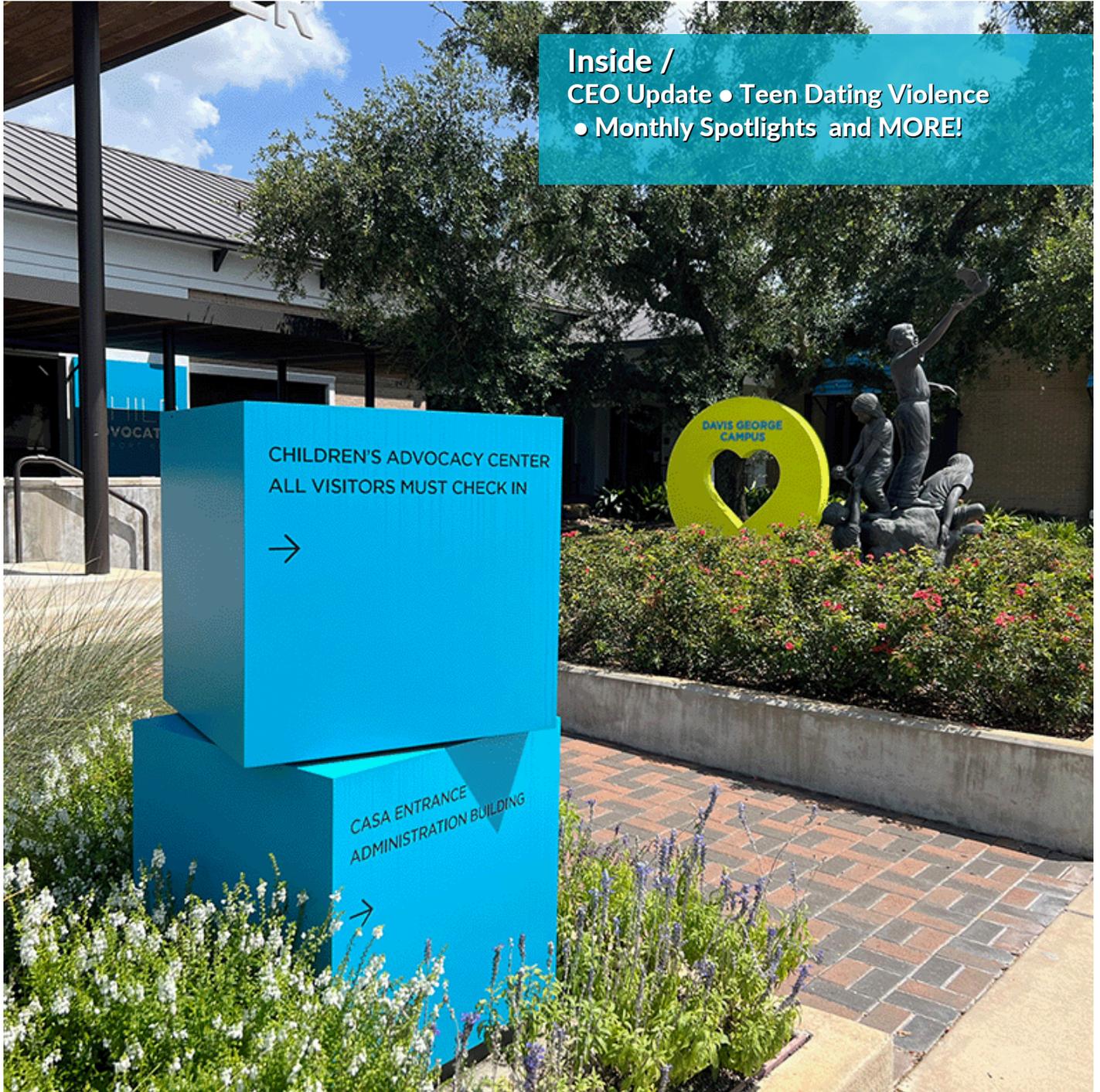


# The VOICES of

CHILD **ADVOCATES** OF FORT BEND™

Inside /  
CEO Update • Teen Dating Violence  
• Monthly Spotlights and MORE!



