

The VOICES of

CHILD **ADVOCATES** OF FORT BEND™

Inside /

CEO Update • Back-to-School
National Dog Month • Prevention
Luncheon • Monthly Spotlights and MORE!



AUGUST 2026

contents



6

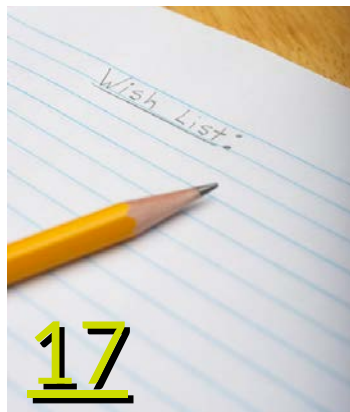
Keeping you informed on our mission:

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.



13

MONTHLY SPOTLIGHTS



17

NEEDS + OPPORTUNITIES

NEWS + FEATURES

4 FROM THE CEO

CEO Ruthanne Mefford shares what we are up to this month

6 FEATURE STORY

BACK TO SCHOOL

Helping Children Identify Safe Adults

9 CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION LUNCHEON

Get the details...

11 RECOGNIZING OUR THERAPY DOGS

During National Dog Month

13 MONTHLY SPOTLIGHTS

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

17 NEEDS + OPPORTUNITIES

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

20 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,

It's hard to believe that Summer is winding down and school will be starting in a few short weeks. I hope you have taken time this Summer to relax and unwind, enjoy family and friends, rejuvenate and perhaps escape somewhere cool. It's been a very busy Summer here at Child Advocates of Fort Bend with a full calendar of programming for our children and youth including WINGS Campus Crawl, NEST Incentive Party and NEST Summer Enrichment, continuing education around TBRI, 28 attendees at our New Volunteer Pre-service Training, our new Care Coordination of sexually exploited youth initiative in full swing and already serving trafficked children and our FRIENDS Council's annual Backpack Program. Co-Leads Brigit Engleman and Lynn Halford have once again led this monumental project of purchasing and filling

backpacks for 270 children, each personalized by name, school year and classroom so that every child starts school with a brand new backpack filled with everything they need to have a successful schoolyear. As we turn to the Fall, we are excited to host our second annual Voices For Children Child Abuse Prevention Luncheon on September 11 and again showcase the critical work that we are doing not only to provide treatment and recovery for child victims and survivors who have experienced abuse but to prevent other children from having to experience this tragedy. This event also educates the public and community leaders about the realities of child abuse and dispels common myths that are endangering our children. Myths like "abuse doesn't happen

-more

here". False - there are over **6000** reports of abuse in Fort Bend County every year across all races and social strata. Or, "it can't happen to my child." Tragically, this is also false. Nationally, **1** in **4** girls and **1** in **13** boys will be sexually abused by the age of **18** years old. Many of us were raised to be fearful of "stranger danger." The reality is that **90%** of abuse is by someone the child knows and often the parents know and trust. And the majority of the time it is by a family member. Or "there's nothing I can do." That also is false. Research has shown that **70%** of abuse is preventable. By learning about the realities of abuse, we can protect our children. CAP-C is the name for our Child Abuse Prevention initiative which aims to mobilize Fort Bend County in a communitywide project to ensure the safety of our children. As we plan for the upcoming school year, there are over **1600** resources and information pieces for parents as well as schools, the medical community and youth serving organizations available on the CAP-C website at www.capcfb.org. Hope to see you at our Prevention Luncheon!

Thanks for all your support throughout the Summer and as we head into the Fall. As we face uncertainty about continued funding from government grants, we are especially thankful and appreciative to our donors for their continuing support to ensure that we can sustain our services and ensure that



children who have been sexually abused, physically abused or neglected receive the life-saving services they need to recover. Now more than ever, your support is critical and we are deeply grateful to all our donors and volunteers whose unwavering support have sustained Child Advocates of Fort Bend for **35** years ... and hopefully for many more years ahead.

For The Children's Sake,

Ruthanne

Ruthanne Mefford, CEO





FEATURE STORY

Back-to-School

Helping Children Identify Safe Adults

By Sandra Glenn

At Child Advocates of Fort Bend, we believe prevention begins with education, open communication, and trusted relationships. Helping children identify safe adults empowers them to recognize healthy relationships, ask for help when they need it, and understand that they are never alone.

