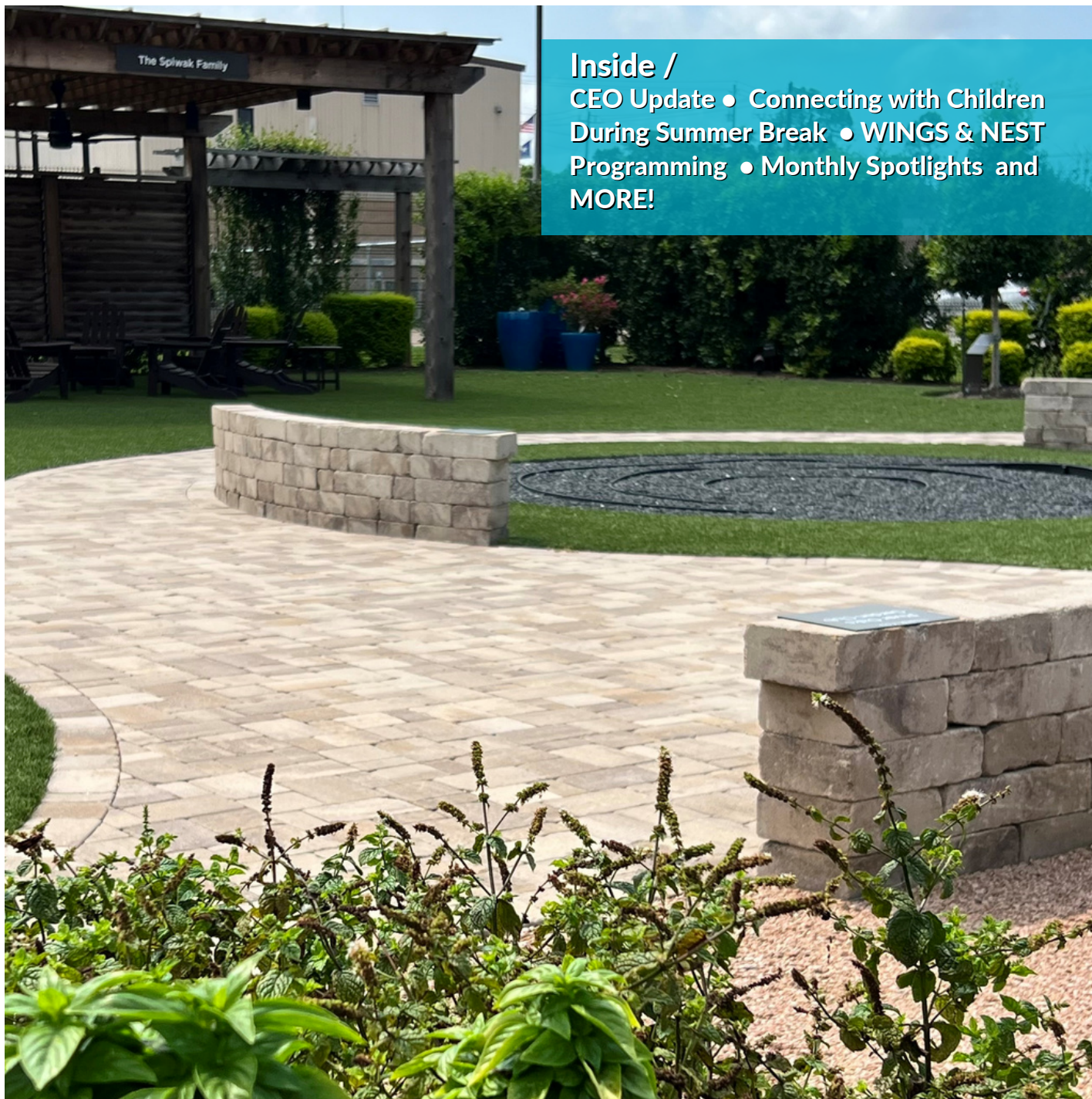


The VOICES of

CHILD **ADVOCATES** OF FORT BEND™



Inside /

CEO Update • Connecting with Children During Summer Break • WINGS & NEST Programming • Monthly Spotlights and MORE!