February 2026

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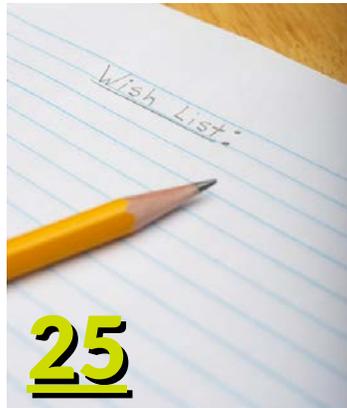


## Keeping you informed on our mission:

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.



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ROSENBERG, TX 77471  
281-344-5100



[WWW.CAFB.ORG](http://WWW.CAFB.ORG)



# from the ceo

*Welcome to our January issue of VOICES. . . .*

Welcome Friends,

February recognizes Black Heritage Month with this issue of VOICES where we discuss the topic of child abuse and child safety in the Black community. As many of you are aware, there is an overrepresentation of Black children in the child welfare system which is mirrored in our numbers at Child Advocates of Fort Bend as well. According to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Black children are three times more likely to die from abuse or neglect than White children. Twenty-five percent of all child abuse cases in America are of Black children. One in four Black children by the age of four will be abused, but one in every 10 white children will be abused at that same age range. Though HHS numbers show that Black children are three times more likely than white children to suffer from abuse, the numbers may reflect over-reporting when children have traumatic injuries. A study at Stanford Medicine also found that injuries in white children are under-reported as suspected abuse. These skewed numbers

not only make Black people, in general, look more violent, but they cause additional harm by potentially resulting in many Black children being separated from families and many children exhibiting negative behaviors resulting from their trauma... which in turn can create a spiraling effect of further harsh discipline, placement changes and institutionalization. One challenge in curbing this abuse is the traditional views on discipline still held onto by many Black parents that spanking and physical discipline is appropriate. But, that school of parenting may be gradually changing. Many millennial and Gen-Z Black parents are turning away from the way they were disciplined as children and becoming informed of the benefits of a more restrained, positive, supportive parenting style. The impact of trauma on children is now widely recognized and the lifelong consequences including altering a child's developing brain, and lifelong impacts on physical and emotional health with higher illness and disease. At Child Advocates of Fort Bend, our trauma-

**-more**



informed training and services are designed to address the impact of adverse childhood experiences. By working closely with both children and parents in programs like Collaborative Family Engagement and Trust Based Relational Intervention, we are able to assist and support parents to choose more positive, healthier parenting styles. Our clinical team of Clinical Family Advocates, Therapists and UT Health Psychiatrists are trained in a range of methodologies so that each child and family receives a customized treatment and service plan. We think the impact will be profound with fewer Black children being victims of abuse and parents acquiring more skills and confidence to use positive parenting approaches.

February also is Teen Dating Violence Month. Tragically, the number of teens experiencing dating violence is increasing dramatically as these behaviors are being viewed in movies, music videos, gaming platforms, TV and online. Statistics indicate that one in three teens in the U.S. will experience physical,

sexual or emotional abuse by someone they are in a relationship with before they become adults. Nearly half of college women (43%) report experiencing violent and abusive dating behaviors. This month, we hope to raise awareness about the prevalence of dating violence and educate young people about what they can do to prevent it from happening to them.

Look inside this month's issue of VOICES to learn more about these topics and all the other happenings at Child Advocates of Fort Bend. Thank you for all you do to strengthen the voices of children, heal their hurt and break the cycle of abuse and neglect.

For The Children's Sake,

*Ruthanne*

Ruthanne Mefford, CEO



Get your Mahj-on!

# Lunch & Mahjong

**Alings Chinese Bistro**  
6542 Hwy 90 Alt.  
Sugar Land, TX 77498

**Wednesday, February 11, 2026**  
**11am until 2pm**  
**\$100 per person**

Join us at Alings Chinese Bistro to celebrate Chinese New Year with lunch and an afternoon of Mahjong (Chinese or American style).  
**All proceeds benefit Child Advocates of Fort Bend.**

Space is limited.  
Reserve Today



Questions? Contact **Tarina** at [TSheridan@cafb.org](mailto:TSheridan@cafb.org)





# Love Shouldn't Hurt -Let's Talk About It

By Casey Davis & Dana Petty

Every February, communities nationwide observe Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM) to highlight an issue that impacts millions of teens each year. Teen dating violence includes physical, emotional, sexual, and digital abuse within a dating relationship - and its effects can be long-lasting.