As a new school year begins, children are stepping into classrooms filled with new teachers, classmates, routines, and opportunities. For some, it's their very first day of kindergarten. Others are transitioning to middle school or high school, where they'll experience greater independence and interact with many new adults and peers.

While shopping for school supplies and preparing for the first day are important back-

to-school traditions, there's another conversation every family should have before the school year begins:

Who are the safe adults in your child's life?

Teaching children how to identify trusted adults is one of the most important ways parents and caregivers can help keep them safe. Children who know where to turn when they feel scared, confused, or unsafe are more likely to ask for help when they need it most.

What Is a Safe Adult?

A safe adult is someone a child knows, trusts, and can turn to for help, especially during difficult, confusing, or uncomfortable situations. Safe adults help children feel heard, supported, and protected.

[-more](#)

One of the most important lessons children can learn is that they should never keep a secret about someone hurting them, making them feel uncomfortable, or asking them to break family safety rules. Safe adults listen, believe children, and take action to help keep them safe.

Safe Adults Can Be Found Everywhere

Encourage your child to identify several safe adults in different areas of their life. Having multiple trusted adults increases the likelihood that someone will always be available to help when they need it.

At Home - These might be parents or guardians, grand-parents, adult siblings, aunts and uncles and trusted family friends.

At School - As children grow, they interact with more adults throughout the school day. Talk with your child about who they can go to if they need help. This could include classroom teachers, school counselors, principals and assistant principals, school nurses, librarians, coaches, trusted office staff, school resource officers.

At Church and in the Community - Children spend time in many places beyond home and school. Help them identify trusted adults in these settings as well.

These might be Sunday school teachers or youth leaders, pastors or church staff, coaches, scout leaders, parents of close friends or trusted neighbors.,

What Makes Someone a Safe Adult?

Help children understand that safe adults are recognized by their actions, not simply by their job title or relationship.

A safe adult:

- Listens without judgment.
- Believes children when they share concerns.
- Makes children feel respected, valued, and emotionally safe.
- Respects healthy personal boundaries.
- Encourages children to ask questions and speak up.
- Helps solve problems instead of asking children to keep unsafe secrets.
- Supports family safety rules.
- Knows how to get additional help when needed.

Help Your Child Build a Safety Team

Rather than identifying just one trusted adult, encourage your child to create a Safety Team of three to five adults they can turn to for help. A child's Safety Team might include mom or dad, grandpa or grandma, a classroom teacher, the school counselor or a pastor or youth leader.

Remind your child that if the first person they tell doesn't listen, isn't available, or can't help right away, **they should keep telling another safe adult** until someone does.





Transitioning Tips

The following tips can create a smooth transition from Summer to school.

- 1 Begin speaking positively about the school year ahead of time.** Talking about the upcoming year ensures that the start of school year is on a kid's mind.
- 2 Take a tour of campus or drive the child's route to school.** Especially when moving to a new campus. Most schools offer back to school tours for the transition to middle school, junior high and high school. This familiarizes the child with the environment and decreases anxiety related to the unknown.
- 3 Discuss trusted adults at school.** Knowing who the trusted adults at school are important to provide a sense of safety should anything come up or support is needed.
- 4 Encourage and model respectful communication** such as greeting the teacher, asking questions politely, and expressing concerns appropriately.

Small adjustments to the usual start-of-school race like these can lay the groundwork for a great year. Investing in your child's start to the academic year eases anxiety, increases confidence, and promotes academic and emotional success.

~Jamie Schuerg, Therapist II



CHILD ADVOCATES OF FORT BEND™

Child Abuse Prevention Luncheon

Join us!

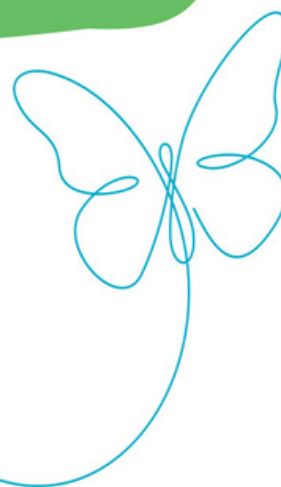
September 11, 2026
11am until 1pm

at the Houston Marriott Sugar Land

Featuring Emmy-nominated and award-winning journalist
Sharron Melton *as emcee* and child abuse survivor
and author **Rachel Fischer** *as keynote speaker*

Sponsorships range from \$2,000 to \$25,000
Individual seats are \$150

**Sponsor
Now!**



This event serves as a fundraising opportunity with proceeds directed toward resources, support for children and families suffering the effects of child abuse, and safety education to prevent children from being abused.

