



NEWS RELEASE

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Texas CASA Welcomes 6 New Board Members

AUSTIN, Texas – Texas Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) is proud to welcome six new members to our Board of Directors: Jessica Cawthorn, Tracey Hull, Elena Villaseñor Sullivan, Mike Viola, Mandy Wright, and Debbie Jensen.

“We are honored that Jessica, Tracey, Elena, Mike, Mandy and Debbie have chosen to bring their time and expertise to Texas CASA, and welcome their strategic leadership as we work to create a safe, positive future for all Texas children,” said Texas CASA CEO Vicki Spriggs.

Our Board Directors play an important role in governance, financial stewardship and ensuring that Texas CASA has the resources to fulfill our work and mission of supporting local CASA volunteer advocacy programs and advocating for effective public policy for children and families in the child protection system. Meet our new members below.

Jessica Cawthorn

Jessica Cawthorn is a former foster youth who aged out of the foster care system at 18 years old. Despite the many challenges she endured, Cawthorn persevered to receive her bachelor’s degree – which only 3% of former foster youth obtain – and work for the Administration of Children and Families. Cawthorn is passionate about sharing her story and the realities of aging out of foster care so others can learn how to make a difference in the lives of children and youth in foster care. She lives in Rockwall, Texas, with her husband Jon and two children.



Tracey Hull



Tracey Hull is the director of development for Café Momentum, an award-winning nonprofit restaurant located in the heart of downtown Dallas, which offers 12-month paid internships created to equip the community's justice-involved youth with life skills, education, medical and mental healthcare and employment opportunities to help them reach their full potential. Before Café Momentum, Hull led development for The Dallas Opera and funded the most successful era in company history – including opening the Winspear Opera House, eight world-premiere operas, funding the Hart Institute for Women Conductors and free public simulcasts. Hull also ran the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria.

As an active community partner, she's served on many boards, including executive committee roles for the Housing Crisis Center of Dallas and the Texas Rangers Baseball Club. Hull is a proud Dallas native, resident and graduate of Randolph Macon College in Virginia.

Elena Villaseñor Sullivan, J.D. and CCEP

Elena Villaseñor Sullivan is an attorney and Certified Compliance & Ethics Professional (CCEP) and serves as the general counsel for Massage Heights Franchising, LLC where she provides strategic, legal and regulatory risk management guidance to leadership. Sullivan previously served as a compliance executive at USAA and was a first-chair commercial trial attorney in private practice. She was also the director of the Bexar County Women's Bar Foundation LEAD Academy, served on the Board of Directors of Junior Achievement of South Texas and a committee for the San Antonio chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners where she helped teenage girls in underserved communities learn about careers and professionalism.



Sullivan is committed to giving back to the community with a focus of helping women and children. She's consistently volunteered with the San Antonio Community Justice Program and the San Antonio Food Bank. She graduated from Boston College and the University of Southern California Gould School of Law, and is a graduate of the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce and San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce's Leadership San Antonio and the North San Antonio Chamber of Commerce's

Leadership Lab. Sullivan currently lives in San Antonio with her husband Chris and daughter.

Mike Viola



Mike Viola is a consultant with PwC’s Capital Markets Advisory Group with over 35 years of experience in the finance arena. Viola has held many roles in the AT&T’s financial organization — as senior vice president, treasurer, he was responsible for all banking relations, capital market transactions, pension asset management and insurance and risk management. As senior vice president, finance, Viola led financial operations, financial planning and analysis, forecasting and budgeting for several AT&T business units. He also represented AT&T to the investment community, including Wall Street research analysts and institutional and retail investors as senior vice president, investor relations.

Before AT&T, Viola was the vice president and treasurer of Kmart, held various financial roles for Chrysler and was an external auditor for Coopers & Lybrand (now PwC). He earned his MBA from the University of Detroit and was a CPA in Michigan. Viola actively supports numerous nonprofits as a board member and volunteer. He lives in San Antonio with his wife Phyllis and has two children.

Mandy Wright

Mandy Wright is the executive director at CASA for Kids of South-Central Texas and has worked for over 10 years in education with a wide range of students from preschool children with disabilities to integrated reading and writing at a junior college.

Wright holds a bachelor’s degree in education from Baylor University and is a graduate of the 2020 Washington County Chamber Leadership Class. In 2021, she completed a Certificate in Non-Profit Leadership with the Bush School Center for Nonprofits and Philanthropy and is a 2022 graduate of the Loyola University Children’s Law and Policy Executive Program. Wright is currently pursuing her Master of Jurisprudence Program in Children’s Law and Policy at the Loyola University Chicago School of Law. She lives in Brenham, Texas, with her husband Shane and four children.



Debbie Jensen



Debbie Jensen was named the executive director of CASA of Denton County in August of 2018 after working for the program for six years in other roles. Jensen began her CASA journey in 2001 as a volunteer advocate with CASA of West Texas, where she fulfilled one of her proudest accomplishments of being named Volunteer Rookie of the Year in 2002.

Jensen graduated with a master of science in family studies from Texas Woman's University and a bachelor of arts in English from Austin College. She was trained in mediation by the Office of Dispute Resolution in Lubbock, Texas, and worked for 1- years in journalism in the West Texas area. She and her late husband, Brian, raised six children, including two who were adopted from the Texas foster care system.

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About Texas CASA

Austin-based Texas CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) is the statewide organization of 73 local CASA programs that recruit and train volunteers to advocate for children and families in the child protection system. Last year, 9,590 well-trained volunteers served 23,943 children in 219 of the 254 Texas counties. Texas CASA supports the local CASA programs by advocating for effective public policy for children in the child protection system and by providing funding, training and technical assistance to program staff, board and volunteers.

CASA volunteers are everyday people from all walks of life in the child's community who are specially trained to advocate for them. They get to know the child, parents and family, and gather information from everyone involved in their daily life. Volunteers work collaboratively with professionals, family and others to promote the child's best interest in court, school, their foster placement and other settings. CASA volunteers advocate first for reunification when safe and possible, and work to keep children connected to their family and community of origin. They focus on facilitating nurturing relationships for the child and helping to find, engage and strengthen a support network for the child and family.

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