

# The VOICES of

CHILD ADVOCATES OF FORT BEND™



Inside /  
CEO Update • National Foster Care Month  
• Mother's Day • Monthly Spotlights and  
MORE!

MAY 2026

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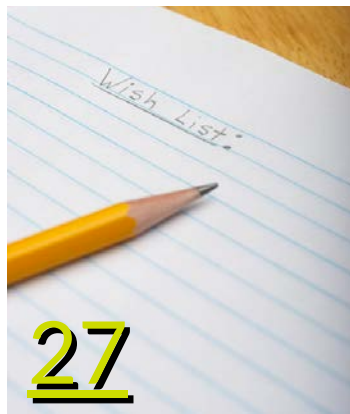


## Keeping you informed on our mission:

*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.*



## MONTHLY SPOTLIGHTS



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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 May issue of VOICES. . . .*

Welcome Friends,

April was a busy month at CAFB packed with all kinds of activities, events and awareness around Child Abuse Awareness Month. We capped it off with our “wildly” successful “Where The Wild Things Are” Gala on April 25. Thank you for showing up, donating, sponsoring and attending our 26th Gala which raised \$600,000 for services and programs for our children and families. We are grateful to all the community members, supporters, volunteers and donors who joined us throughout the month of April to recognize and honoring the thousands of children who have experienced abuse or neglect during the month. You showed up and supported us to ensure that all child survivors receive the critical advocacy and services so they can be safe, heal and break the cycle of abuse in their lives.

This issue of VOICES recognizes May as National Foster Care Month and Mental Health Awareness Month. Our CASA Program has served children in foster care for **35** years, beginning in 1991 with our first little boy to the hundreds of children we serve annually today. In May, we raise awareness about the needs of over 391,000 children and youth in foster care by honoring foster parents, family members, volunteers and friends who support these children, while highlighting the need for permanent, loving homes and supporting youth transitioning out of care. Our CASA Team comprised of our CASA staff support and work alongside our CASA Volunteers to focus on ensuring children’s safety and wellbeing, advocating for their academic, medical and mental

*-more*



health needs, understanding the impact of trauma, and strengthening connections with family and supportive adults. We take time in May to shine a light on children in foster care while recognizing the dedication of our CASA Volunteers and CASA Staff. Many of the children and families we serve are experiencing mental health issues and challenges. Our CAC and CASA teams assess children's mental health needs and bring an array of therapies, psychiatric services and clinical support to both children and families to promote health and wellbeing. We take a holistic approach focusing on the "whole child" within the context of their families and their environment. To help children thrive requires acknowledgement of conditions present in the child's life that contribute to and impact the child's health, then work with the child, family members, teachers and others to provide wraparound services and create a circle of support. Over the past few years, we have seen much higher levels of abuse and neglect for longer duration. This has required our team to be better trained in complex trauma, to have more resources in their toolboxes and devote more time to these cases to achieve the best outcomes.

Thank you for your continued support, dedication and passion for keeping our children safe.

For The Children's Sake,

*Ruthanne*

Ruthanne Mefford, CEO



YOU'RE INVITED!



# FRIENDS

OF CHILD ADVOCATES OF FORT BEND

## SPRING FLING

TUESDAY, MAY 12  
6PM - 8PM

*In the home of*  
**Charlene Smith**  
4418 Della Creek Way  
Missouri City, TX 77459

Please bring a guest and join us to socialize with new and old FRIENDS. Bites and sips will be served.

\*Please bring a gift card in any amount towards food, gas, groceries or shopping.

To RSVP or for more information contact Jessica Kij at 713-249-6128 or [jdkij@comcast.net](mailto:jdkij@comcast.net)

FRIENDS is an auxiliary volunteer group supporting Child Advocates of Fort Bend (CAFB). On May 12 they will host their annual Spring social at the beautiful Riverstone home of Charlene Smith.