*By participating, you are joining our collective effort to **UNITE Against Child Abuse** and help ensure that every child has the chance to grow up in a safe and nurturing environment.*

Please join us for our 2nd Annual Child Abuse Prevention Luncheon on September 11, 2026 at the Houston Marriott Sugar Land.

Featuring keynote speaker and child abuse survivor Rachel Fischer <https://legalrnconsult.org/> and emcee Sharron Melton news anchor with WB39, our goal is to fill the ballroom with 500 community leaders and guests and raise \$600,000 to sustain the services to children who have experienced sexual abuse, physical abuse or neglect and reach more children and parents with life-saving prevention information, tools and resources.

Special thanks goes to the Current Sponsors who have signed up to Unite Against Child Abuse and will receive a table for 10 and more. We couldn't do the work we do without the generous support of our special donors.

Please join our initiative to UNITE Against Child Abuse!



Immersive Experience Sponsor

Fred & Mabel R. Parks Foundation
Betty Baitland / Eileen Akerson

Stage Sponsor

OCuSOFT, Inc.

Lunch Sponsor

Razorback Direct Oilfield Solutions & Services, LLC.

Program Sponsor

Exchange Club of Sugar Land

Luncheon Favor Sponsor

Onyx Supply Solutions

Table Centerpiece Sponsor

EOG Resources

Dessert Sponsor

Kyle & Mike Nelson

Social Media Sponsor

Hendershot Cowart, PC

Coffee Bar

Pierce Built Construction

Registration Sponsor

County Judge Daniel Wong

Choir Sponsor

Kelsey-Seybold Clinic

Mission Banner Sponsors

Jill & Sandy Curtis
Brigit & Andrew Engleman
Susie Goff & Bridget Yeung
Merry Ministries
Nancy & Pete Olson

Table Sponsors

Alings Chinese Bistro
Amegy Bank
GFL Environmental
Kelly Goff
Rhonda & Tommy Kuykendall
Charlene & Bruce Smith
Pat & Brad Somers
May Tape / Terry Martinez
Tricia Turner Properties
Tracy Walker State Farm Agency
Terri Wang / Shirley Brown



Recognizing Our Therapy Dogs

During National Dog Month

By Ellie Archinal

We recognize that, though we love to be at the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC), many of the people who visit are enduring stressful experiences and facing serious trauma. That means we have a great opportunity to create a safe space and offer things our guests enjoy! While the playroom at the CAC is most often filled with beaming volunteers, books and dolls, on special afternoons, it has another wonderful addition... slobber. August is known to be National Dog Month, and nobody loves dogs quite the same as our kids! We have a paw-full of pups who come by the agency on a regular basis to make the playroom especially delightful. Wagging their tails and offering their manes for petting as children relax and render themselves to the sweetness of puppy love.

Interacting with therapy dogs, like Roux pictured above, has been proven to lower stress hormones as well as reduce physical symptoms

of anxiety, which can make a big difference for our guests. The nearness of the four-legged friend creates an experience of safety and grounding for the children and guardians alike, providing them with a sense of calm in what may be a time of distress.

Our therapy dogs are made even more special because they're brought in by endearing volunteers like Arlene and Wayne Murray. The Murrays give their time and two dogs, Lexi and Tucker, to the CAC for afternoons of play, easing children's nerves and giving them something to look forward to at their next therapy appointment. Spending hours with new and returning friends, sneaking snacks, and playing games, there is no time wasted when a dog is present. National Dog Month is easily honored because our dogs and their caregivers are so easy to be thankful for! We are so grateful for the patience and play they give to

[-more](#)



Brodie (above), Lexi (below) and Henley (right)



our guests every day they come in.