JULY 2026

contents

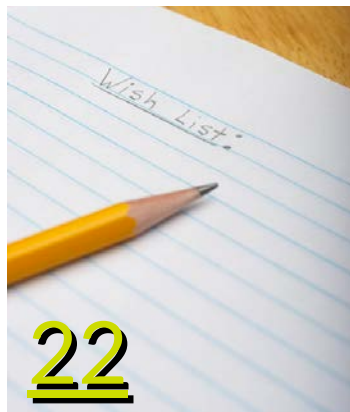


Keeping you informed on our mission:

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.



MONTHLY SPOTLIGHTS



NEEDS + OPPORTUNITIES

NEWS + FEATURES

4 FROM THE CEO

CEO Ruthanne Mefford shares what we are up to this month

6 FEATURE STORY

INTENTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Connecting with Children During Summer Break

9 SUMMER SAFETY

Tips and links to help you keep kids safe

10 WHEN ADULTS LEAD SAFE KIDS FOLLOW

9 important rules for adults

11 MONTHLY SPOTLIGHTS

see what we've been up to this month - staff updates, and MORE. . .

16 NEEDS + OPPORTUNITIES

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

19 SAVE THESE DATES

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



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



WWW.CAFB.ORG



Sip, Shop & SINGO

BENEFITING
CHILD **ADVOCATES** OF FORT BEND™

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27 • 5-9 PM

SPARKLE & SIP BOUTIQUE

203 SIMS STREET
RICHMOND, TX 77406



OPTION 1

Event Ticket - \$40

Scan QR code for tickets

*Ticket includes private shopping, 1 glass of bubbly
and **SINGO** games & prizes starting at 6:30 pm*

~Limited to 50 people

SINGO (think Bingo but songs are played and you mark off the title of the song)

OPTION 2

FREE Private Shopping 5 pm - 8 pm

Drinks are available for purchase.

NOTE: Food is available for purchase.

100% of ticket purchase and
10% of boutique purchases **go back to CAFB.**

For more info contact **Tarina**
at TSheridan@cafb.org or 281-755-2659



from the ceo

Welcome to our latest issue of VOICES. . . .

Welcome Friends,

We hope you are having an enjoyable Summer and have taken time to relax, travel, spend time with family and friends, enjoy a good book or cool off at the pool or at the movie theater. Whatever your preferred summer break activities are, be safe and take time to refresh. July is "Make a Difference to a Child Month." For the children we serve, this could mean everything from visiting your child more regularly, bringing a special treat, engaging them in their favorite activity, celebrating a birthday, or celebrating our nation's 250 birthday on 4th of July. We take time this month to recognize that children in foster care may have experienced tremendous change and loss and that the life they were accustomed to may have changed dramatically when they entered or remained in the foster care system. Our CASA Volunteers can help these children by

focusing on "normalcy" or the opportunity for children to live a life as similar as possible to their peers. This might involve active participation in social, scholastic, and extracurricular activities, which are essential for healthy child development, building social skills, and boosting self-esteem. Achieving normalcy shifts the focus from rigid risk management to supporting childhood development. The Federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act requires states to empower caregivers using the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard. Historically, children in foster care often missed out on standard childhood experiences due to strict liability rules and lengthy administrative approvals. With this standard, caregivers are allowed to make everyday decisions for foster children just as

[-more](#)



a biological parent would. Caregivers are encouraged to allow foster youth to participate in typical childhood experiences, such as school clubs, team sports, youth groups, birthday parties, sleepovers, or summer camps. For children who have experienced abuse or neglect, whether they are living in foster care as part of our CASA Program or receiving services at our Children's Advocacy Center, CAFB is invested in each child's life and their pathway for success. Every day in every way possible, we advocate to make a difference for every child. We honor every child's individual backgrounds, perspectives and their needs, making sure every child feels respected and heard.

Thank you for all you do to serve children and families, to dedicate your time to the mission of strengthen children's voices, and to support the work we do so that every child can thrive.