FRIENDS' Special Needs Fund supports the children served by CAFB. The fund has underwritten backpacks filled with school supplies, summer camp tuition, tutoring, caps and gowns for graduating seniors and computers for college students. FRIENDS has more than 100 members and is managed by a Council which provides volunteer opportunities and social events throughout the year. Annual membership dues are \$50 per year. Membership is open to anyone. Visit [www.CAFB.org](http://www.CAFB.org) to join or learn more.

»» LEARN MORE



## FEATURE STORY

# National Foster Care Month

By Aly Ferrante

Each May, National Foster Care Month shines a light on the experiences of children and families impacted by the child welfare system. As a community, collaboration is crucial to ensure that every child has the opportunity to feel safe, supported, and seen. At Child Advocates of Fort Bend, that commitment comes to life through a comprehensive wraparound approach—meeting children where they are and addressing their needs from every angle.

Children in foster care often face complex challenges. Many have experienced trauma, instability, and disrupted relationships. While a safe placement is critical, it is only one piece of what a child needs to truly heal and thrive. Wraparound services are designed to fill in those gaps—providing individualized, holistic support that surrounds each child with care, consistency, and connection.

At the heart of this approach are:

### **1. CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) Volunteers**

These trained community members serve as a consistent, caring adult in a child's life—often one of the few constants amid change. CASA volunteers advocate for the child's best interests in court, but their role extends far beyond the courtroom. They build trusting relationships, ensure the child's voice is heard, and help identify needs that might otherwise go unnoticed.

### **2. Wraparound Services**

At Child Advocates of Fort Bend this goes beyond advocacy to include targeted programming that addresses emotional, educational, and practical needs. Trauma-informed care is a cornerstone of this work,

[cont'd](#)

recognizing how past experiences shape behavior and development. By utilizing evidence-based models like Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®), staff and volunteers are equipped to respond to children with empathy, connection, and strategies that promote healing.

### **3. Educational support**

Children in foster care often experience school disruptions, making it harder to stay on track academically. Through advocacy and collaboration with schools, CASA volunteers help ensure children receive appropriate services, stability in their education, and encouragement to reach their full potential.

### **4. Support for caregivers and families**

Foster parents, kinship caregivers, and biological families benefit from training, resources, and guidance that strengthen their ability to meet a child's unique needs. By empowering adults in a child's life, they can create a more stable and nurturing environment for long-term success.

### **5. Connection:**

Maintaining sibling relationships, preserving cultural identity, and creating a circle of support for youth as they prepare for adulthood are critical connections for children's wellbeing. From normalcy activities to mentorship opportunities, these supports help children experience joy, build confidence, and develop a sense of belonging.

This National Foster Care Month, we are reminded that supporting children in foster care requires more than one solution—it takes a community. We ensure that children are not defined by their circumstances, but instead are supported, empowered, and given every opportunity to thrive.

Together, we can make a difference—one child, one advocate, and one connection at a time.



# Mental Health Care for our Clients

By Jamie Schuerg



The month of April highlights the importance of mental health for the clients and the families that CAFB serves. Caring for mental health can take many forms, especially when working with children. Sometimes that healing is non-traditional, not through words, but through movement, curiosity, and play.

At CAFB, we have specially designated Movement Rooms spaces for our clients to move their bodies freely as part of therapy. The purpose isn't to "burn energy", but is grounded in how children process emotions and experiences. Movement rooms provide emotional regulation, sensory processing, body awareness, expression of feelings and aid in building trust and safety during

therapy. It's much more than a space to play. These rooms become an environment where a child's body becomes the entry point to emotional healing.

When you enter the movement room, your eye immediately goes to six panels hung on the wall. Each one invites you to participate in an activity that centers and regulates the brain and body. Some children are drawn to the gears that spin around while others focus on creating patterns with the colored blocks. A third square leaves room for the imagination where children can scribble and draw what's on their mind. The panel titled Breathe encourages you to practice slow, steady breathing by blowing on pinwheels.

