

# Mission Moment: Larry Pagan

September 14, 2022

Larry Pagan completed training to become a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) in 2018. Since taking the CASA Oath, Larry has been appointed to four cases, serving a total of 13 Coastal Bend youth in foster care. In 2020, Larry's wife Cynthia became a CASA, and now they work together to advocate for children in care.



Larry's first CASA appointment was to the case of 15-year-old Thomas, who was in his 13th placement since coming into the foster care system three years earlier.

When Larry was appointed to Thomas' case, Thomas was struggling with substance abuse and mental health issues and frequently ran away from placements. He had no connection to his biological family and had experienced an unsuccessful adoption. He was isolated and alone, and professionals working with Thomas stated that he had given up. Larry first met Thomas during Family Day at the Residential Treatment Center in which he was placed. According to Larry, "He was standoffish at first, but then after a while came around and started talking."

Over the next couple of years Thomas changed placements an additional five times. Regardless of the distance, Larry routinely visited Thomas in person, and he also stayed in touch by phone. "I gave him someone he could talk to and helped him learn to handle issues in a healthy way," said Larry. "Even when Thomas ran away, he stayed in contact, so I knew he was ok. "

Larry knew it was important to build healthy connections and establish a lifetime support network for Thomas, so he started family finding. He was able to locate biological relatives, some of whom began having conversations with Thomas. Through these efforts, Thomas was able to establish a close relationship with a sister he had never met before and eventually move into her home. Shortly thereafter, Thomas stopped taking all psychotropic medications and began focusing on his future by looking for a job and working toward getting his GED.

When Thomas turned 18, he aged out of care. More than a year later, he called Larry and said, "All this time I thought the world was against me, it was my fault. All the things you told me were true and I understand, and I appreciate you being in my life. "

Larry was Thomas' CASA for over two and a half years. During that time, Larry donated 125 hours and drove 5,200 miles to spend time with Thomas in person. Larry also collaborated with therapists, school personnel, caregivers, caseworkers, and attorneys to ensure a best interest outcome for Thomas. "I was able to see a boy at 15, who was very hostile and hated everything, finally get to a point where he trusted me," said Larry. "I feel good that he ended up in a good place. "

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>