For The Children's Sake,

Ruthanne

Ruthanne Mefford, CEO





FEATURE STORY

Intentional Engagement: Connecting with Children During Summer Break

By Dana Petty

Summer offers a unique opportunity to strengthen connections with children in ways that the busy routines of the school year often don't allow. With fewer schedules to juggle, families can slow down and be more present with one another. This uninterrupted time creates space for meaningful conversations, shared experiences, and simple moments of joy—whether it's cooking together, taking walks, or just sitting and talking. These small, consistent interactions build trust and help children feel seen and valued, reinforcing a sense of emotional security that supports their overall well-being.

Prioritizing connection over productivity during the summer also helps nurture a child's confidence and communication skills. When children feel genuinely heard and understood,

they are more likely to open up, express their thoughts, and develop a strong sense of self. Additionally, positive shared experiences create lasting memories that children carry with them long after summer ends. By being intentional about quality time and engagement, caregivers can deepen their relationships with children, laying a foundation for stronger communication and resilience in the months and years ahead.

For children in the child welfare system, summer can be a particularly important time to build and strengthen connections with the adults in their lives. Without the structure of school, some children may feel a greater sense of uncertainty or loneliness. Intentional connection during this time, through consistent

[-more](#)

Even small gestures, like checking in regularly, spending one-on-one time, or engaging in fun, low-pressure activities, can remind a child that they are valued and cared for. . .

presence, shared activities, and open communication, can help provide a sense of stability and belonging. Even small gestures, like checking in regularly, spending one-on-one time, or engaging in fun, low-pressure activities, can remind a child that they are valued and cared for.

These connections are especially meaningful for children who may have experienced disruption or trauma. When caregivers, family members, or supportive adults prioritize relationship-building, they help create a safe emotional space where children feel seen, heard, and understood. This sense of emotional safety can strengthen a child's resilience and trust in others. By focusing on connection over expectations or outcomes during the summer, adults can help foster healing, build trust, and support a child's sense of identity and security, foundations that are critical for their long-term well-being.



Summer Safety: Stay Smart While Having Fun

Summer is a time for relaxation, adventure, and outdoor fun. Whether you're traveling, swimming, attending camp, or spending more time online, it's important to stay safe so you can enjoy every moment.

Ocean and Pool Safety

Swimming is a favorite summer activity, but water safety is essential. Never swim alone—always have a buddy or a lifeguard present. For children or inexperienced swimmers, use approved flotation devices and maintain constant supervision. Learning basic swimming skills and CPR can also save lives in emergencies. Wear swimwear that is visible in the ocean as well as in a swimming pool.

Camp Safety

Summer camps provide fun opportunities to make friends and try new activities. Prior to sending your kids to camp, parents should be intentional about vetting the camps. Ask about child to counselor ratios, adult supervision standards, background checks and safety plans. To stay safe while at camp, stay hydrated, especially during outdoor activities in the heat. Follow camp rules and listen to counselors or leaders. If you're hiking or exploring, stick with your group and avoid wandering off alone.

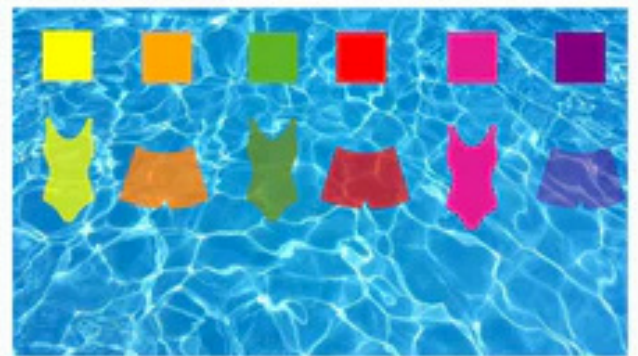
Internet Safety

With more free time in summer, many children and teens will spend extra hours online. According to the American Academy of Child

[-more](#)

Swimwear Safety

In the ocean



and Adolescent Psychiatry, children ages 8 to 18 spend an average of 7.5 hours per day using screens. Children online are increasingly vulnerable to violence, self-harm, suicide, sexual content, cyberbullying and online predators who often use social media and gaming platforms to manipulate or exploit minors.

