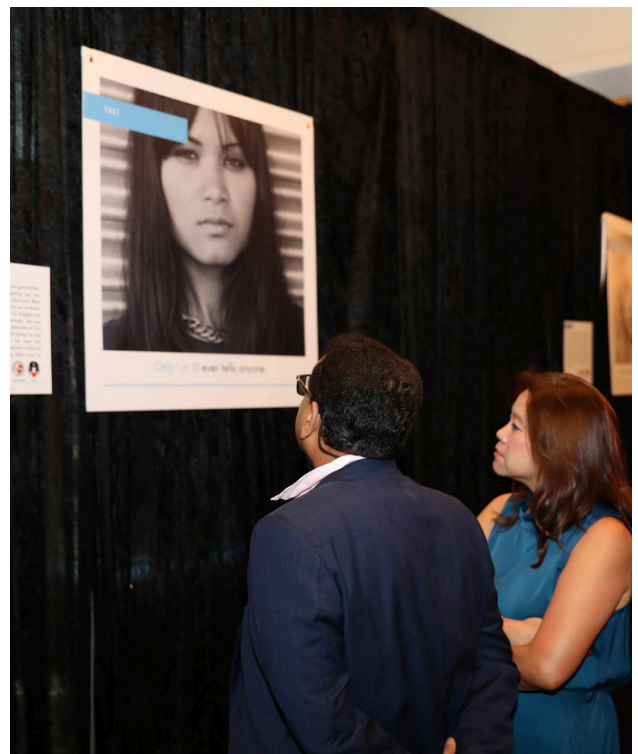
False, it does. 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be victims of sexual abuse by the age of 18 years old. There were over 6000 reports of child abuse in Fort Bend County just last year. And it may even have happened to someone you know. This was graphically depicted during the program in a photo montage of community leaders in Fort Bend County, who had previously experienced abuse or have a family member who had experienced abuse.

Myth #2: It Won't Happen to My Child.

False, the myth of Stranger Danger is untrue and dangerous. Over 90% of abuse happens by someone the child knows and often the parents know and trust. And most of the time (76%) the abuser is a family member.

Myth #3: There's Nothing We Can Do to Prevent Abuse.

False, research has shown that over 70% of abuse is preventable.



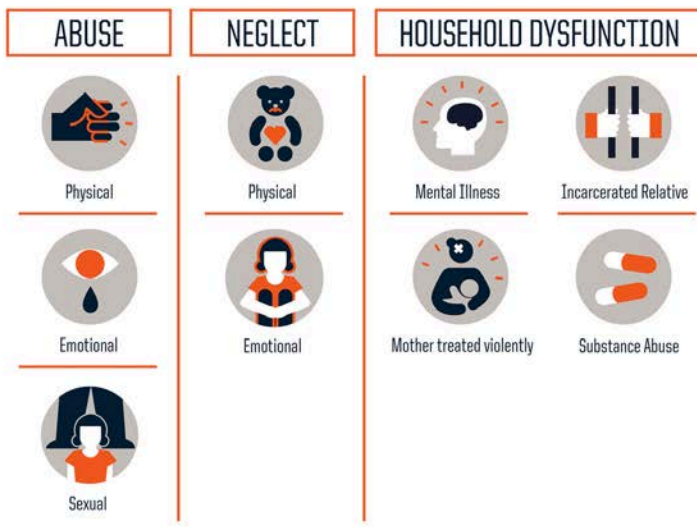


In addition, we detailed what Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are and how they are directly related to trauma (see graphic below). Because ACEs affect more of us in our community than we realize, colorful pom-poms were collected from guests who have personal experience with any of the ACEs within their families. The cumulation of hundreds of colorful balls was shared from the stage as a visual demonstration that almost everyone is impacted by trauma. This is happening in Fort Bend County.

**It's time to step up and
SUSPECT, DETECT & PROTECT our children.**

It's time to be a part of a movement to
PREVENT CHILD ABUSE in Fort Bend County.
Join us!