-more-



What is seen as fun or games is really a way to regulate one's nervous system. Engagement in sensory activities activates parts of the brain that are pivotal for helping clients shift from a state of "overwhelm" to one of calm and regulation. For children who have experienced trauma, taking time to explore these elements can build confidence in their ability to self-soothe.

During National Mental Health Awareness Month, it is important to remember the small tools and moments that help clients heal. We are fortunate to have tools like the sensory wall to provide our clients with the best care.

### **Mental Health Groups help meet the needs of our clients' mental health**

The Family Advocacy Team offers and facilitates mental health groups throughout the year for children, teenagers, and caregivers. The overarching goal of groups is to create a safe space for clients who have experienced trauma to process their experiences with others with the support of Family Advocacy team members. The groups are offered in both English and Spanish and are a powerful catalyst for healing. Clients hear from others and share with one another, creating an atmosphere of hope and sense of relief that they are not alone.

# Honoring Maternal Figures This Mother's Day

By Jen Brown

Mother's Day is a time to celebrate the love and dedication of mothers and maternal figures who provide care, stability, and encouragement. For many children, a nurturing adult can make a lasting difference in their sense of safety and self-worth. In the lives of children who have experienced abuse or neglect, that role is especially meaningful. Whether it is a biological mother working toward reunification, a foster parent offering a safe and supportive home, or a volunteer advocate providing consistent guidance, these figures embody resilience and hope.

At the CAC, it's common for a mother to bring her child in for an interview and appear composed while signing in. But the moment the interviewer takes the child back, she breaks down. She's been holding herself together for her child, and once she feels they are safe and well cared for, she finally allows herself to release the emotions she's been suppressing and begin processing her own trauma.



Our volunteers, caregivers, and community partners play vital roles in ensuring that every child has someone in their corner.

This month, we honor all who nurture. Their dedication strengthens families, uplifts children, and helps build a brighter future for our community.

Together, we remain committed to advocating for every child and ensuring they feel safe, supported, and valued.





# monthly spotlights

*updates from the programs and MORE!*

***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)



## Henderson and Walters Graduate From Excellence in Nonprofit Leadership Program

By Cheryl Henderson

CAFB celebrated the graduation of two standout professionals from the George Foundation's highly selective Excellence in Nonprofit Leadership program (ENL) - Cheryl Henderson, Director of Human Resources and Organizational Strategy, and Jheri Walters, Clinical Director for the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) Therapy Program.

The George Foundation has long been a cornerstone of philanthropic support in the area. By providing advanced training in organizational strategy, financial stewardship, and visionary leadership, the foundation ensures that local organizations are not just surviving but thriving. "Leadership in the

nonprofit sector requires a unique blend of business acumen and deep-seated empathy," noted a George Foundation representative. "Cheryl and Jheri embody the dedication required to move our community forward."

The Excellence in Nonprofit Leadership Program equips nonprofit leaders with practical knowledge and skills while fostering a collaborative peer network committed to advancing service and impact across Fort Bend County. This brings the total number of CAFB staff and Board graduation from ENL to 10, underscoring the commitment by CAFB to invest in its management and leadership team.



