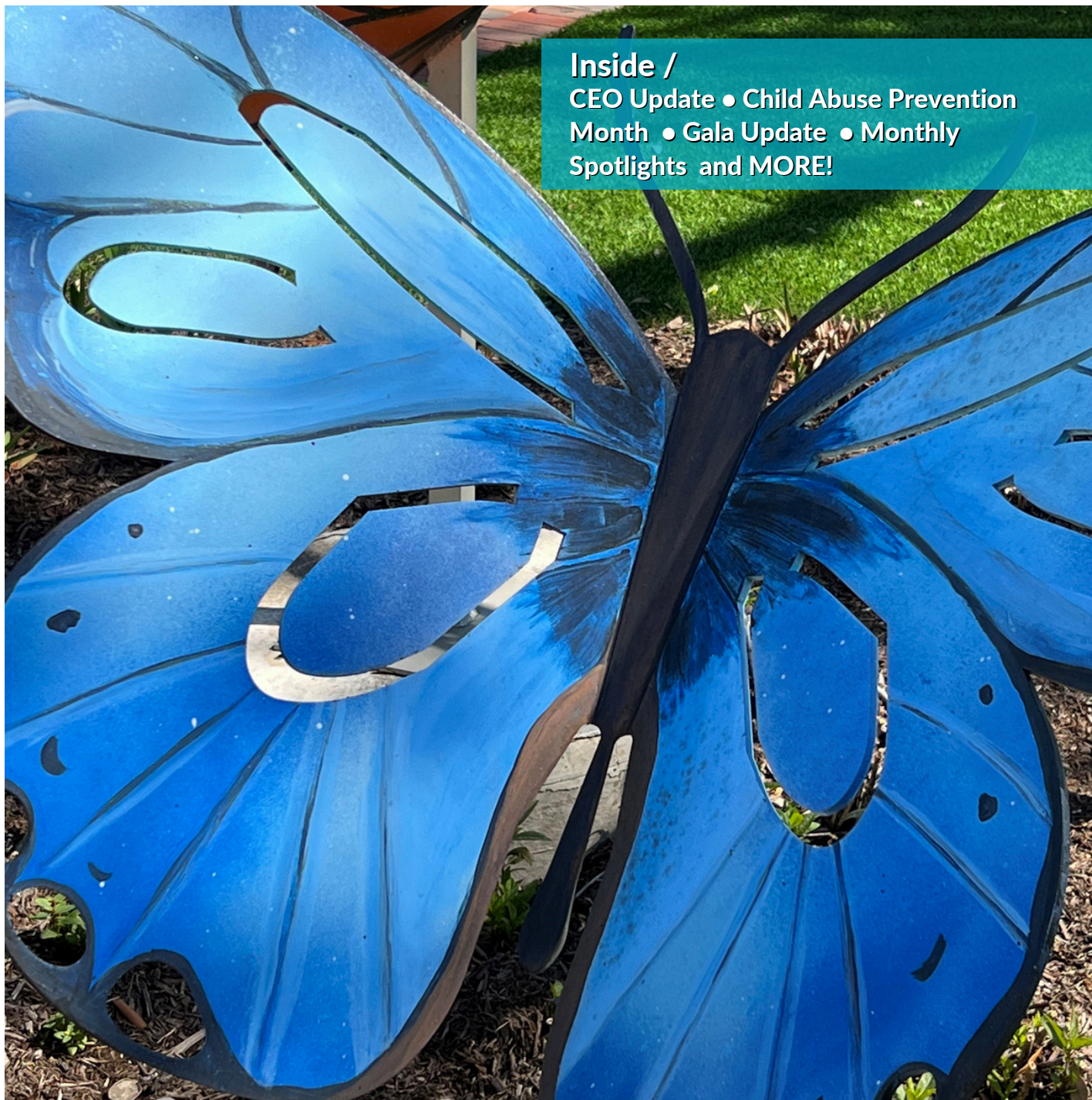


# The VOICES of

CHILD ADVOCATES OF FORT BEND™

Inside /  
CEO Update • Child Abuse Prevention  
Month • Gala Update • Monthly  
Spotlights and MORE!