It is important for parents and caregivers to remain actively involved in their children's online lives. Parents teach children how to stay safe in their communities, but they should also teach them how to navigate the digital world safely too. Continuous conversations about online behavior, privacy, and seeking help when something feels wrong can empower children and teens to make safer choices. Setting age-appropriate boundaries, utilizing parental controls, monitoring online activity, and maintaining open conversations about internet safety can help reduce risks and create a safer digital environment. By staying informed and

engaged, adults can help children enjoy the benefits of technology while protecting them from the potential dangers that exist online.

Protect your personal information by avoiding sharing details like your address or location on social media. Be cautious about interacting with strangers online, and use strong, unique passwords for your accounts. Parents should monitor their children's online activity and set appropriate privacy controls. Have open communication about online risks with your children.

Summer should be full of fun memories—not preventable accidents. By staying aware, preparing ahead, and following simple safety guidelines, you can enjoy vacations, pools, camps, and even online time with confidence. Child Advocates of Fort Bend wishes you a safe and fun-filled summer.

RESOURCES FOR SUMMER INTERNET SAFETY

https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-Watching-TV-054.aspx

<https://atriumhealth.org/dailydose/2023/06/26/help-children-break-away-from-the-screen-this-summer>



When Adults Lead Safe, Kids Follow

9 Important Rules for Adults

- ① Help children feel safe by identifying five people who care about them and who they can trust in a time of need—one for each finger on their hand
- ② Believe children when they say they're hurt, and say, "It's not your fault."
- ③ Explain the difference between a secret (bad) and a surprise (good).
- ④ Teach children the correct name of their private parts.
- ⑤ Talk to kids about safe and unsafe touches.
- ⑥ If you suspect abuse, you can say, "I care about you. You seem really afraid and sad." Or, "Is anything bothering you?"
- ⑦ Frequently tell and show children in your life that you care about them.
- ⑧ If you have a reasonable suspicion that abuse is happening, you are required to report it to the abuse hotline or law enforcement. **1-800-252-5400**
- ⑨ If a child comes to you for help, remain calm, listen and provide the support needed.

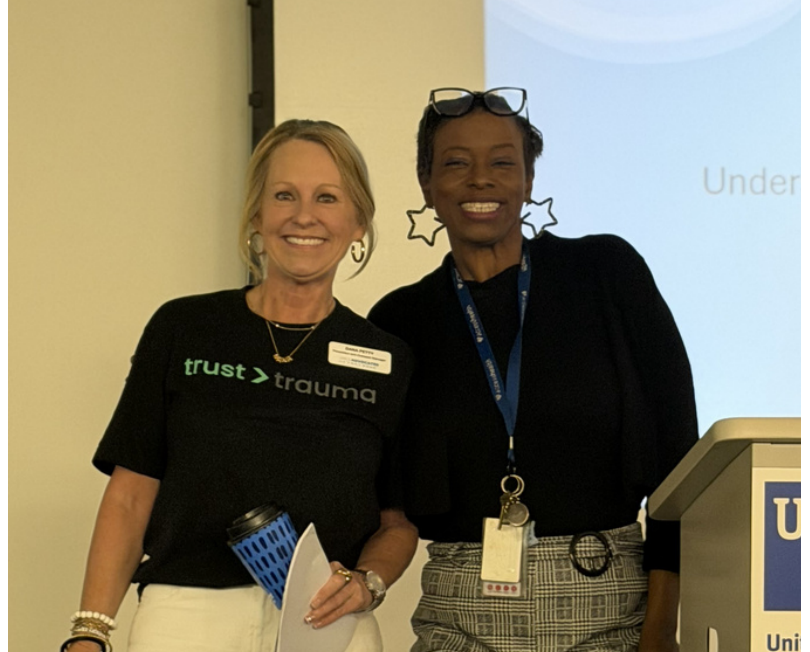
To learn more about the
Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative
(www.capcfb.org)
or to schedule a presentation contact
Dana Petty at dpetty@cafb.org.





monthly spotlights

updates from the programs and MORE!



Thank you AccessHealth!