### Cheryl Henderson

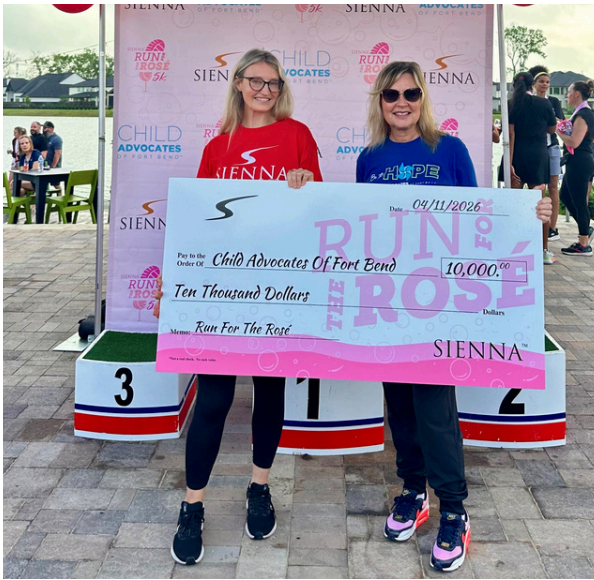
As the Director of Human Resources & Organizational Strategy, Henderson's role is pivotal in ensuring staff is supported and in shaping the internal culture of Child Advocates of Fort Bend. Her participation in the program focused on aligning human capital with mission-driven results, ensuring that staff are supported as they tackle the community's most pressing issues.



### Jheri Walters

Leading the Therapy Program at the Children's Advocacy Center, Walters oversees critical interventions for vulnerable youth. Her graduation from the program brings a refined strategic lens to clinical services, bridging the gap between frontline therapeutic care and executive-level program management.

# Thanks to Sienna and their Run for the Rosé Event



Thank you so much to Sienna for including CAFB as a beneficiary of the 2nd Annual Run for the Rosé! This 5k Fun Run/Race was held on April 11, the day after some big storms. Lucky for all, the weather cooperated, making it a beautiful day filled with excited families, energetic runners, bubbles of rose' and LOTS of pink.

Race day fun included: vendor booths from local small businesses, food trucks, photo ops, hula hooping, corn hole, finish line

celebration, DJ Jams, and massage chairs. But the real fun of the day was receiving a \$10,000 donation from the event!

We'd like to give a special thanks to those who stepped in to volunteer. As member of the Fort Bend community, CAFB is grateful to be included in such a fun event that brings so many together and allows CAFB to share awareness information about child abuse in a new way.





# A Day of Connection and Insight: Reflecting on "From Survival to Safety"

By Casey Davis

The community recently gathered for the Trauma-Informed Systems, Science and Stories conference, themed "From Survival to Safety". This impactful day of learning provided attendees with a deep dive into trauma-informed care, focusing on the essential journey from survival-driven behaviors to felt safety.

The event featured a live virtual presentation by Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D., renowned neuroscience expert and author of The Neurosequential Network. Dr. Perry led a vital session on "The Neuroscience Behind Your Brain on Trauma," helping participants understand the physiological impact of traumatic experiences.

Attendees also gained valuable perspectives from other leaders including:

- David G. Daniels who shared insights on "Lived Experience: Engaging Clients with Trauma-Informed Advocacy"

- Randy Kaiser from the TCU Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development presented "Guardians of Tomorrow: Empowering Communities to Protect Youth"
- Michelle Maikoetter, also representing The Neurosequential Network, contributed expertise to the discussions on neuroscience and recovery

Beyond the lectures, the conference emphasized the practical application of trauma-informed care. This training served as a bridge between understanding the science of trauma and providing the relational support necessary for healing.

An event of this scale is not possible without community support. Thank you to our lunch sponsor, Chris Meyer Law Firm, for their generous contribution to the day's success, and the Fort Bend ISD Reese Technical Career Center for their hospitality.



## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

By Lisa Moore



For more than a decade, our neighbors - the Del Webb Sweetgrass Needlecrafters - have been quietly stitching together something far greater than yarn and fabric—they've been weaving comfort, care, and community into every piece they create.

Since 2013, this dedicated group of volunteers has donated countless handmade items to the children we serve. Their work includes cozy blankets, warm beanie hats, intricate afghans, and a variety of other thoughtfully crafted pieces. Each item represents not only hours of skill and patience, but also a deep commitment to helping others.

What makes the Needlecrafters truly special is the heart behind their handiwork. Whether it's a soft blanket for someone facing trauma, a warm hat for a chilly day, or a beautiful afghan offering comfort during difficult times, every stitch carries compassion. Their creations have touched the lives of children and families throughout the community,

providing both practical support and a reminder that someone cares.

