

Taking A Leap of Faith

June is National Reunification Month. It's a time to celebrate the families who have overcome obstacles to providing a safe and loving home for their children, and are able to reunify after their child was placed in the child welfare system.

We know children do best when they can safely remain with their parents or with other family members. Children experience trauma when separated from their family of origin. That's why CASA volunteers commit to strengthening families involved in the child welfare system, in their ability to care for and protect their children. During FY

2020, over 50 percent of the cases closed, with a CASA of the Coastal Bend volunteer appointed, resulted in children returning to their parent(s), primary caretakers or relatives.

CASA volunteer Dara served on a case that recently closed and resulted in not only reunification but also transformation.

When Dara was appointed to her first case as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer in mid 2020, it was for 3 young children who were in the care of their grandmother. Their mother was in denial about using drugs and had not been involved with caring for the children. There were two fathers but one had a history of alcohol abuse with allegations of abuse towards his child and the other was incarcerated and did not want to be involved. Dara's initial plan, after speaking with everyone on the case, was to support the grandmother to help her get custody of the children.

During the case the mother became pregnant with her fourth child and Dara noticed something had significantly shifted with her behavior. After meeting with her on several occasions, Dara could see that she had begun to take an active role in being a parent to her children and was serious about stopping her drug use. Her drug tests were consistently negative, she completed drug court, she moved in with her parents and helped to raise her children. She was now a caring, diligent mother; she had just needed motivation to turn her life around.



Witness to the love this mother has for her children and her dedication to keep them safe, Dara had a new plan – to help her with the navigating through the process of working with the child welfare system and overcoming obstacles. “I think that I made difference by supporting mom so that she could get on her feet and be good mother,” said Dara.

The case closed in early 2021. The mother was given full custody of her children. She had reclaimed her life and was able to prioritize her children.

The positive aspects of serving as a CASA on this case according to Dara were “Seeing the kids reunited with their parents and how important it was for the kids to be with their parents. Seeing the mother make big sacrifices and genuine changes. She is a very competent mother who will advocate for her children. They have family support (grandma), and they are in good hands.”

Dara is now serving as a CASA on her second case, which is very similar to her first case. She’s been able to share the success story of the mother on that case with the mother on her current case, telling her “You just need to take the first step to get clean. Look how positively things can go in your direction. You just have to take the first leap of faith.”

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/2JAId0E>