It was an honor to speak at the 2026 Family Matters Mental Health Conference hosted by AccessHealth. The day brought together professionals and community members that are committed to strengthening families, improving mental wellness and promoting trauma-informed care. We filled our cups with a day of learning, collaboration and empowerment.



The Importance of Lunch

By Ellie Archinal

Inside the big, gleaming windows of the Child Advocacy Center, staff work hard on emotionally taxing situations for hours every day. Staff like Heather Waterwall who is preparing for school reports to come in with her color-coded spreadsheets. Staff member, Megan DeYoung, who meets intentionally and thoughtfully with families in difficult times, finding solutions to unimaginable problems. Though the work is deeply fulfilling and done with excellence paired with persistence of heart, when the clock hits 12pm, stomachs sit empty. It's around this time that heads poke up over cubicles, messages are sent in group chats, and therapy dogs are sent home, all in search of what is to be had for lunch.

Lunch, at the CAC, is the most important meal of the day. It's a time for light discussion and hard laughter. When the sun reaches its peak, we know it's time to take a break so that we can soon after give our full selves back into helping the children of Fort Bend and surrounding areas. It begins with a spirited back-and-forth on the different options nearby, whether more people brought meals from home or require a trip off campus. It's the beginning of learning common ground and unique tastes, bringing people together for errands and

cravings. Do not be mistaken, we at the CAC take our lunch very seriously and usually, to-go.

The team, after its dispersion to drive-throughs back together at the universally recognized image for family- the kitchen table. It's here that everyone buckles in with their best stories and most convenient meals, in hopes to connect and unwind in preparation for the work ahead. This is when we talk to Hannah Waltrip, our newest forensic interviewer, about her latest training. Hannah just learned about court proceedings and now understands the impact trauma has on a child's memory, helping her to minimize suggestibility during the interviews she conducts. We'll hear all her stories about the friendships she built and her excitement to apply all she's learned. Under the warm breakroom light, Sasha Soileau will talk about the annual Partner Appreciation event to come in September. Which will be eagerly attended by law enforcement and Child Protective Services who help with our mission every day.

At the CAC, lunch is when our team comes together to refuel and unify in our mission. For us, breakfast is good, but lunch is the most important meal of the day.



Graduation Celebration

By Aly Ferrante

On Saturday, June 13th, Child Advocates of Fort Bend proudly hosted its eighth annual Graduation Celebration, honoring youth served through CAFB who reached the important milestone of graduating high school. This year's celebration was especially significant as we had the honor of recognizing 28 graduates—our largest graduating class yet! The event was a meaningful reminder that every diploma represents perseverance, growth, and the courage to keep moving forward despite life's challenges.

Surrounded by advocates, caregivers, staff, volunteers, and community supporters, graduates were celebrated not only for their academic achievements, but for the determination and resilience that carried them to this moment. Each student was recognized individually as they crossed the stage, receiving a laptop and gifts designed to help equip them for the next chapter of their journey.

Throughout the celebration, graduates shared their future goals and aspirations, including plans to attend college, pursue trade programs, begin careers, and continue building independent lives. Their stories reflected hope, ambition, and the incredible potential that exists when young people are supported and encouraged along the way.

We have one graduate who is headed to the Marines, one who is headed to work with her dad in construction, several who are looking into vocational schools and many others





headed to various universities. Some of the degrees that are being pursued are Aerospace Engineering, Speech Pathology, Psychology and Criminal Justice. One of our graduates is even headed to culinary school! Every child deserves to be seen, celebrated, and empowered to succeed. This annual event is more than a graduation ceremony—it is a celebration of possibility and a reflection of the bright futures these young adults are creating for themselves. We are honored to celebrate this milestone alongside them and look forward to cheering them on in all that lies ahead.



NEST INCENTIVE Celebration

On May 29, Child Advocates of Fort Bend hosted our Spring Incentive Party for NEST youth ages 6-13, celebrating the academic and behavioral achievements they accomplished throughout the spring semester. We started the evening with a special awards ceremony where each child received a certificate, an award, and personalized messages of encouragement and praise from their teachers, caregivers, CASA volunteers, and caseworkers. This year's celebration also featured a cozy pajama-themed K-Pop movie night complete with a popcorn bar, pizza, and sweet treats. It was a meaningful opportunity to recognize each youth's hard work, growth, and resilience, and to remind them how proud their support team is of all they have achieved.