Of course, there are slow days at the CAC, but that doesn't keep the therapy dogs from bringing their all. On days like these, the staff can look forward to floppy ears and wet noses poking around the desks, sniffing trash bins for remnants of lunch, and plopping down at the feet of hard workers. The best days at the CAC are days when everyone gets the chance to be loved by a dog, making August our chance to show them just how much we love them in return.





monthly spotlights

updates from the programs and MORE!



Aging Out Conference Recap

On Tuesday, June 24, 2026, participants including volunteers and employees from University of Texas, Wharton County Junior College, and Child Advocates of Fort Bend gathered to learn from three dynamic and resource heavy presenters. CAFB Clinical Director, Jheri Walters, along with David G. Daniels, and Latissa Stephens, DFPS, shared information to assist attendees with filling their toolboxes to support youth who are preparing to exit care in the near future. This interactive session provided attendees with real time and lived experiences in an effort to increase the effectiveness of their advocacy.

STAFF UPDATE



Kristen Kaisharis

Community Family Engagement (CFE) Coach

My name is Kristen Kaisharis, and I recently joined Child Advocates of Fort Bend as a Community Family Engagement (CFE) Coach. In this role, I help strengthen connections between children, families, and the resources they need to thrive. Before joining CAFB, I worked as a CPS conservatorship caseworker serving children and families in Fort Bend County, and I'm excited to continue supporting our community in this new role.

What I enjoy most about this work is building relationships, helping children and families navigate challenges, and celebrating their successes. Outside of work, I love traveling with my family and creating new memories together. I'm grateful to be part of the CAFB team and look forward to serving alongside such a dedicated group of advocates.

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





volunteer
social



Thank you to everyone who joined us at the Katy Beer Garden on July 17 for our Volunteer Social! We love spending time with the incredible volunteers who help make CAFB's mission possible. Your dedication, compassion, and service make a lasting impact on our community every day. We are so happy that you are part of our CAFB family!



Volunteer Pre-Service Training

By Jen Brown

Pre-Service training was held at Child Advocates of Fort Bend, July 6-10, 2026.

The attendees included board members, new employees, and volunteers seeking to serve as a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate), assist in the CAC (Children's Advocacy Center) or help our Prevention Speaking Team with Outreach.

The five days of training provided insight into what we do and more importantly the why behind the work. Our mission is to heal the hurt

and end child abuse, and this requires dedicated volunteers. Twenty-three volunteers were sworn in at the conclusion of training on Friday, July 10, 2026, by Judge Felishia Young.

We are grateful to each of these volunteers who have chosen to join us in providing support and care for the families CAFB serves. It takes a village and we're proud of ours!

If you would like more information about the many different volunteer opportunities CAFB has, please reach out to **Jen Brown** at Jbrown@cafb.org.



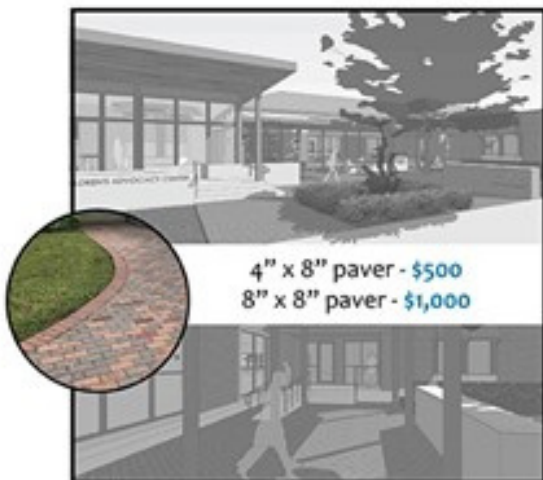
our needs

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





QCDs Continue to be a Popular Giving Strategy

What if your IRA could lower your tax bill and support Child Advocates of Fort Bend—all with one move? A **Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)** allows people who are age **70½ or older** to do just that by transferring money directly from an IRA to a qualified charity. For the 2026 tax year, the maximum QCD limit is **\$111,000 per individual**.

Important reminders:

- **The Split-Interest Limit:** You can use up to \$55,000 of your annual QCD limit for a one-time, life-income transfer to a Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA) or Charitable Remainder Trust (CRT).
- **Eligibility:** You must be at least 70½ years old at the time of the distribution.
- **Married Couples:** Spouses can each make QCDs up to the individual limit, allowing a combined transfer of up to \$222,000 if both have sufficient IRA balances.

