

Willess named CASA Volunteer of the Year

Written by Betsy Blevins
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On April 7, 2011, Willess of Celeste took home the top honor of the night at the recent Volunteer Banquet of the Fannin County Children's Center. Willess was named the CASA Volunteer of the Year for her work in advocating for abused children in foster care.

CASA Program Director Joyce McGehee and CASA Casework Supervisor Sandy Hood both described Willess's volunteer efforts over the last eight years. Hood talked about how each time Willess finished a case, she would say she was going to take a break for awhile, but then would be calling within a few days, asking if there was another case she could take.



In eight years, Willess has advocated for many children in foster care. Some cases ended with children returning home, while others ended with adoption parties. Willess was described as a volunteer who regularly goes above and beyond the call of duty. She has helped speed up the adoption process for many children, some not even on her case, by copying the CPS case file. Willess also helps out with the Children's Advocacy Center by sitting with children and families before, during and after the forensic interview process.

When accepting her award, Willess shed a few tears of joy and said she loves what she does and believes in what she does.

All of the agency's volunteers, including board members, were honored at the banquet. Special recognition was given to Stephanie Wood and Marta Schreiber, both of Bonham, for their eleven years of service as CASA volunteers. JoAnne Duncan of Trenton earned her five year service pin. Three year service pins were given to Julie Luton of Bonham, Martha Latimer of Anna, Gary Duncan of Trenton and Don Grammar of Whitewright.

Board President Cindy Bankston welcomed the volunteers, board members, staff and their

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guests to the banquet at Legacy Ridge Country Club. She praised all of the agency's volunteers for their dedication and devotion to children.

CASA is in need of more volunteers. A new training class will start May 2. For more information, visit www.fanninccc.org or call (903) 583-4339. To learn about CASA volunteer opportunities in other parts of Texas, visit www.becomeacasa.org.

Sandy Barber, Joyce McGehee, Jo Willess and Sandy Hood celebrated Willess being named CASA Volunteer of the Year.