DONOR SPOTLIGHT



TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS CHARITABLE TRUST

Here Everything's Better

Special thanks to the H-E-B Tournament of Champions (H-E-B TOC) Charitable Trust for their financial support of our mission. Since 2014 CAFB has been fortunate to partner with one of Texas' most known and beloved businesses.

To quote Winell Herron, H-E-B TOC Trustee, "It is our sincere hope that our support will help make your Child Advocates of Fort Bend - Advocacy, Treatment and Prevention of Child Abuse project a success." Yes, we will implement this in the advocacy and healing we provide children, but the only thing better would be if we could wrap up their support in

one of their warm homemade tortillas then share it.

The H-E-B TOC golf tournament held in the fall provides an opportunity for H-E-B Partners, suppliers, and vendors to join together and amplify the positive impact they are making on the lives of Texans. For over 35 years, H-E-B TOC has invested over \$100 million in nonprofit organizations focused on the needs of children and families throughout the state.

Thank you H-E-B and the Tournament of Champions Charitable Trust!

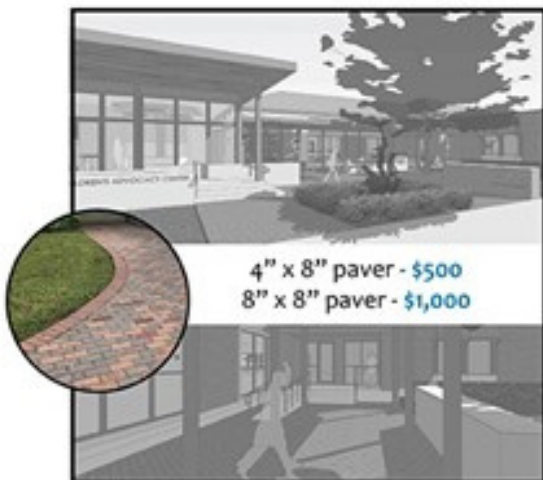
our needs

View our general amazon program needs link [Amazon Wish List](#)



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





CAN YOU HELP today?

Won't you help fill 250+ backpacks with school supplies for children served by Child Advocates of Fort Bend?

Your support helps provide kids with the basic tools they need to succeed. Backpacks are provided courtesy of FRIENDS dues -now they need **your** help to fill them!

Deadline: Supplies due July 10-15, 2026

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

1) Shop for a child

Contact: Brigit Engleman - bengleman@hotmail.com
for a student, grade, school and the list of locations for dropping off your supplies.

2) Sponsor a backpack (\$100 each)

Short on time? We'll shop for you!

✓ Checks: FRIENDS of Child Advocates

Mail to: Alexis Jackson, 7406 Forest Shadow Dr, Sugar Land, TX 77479

Contact Alexis - alexisjackson@outlook.com
(713-582-0341) for other payment options



COMMUNITY BASED CARE CHAT

with Texans Together

Join us for a Town Hall focused on the future of child welfare in CBC Region 6B through Texans Together. This conversation will provide an opportunity for community members, stakeholders, caregivers, and partners to learn more about Community-Based Care (CBC), hear updates on implementation and services, and discuss how we can work together to better support children, youth, and families across our region.

Thursday, September 24
11am - 1pm

Child Advocates of Fort Bend

Training Room

5403 Avenue N, Rosenberg TX 77471

[RESERVE NOW](#)





July 28

Sip & Stroll

5:30pm - 7:00pm

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

August 20

Darkness to Light Training

10:00am - 12:30pm

More info or RSVP [here](#)

August 25

Collaborative Family Engagement Best Practices Training

5:30pm - 7:30pm

More info or reserve [here](#)

August 27

SINGO at Sparkle & Sip

5:00pm - 9:00pm

More info or reserve [here](#)