The group meets regularly, sharing techniques, stories, and laughter while working on projects that will ultimately be given away. Over the years, their impact has grown steadily, with donations several times throughout the year, always delivered with a sweet smile. What began as a small gathering of crafters has blossomed into a meaningful force for good.

As the Del Webb Needlecrafters continue their mission, they serve as an inspiring example of how simple acts—done consistently and with kindness—can make a lasting difference. Their work reminds us that generosity doesn't always come in grand gestures; sometimes, it's found in the quiet rhythm of needles and the warmth of something made by hand.

There's a lot of SWEET coming from Del Webb SWEETgrass Needlecrafters and so many are blessed by it.





## WOW!

If you were one of the supporters of our “Where the Wild Things Are” Gala **thank you** for helping us create a night where imaginations roared to life.

Your generosity was the magic that turned our fundraiser into a celebration of courage, community, and possibility. Because of your support, our work can continue to make a real difference. We’re grateful to have you in our ‘wild rumpus’ of supporters.

The Marriott was packed with over 620 guests and volunteers. We were treated to a beautiful performance from dancers from Cookie Joe’s Dancin’ School, music and dancing from DJ C-Love and pure JOY from all who were there. Coming soon you can see some of the photos on our website.

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

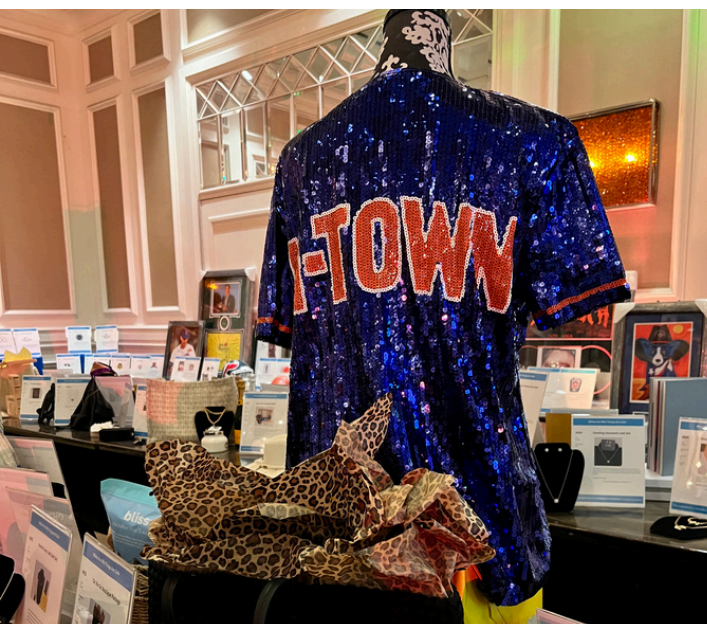
***We give special thanks to these generous individuals and companies for their extra support which helped the event run smoothly.***

All Star Storage, Karla Arjona, Michelle Cano, Cookie Joe, Cookie Joe's Dancin' School, Melanie Kelly-Ruiz, Jessica Kij, Sheline Lampart, Jill Paquette, Stefanie Pride, Nancy Schultz, Pat Somers

AND All of our wonderful volunteers for making the Gala happen! Special thanks to ALL the incredibly generous auction donors and all our Gala Sponsors.



Check out more photos from our  
Where the Wild Things Are Gala  
[here](#)



# Thank You Sponsors

## **KING OF THE WILD THINGS**

EOG Resources  
Exchange Club Sugar Land  
NRG WA Parish Plant  
OCuSOFT, Inc.