April 2026

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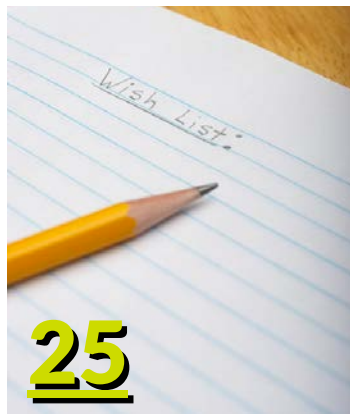
## Keeping you informed on our mission:

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



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



# from the ceo

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

Welcome Friends,

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, dedicated to raising awareness and fostering community involvement to support families and prevent child maltreatment. You may have seen blue ribbons tied around trees in our community or affixed to cars, displays of blue pinwheels, elementary schools decorated with child abuse prevention art and messages and fields of 1,993 white stakes each tied with a blue ribbon in front of the Richmond Court House and on Highway 90 in Stafford representing each child who suffered abuse last year and was served by Child Advocates of Fort Bend. The story of the blue ribbon commemorates the lost life of a little boy who died after suffering from severe abuse. His grandmother, Bonnie Finney, tied a blue ribbon on the antenna of her car in acknowledgement of his bruised body to raise awareness about abuse across the community

The blue pinwheel is the national symbol for child abuse prevention and represents joy, whimsy, and innocence, emphasizing what a child's life should be. These symbols signify the hope and belief that raising children in supportive, nurturing environments is a community responsibility.

We have a variety of activities and events planned for the month, beginning with our Light of Hope Ceremony on Friday, April 10 and culminating with our Gala for the Children on April 25. This year's Light of Hope will be extra special because we will be debuting our new child safety campaign, **YOU HAVE THE POWER**, which provides tips, tools and messaging for parents, children and teenagers to stay safe. Over the coming months, we will be piloting the campaign in daycares, medical clinics, youth

[-more](#)



and community organizations and schools. Our Gala is always the highlight of the season, and this year's theme of "Where The Wild Things Are" follows the timeless tale of one little boy's journey to face and conquer frightening monsters - emerging stronger, braver and more self-assured. The Gala invites guests to celebrate the resilience of the children and families served by CAFB.

I hope to see you at our events as we continue to emphasize child abuse prevention in addition to our traditional advocacy, treatment and recovery services. Did you know that 70% of child abuse is preventable?

With awareness and education, resources and skill building, family support and community engagement, we hope that all children have safe childhoods.

Thank you for all you do to help us be able to deliver on this vision.

For The Children's Sake,

*Ruthanne*

Ruthanne Mefford, CEO





**YOU HAVE THE  
POWER**

**TO PREVENT CHILD ABUSE**

**Please join us  
for this FREE  
family-friendly  
event!**

- Booths
- Music
- Resources
- Giveaways

**You Have The Power  
to make a difference!**  
For more information  
on how to get involved,  
visit [www.cafb.org](http://www.cafb.org)

Light of  
**HOPE**  
CEREMONY

Friday  
**APRIL**  
**10**  
6PM - 7PM

**SUGAR LAND  
TOWN SQUARE**

15958 City Walk,  
Sugar Land, TX 77479

CHILD  
**ADVOCATES**  
OF FORT BEND™



Child Abuse Prevention  
COLLABORATIVE





**April 25, 2026**

Won't you join us?

Gather your friends, family and co-workers and join us for an evening full of emotions, fun and impactful messaging that makes a HUGE difference for children in Fort Bend!

To sponsor or for tickets visit our website or click [here](#)

**We need your help!**

- **Be the organizer and invite your friends to attend!**
- **Share our event on Social Media**
- **Browse our Online Bidding site (live April 13)**
- **Interested in volunteering? Contact Tarina**

***Can't make the Gala but interested in a Live Auction item?***

Contact **Tarina** and we will make sure you have a chance to win!

**[Tsheridan@cafb.org](mailto:Tsheridan@cafb.org)**



# A Wildly Memorable Night To Make a Difference for Children

Get ready to step into a world of imagination, courage and untamed wonder! Our highly anticipated “Where the Wild Things Are” Gala will take place on Saturday, April 25, 2026, at the Houston Marriott Sugar Land. This magical evening will bring to life the spirit of resilience and bravery inspired by Maurice Sendak’s beloved children’s story “Where the Wild Things Are”.