TYPES OF ACEs



ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood. Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect are all Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Toxic stress from ACEs can change brain development and affect how our body responds to stress. ACEs are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance misuse in adulthood. However, ACEs can be prevented.

THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU

Special thanks to all of our Sponsors!

We couldn't do the work we do without your generous support.

VIDEO

Fred & Mabel R. Parks Foundation

Betty Baitland / Eileen Akerson

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Cathy Stubbs
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Jim Vonderhaar, Sugar Land City Council At Large Position One
Sam & Terri Wang

Special thanks to: Laundry Genie – Kevin Stromatt, H-E-B, Greg Davis Signs,
Clements High School Chamber Choir & Director Jade Blakey

THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU



FEATURE STORY

Understanding Bullying

By Sandra Glenn and Dana Mersiovsky

October is Bullying Prevention Month, an important time for families, schools, and communities to come together around a simple idea: every child deserves to feel safe, seen, and respected. In this issue, we will explore the difference between bullying and unkind acts, share red flags that might suggest your child is being targeted, and offer practical ways you can help, whether your child needs support or is the one behaving in hurtful ways.

Understanding Bullying vs. Unkind Behavior

Not every unkind act is bullying, and that distinction matters. **Unkind behavior** can be a one-off snide comment or insensitive joke. It is hurtful, yes, but it does not usually involve a repeated pattern. **Bullying**, by contrast, is more serious: it is repeated aggression or harm, meant to intimidate or assert power over someone. That could look like ongoing teasing, social exclusion, threatening messages, or physically aggressive behavior. At its core, bullying happens over time, targets individuals unfairly, and often leaves them feeling unsafe.

When a report of bullying is received, school administrators follow clearly defined procedures to investigate and ensure student

safety. If bullying is confirmed, schools have several response options, which may include formal “stay-away” agreements, changes in classroom placement, or in some cases, a transfer to another campus.

Spotting the Warning Signs: Is Your Child Being Bullied?

Parents and caregivers watch for these red flags that might suggest something more than a bad day:

- Reluctance or refusal to go to school or social events
- Unexplained physical injuries, such as bruises or torn clothes
- Sudden drop in grades or loss of interest in school or homework
- Emotional changes such as sadness, moodiness, withdrawal, or frequent tears
- Physical complaints without a clear medical reason, such as headaches or stomachaches
- Loss of sleep or appetite, or talk of wanting to disappear or harm themselves

Studies confirm bullying can have serious mental effects. In a large-scale survey, even

-more-

LCISD uses both proactive and reactive strategies to address bullying:

"We are a Character Counts district, which provides the foundation for our behavior expectations, a shared language, and a positive school culture."

-Kathryn Reaves, Elementary Counselor Coordinator - Lamar CISD

mild bullying raised a student's odds of anxiety, depression, PTSD-like symptoms, sleep trouble, and poor mental health by two to four times. Severe bullying pushed those odds even higher, up to 18 times in some cases (arxiv.org). It is easy to dismiss a bad day, but when things start adding up, it is time to pay attention.

Supporting a Child Who's the Target

- Listen without judgment. Ask, "What happened? How did that make you feel?" Let them share as much or as little as they want.
- Validate their feelings. "That sounds unfair and scary. You do not deserve that."
- Partner with the school. All of our neighboring school districts have systems for reporting bullying, including anonymous reports.
- Work with a counselor or mental health professional if needed. Especially if anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts appear.
- Keep open communication with the school, including asking for follow-ups on how incidents are addressed.

What can we do?

There is a lot we as parents and caregivers can do. Knowing the difference between one-off unkindness and ongoing bullying helps us see when to step in. Watching warning signs, teaching empathy, supporting victims, and guiding kids who bully toward better choices all matter.

"At Lamar CISD Police Department, we take bullying seriously. Our commitment goes beyond simply addressing incidents as required by law; we are deeply invested in the emotional and psychological well-being of every student affected."

Bullying has no place in our schools. While some may dismiss it as a part of growing up, the truth is that bullying can have lasting, harmful effects, especially in a society that values inclusion, empathy, and acceptance."