## **CROWN JEWEL**

Houston Methodist  
Razorback Direct Oilfield Solutions and Services LLC **STAGE & ENTERTAINMENT**

## **RED SAILBOAT**

Dr. Betty Baitland **AUCTION PADDLE**  
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Polly & Mike Hrebenar **CENTERPIECE**  
Manmeet & Paul Likhari  
Kyle & Mike Nelson  
OCuSOFT, Inc.  
Onyx Supply Solutions **PHOTO BOOTH**  
Pamela Printing Company **PRINTING**  
The College of Health Care Professionals

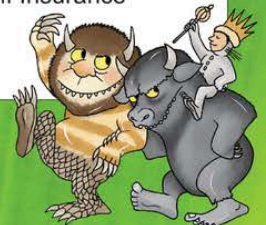
## **WILD RUMPUS**

Audi Sugar Land, A Sewell Company **VALET**  
Chiang Law Firm/Chris Meyer Law Firm **VIP & SILENT AUCTION**  
Jill & Sandy Curtis **SIGNATURE COCKTAIL**  
E.E. Reed Construction, L.P. **GIFT CARD PULL**  
GFL Environmental **DINNER & DESSERT**  
Doug & Susie Goff **SPIRITS PULL**  
Julienne & Todd Maguire **WINE PULL**  
PB&J Pavement Marking/Benedettini Cabinetry

## **MIGHTY MAX**

Eileen G. Akerson  
Amegy Bank  
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Business Flooring Specialists  
Cloud9Travels **SOCIAL MEDIA**  
Douds/King/McClellan/Somers **MISSION BANNER**  
Early, McClintic & McMillan  
Exchange Club of Fort Bend  
Frost Bank **MISSION BANNER**  
John & Debbie Gamble  
Susan Greer Real Estate  
Mike & Sue Hilliard  
Judge Dean Hrbacek & Judge Tricia Krenek  
The Hunt Law Firm  
Tommy & Rhonda Kuykendall **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Kelsey-Seybold Clinic **MISSION BANNER**  
KW Southwest  
Longaker Foundation  
Dexter McCoy **MISSION BANNER**  
Suzy Morton & Dell Toelkes  
OakBend Medical Center  
Primeway FCU  
Rejuven8 Medical  
Kara Lea Roberts  
Charlene & Bruce Smith  
The Tricia Turner Group **SOCIAL MEDIA**  
Tuma/Olson  
University of Houston  
WJ Interests/McDonald-Wessendorff Insurance  
Daniel Wong **MISSION BANNER**



# Child Abuse Prevention Month Activities

By Dana Petty



April is recognized nationwide as Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness and promoting the well-being of children and families. Throughout the month, Child Advocates of Fort Bend (CAFB) has been actively out in the community, working to shine a light on the importance of prevention, education, and advocacy, to include launching a collective initiative, Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative (CAP-C), and its brand campaign... YOU HAVE THE POWER.

From community events and local partnerships to outreach initiatives and awareness campaigns, CAFB has engaged with residents across the county to share information about recognizing and preventing child abuse. These efforts are rooted in the belief that awareness is one of the most powerful tools to protect children. When communities are informed, they're better equipped to respond, support families and take action when it matters most.

Throughout April, CAFB connected with families, volunteers, and community partners to

highlight the signs of abuse and the importance of early intervention. Conversations focused not only on prevention, but also on the role each individual can play to create a safer environment for children. Whether by attending events, sharing resources, or simply starting conversations, community members have played an important part in this collective effort.

A key message shared during the month is that child abuse prevention is a year-round responsibility. While April brings special focus, the need for awareness and advocacy continues every day. Strengthening partnerships and building a network of informed and compassionate individuals, are creating a community where children are safer, families are supported, and hope is stronger.

CAFB extends its gratitude to everyone who joined in raising awareness this April. Together, we are making a difference—one child, one family, and one community at a time.



# Staff Appreciation Social: A Blooming Success

By Cheryl Henderson

On April 7th, CAFB staff enjoyed a Appreciation Social which celebrated and recognized the dedication and hard work of our incredible team. This event was designed as a moment to pause, connect, and show gratitude for one another in a fun and meaningful way.

