

## **Dallas CASA's Cherish the Children luncheon to feature Ashley Rhodes-Courter, *New York Times* Best-Selling Author**

DALLAS, April 27, 2015 –The Dallas CASA Children's Council is pleased to announce *New York Times* best-selling author Ashley Rhodes-Courter as the 2015 keynote speaker for the Cherish the Children luncheon. Benefiting Dallas CASA and abused children in our community, the luncheon takes place at 11 a.m. on Thursday, May 7, at the Dallas Country Club. The Cherish the Children luncheon raises funds by auctioning artfully-designed, one-of-a-kind children's chairs and furnishings. Proceeds are used to support the Dallas CASA volunteer advocates who help abused children have safe, permanent and loving homes.

Ashley Rhodes-Courter is the quintessential American success story. Born in 1985 to a single teen mother, Ashley was placed in Florida's foster care system at the age of three. She spent almost ten years being shuttled between 14 homes, some quite abusive, before a CASA volunteer was assigned to her case and she was adopted by a loving family.

In 2003, *The New York Times Magazine* published Ashley's grand prize winning high school essay about her adoption day. She later expanded the essay into a memoir, *Three Little Words*. The book became a *New York Times* and international bestseller and has been optioned for a major motion picture. Ashley's second book, *Three More Words*, will be published in 2015. Since the age of 14, Ashley has advocated for the half-million children living in foster care in the U.S. by speaking on their behalf nationally and internationally to elected officials, judges, social workers, policy makers and families. She has testified on Capitol Hill and been invited to the White House to speak with the President.

Ashley has turned her pain into power and has a passion to share her story with others who have experienced severe adversity. She strives to encourage education, compassion, community involvement and positive outcomes for individuals, youth and families.

In recognition of its service to our community and children for almost 90 years, Kappa Alpha Theta Dallas Alumnae Chapter is the Cherish the Children Honorary Chair. Kappa Alpha Theta has been a valued supporter of Dallas CASA since 1989, celebrating a 25 year partnership. In addition to their generous financial support, Theta women give tirelessly by serving as Dallas CASA volunteer advocates, hosting 5K runs annually with their college chapters and recruiting summer interns for the Dallas CASA Parade of Playhouses.

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“We are fortunate to have such a dedicated partner as Kappa Alpha Theta Dallas Alumnae Chapter working diligently on behalf of the most vulnerable children in our community,” commented Cherish the Children luncheon Chair, Madeline Freberg. “The members of Kappa Alpha Theta Dallas Alumnae Chapter are committed to keeping all children safe and with their support of Dallas CASA volunteers, many abused children now have safe, permanent homes.”

On an average day in Dallas County, more than 2,000 abused and neglected children live in foster care because they cannot live safely at home. These children need powerful voices to speak for them. CASA volunteers are trained to make recommendations that help judges decide what is best for each child.

Kathleen LaValle, Executive Director and President of Dallas CASA, said, “Few of us can imagine the feelings of loneliness and uncertainty an abused or neglected child experiences while in protective care. Today, nearly one-half of Dallas County children in protective care do not have a CASA volunteer to advocate on their behalf during this extraordinarily difficult time. We are committed to doubling our CASA volunteer ranks, so that every child in protective care has the support of a strong and caring advocate.”

The Cherish the Children luncheon raises critically-needed funds to recruit and train volunteer advocates who help ensure that abused and neglected children are safe, healthy and protected with loving families.

Luncheon tickets are available for \$250 at [www.dallascasa.org](http://www.dallascasa.org).

The following individuals, retailers and manufacturers designed and donated delightful children’s chairs and furniture which will be sold at the luncheon: Matthew Benys, COUTURE – Nicolas Villalba, Creative Room Arrangements, Kay Dalton, Desilynn Faith, Fossil – Casey Green, Chelsea Green, Liz Conrad Graphic Design, Blake McElroy, MURALICIOUS, Nancy Newbern of Rare Assets, Inc., Phelan’s – Amy Bailey, Pigment School of the Arts – Tori Pendergrass, Susie Brennan Interiors.

Dallas CASA is pleased to recognize the following underwriters:

CASA ANGEL: Kappa Alpha Theta Dallas Alumnae Foundation

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Dallas CASA is grateful to our supporters who contributed after print deadlines.

**PRESS RELEASE**

**About Dallas CASA:**

All children have the right to be safe. In 2014, almost 4,400 abused and neglected children were in the protective care of the courts because it wasn't safe for them at home. Sadly, nearly half of these children did not have a CASA volunteer advocate to speak for them. CASA volunteers gather information to help judges decide where the children can safely and permanently live. A CASA volunteer can make an immediate and critical difference in the life of an abused child. By 2019, Dallas CASA hopes to become the largest CASA program in the country to serve all abused children in protective care. To learn more about advocating for abused children, call 214-827-8961 or visit [dallascasa.org](http://dallascasa.org).

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