We believe every child deserves to feel safe, respected, and supported. Our schools are committed to fostering environments where kindness is the norm and every student can thrive without fear."

-Chief Garcia, LCISD PD

Is Your Child a Bully?

No parent wants to imagine their child as a bully. But recognizing the possibility is not about blame – it's about responsibility, awareness, and growth. Bullying can take many forms: physical aggression, verbal teasing, exclusion, or online harassment. Sometimes, children act out due to stress, insecurity, or a desire to fit in. Child Advocates of Fort Bend teaches children about the signs, dangers and steps to help in the event children are being bullied. Additionally, we teach and encourage parents to be aware of why bullying happens, signs to watch and what to do in the event there needs to be an intervention.

Signs to Watch For

- Frequent complaints from peers or teachers about aggressive behavior
- A tendency to dominate or control others
- Lack of empathy or dismissiveness toward others' feelings
- Enjoyment from teasing or embarrassing others
- Trouble accepting responsibility for hurtful actions

Why It Happens

Children may bully for various reasons: modeling behavior they see at home or online, struggling with their own emotions, or trying to gain social status. Understanding the root cause is key to helping them change.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Talk openly: Ask your child about their interactions and feelings without judgment.

Teach empathy: Help them understand how their actions affect others.

Set clear boundaries: Reinforce respectful behavior at home and in public.

Work with educators: Partner with teachers or counselors to monitor and guide behavior.

Model kindness: Children learn most from what they see – show compassion in your own actions.

Asking "Is my child a bully?" is a courageous step. It opens the door to growth, healing, and building a future where your child learns to lead with kindness and respect. **We are here to help.** Contact **Dana Mersiovsky** at dmersiovsky@cafb.org with questions or for more information.

Are You a Bully?

A Mirror We All Need

At Child Advocates of Fort Bend, a component of the abuse prevention curriculum we teach discusses the topic of bullying. Many of our partner schools have specifically requested the agency bring this topic to their campuses. Bullying is often portrayed as a playground problem or a schoolyard issue. But the truth is, bullying can take many forms and exist in every environment – from classrooms to boardrooms, from social media to family dinners. The question “Are you a bully?” isn’t just for others. It’s a question we all need to ask ourselves.

Understanding Bullying Beyond the Stereotype
When we think of a bully, we often imagine someone loud, aggressive, and physically intimidating. But bullying can be subtle. It can be:

- **Verbal:** Sarcasm, insults, or passive-aggressive comments.
- **Social:** Excluding someone, spreading rumors, or manipulating relationships.
- **Cyber:** Posting hurtful content, sending threatening messages, or public shaming online.
- **Emotional:** Gaslighting, guilt-tripping, or controlling behavior.

Sometimes, people bully without realizing it – out of frustration, insecurity, or a need for control. That’s why self-reflection is so important.



Signs You Might Be Crossing the Line

Ask yourself:

- Do I often make others feel small to feel better about myself?
- Do I dismiss others’ feelings or opinions without listening?
- Do I use humor to mask hurtful comments?
- Do I dominate conversations or decisions without considering others?
- Do I feel the need to “win” at all costs, even if it hurts someone?

If any of these resonate, it doesn’t mean you’re a bad person. It means there’s room to grow.

-more-



Why People Bully – And How to Break the Cycle

Bullying often stems from pain. People who feel powerless may try to gain control by putting others down. Those who were bullied themselves may repeat the behavior as a defense mechanism.

Breaking the cycle starts with:

Empathy: Try to understand how your words and actions affect others.

Accountability: Own your behavior and apologize when necessary.

Growth: Seek support, read, learn, and commit to being better.

Creating a Culture of Kindness

Whether at work, school, or home, we all have the power to shape the environment. That starts with kindness, respect, and courage – the courage to speak up when we see bullying, and the courage to look inward when we might be the one causing harm.

Contact our Outreach Coordinator, **Sandra Glenn**, at sglenn@cafb.org if you are interested in learning more or scheduling a presentation.