One of the highlights of the afternoon was a hands-on flower arrangement activity led by Jane and Kimberly from Spring Flower Market. They guided staff through the process of creating beautiful floral arrangements, while also sharing tips on how to recreate them at home. It was a relaxing and creative experience that allowed everyone to unwind and tap into their artistic side.

In addition, we enjoyed a delicious catered lunch from Witt Pit BBQ and incorporated a special appreciation exercise. Each staff member wrote their name on a card and placed it on the wall. Colleagues were then encouraged to leave messages, words of encouragement, or affirmations for one another. This simple yet powerful activity served as a reminder that even one kind word can brighten someone's day.

Overall, the Staff Appreciation Social was a wonderful opportunity to connect, celebrate, and uplift one another. It truly reflected the heart of our organization—support, teamwork, and appreciation. **We are truly, Better Together!**





# Volunteer Social Recap

By Jen Brown

Volunteers and staff of CAFB gathered for an evening filled with connection, conversation, and a shared sense of purpose.

The event featured eight unique vendors, offering everything from handcrafted goods to specialty items, giving attendees the chance to browse, shop, and support local businesses. The relaxed atmosphere made it easy for everyone to mingle, reconnect with familiar faces and meet new volunteers. Laughter and lively conversations filled the space as volunteers and staff caught up, shared stories, and strengthened the relationships that keep our work moving forward.

Events like these not only celebrate the dedication of our volunteers but also create space for the connections that sustain and inspire our work.

Thank you to everyone who joined us and helped make the evening such a success. We look forward to many more opportunities to gather, connect, and continue building this incredible community together.





**Thank you to our vendors!**

- Blondie & Bling
- Crafty Wine Mama Design
- Dimple Malkan- Essential Oils
- Fabulous You
- Handpicked Wildflours
- Inspirations by DB
- Permalinx Jewelry
- South Tejas Gems





The “**YOU HAVE THE POWER**” Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative (CAP-C) prevention campaign has **LAUNCHED** with a **clear call to action**: empowering adults and communities to recognize the signs of abuse and take meaningful steps to protect children. The campaign emphasizes that prevention starts with awareness, education, and the courage to speak up. By highlighting practical tips and tools along with local resources, **YOU HAVE THE POWER** reinforces that everyone plays a role in creating safe, supportive environments where children can thrive.

**If you are interested in helping promote the campaign at your place of business contact**

**Dana Petty at**  
**[dpetty@cafb.org](mailto:dpetty@cafb.org)**

# our needs

## This month, we need:

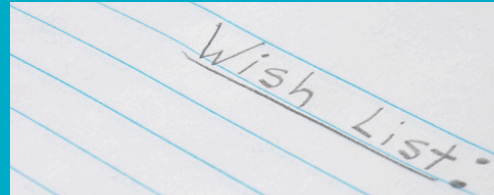
Over the past several weeks, our Family Advocacy Team has been facilitating 8-week support groups for families who have come through the CAC. These are closed groups for teenagers who have experienced sexual abuse or assault, along with their caregivers.

This has been our largest round of groups to date, with 14 teens, 9 English-speaking caregivers, and 10 Spanish-speaking caregivers completing the program. Throughout the past 8 weeks, participants have shown incredible commitment—consistently showing up, engaging in the material, and supporting one another through shared experiences.