- **Tax Benefit:** The QCD bypasses the 2026 itemized deduction limits by excluding the donated funds directly from your Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) which may affect the taxation of Social Security benefits and Medicare premium surcharges.
- **RMD Requirements:** QCDs count towards satisfying Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) for those 73 and older.

Keep in mind, you cannot also claim a charitable deduction for the amount excluded from income as a QCD.

To find out how to make a QCD, please contact your IRA custodian and tax advisor to determine the best strategy and to ensure the transfer is handled correctly. If you'd like to learn more about joining the "Forever Angels Legacy Society" and honoring CAFB with a legacy gift, please email Plannedgiving@CAFB.org.





COMMUNITY BASED CARE CHAT

with Texans Together

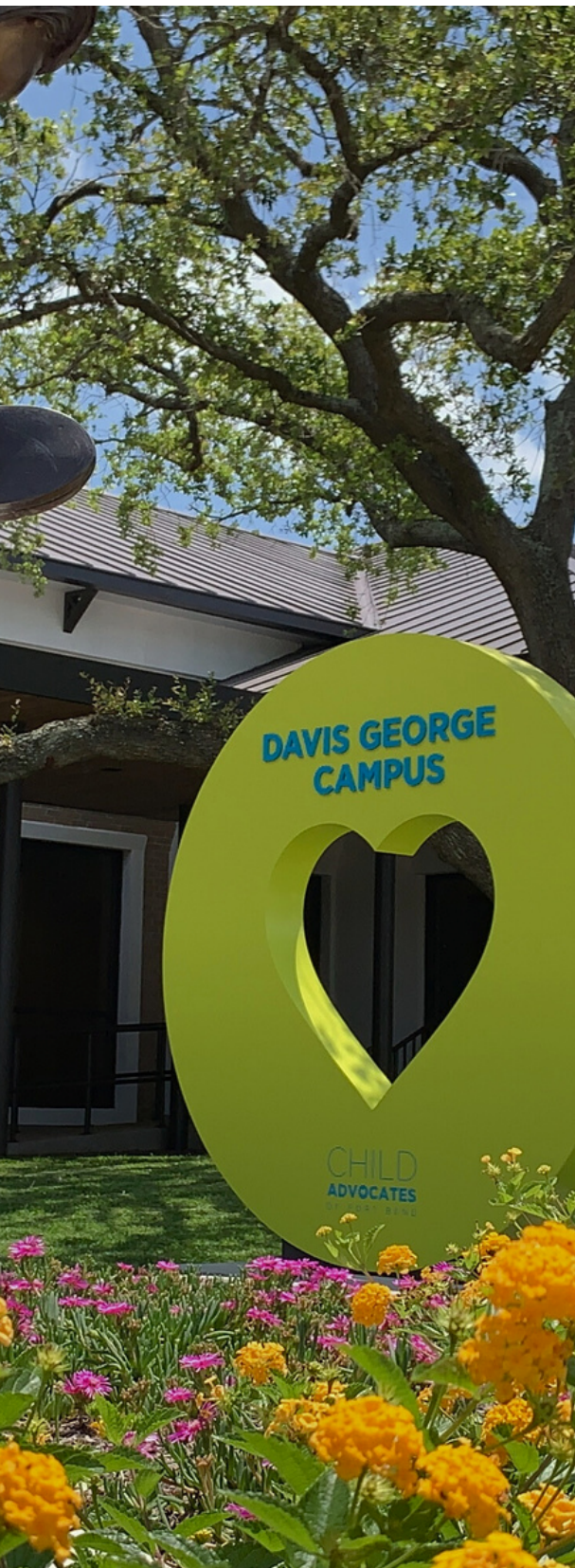
Join us for a Town Hall focused on the future of child welfare in CBC Region 6B through Texans Together. This conversation will provide an opportunity for community members, stakeholders, caregivers, and partners to learn more about Community-Based Care (CBC), hear updates on implementation and services, 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

September 11

Child Abuse Prevention Luncheon

11:00am - 1:00pm

More info or sponsor [here](#)

September 30

Sip & Stroll

5:30pm - 7:00pm

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



"Every child deserves a champion- an adult who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best they can possibly be."

~ Rita Pierson

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.