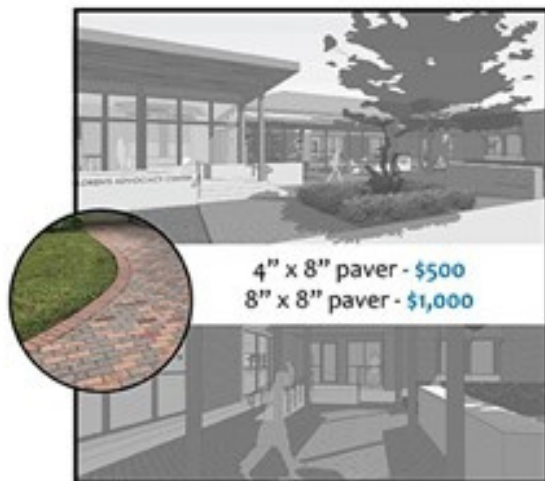


monthly spotlights

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



WELCOME NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBER!

Victoria (Tori) Benedettini



Tori has a BS in Business, Family and Consumer Sciences from the University of Alabama and an MS in Professional Studies in Sports Industry Management from Georgetown University. She is the Managing Partner for Benedettini Cabinetry manages the Benedettini family's real estate portfolio.

Born and raised in Fort Bend County, Tori has volunteered and supported programs centered around disadvantaged youth. In high school, she was a member of PALS and served as a member of Al's Pals at U of Alabama and was a mentor at Project North Star while living in Washington DC. She then went on to intern for Most Valuable Kids, a nonprofit that provides tickets to sporting events to underserved youth.

Under Tori's tutelage, Benedettini Cabinetry has doubled their Christmas contributions to CAFB donating over 200 toys in 2024 and supporting students with school supplies.

In her free time, Tori is an equestrian show jumper participating in national and international competitions, learning Italian and currently resides in Houston.

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.

Charcuterie & Champagne:

A Celebration of Our Volunteers

By Jennifer Brown



On September 5th, CAFB volunteers and staff gathered for an afternoon of charcuterie and champagne—and plenty of laughter. While the goal was to learn how to craft the perfect board of meats, cheeses, fruits, and chocolates, the true joy came from the connections made along the way. Stories were shared, friendships deepened, and new bonds began to form, all between moments of delicious “instruction.” And oh the laughter!!!!

It was wonderful watching these relationships grow. Our volunteers give so much of themselves to CAFB—welcoming clients and guests, caring for children, advocating in courtrooms, fundraising, and more. Their dedication is at the core of our mission: to strengthen a child’s voice, heal the hurt, and break the cycle of abuse and neglect.

This event was our small way of saying thank you. It was an afternoon of food, friendship, and fun—and a reminder that our mission is only possible because of the incredible people who choose to serve alongside us.



SAVE THE DATE

CHRISTMAS HOME TOUR

Presented by Fred and Mabel R. Parks Foundation

We have some exciting news!
Our 34th Christmas Home Tour will be
Friday, December 5th and Saturday, December 6th.

Support the tour today by becoming a Sponsor
Check out all the Sponsorship Options

LEARN MORE



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](#) to chat!

Do YOU want to help?

Please grab your friends and be a host in a home OR share your
baking skills by baking homemade cookies for the Tour.

For more information contact [Tarina](#) at TSheridan@cafb.org.



It's official - we are announcing a countywide collaborative effort that has been two years in the making called Child Abuse Prevention or CAP-C.

This is the first of its kind in the state of Texas - for a county to come together and declare that child abuse prevention is a priority and a commitment. The Collaborative is the joint effort of over 40 child welfare agencies. Our mission is to speak in one voice united in a vision of prevention.

CAP-C is anchored in 5 Pillars.

Pillar #1 is the formation of a Collaborative of child welfare professionals from over 40 Fort Bend County organizations who meet monthly to learn and share best practices.