August 28

Sip & Stroll

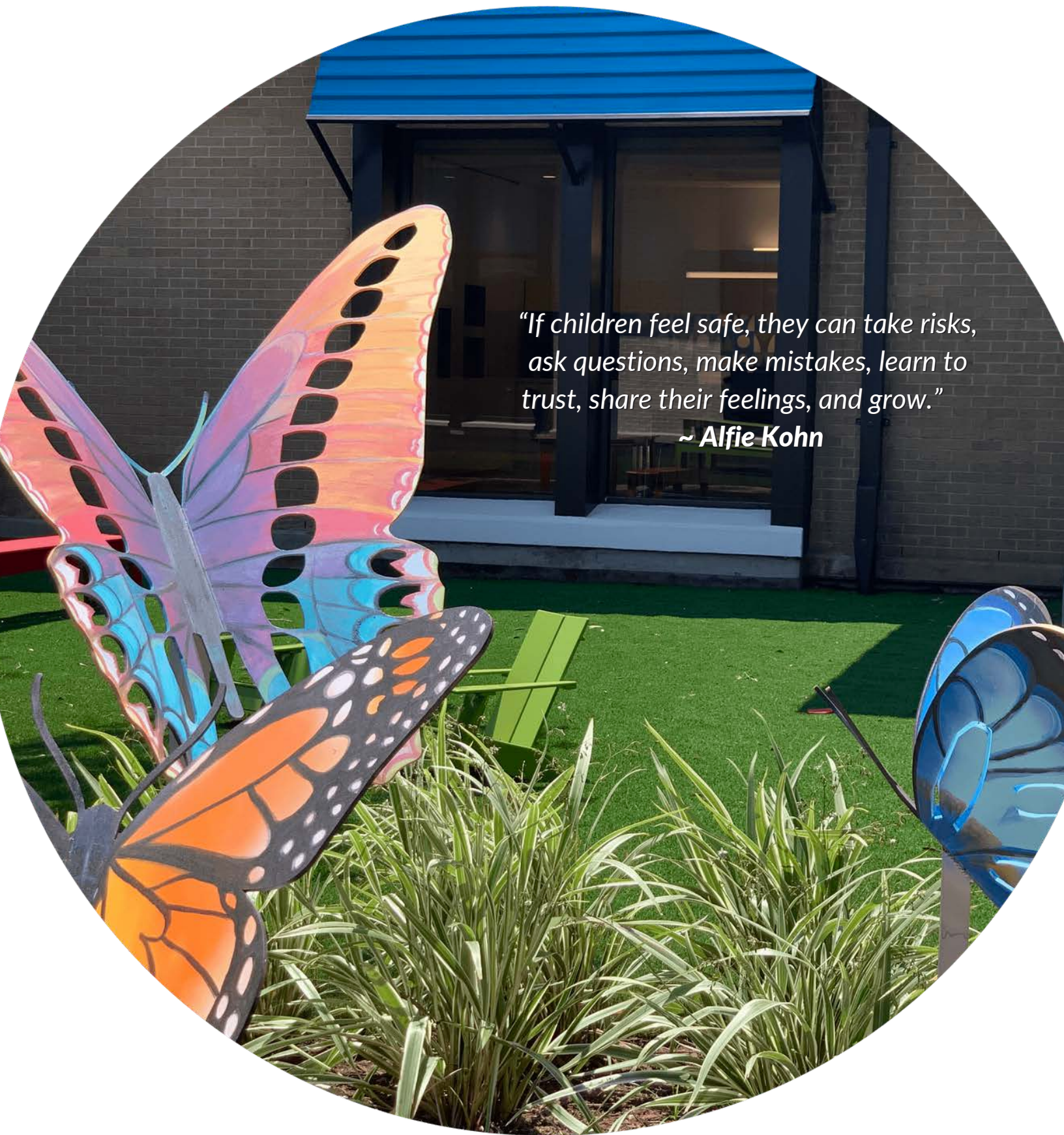
12:00pm - 1:30pm

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



Sip & Stroll

July 28, 2025
5:30pm - 7:00pm



*"If children feel safe, they can take risks,
ask questions, make mistakes, learn to
trust, share their feelings, and grow."*

~ Alfie Kohn