## This is Why it Matters

- **1 in 3** teens will experience some form of dating abuse before adulthood
- **1 in 12** high school students report physical dating violence annually
- **1 in 10** report sexual violence

**Cyber abuse** is on the rise, with **1 in 3 teens** experiencing online harassment or control. These numbers show how critical it is to educate and empower teens to recognize unhealthy behaviors early.

## Warning Signs of Abuse

- Excessive jealousy or controlling behavior
- Isolation from friends and family
- Mood swings or explosive anger
- Verbal insults, humiliation, or gaslighting
- Pressure for sexual activity or unwanted touches
- Digital abuse: demanding passwords, monitoring online activity
- Unexplained injuries or intimidation
- Even one warning sign can indicate a harmful dynamic - **early intervention matters**

## What Parents Can Do

- Keep communication open about healthy relationships
- Watch for changes in mood, school performance, or social habits
- Believe your teen if they share concerns—avoid judgment

-more-

- Model respect and consent in your own relationships
- Know your local resources like **Child Advocates of Fort Bend** ([www.cafb.org](http://www.cafb.org)) as well as the **National Domestic Violence Hotline** ([www.thehotline.com](http://www.thehotline.com))

### Teen Power Points

- Healthy relationships include respect, trust, and boundaries
- Trust your instincts - if something feels wrong, speak up
- Stay connected with friends and supportive adults
- Understand and practice consent
- Reach out for help - talk to someone you trust or call a teen helpline

**Child Advocates of Fort Bend** is committed to breaking the cycle of abuse through education. The **NetSmartz** curriculum we offer provides training on:

- Online safety
- Recognizing red flags in relationships
- Building healthy boundaries
- Knowing when and how to seek help

Join us in spreading awareness about teen dating violence. Together, we can create a safer, stronger community for our youth.

**For more information or to schedule a NetSmartz training contact [Sandra Glenn, sglenn@cafb.org](mailto:sglenn@cafb.org).**

## KNOW THE SIGNS

- Excessive jealousy or controlling behavior
- Isolation from friends and family
- Mood swings or explosive anger
- Verbal insults, humiliation, or gaslighting
- Pressure for sexual activity or unwanted touches
- Digital abuse: demanding passwords, monitoring online activity
- Unexplained injuries or intimidation
- Even one warning sign can indicate a harmful dynamic - early intervention matters





# Black History Month

## Why It Matters for Children We Serve

By Jen Brown

At Child Advocates of Fort Bend, our work is rooted in protecting children, uplifting their voices, and helping them build safe, hopeful futures. Black History Month reminds us why this work matters—and why children must continue learning the full story of our shared history.

Teaching children Black history is about more than honoring the past. It helps young people understand resilience, courage, and the power of standing up for what is right. When children learn about Black leaders, innovators, and everyday heroes, they see that change is possible—even in the face of adversity—and that their own lives have value and purpose.

For the children we serve, representation matters deeply. Learning Black history affirms identity, builds confidence, and reinforces a sense of belonging. It tells children that their stories matter and that their futures are not defined by their circumstances, but by their potential.

“

*“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically... Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.”*

*~ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

”

Black history also encourages empathy and understanding for all children. It teaches respect, compassion, and the importance of justice—values that align closely with our mission as advocates. These lessons help children form healthy relationships, recognize their worth, and grow into caring members of our Fort Bend community.

By continuing to teach and celebrate Black history, we honor the past while empowering the children of Fort Bend to shape a safer, more inclusive future—this month and every month.





**April 25, 2026**

**SAVE THE DATE** and make plans to join us for our Gala for the Children. We are hard at work planning an amazing evening. Start thinking about festive dress with a "Touch of Wild"!