Pillar #2 is conducting a comprehensive Research study last year of survivors of child abuse where we heard firsthand often in very emotional and brave personal stories about what could have prevented their abuse.

Pillar #3 is creating a CAP-C Website which we recently launched stocked with over 1600 resources about child abuse and child safety that can be downloaded and used for free.

Pillar #4 is developing a Safety Campaign for parents, children and teenagers so you know about risks, early warning signs and red flags.

Pillar #5 is Piloting this campaign in the coming year throughout our community - in daycares, elementary, middle and high schools, medical clinics, youth serving organizations, churches and houses of worship and community centers.

Your Commitment and what the impact will be.

CAP-C is Groundbreaking.

Prevention is Visionary.

And the impact could be Transformational.

We believe it's the right thing to do. It's what we must do now if we are going to keep our kids safe and prevent suffering, tragedy and heartbreak.

Just think, that could mean over 6,000 children next year would not experience abuse...and the following year and the following year. The ripple effect is enormous.

With your help, let's show the country what a group of passionate leaders can do to make Fort Bend County the model community for child abuse prevention.

For more information, please see the
www.capcfb.org website
or contact Dana Mersiovsky
at Dmersiovsky@cafb.org

Ready...Set...GO!

WWW.CAPCFB.ORG

We are proud to announce the launch of the Child Abuse Prevention Community (CAP-C) website, www.capcfb.org, a vital resource dedicated to protecting children and strengthening families across the Greater Fort Bend area. Special thanks to website committee members Sue Profilet, Jim Lockwood and Anne Bulan, who implemented the project at inception, and to the collaborative members who helped in the implementation.

This newly launched site serves as a central hub for community members, service providers, and advocates working to prevent child abuse and neglect and help keep our community safe. It offers easy access to information, tools, and support services designed to promote child safety and family well-being.

How to Use the Website

Explore Resources: Find educational materials, prevention strategies, and support services tailored for parents, caregivers, and professionals.

Get Involved: Learn how you can participate in local initiatives, volunteer opportunities, and collaborative efforts.

Stay Informed: Keep up with news, events, and training opportunities through the site's calendar and announcements.

Connect with Partners: Discover the network of organizations working together to create a safer community for children and families.

Whether you're a concerned citizen, a professional in the field, or someone seeking help, www.capcfb.org is your gateway to making a difference.

[ABOUT US](#)[EVENTS](#)[RESOURCE LIBRARY](#)[CONTACT US](#)

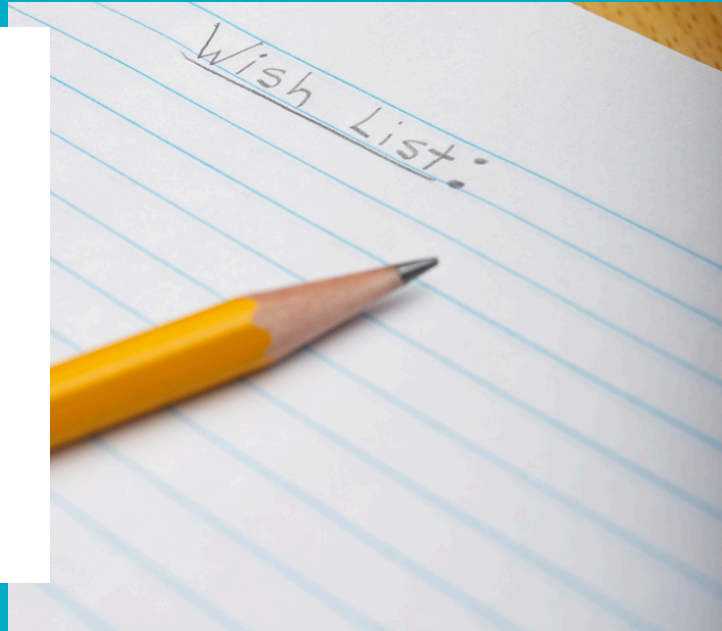
our needs

This month, we have immediate need for:

