



Court Appointed Special Advocates of Collin County, Inc.

101 E. Davis St. McKinney, TX 75069-4423

PRESS RELEASE

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CASA GRAND OPENING RECEPTION MAY 1, 2009

McKinney, Texas, April 24, 2009 – The Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Collin County will host a grand opening celebration of their new building acquisition at 101 East Davis Street in downtown McKinney, Texas. At nearly 7,000 square feet, the new building approximately doubles the floor space of the prior location thus, allowing CASA to better deliver services to Collin County foster care children. The grand opening celebration will include the national CASA Association touring exhibit: *“Forgotten Children: Foster Children Take a Stand.”* The CASA of Collin County Executive Director, **Susan Etheridge**, and staff and members of the CASA of Collin County board, including Board President, **Randy Roland**, will be on hand to welcome guests to the grand opening celebration, which is scheduled for 4:00pm on Friday, May 1st, 2009.

The national CASA association launched the “Forgotten Children” campaign in May of 2008, which includes a study of those children in the foster care system (over half a million nationwide) and a campaign to raise community awareness of the plight of these “forgotten children.” The traveling exhibit, portions of which will be displayed at the CASA of Collin County grand opening, will include over 300 life-sized cut-out photographed figures of children. The figures are captioned to give voice to the challenges and needs these children face as they leave untenable and/or violent or abusive homes to enter foster care.

CASA of Collin County was incorporated in 1991 to provide trained volunteers to advocate and represent the best interests of abused and neglected children who are involved in the court and foster care system.

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CASA serves as Guardian ad Litem for 100% of children court-ordered into Collin County foster care due to abuse and/or neglect. A child's CASA provides critical information to the judicial courts regarding personal and case histories and advocates in the best interests of these children. A recent press release out of Texas governor, Rick Perry's, office cited Justice Harriet O'Neill of the Texas Supreme Court's statement that "97 percent of Texas judges recently surveyed say the personal knowledge the (CASA) volunteers have of each case helps them make a decision."

CASA of Collin County trained volunteers annually serve over 700 children with nearly half under the age of 6 years. More than 20 percent of CASA's caseload involves physical abuse victims. The more than 165 CASA of Collin County volunteers annually donate over 25,000 hours of volunteer time, focusing on the child's best interest through services, treatment and placement. In their own words, children who are rescued from homes where they have endured abuse and/or neglect and find themselves thrust into the foster care, relate what a CASA volunteer means to them.

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"When I first went into the foster home, I felt scared. I felt lonely. We weren't like normal kids, happy kids. . . all kids like me want is a chance. My CASA was someone that took interest in me. . . . when you go into foster care you get lost."
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"To me, my CASA means a trusted friend, an advocate, a voice; cuz when you are young no one listens to you. . . she was the light at the end of the tunnel. She was my friend when I didn't have anybody."
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"To give a child a CASA is to give them a voice. To give them a voice is to give them hope."

The mission of CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) of Collin County is to train community volunteers as advocates on behalf of abused and neglected children involved in the court system, so that each child is placed into a safe, loving home. CASA of Collin County relies upon the generosity and support of county, municipal, corporate and philanthropic foundations and individuals to ensure they are able to fulfill their mission for these at-risk children. CASA of Collin County offices are located at: 101 E. Davis, McKinney, TX 75069. For more information, refer to the CASA of Collin County Website at: www.casaofcollincounty.org

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