Based on the timeless tale of one little boy’s journey to face and conquer frightening monsters—emerging stronger, braver, and more self-assured—the gala invites guests to celebrate the resilience of the children and families served by CAFB. Attendees will be transported into a whimsical world filled with creativity and courage, reflecting the mission to help every child Strengthen their Voice, Heal from Hurt, and Break the Cycle of abuse and neglect for children and families in Fort Bend and surrounding counties.

The evening will feature imaginative décor, a whimsical dance performance by students of Cookie Joe’s Dancin’ School, live and silent auctions, raffle, wine, spirits and gift card pulls, dinner and dancing to the tunes of DJ Love. Michele Fisher returns as emcee for her 14<sup>th</sup> year, and Jason Alexander will lead an exciting live auction. Joining Exchange Club of Sugar

Land and OCuSOFT, Inc. this year as presenting sponsors are EOG Resources and NRG WA Parish Plant. Attire for the evening is Cocktail Formal with a “Touch of Wild”—inviting guests to add subtle animal-inspired elegance or bold thematic flair.

Auction highlights will include luxury travel packages, exclusive experiential offerings, fine dining experiences, and one-of-a-kind items designed to inspire an adventurous spirit. Guests may find themselves whisked away on a wilderness getaway in Colorado, enjoying gourmet culinary journeys like a 7-course tasting with wine at Musaffer, or filling their bar with high-end bourbon or wine.

Join us for an unforgettable night of imagination, courage, and connection as we celebrate the strength of children who face their own “wild things” every day. Together, we will raise vital funds to support Child Advocates of Fort Bend’s wraparound services for children and families impacted by abuse and neglect. Sponsorships of \$2,500 - \$25,000 are available. Individual reservations are \$200. For more information about the Gala or to sponsor visit <https://www.cafb.org/events/gala/> or contact Tarina Sheridan at [tsheridan@cafb.org](mailto:tsheridan@cafb.org).

# YOU HAVE THE POWER

## The Power of One Safe Adult How Our Community Prevents Child Abuse

By Dana Petty

April is Child Abuse Prevention month. Every child is just one "safe adult" away from a completely different life story. While child abuse is a complex societal issue, research consistently shows that the presence of even a single stable, nurturing relationship is the most significant protective factor in a child's life. This is the core of our Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative's (CAP-C) You Have the Power campaign: the belief that every individual in our community has the ability to disrupt the cycle of abuse and advocate for the most vulnerable children.

### What is a "Safe Adult"?

Unlike a "trusted adult"—who might unfortunately be the one causing harm—a safe adult is defined by their actions and commitment to protection. A safe adult:

- **Listens without judgment** and validates a child's feelings.
- **Respects body boundaries** and teaches children they have the right to say "no".
- **Takes immediate action** when a child discloses concerns, understanding that reporting is an act of courage that saves

lives. In the state of Texas, we are all mandated reporters. Pass it on!

- **Maintains transparency** with other caregivers and avoids secret or isolated one-on-one time.

### The Community's Role in Prevention

Prevention is a shared responsibility that extends beyond the home. Our community protects children when we:

- **Educate Yourself and Others:**

Normalize the conversation about child abuse prevention. Learning to recognize behavioral red flags-like sudden mood changes or fear of specific people-is the first step toward intervention. Child Advocates of Fort Bend provides a variety of educational opportunities for our community. Learn more at [www.cafb.org](http://www.cafb.org) or [www.capcfb.org](http://www.capcfb.org).

- **Support Families:** Helping a neighbor with childcare or advocating for family-friendly policies reduces the parental stress that often precedes neglect. Spread awareness without pressure.

-more-

- **Invest in Safe Spaces:** Whether through local schools, churches, youth serving organizations, or local businesses, we must ensure that the environments where children live and play are vetted and secure. This is community responsibility.

### You Have the Power to Prevent Child Abuse

Our **You Have the Power** campaign serves as a call to action for every community member. You don't need special training to be a safe adult; you only need to be present, observant, and willing to speak up. When we stand united, we create a protective shield around our children. By identifying yourself as a safe adult, you are not just a bystander-you are a lifeline.

