



Dallas CASA

**Madeleine Johnson and Paul Coggins** are co-chairs for Dallas CASA's 30th anniversary efforts. The group serves as a voice for abused and neglected children going through the court system by providing them with a volunteer advocate. Dallas CASA hopes to train 1,000 more volunteers.

## Dallas CASA enlists more civic support

**C**asa means home, but for thousands of abused and neglected children, it's an acronym that has even more meaning — it's the best chance of finally finding safe, permanent homes where they can thrive.

Dallas Court Appointed Special Advocates is an organization of volunteers trained to gather facts and give recommendations that help judges make critical decisions about child abuse cases in Dallas.

To commemorate its 30th year, Dallas CASA wants to reach even more children than it does now. Its goal is to provide an advocate for each child who goes through the system, which would require 1,000 more volunteers as well as the financial resources to train and supervise them.

"Each day in Dallas County, nearly 2,000 children are waiting for juvenile and family court judges to decide where they may safely live," said Dallas CASA executive director Beverly Levy. "These children have been physically abused, sexually abused, neglected, abandoned or have survived the murder of a sibling."

"After an initial investigation, often at a local CPS [Child Protective Services] office or at the Dallas Children's Advocacy Center, these children are placed under the protective care of the courts until judges can decide what's best for each child. That's where CASA comes in."

From the first class of 10 volunteers who served about 25 children, Dallas CASA has grown to nearly 500 volunteer advocates serving more than 1,200 child victims in 2009.

"Our advocates have done so much good, but there is still an overwhelming need for more CASA volunteers," Levy said. "Only one-third of the children in protective care in Dallas County have a CASA voice in court."

### Slow acceptance

Founded in 1980, Dallas CASA (then called Foster Child Advocate Services) was one of three pilot CASA programs in the country. The program started by the National Council of Jewish Women was patterned after a model in Seattle.

"Though it was initially difficult to garner support for the role of a volunteer within a court system, the concept slowly began to receive greater acceptance," Levy said.



**ROBERT MILLER**  
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"Judges found that when CASA volunteers were appointed to their cases, child victims of abuse were more likely to find safe, permanent homes more quickly."

Levy said support from the community has been critical to the success of the program.

The Meadows Foundation, Junior League of Dallas, Kappa Alpha Theta, Northwood Woman's Club and others provided volunteers and financial support. Crystal Charity Ball made major grants in 1991, 1996 and 2002, and starting in 1998, the Dallas County Commissioners Court has provided funding.

In 1997, the employees of Archon Group LP, a Goldman Sachs subsidiary, chose Dallas CASA as their only corporate charity, resulting in more than \$7 million raised thus far.

"Because CASA does such an outstanding job of leveraging the community's time and giving, we felt Dallas CASA was an ideal organization, one where our employees could participate in any way they felt appropriate," said Archon Group CEO Jim Lozier.

### A voice for all

During its 30th anniversary, Dallas CASA is asking community leaders to help provide a CASA voice to every child who needs one, Levy said.

Co-chairs for the anniversary efforts are Madeleine Johnson, former city attorney and general counsel for Southwest Airlines, and former U.S. Attorney Paul Coggins, now a partner with Dallas firm Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell LLP.

"All of us have an opportunity to raise awareness about the pain that child victims suffer," Johnson said. "Protecting children ultimately makes our community safer."

Johnson and Coggins have enlisted colleagues for two groups, the Committee for 30 and the Leadership Council of 30.

The Committee for 30 is a group of more than 40 corporate, organizational and civic leaders who have

publicly endorsed CASA. They include Mayor Tom Leppert; Southern Methodist University law school dean John Attanasio; DISD Superintendent Michael Hinojosa; former Dallas Police Chief David Kunkle, now a CASA board member; URS Corp. vice president Wendy Lopez; Pioneer Natural Resources CEO Scott Sheffield; and Terdema Ussery, president and CEO of the Dallas Mavericks.

The Leadership Council of 30 is 30 general counsel attorneys from local corporations, including: Ron Barger, Archon Group LP; Mark Berg, Pioneer Natural Resources; Joseph Hubach, Texas Instruments Inc.; Ric Liskow, FedEx Kinko's; Tom Mielke, Kimberly-Clark Corp.; Regina Montoya, Children's Medical Center Dallas; Nathan Moore, Mary Kay Inc.; Tom Perkins, city of Dallas; Ron Taylor, BlueCross BlueShield of Texas; and Rob Walters, Energy Future Holdings.

Members of the Leadership Council of 30 will encourage their colleagues to become volunteer advocates, help with agency events and spread the word about CASA's mission.

"These community leaders of great stature have come together with the goal of protecting children and giving them what everyone deserves — a safe, healthy childhood," Coggins said.

"When I was U.S. attorney for North Texas, I worked with scores of nonprofits, all doing wonderful things in the community. But none of them did more with less or had a greater positive impact on our most vulnerable kids than CASA does. For that reason, I was thrilled when I was asked to join the CASA board upon leaving office."

Dallas CASA also received a \$300,000 challenge grant from the Jim and Angela Thompson Foundation.

