



# Virginia Barrett, Jane Q. Piper Volunteer of the Year: Ten years with CASA and more than 50 children helped

by Meredith Hight

Hearing about criminal cases of child abuse and neglect can be upsetting and overwhelming. For Virginia Barrett, hearing about child abuse cases while serving on the grand jury in Collin County spurred her to action.

“They would bring us child abuse cases and it was like, ‘What can we do?’ she said. “A man on the grand jury was on the board with CASA. He showed up with applications to be a part of CASA. I did the interview and that was it.”

Ten years later, Barrett has advocated for the best interest of more than 50 children

in Collin County as a CASA volunteer. It is no surprise, then, that she recently received the Jane Quantan Piper Volunteer of the Year award at Texas CASA’s 19th Annual Conference in Austin, Texas, this past October.

Barrett is currently assigned cases involving 11 children. Two of her CASA children were recently adopted.

“That is always great, when you find a permanent, wonderful situation. I care about them and I want the best for them,” she said. “I just love doing this. It really makes you feel good to do something for someone else; I really think sometimes I get more out of it than they do.”

Barrett noted that a CASA’s role is especially important given that Child Protective Services is often overworked and not every child receives the attention he or she needs. “If that child has a CASA, that [lack of attention] is not going to happen,” she said.

What is the secret to Barrett’s long term commitment as a CASA? Over the course of ten years, Barrett has continued her volunteer work with CASA by focusing on what can be done to better the children’s lives.

“Some of the situations are horrible. You have to understand that their life may be different. I just have to focus on what I can do to make the situation better? It is emotionally draining, absolutely, but you have to focus on what you can do,” she said.

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— Virginia Barrett, volunteer



LEFT TOR RIGHT: Erica Baig, Susan Etheridge, Dianne McCall, **VIRGINIA BARRETT**, Joanna Halteman, Jaime Carter, Sharon Lloyd and Debbie Mormon.

Susan Etheridge, Executive Director for CASA of Collin County, said Barrett has made a difference in the lives of the children she works with.

“She cares deeply about every single case that comes in,” Etheridge said. “She has been the only constant in these kids’ lives, as foster parents, lawyers, and CPS workers cycle in and out.” Barrett has worked with one sibling group of six children since 2002.

Barrett added that the CASA of Collin County staff is supportive of the work she does as a volunteer.

“They really stand behind us,” she said. “

As for her being recognized as a statewide volunteer of the year, Barrett said, “A lot of volunteers do what I do. I am really grateful for the award.”

Debbie Mormon, Director of Development with CASA of Collin County nominated Barrett.