This month, we invite you to commit to being a safe, trusted adult for a child-**because prevention starts with connection.**

- Learn the signs of abuse or neglect
- Speak up if something feels off  
"What if I'm wrong?"  
*But, WHAT IF YOU ARE RIGHT?*
- Show up consistently for a child in their life.

**How will you use your power** to be the one safe adult a child in our community needs today?



# No Child Alone: CASA's Commitment to Fort Bend Youth

By Jen Brown

At Child Advocates of Fort Bend, the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program provides a powerful voice for children and youth who have experienced abuse, neglect, or other serious challenges. Trained volunteers are appointed by a judge to advocate for a child's best interests – both in the courtroom and in everyday life.

CASA staff and volunteers serve children in foster care, as well as youth involved in Court-Ordered Services (COS) cases and Juveniles in the FIRST Court, Justice Involved Youth Pilot program, ensuring that young people across multiple court systems have a consistent, supportive adult focused solely on their well-being and future.

Each volunteer typically works with one child or sibling group, building a stable, trusting relationship during an often uncertain time. Volunteers regularly visit the child or youth, monitor safety and progress, and communicate with teachers, medical providers, caregivers, probation officers, caseworkers, and family members. They then provide detailed reports and recommendations to the court, which provide valuable information to the Judges, ultimately leading to a more well-rounded and informed decision.



CASA advocacy extends far beyond legal proceedings. Volunteers help ensure that children and youth receive appropriate medical care, mental health services, and educational support, while also encouraging healthy relationships and positive activities. For justice-involved youth, CASA advocates may also support rehabilitation goals, school engagement, and planning for a successful transition back into the community.

Child Advocates of Fort Bend offers specialized support tailored to developmental stages. Young children receive early developmental monitoring and stability-focused advocacy, school-aged children benefit from educational and social enrichment support, and teens receive guidance in preparing for adulthood – including life skills development, career exploration, and independent living readiness.

The ultimate goal of CASA is to help every child and youth achieve safety, stability, accountability, and a permanent network of caring adults. By standing beside them throughout their involvement with the court system, CASA staff and volunteers ensure that no young person has to navigate these challenges alone.

### JIY Training Recap

Recently, CASA trained 12 new Justice-Involved Youth (JIY) CASA Advocates who will serve youth involved with the juvenile justice system. During the training, participants gained an in-depth understanding of what it means to advocate for youth navigating the juvenile justice system.

Throughout the training, advocates learned about the structure and processes of the juvenile justice system, as well as the unique challenges faced by justice-involved youth. Presentations were provided by a variety of professionals working directly within the system, including representatives from the Juvenile Probation Department, The Honorable Teana Watson of County Court at Law #5, and representatives from the District Attorney's Office. Participants also received training on Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI) and heard from CASA's own Jordan Schlafer on effective strategies for JIY advocacy.

This comprehensive training equipped advocates with the knowledge and tools needed to effectively support and advocate for youth on Justice-Involved Youth cases, helping ensure they have the guidance and support necessary to achieve positive outcomes.



# monthly spotlights

*updates from the programs and MORE!*

## STAFF UPDATE

### We're Hiring!

#### ***Court Advocacy Specialist***

The Court Advocacy Specialist is responsible for supervising and evaluating advocates appointed to serve children in foster care. The goal is to provide advocates with supervision and monitoring to ensure children's best interests are being met while involved in the legal system. In addition, this position assists with advocate recruitment, screening, and training of advocates as well as program development, tracking and evaluation.

If you are interested in applying, visit [Career Opportunities - Child Advocates of Fort Bend](#) to find information on how to apply.

# A Special Visit from the Garden Club of Richmond

By Lisa Moore



The Garden Club of Richmond toured Child Advocates of Fort Bend at their monthly members meeting on March 19. The theme of the meeting was “Butterflies,” and CAFB Volunteer Donna Anderson shared an enlightening presentation on butterflies, migration, and native plants that attract them. This tied in beautifully to the décor and theme of our building, which utilizes butterfly imagery in the theme of “Transforming Lives”, as well as our Butterfly Garden and Wellness Garden.