***Want to be a part of this fun event?***

Please see the following for our current needs:

**1) LIVE & VIP ITEMS**

- Destination trips to include second homes, time shares, hotel contacts, airline points
- Tickets to Sporting Events or the Theater
- Exclusive and rare liquor or wine, single or collections

**2) SILENT AUCTION ITEMS**

- Sports memorabilia, Spa certificates, self-care items
- Themed baskets such as gardening, movie night, summer, wine/liquor with specialty food
- Think NEW items that you would like to donate to a good cause - we will build a basket!

**3) SPONSORSHIP/TICKETS**

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT, Share with your friends  
Check out our website [here](#) for Sponsorship information  
Round up your friends and purchase tickets today

Contact **Tarina Sheridan**, [TSheridan@cafb.org](mailto:TSheridan@cafb.org) for more information or to sign up today!

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?



### AUCTION ITEMS

Do you know someone who has some-thing to donate OR do you like asking for things in-person/online? It feels like winning when they say yes! We have all the information you need to be a winner!



### EVENT COMMITTEE

Do you have an eye for attention to detail? Help us with the auction during the day or evening of the event. Many hands make light work!



### SPIRITS

Donations of spirits valued at \$35 and up are needed for our Spirit Pull. You can buy at \$50 chance to win a bottle valued at up to \$125 Pull until your arm hurts!



### GIFT CARDS

Donations of restaurant or retail gift cards valued at \$25 or more are needed. At our Mystery Gift Card Pull for \$50 you could win a gift card up to \$200. Think "re-gifting" - we won't tell!



### WINE

Donations of red or white wine valued at \$35 or more are needed for our annual Wine Pull. You can buy a \$50 chance to win a bottle valued at up to \$150. Try your luck!



### JUST WANT TO HELP

Contact Tarina at [TSheridan@cafb.org](mailto:TSheridan@cafb.org). She will encourage you and share how you can help and have fun at the same time. It's a win - win!



# 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. A 4"x8" paver is \$500 and a 8"x8" large paver is \$1,000. Bricks are positioned 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](mailto:Lmoore@cafb.org)



## STAFF UPDATE



### Congratulations to Kimberly Bautista!

I passed my licensing exam, and I am now a Licensed Clinical Social Worker! This achievement marks an important milestone in my professional journey. Growing within this organization from a social work intern to a licensed clinician has been both meaningful and rewarding.

I am so grateful for my amazing team and supervisors who have supported and guided me throughout this process.

I look forward to continuing to support children and families with compassion and care!

### *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.



# Happy Retirement, Marjorie!

By Carol Thesing

Help us celebrate the remarkable career of **Marjorie Hancock**, who is retiring after **29 ½ years** of dedicated service to Fort Bend County with both the District Attorney's Office and the last 21 years with the County Attorney's Office.

For nearly three decades, Marjorie has exemplified integrity, professionalism, and an unwavering commitment to justice and fairness. Her contributions have shaped not only the County Attorney's Office Family Law Division but also the lives of countless individuals and families in our community. Her work has been a testament to what public service should be—guided by compassion, grounded in principle, and driven by a genuine desire to make a difference.

Marjorie, while we will miss your presence in the office, we are excited for the new

chapter that awaits you. May it be filled with joy and all the things you have dreamed of and worked so hard to enjoy.

Marjorie will be caring for her beautiful twin granddaughters as well as her other three grandchildren, who bring such happiness to her life. In her spare time, she and her husband will be working on their bucket list, traveling both at home and abroad.

Assistant County Attorney Chris McDaniel summarized it perfectly with a quote by John C. Maxwell that perfectly reflects Marjorie's impact.

"A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way."

We thank Marjorie—for her extraordinary service, her lasting impact, and the bright future ahead. Congratulations on your retirement.



# Employee Match

Here's a list of **Major Employers in Houston** that typically offer **employee giving (donation) matching programs and/or volunteer hour grant programs** – meaning if you work for these companies, your personal charitable donations and sometimes volunteer time can be matched by your employer. Do you or someone you know work for one of these companies? If your company is not on this list, it's easy to check with your HR Department to inquire about a matching gift program.

