



Robert Miller

Dallas CASA hires new development director



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Dallas CASA had its eye on the finish line when it hired **Kersten Rettig** as development director.

The group is working to finish **Abused Children Can't Wait**, a \$37 million campaign to ensure that all abused and neglected children living in protective care in Dallas have volunteer advocates by 2019.

The advocates gather information that helps judges decide the best outcomes for children in protective care. Almost half of the abused children living in protective care in Dallas County are waiting for Court Appointed Special Advocates volunteers to help them find lasting homes.

Rettig comes to Dallas CASA from **Highland Park Village**, where she was chief marketing officer. Before that, she was director of corporate public relations for **Rosewood Hotels & Resorts**.

“The opportunity to lead Dallas CASA’s development group is a perfect match with where my heart leads me,” Rettig said. “Anyone who learns about the impact Dallas CASA volunteer advocates have on the lives of abused children will understand why I am so proud to be joining this impressive organization at such a pivotal time in its 35-year history.”

The Can't Wait campaign was launched two years ago, and campaign chair **Jim Lozier** says

it has raised \$34.8 million so far. Dallas CASA is making a final push to raise the remaining \$2.2 million to complete the campaign.

Lozier is a former CEO of the **Archon Group** of **Goldman Sachs** and a Dallas CASA board member. His vice chair, **Christie Carter**, is a past president of the **Junior League of Dallas** and a Dallas CASA board member. She's also the 2016 **Crystal Charity Ball** chairwoman.

Campaign leaders stress that the \$37 million is not a one-time goal. The effort  have to be sustained, which requires expanding the group's donor base and annual revenue sources.

“Children who come into foster care deserve to have dedicated advocates who speak only for them with no agenda other than the children's best interests,” Carter said. “Our vision is to give each of these children the chance to heal from their abuse and a reason to believe in their own potential to be successful.”

During 2014, Dallas trained 288 new volunteer advocates, which brought its number of active volunteer advocates to 907.

The group has to double its number of volunteer advocates to accomplish its goal by 2019, and it costs \$2,129 per year to provide an advocate.

“Amidst an overwhelmed child welfare system, a CASA volunteer can make all the difference in the life of an abused or neglected child,” said **Kathleen LaValle**, Dallas CASA executive director and president. “CASA volunteers focus on the needs of the children, working directly with them, getting to know their families and others involved in the case so they can make the best recommendations to the courts. Few volunteer roles have such a critical and immediate impact on the life of a child as that of a CASA volunteer.”

Dallas CASA was established in 1980. In 2014, it had 771 volunteers who served 2,264 abused and neglected Dallas County children. The **Texas Department of Family and Protective Services** had legal custody of 4,382 children in Dallas County, leaving almost half without an advocate.

To learn more about advocating for abused children, call 214-827-8961 or visit dallascasa.org.



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