Garden Club members toured our building and learned about the presence of child maltreatment in our community, with over 6000 reports of alleged abuse of Fort Bend County children just last year, and how

children can heal and recover following sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect. They followed the journey that a child takes from having a safe place to tell what happened to them to a trained forensic interviewer, to receiving a medical exam, therapy and psychiatric services while their non-offending caregivers receive family support and comprehensive case management.

Hostesses from the Garden Club of Richmond are Gay Young, Nancie Rain, Laurel Wendt, Teresa Crowell and Elizabeth Drozd. The club’s yearly caladium sales fundraiser helps provide the funds that the club donates regularly to Child Advocates of Fort Bend.

# Spring Break Recap

By Aly Ferrante

The CASA Team recently hosted a successful and meaningful Spring Break event that brought together youth from CASA and the CAC for a day of connection, service, and personal growth.

The day began with a service project in partnership with Lunches of Love, a local nonprofit dedicated to providing meals for children in need. Youth spent time decorating lunch bags that will be used to deliver meals to children in the community, adding encouraging messages and creative designs to brighten someone's day.

Participants also engaged in a reflective activity by creating their own vision boards. This intentional time allowed youth to think about their future, set personal goals, and express their aspirations in a creative and supportive environment.

Lunch was generously provided by CASA Board Member, Irfan Motiwala, at Alings Chinese Bistro, where the group enjoyed a delicious meal and time together outside of the day's activities.

The event wrapped up with an exciting escape room experience, giving youth the opportunity to work together, build teamwork skills, and simply have fun.

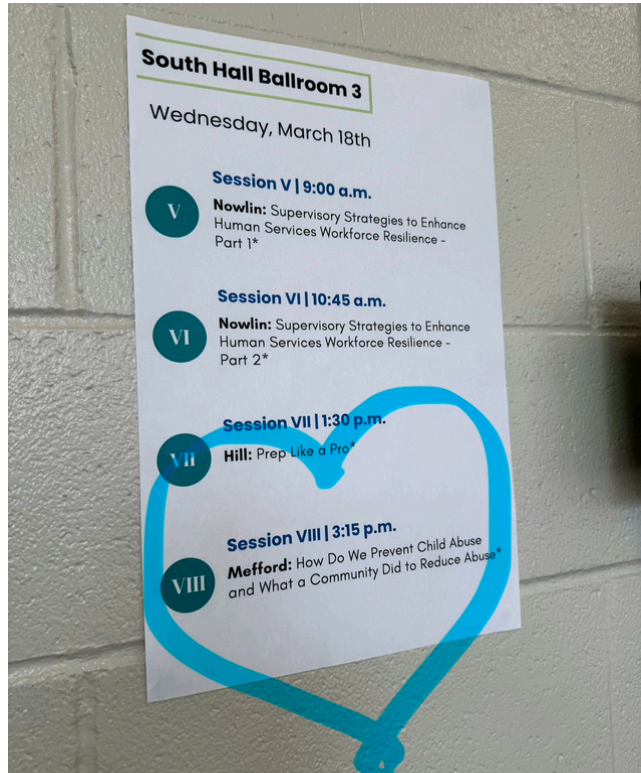
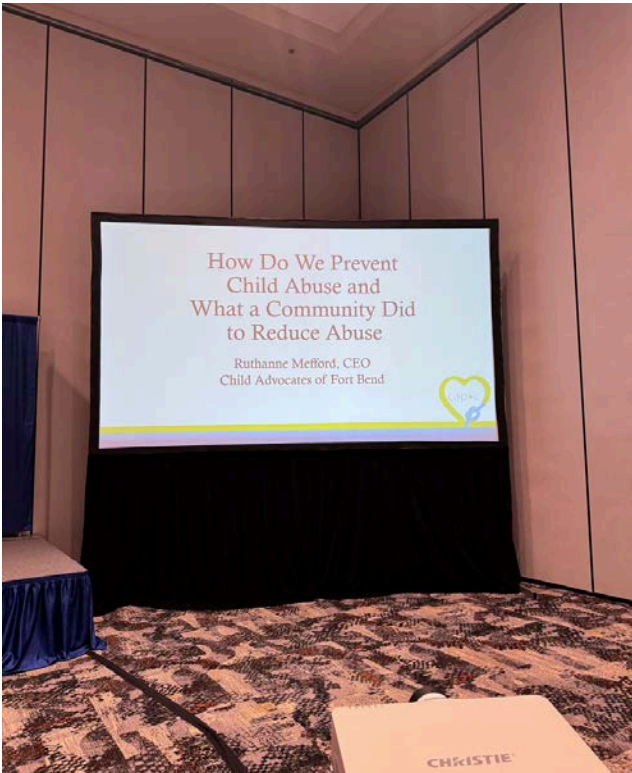
Overall, the Spring Break event was a wonderful opportunity for youth to connect with one another, give back to the community, and invest in their own goals for the future. CASA is grateful to everyone who helped make the day possible and looks forward to continuing to create meaningful experiences for the youth we serve.