- **Gift cards**
VISA/ MasterCard, Walmart, HEB
- Pullups and adult diapers (a few pack of each)
- Children's underwear (boys and girls)

View our [Amazon Wish List](#)

View our [Holiday Wish list](#)



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



CHILD **ADVOCATES** OF FORT BEND™



Darkness to Light

Stewards of Children

Learn how to prevent child sexual abuse

We will teach you how to:

- Recognize risky situations
- Talk to children about boundaries and abuse
- Learn strategies that keep children safer
- Report abuse if you suspect something

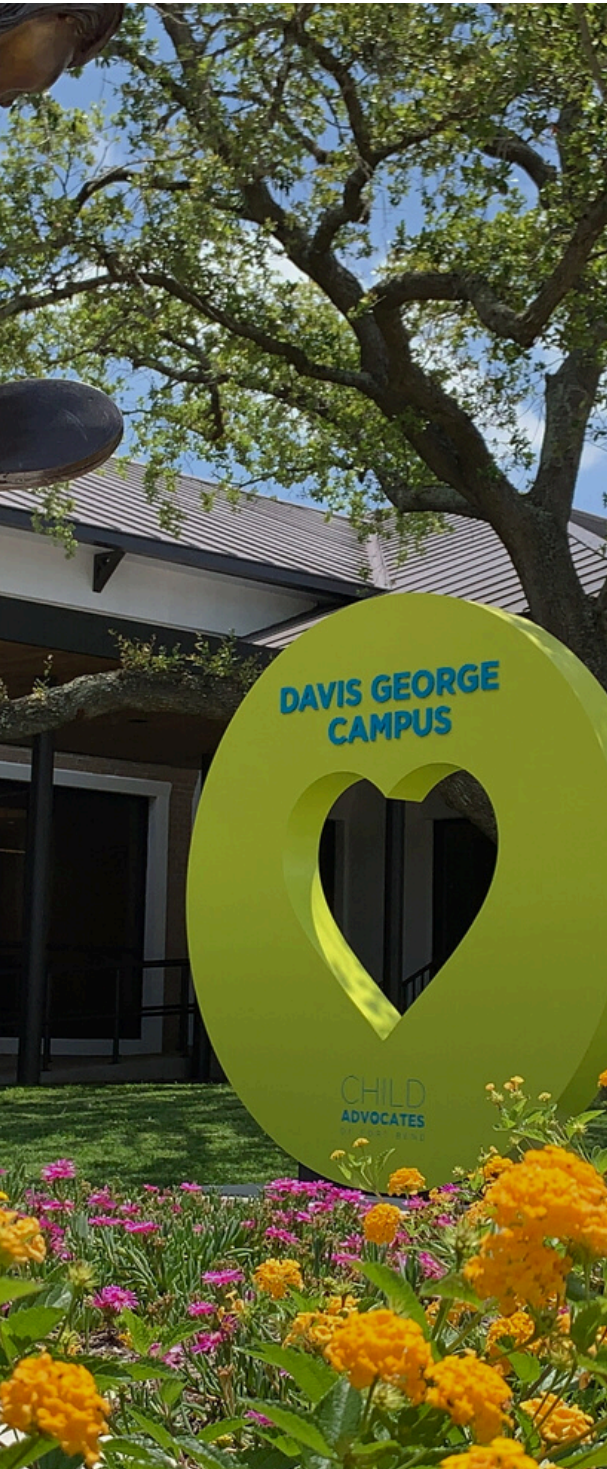
Scan QR code to register
or follow the link below:

[REGISTER HERE](#)



DARKNESS TO LIGHT'S
STEWARDS OF CHILDREN®

save these dates



October 14

FRIENDS Fall Coffee
10am - 11:30am
More info or to RSVP [here](#)

October 14-16

TBRI Caregiver Training
10am - 4pm
More info or to register [here](#)