"CASA volunteers are my personal heroes," said Nancy Nasher, a committee member. "They are frequently the one constant in an abused, abandoned or neglected child's life."

Committee member Caroline Rose Hunt added: "I was shocked when I learned there are more than 2,000 abused, abandoned and neglected children living right here in our city [who] can't speak for themselves."

To learn more about advocating for abused children, visit [dallascasa.org](http://dallascasa.org) or call 214-827-8961.

CHERYL HALL

## Leading by example, CEOs rise above pack

Continued from Page 1D

Inc., nurtured his staff like a benevolent patriarch.

"They're adopted members of the Basso family," says Basso, who has never fired a worker simply to reduce costs. "We have our arguments just as family members do. People can speak their minds."

Basso's employees placed him in the top spot for small companies with 149 or fewer local workers.

Nearly 50,000 employees gave us candid assessments of their bosses in a strictly confidential survey for this year's Top 100 Places to Work competition.

They want to be led, not micromanaged. They want guidance, but they also want to be heard. Workers are willing to sacrifice when they sense that their bosses are feeling the pinch, too.

More than anything, they want the truth. They can handle it.

Tindell, Cruse and Basso lived up to their employees' great expectations best. But leadership played an important role in every company selected to our list.

When asked to rank key components in making outstanding workplaces, confidence in leaders beat out paychecks, flexible hours or training opportunities.

We decided to ask some CEOs from our Top 100 for introspection. We asked three questions:

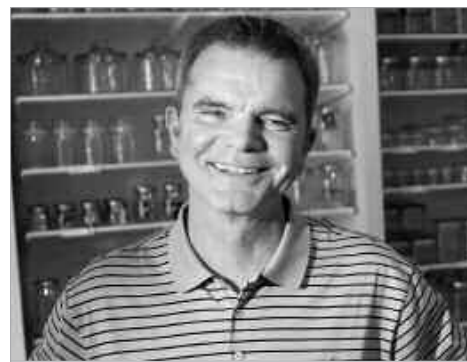
■ What did they believe employees wanted most from them as CEOs?

■ If they got a do-over for the last year, what would it be?

■ When they were starting out, what failures did they see from their bosses?

Their frank, thoughtful and revealing answers show why their companies rose to the top.

Here's what they had to share, beginning with our CEO winners:



**Kip Tindell**

Chief executive,  
Container Store Inc.

"When communication is clear, open, honest, employees know it's authentic — particularly in terrifying times like the last couple of years in retail. We did a great job making sure employees understood that we were all holding hands, knowing what the plans were. As a result, our people didn't have paranoia and were much more productive."

"They also understood that if sales got to a certain level, we would have to reconsider our decision not to have layoffs. We openly discussed and decided as a group to freeze salaries. They knew they were saving their fellows' jobs."

His do-over: "I'd communicate twice as much as I did. I would have been out in the stores even more."

As for failures of bosses in his past: "They assumed that people want to come to work and goof off and do as little as possible. That assumption is an injustice to the whole human spirit."



**Tait Cruse**

Managing partner,  
Northwestern Mutual Financial Network,  
the Texas Financial Group-Dallas

"What do employees look to me for as the CEO of this firm? Consistency in words and actions, unwavering, constant commitment to the growth in the individual and the organization. Employees like my enthusiasm and focus on growth."

The result: "We have a 97 percent retention rate of our senior salespeople. We're on track for another 20 percent growth rate."

His do-over: "I would have invested more courageously in our future. That keeps coming back to me — the opportunities missed both in adding space and hiring staff as well as salespeople."

"The biggest failure I saw from my leaders and mentors when I started out was that they forgot their purpose — the 'why.' Their mission and values were forgotten or not followed daily."



**Dan Basso**

Chief executive,  
Systemware Inc.

"A leader has to be passionate about the mission and consistent in the message. That makes it much easier for people to follow. People have to be allowed to take risks without fear of punishment. We try things. If it works, it works. If it doesn't, we try something else. We don't look to make examples or to punish people."

"People want to feel their lives have some sort of meaning: 'There is some reason why I'm here, laboring away.' It's not something we spend a lot of time talking about. It's embedded in the way we operate our business."

His do-over: "We missed an opportunity last year in our consulting business because of our conservative approach."

"We've just started to hire and push that business forward, but we're a little behind the curve. I wish we had started it six or eight months ago."

As for mistakes of past bosses: "They would take action that, first and foremost, benefited themselves — regardless of the harm inflicted on other people or even the company."

"When I pressed one of them on the subject, his response was, 'If I advance myself, I help you and the company.'"

"I could not have disagreed more."

More from CEOs, Page 4D

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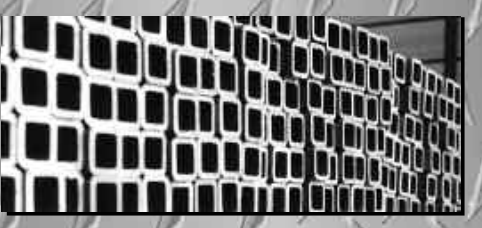
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