## **Energy / Oil & Gas (Big Houston Presence)**

- BP
- Shell
- Chevron
- Halliburton
- Phillips 66
- ConocoPhillips
- Citgo
- CenterPoint Energy
- ExxonMobil
- Kinder Morgan
- BHP Billiton
- EOG Resources

## **Tech & Professional Services**

- Microsoft
- Google
- Apple
- Cisco
- Accenture
- Adobe
- Dell
- HP / Hewlett Packard

## **Healthcare & Pharma**

- Tenet Healthcare Foundation
- AbbVie / Abbott Fund
- Aetna Foundation
- Johnson & Johnson
- Pfizer Foundation

## **Financial & Insurance**

- Bank of America
- Wells Fargo
- JP Morgan Chase
- Goldman Sachs
- Ameriprise Financial
- Citigroup / Citibank

## **Retail & Consumer Brands**

- National HQs with Houston operations
- Allstate Foundation
- American Express
- Coca-Cola
- Costco Wholesale
- 3M
- Abbott Laboratories

# Awareness in Action: Partner Appreciation

By Claudia Sorto

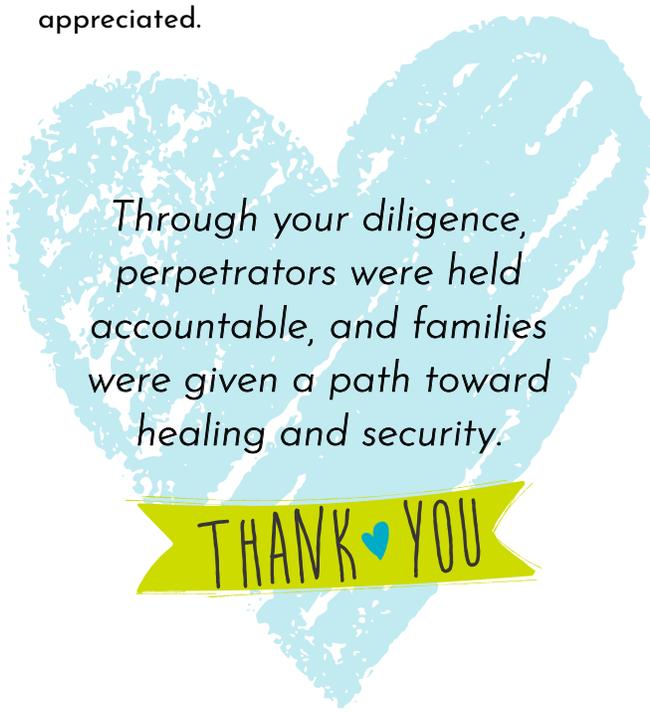
Thank you to the Assistant District Attorneys of Fort Bend County's Child Abuse Division for the extraordinary dedication you bring to one of the most demanding and vital responsibilities in our justice system. Your work requires not only legal expertise but profound empathy, resilience, and a steadfast commitment to protecting children who cannot protect themselves. Every day, you stand on the front lines of justice, ensuring that the most vulnerable members of our community are heard, believed, and safeguarded.

Your efforts were especially evident in the month of December 2025, a month that underscored the depth of your commitment. During this period, you worked tirelessly to resolve your cases—whether through carefully negotiated pleas or through the rigor and courage required in trial. In each decision, you weighed every factor with intention: the strength of the evidence, the needs and wishes of the families, the long-term safety of the children, and the mental and emotional well-being of those who had already endured so much. Your approach ensured that every resolution was not only legally sound but ethically grounded and trauma-informed. Through your diligence, perpetrators were held accountable, and families were given a path toward healing and security.

We also extend heartfelt gratitude for your ongoing collaboration with the Child Advocates of Fort Bend Criminal Court

Advocate team, including Renee Johnson, Jasmine Morales, and Claudia Sorto. Together, you form a team that goes far beyond the traditional boundaries of prosecution. Your partnership ensures that families receive holistic support—legal guidance, emotional care, safety planning, and the reassurance that they are not navigating this journey alone. This unified approach strengthens outcomes, restores hope, and honors the dignity of every child and caregiver you serve.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication, your compassion, and your relentless pursuit of justice. The impact of your work reaches far beyond the courtroom. It shapes safer futures, rebuilds lives, and reinforces the values that make our community strong. Your service is seen, valued, and deeply appreciated.



