**Hispanic Heritage Month Evergreen Media Release Template**

Fill in or delete all highlighted areas. Copy and paste the text into the body of an email to your local media. If you need assistance identifying your local media, please contact the Texas CASA Communications team. Please send a link or PDF of any coverage you get. Good luck!

INFORMATION HIGHLIGHTED IN TEAL CAN BE FOUND IN THE DFPS DATA BOOK LOCATED AT <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/>

**For Immediate Release Contact:**Date First name, last name and title

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**[YOUR CASA PROGRAM] Celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month**

[City], Texas – Sept. 15 marks the beginning of National Hispanic Heritage Month, a time to celebrate the culture and traditions of U.S. residents who trace their roots to Spain, Mexico and the Spanish-speaking nations of Central America, South America and the Caribbean.

During Hispanic Heritage Month, we recognize and honor the history, culture and contributions of the Hispanic community. For many Hispanic children in the foster care system, however, it can be challenging for them to identify with their culture. That is why [YOUR PROGRAM NAME] is asking for more Hispanic and bilingual members of the community to become CASA volunteers (Court Appointed Special Advocates) and advocate for Hispanic children in the foster care system and their families.

When children are placed in foster care, they are often not only separated from their families, but also from every other part of their lives like their church, school and community. What’s more, their foster families may have different cultural values, which can further deter them from learning about and celebrating their heritage.

“It is not uncommon that a child in foster care will be placed in a home that does not speak their primary language or hold their same cultural beliefs,” said [ED’s FIRST AND LAST NAME], executive director of [YOUR PROGRAM NAME]. “They need someone they can relate to; someone who can comfortably and effectively communicate with them and advocate for their best interests.”

CASA volunteers are everyday members of the community who are trained and appointed by judges to advocate for children and families in the child welfare system. They form a relationship with the children and become acquainted with everyone involved in their lives, such as their parents, family, teachers and therapists, so that they can make informed recommendations to the court. Their goal is to ensure these children are safe, their needs are met and their voice is being heard while they are in foster care. They advocate for children to be reunified with their families whenever safe and possible. When this is not an option, they advocate for children to be adopted by another loving member of their family. Whatever the circumstances of the case, they help ensure children stay connected with their family, community and culture.

OPTIONAL PARAGRAPH - USE AN EXAMPLE OF A HISPANIC OR BILINGUAL VOLUNTEER WHO HAS CONTRIBUTED TO A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME. EX: JOHN SMITH has been a CASA volunteer for XX years. Because of his advocacy, # children who were in foster care have safely returned to their parents/are being raised by family members.

“[QUOTE FROM THAT VOLUNTEER],” said [VOLUNTEER’S LAST NAME]. “[ADDITIONAL QUOTE FROM THAT VOLUNTEER].”

[YOUR PROGRAM NAME] is always seeking volunteers of all demographics, but Hispanic and bilingual volunteers are urgently needed due to the large number of Hispanic children in the foster care system. In [PREVIOUS YEAR], [ # OF HISPANIC CHILDREN IN DFPS LEGAL REPONSIBILITY DURING FISCAL YEAR] of the [TOTAL # OF CHILDREN IN DFPS LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY DURING FY] children in foster care statewide were Hispanic. There is a crucial need for more Hispanic and bilingual volunteers for these children.

“While all of our volunteers are prepared to advocate for any child, it’s ideal for our volunteers to reflect the children they serve because they and their family may be better able to trust and open up to someone who shares similar customs and experiences,” said [ED’s LAST NAME]. “We hope it will allow them to form a bond that will result in better advocacy for children’s unique needs in court, school and other settings.”

It is [YOUR PROGRAM NAME]’s goal, and the goal of the greater CASA community, to grow to provide a CASA volunteer for every child in the foster care system.

“Our volunteers are extraordinary people who speak up for children and families in crisis,” said [ED’s LAST NAME]. “This Hispanic Heritage Month, we hope you will consider making a difference for them by becoming a CASA volunteer.”

Join [YOUR PROGRAM NAME] for their next information session on [TIME/DATE] at [PLACE/DIGITAL PLATFORM]. To learn more, visit [YOUR PROGRAM WEBSITE] or [www.BecomeACASA.org](http://www.BecomeACASA.org).

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