# CAP-C Highlighted at International Symposium

CEO Ruthanne Mefford and Prevention & Outreach Manager Dana Petty attended the 42nd International Symposium on Child Abuse in Huntsville, Alabama.

We are so proud that Ruthanne was invited as a conference speaker, where she presented on the Fort Bend County Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative (CAP-C) - sharing our community-driven approach to prevention, advocacy, and collective impact. Thank you to the symposium organizers for bringing together experts and leaders from across the nation to strengthen child protection efforts. And thank you to Ruthanne and Dana for your commitment to keeping children and families safe.





## We want to Thank You!

Donor Advised Funds, commonly known as DAFs, are fast becoming one of the most popular charitable giving tools in the United States. Donors can donate assets such as cash, securities, cryptocurrency, real estate, etc. and realize the full tax benefit of the gift at the time the fund is established. Funds are then distributed to qualified non-profit organizations, like Child Advocates of Fort Bend, in the form of grants from the DAF sponsor. Organizations like Fidelity, Schwab and Vanguard are some of the most popular sponsors.

### But here's the problem...

If CAFB receives a grant from a DAF, we are often not told the name of the donor. Instead, the grant is credited to the DAF sponsor. Many donors are unaware their identities are not disclosed. If you have generously supported CAFB through a DAF grant and felt you did not receive the proper recognition from us, this is the reason why! Please accept our apologies.

We are hoping to help rectify the situation with a few simple steps. We have created a simple form on our website. Please go to

<https://www.cafb.org/waystogive/donor-advised-funds/>.

Scroll down the page to the form.

**We are kindly asking DAF donors to provide:**

- Donor Name
- DAF sponsor (e.g., Fidelity, Schwab, Vanguard, etc.)
- Approximate Gift Amount

### Why is this so important to CAFB?

First and foremost, our donors are everything to us, and it causes us to lose sleep thinking we have not properly thanked someone for their generosity! Additionally, being able to identify a donor may also help us achieve a matching gift and keep donors up to date on the personal impact their gift has had on CAFB.

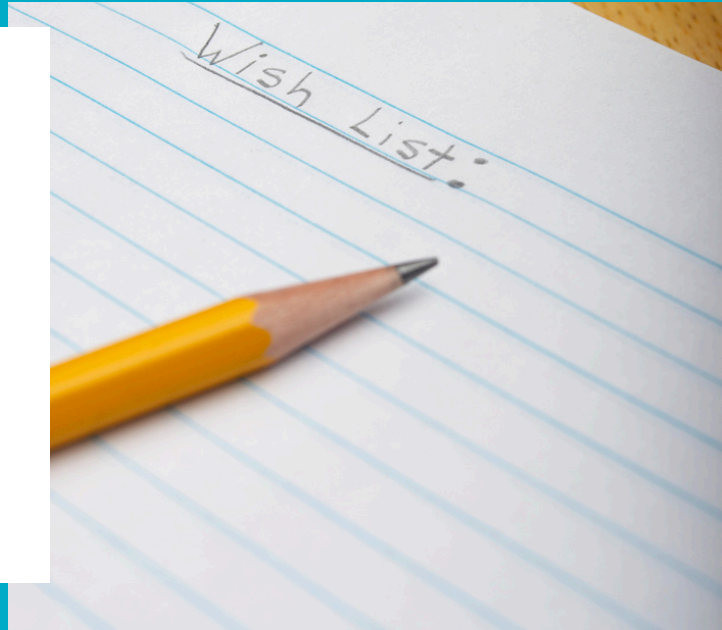
*If you would like more information about how to become part of the "Forever Angels Legacy Society," please email [plannedgiving@cafb.org](mailto:plannedgiving@cafb.org)*

