

CASA Volunteer Helps to Reconnect & Strengthen Family

April 27, 2021

Libby Martin's extensive history of working in the education system plus time spent volunteering with an emergency shelter familiarized her with various family dynamics, vulnerable youth and the child welfare system. So it is not a surprise that after 20 years in education as a teacher, campus intervention specialist and assistant principal, upon beginning her next chapter in life she chose to become a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA Volunteer) in March 2020.



She knew that her background in education would be an asset as a CASA volunteer, especially her experience with the special education referral and evaluation process. When reviewing cases to select as her first case to be appointed as a CASA, her CASA Supervisor showed her a case with 2 young children, one with extensive special needs. Libby knew it was the case for her.

Both children had severe developmental and medical needs that were not being met, causing them to be placed in foster care. One of the children is non-verbal and non-ambulatory. Both parents love and want the best for their children but they themselves struggled with significant issues. The children had been living with their

mother, who was consumed with mental health challenges and substance abuse. Their father was involved in their lives but had not intervened.

The children had been in two placements since coming into foster care and were residing with a family member when Libby was appointed as their CASA. At that time was in the midst of the pandemic, so while she had at one point dropped off some items to the caregiver and waved from the driveway, all of Libby's interactions with the children and others on the case was virtual.

Both parents were ordered by the court to participate in and complete service programs to address their individual struggles. The mother had yet to participate in her ordered services a year into the case and was difficult to contact. Over the past year the father however completed all ordered services and for the first time was living on his own, securing appropriate living accommodations for him and the children. He wanted his children to live with him. The father also attended both ARD meetings for one of the children and had been in consistent communication with Libby. By demonstrating his dedication to his children through making his life better and communicating with CPS and CASA, he was able to get weekend visits with the children.

At the most recent court hearing, all the parties involved in the case felt the father was not yet ready for full custody of the children- everyone except Libby. She was able to provide specific instances in which he had not only created a stable home for the children, but he was also actively involved in meeting their developmental and medical needs. He had the right to try to be the best father he could be for them with factors that would be hard for anyone. He showed over the last year he has the capacity to put forth great effort. After Libby's testimony, the Judge ordered for the children to be placed with their father on a return and monitor basis.

The children are now living with their father and the case will remain open until CPS and the Court determine the children will remain safe and will continue to have their needs met. Libby is still involved in the case until it closes. Throughout the case Libby was a source of support for the father, as it was in the best interest of the children. She helped guide him in enrolling one of the children in school, applying for transportation to school for the child with special needs and helping to acquire beds through connecting him with Foster Angels of South Texas.

Because of Libby's experience but even more importantly her passion to help others, a family has been reconnected and strengthened.

To learn how you can make a difference as a CASA volunteer for Coastal Bend youth in foster care, attend an upcoming 45 minute Virtual CASA Info Session held every Wednesday at 12pm via Zoom: <https://bit.ly/2JAld0E>