The CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) model was developed by a Seattle Superior Court Judge in 1979 to help him make informed decisions in cases where a child has been removed from a home for health or safety concerns. Dallas CASA was one of three pilot programs in the country to emulate the Seattle program and graduated its first class of 10 volunteers in 1980. Today, Dallas CASA is the largest of more than 70 CASA programs in Texas and is one of the largest of 938 CASA programs in the U.S.

With the coaching and support of professional staff, CASA volunteers gather information and make recommendations that help judges decide the best possible outcomes for children living in protective care. CASA volunteers make personal connections with the children and have contact with the adults in their lives. For many children, a CASA volunteer is the only constant and caring adult during a frightening and uncertain time in a child’s life.

On average more than six children a day are placed in the foster care system in Dallas County because it’s unsafe for them in their homes. Last year, more than 4,300 Dallas County children were in the protective care of the state due to confirmed allegations of abuse or neglect. In 2017, Dallas CASA served 3,118 children with more than 1,300 assigned volunteers. 443 new volunteers were sworn in last year, and Dallas CASA hopes to serve over 3,500 children this year. Even with all of this success, only three out of four Dallas children in foster care have an assigned CASA volunteer.

CFMA has several potential ways to help CASA reach its goal of providing a voice for EVERY child who needs this support. CFMA can host an event, take donations, allocate a portion of sponsorship dollars, or participate in the annual Parade of Playhouses to contribute to this great cause. CASA has a group of Young Professionals that is very active in fund raising and increasing awareness to encourage participation in the volunteer program. The CASA YP group has expressed their willingness to work with CFMA to do a joint fundraising event if we select CASA as a community focused cause to support in 2019. Several of our members participate in the POP event each year, and there is tremendous opportunity for us to do a great deed in our community and raise awareness of our organization through this partnership. Please consider putting your vote in to select CASA as the 2019 community cause partner of the DFW CFMA.