*Through your diligence,  
perpetrators were held  
accountable, and families  
were given a path toward  
healing and security.*

THANK YOU



# Ready, Set, Go!

## YOU HAVE THE POWER

By Dana Petty

The Fort Bend County **Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative (CAP-C)** has officially launched its new Safety Campaign, a county-wide brand initiative designed to raise awareness and empower adults, teens and children in Fort Bend County. The campaign was developed by a coalition of over 40 local organizations—including medical clinics, schools, churches, and youth-serving agencies—working together under CAP-C’s mission to unify child abuse prevention efforts.

At the heart of the campaign is a bold yet compassionate message “You Have the Power” aimed at reshaping attitudes around child safety and abuse prevention. Central components include:

- Targeted messaging and visuals that promote the impactful messaging. Tips and tools will guide children, teens and adults to trust their instincts, ask the right questions if something seems off, and actively act to safeguard children.
- A multi-channel rollout featuring social media graphics, short-format video content, traditional media, and printed materials. This ensures that the campaign meets audiences across digital spaces and community hubs alike.
- A pilot phase within medical facilities, schools, early childhood centers, and

collaborative partner agencies - where local advocates are trained to share safety best practices and act as campaign champions.

- A commitment to data-informed improvements: CAP-C will continuously learn from early results and feedback, refining messages and expanding the campaign’s reach based on real-time impact.

This empowering and proactive brand approach marks a new phase for the CAP-C, implementation toward building community-wide awareness and early prevention practices. By equipping adults, teens and youth with the knowledge and tools to recognize potential abuse, the Safety Campaign aims to create a broader culture of vigilance and care before harm occurs. As CAP-C continues its rollout, the initiative adds new momentum to Fort Bend County’s child protection efforts and establishes a sustainable model for prevention across diverse community settings.

**To learn more about the Fort Bend County Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative visit [www.capcfb.org](http://www.capcfb.org) or contact Dana Petty at [dpetty@cafb.org](mailto:dpetty@cafb.org).**





# Celebrating the Anniversary of the "Forever Angels" Legacy Society

The Forever Angels Legacy Society, the planned giving program of Child Advocates of Fort Bend (CAFB), welcomed its newest members and celebrated its 2nd anniversary with a cocktail reception on January 5<sup>th</sup>. Thirty-two generous CAFB supporters now adorn the donor wall located in the agency's lobby. Each time a new donor commits a legacy gift to CAFB, a new star with the "angel's" name(s) is added to the wall. "These stars really signify the ultimate commitment from our donors. To know that we have supporters who have made plans to continue to help children in our community, even after they have passed on, is truly humbling," says Ruthanne Mefford, CAFB CEO.

The Forever Angels Legacy Society has even attracted support from donors who live outside our community. Jeanne Lonati, the sister of CAFB board member, Jill Curtis, lives in North Carolina. But after touring the

CAFB campus and learning more about the agency's programs and mission, she was inspired to make a legacy gift. Jeanne, in town for the holidays, was elated to see her new star on the wall!

A portion of the evening was also set aside to honor the agency's first "Forever Angel," Dr. Angela McCain who tragically passed away after a short illness on September 21, 2025. Her husband, David Lanagan, also a donor, reflected on Angela's gift. "Now the tangible part of her life that remains to be seen is the legacy that she has left behind her after that transition. It's tremendously comforting to know that she not only changed lives, she changed them forever," says Lanagan who encourages others to join in the giving spirit.

*If you would like to learn more about the various ways you too can become a "Forever Angel," please email [plannedgiving@cafb.org](mailto:plannedgiving@cafb.org).*



# CAFB Launches

## TAKING STOCK OF YOUR

# STOCK



When you think of making a donation to charity, does the image of writing a check or providing your credit card number come to mind? You're not alone. A whopping **86%** of donations made to charity are cash. But did you know there's another often-overlooked asset that can be extremely beneficial to both donor and recipient? **The answer—Appreciated Securities!**

Appreciated securities are investments (stocks, bonds, mutual funds) that have grown in value since you purchased them. These are highly tax-efficient assets to donate to charities like Child Advocates of Fort Bend. **Why?** Because you avoid capital gains tax and can deduct the full fair market value, maximizing the gift's impact compared to donating cash.

