**Large Group of Volunteers Joins CASA of Bell and Coryell Counties**

Fifteen new volunteer advocates were sworn in last week by Judges Cheryll Mabray of Coryell County and Judge Chris Cornish of the Centex Child Protection Court. The ceremony took place at the Bell County Child Protection Courtroom in Belton on Tuesday, April 22nd.

This class of new advocates represents one of the largest classes of new volunteers ever sworn in at one time in the Bell and Coryell County program. The new advocates received the oath from Judge Cheryll Mabray after completing the 33-hour training course provided by CASA under the guidance of Director of Volunteer Engagement, Melissa Ward. The training included in-person course work, online modules, casework scenario simulations, and courtroom observations over the past 5 weeks.

The new volunteers will soon be assigned to cases to use their advocacy skills for children who have been placed into CPS custody in the two-county area. Advocates assist the judges, DFPS caseworkers, family attorneys, and others involved in the case by gathering facts and information to ensure decisions are made in the best interests of each child involved.

Judge Cheryll Mabray presided over the swear-in ceremony and was thrilled to see so many local citizens volunteering to represent children in need of a CASA. “This just warms my heart to see so many great people willing to donate their time and energy to be there for a child in foster care who really needs help. Our judges have to make so many tough decisions with regard to the future of these children, and having a CASA involved in our cases is a huge benefit to make sure we have all the facts and information we need to make the best decisions possible” stated Mabray.

New advocates taking the oath included Stephanie Abaga, Randal Adair, Patricia Bias, Angela Brown, Tammie Generette, Corinthia Harris, Tameisha Howell, Charlotte King, Cydni Manning, Krystal Mehrhof, AnaMaria Roberts, Shirley Sykes, Joe Welch, Fiona Williams, and Sue Yanez.

Anyone over the age of 21 can become a CASA volunteer. The next training class begins on Tuesday, May 30th at 5:30 pm. If you are interested in learning more about becoming a CASA advocate, please go online at [www.casabellcoryell.org](http://www.casabellcoryell.org)/volunteer for more information or call the CASA office at (254) 774-1881.