October 28

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

November 21

National Adoption Day
8:30am - 10:30am
Fort Bend County Justice Center

November 21

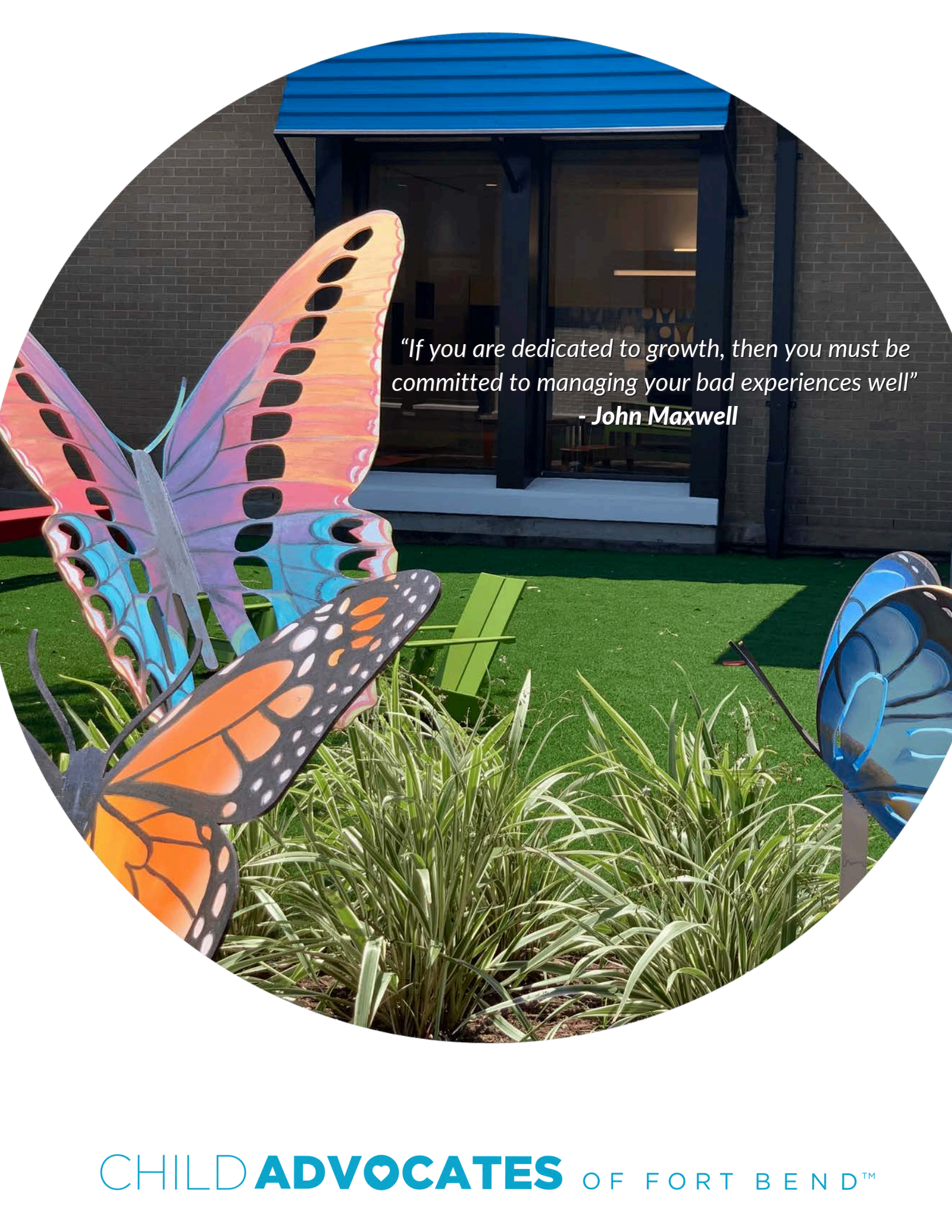
Sip & Stroll
noon - 1:30pm
Contact [Lisa](#) at LMoore@cafb.org to reserve your spot

December 2

Darkness to Light (via Zoom)

December 5 + 6

Christmas Home Tour



"If you are dedicated to growth, then you must be committed to managing your bad experiences well"
- John Maxwell