### **Here's a possible scenario:**

A Texas couple in their 60's bought a utility stock more than 30 years ago for \$20 per share. The company's profit has expanded over the decades and now the stock is worth \$500 a share. The couple owns 100 shares, which is now valued at \$50,000. They are thinking of selling the stock but are worried about the tax implications. The couple are longtime donors to Child Advocates of Fort Bend, and they would like to make gift to the charity. Should they sell the stock to generate income or just donate the stock

directly to CAFB?

### **The answer--donate the stock!!**

Donating the stock directly is a win-win for everyone! Here's why:

If the couple sold the stock themselves (they are in the top tax bracket), they would pay 23.8% in taxes per share (and even more if they lived outside Texas.) That would result in a tax bill of **\$11,424!** They would realize just \$38,576 from the sale.

But....

If the couple donated the stock directly to CAFB, they would not pay ANY tax. Instead, they would be eligible to take a tax deduction equal to the full value of the stock. CAFB, as a non-profit organization, could then sell the stock and receive the full \$50,000 as a donation and pay no tax.

**Do you need to "Take Stock of Your Stock"?** Do you have a long-held security that could do more for both you and your chosen charity if you were to donate it? To decide if this giving strategy would be beneficial to you, consult a qualified financial expert to determine the best course of action. **If we can be of any assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out to [plannedgiving@cafb.org](mailto:plannedgiving@cafb.org).**

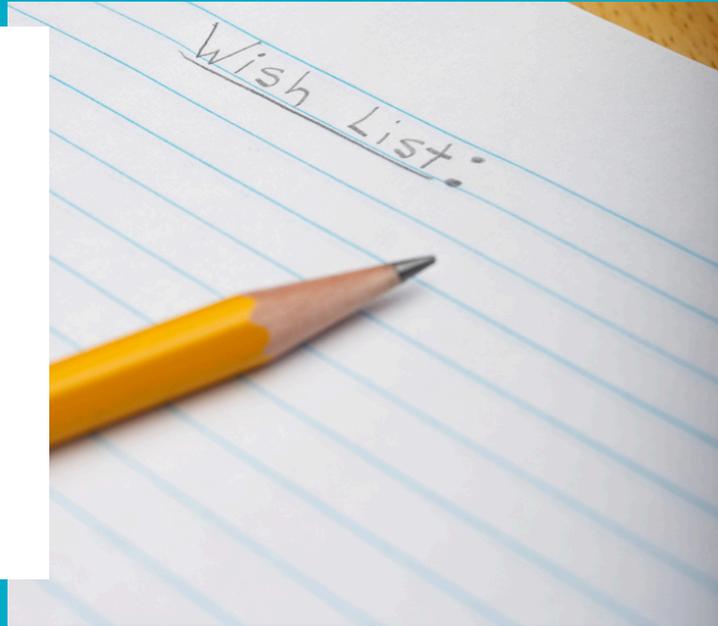


# our needs

This month, we have immediate need for:

- **NEW** medium-sized stuffed animals
- **Gift cards**  
VISA/ MasterCard, Walmart, HEB

View our [Amazon 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](mailto:lmoore@cafb.org)





## February 10

Recognize+ Respond  
10:00am until 12pm  
Reserve your spot [here](#) today!

## February 20

Sip & Stroll  
12pm until 1:30pm  
Contact [Lisa](#) at [LMoore@cafb.org](mailto:LMoore@cafb.org) to reserve your spot

## March 26

Trauma Informed Care and TBRI Conference  
9:00am until 4:00pm  
*James Reese Career and Technical Center*

## March 31

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

## April 10

"Light of Hope"  
Sugar Land Town Square

## April 25

"Where the Wild Things Are" Gala  
5pm until 10pm  
*Houston Marriott Sugar Land*

## June 24

Youth Aging Out Conference  
1pm until 5pm





*“Our children are worthy of love without fear, relationships built on respect, and a world that celebrates who they are and where they come from”*  
**- Anonymous**