# our needs

This month, we have immediate need for:

- Items for teens
- **Gift cards**  
VISA/ MasterCard, Walmart, HEB

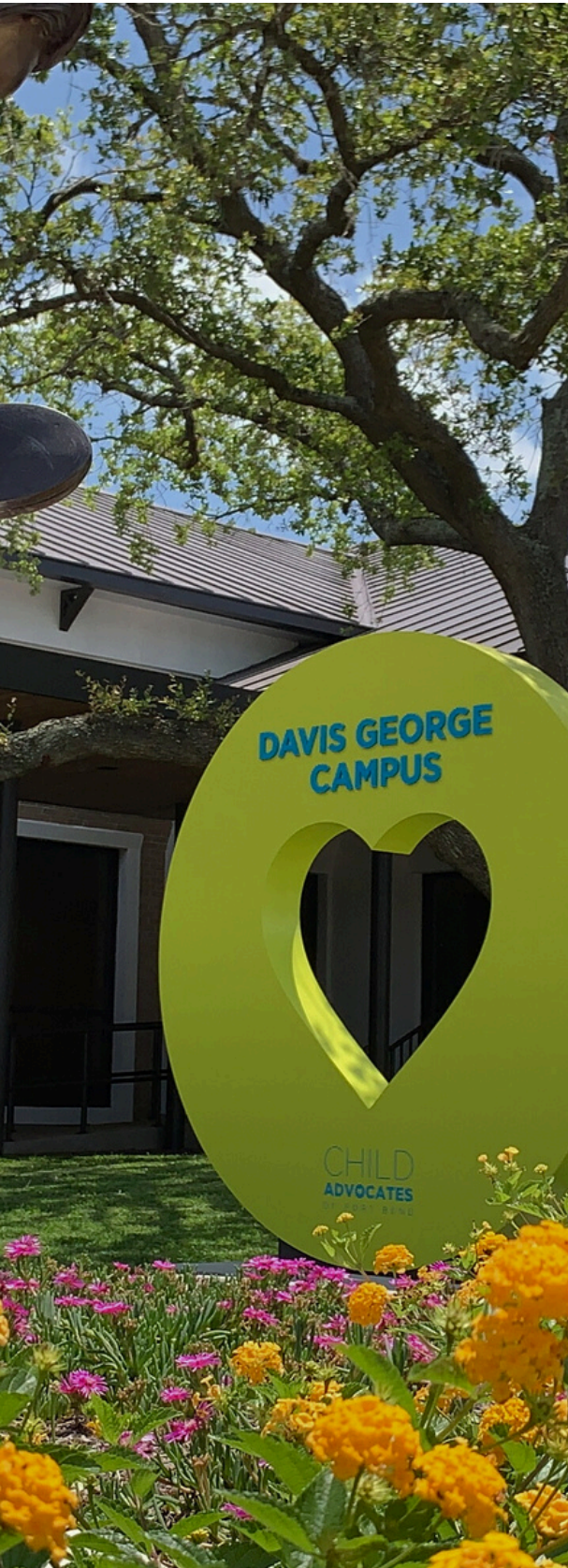
View our [Amazon Wish List](#)



**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)





## April 10

Light of Hope Ceremony  
6:00pm until 7:00pm  
Sugar Land Town Square

## April 25

"Where the Wild Things Are" Gala  
6pm until 10:30pm  
Houston Marriott Sugar Land

## April 28

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

## May 29

Sip & Stroll  
12:00pm until 1:30pm  
Contact [Lisa](mailto:Lisa@cfb.org) at [LMoore@cfb.org](mailto:LMoore@cfb.org) to reserve your spot

## June 24

Youth Aging Out Conference  
1:00pm until 5:00pm





*“Child abuse prevention starts with awareness, compassion, and action.”  
~Anonymous*