At the end of group, we host a small celebration to recognize their hard work and growth. We would love to provide each teen with a meaningful gift to take with them as a reminder of their strength and the support they built during this time. If you'd like to help support this gift, **[please click on the Amazon Shopping list.](#)**

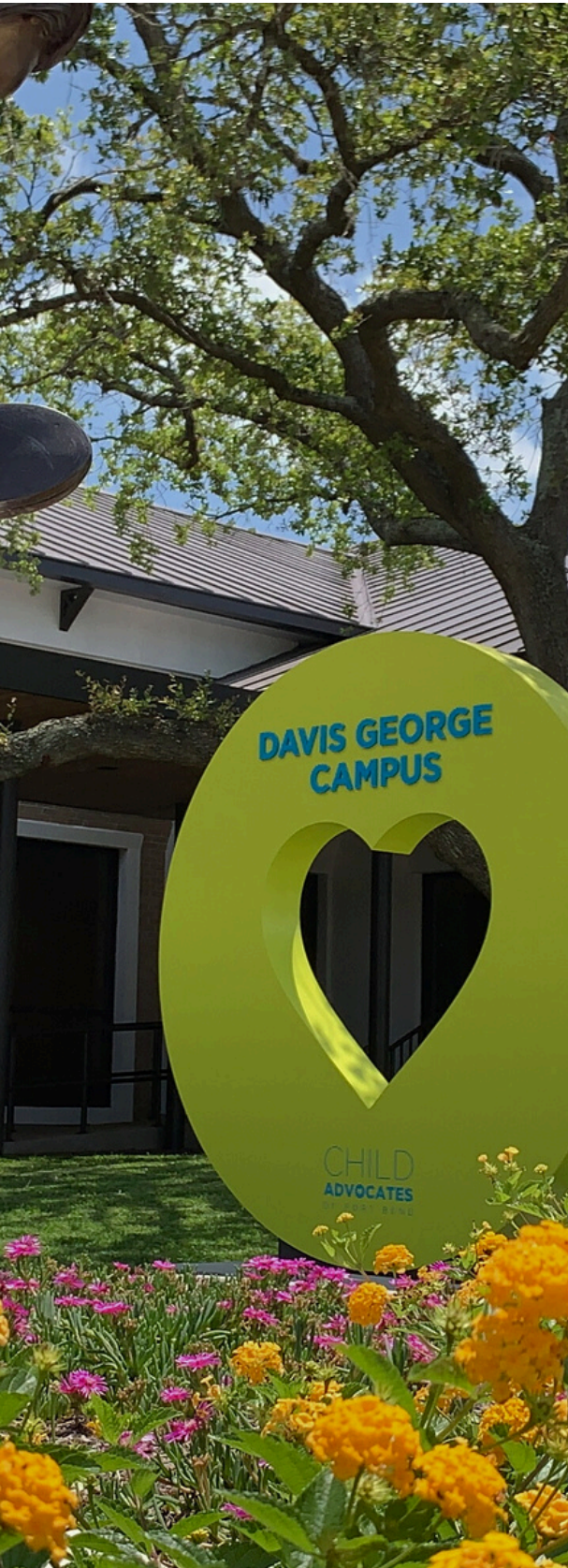
Thank you!

**[View our Amazon Wish List](#)**



Wish List:





## May 12

FRIENDS Spring Fling  
6:00pm until 8:00pm  
More info or RSVP [here](#)

## May 29

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

## June 9-11

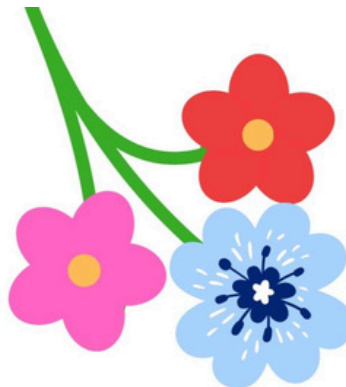
TBRI® Caregiver Training  
10:00am until 4:00pm  
CAFB Training Room  
More info or reserve your spot [here](#)

## June 24

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

## June 26

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



**MAY**  
**Sip & Stroll**

**May 29, 2026**  
**12:00pm - 1:30pm**  
Child Advocates of Fort Bend  
5403 Avenue N, Rosenberg, TX 77471



*“When we care for a child’s heart and mind,  
we don’t just support their present—  
we help build their future.”*

*~Unknown*