

PROGRAM SUMMARY

*A Volunteer for Every Child in Need*, is Golden Crescent CASA's goal. This year Golden Crescent CASA has provided 306 of the 393 children entrusted to our organization with a trained CASA volunteer for a 78% child to volunteer ratio. Although our volunteer retention rate is 80%, annually volunteers retire from service, relocate out of service area, resign to address family needs, or removed from service due to inability to meet service requirements. As a CASA volunteer only investigates 1 or 2 cases at a time in order to give each child's case the individualized attention the child deserves, we will need to recruit and train 50 more volunteers and strive to increase our volunteer retention rate in 2017 to meet our *A Volunteer for Every Child in Need* goal.

Funding through the Texas Rural Communities, Inc. would provide needed funds to offset costs of our increased volunteer recruitment efforts in all eight counties we serve, volunteer training classes –training classes held each month in service region counties, and implementation of retention strategies which include expanded training opportunities and programs to help children transition from foster care to adulthood. To help obtain these objectives, Golden Crescent CASA is humbly requesting funding in the amount of \$5,000.

## *Texas Rural Communities, Inc.*

### I. INSTITUTION PROFILE

Name of Organization: Golden Crescent Court Appointed  
Special Advocates, Inc.  
Golden Crescent CASA  
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### II. ORGANIZATIONAL DESCRIPTION

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) organizations are modeled on the volunteer centered investigative program created by Juvenile Court Judge David Soukop of King County, Seattle, Washington. Dissatisfied with the same case plans and same recommendations for victims of child abuse who appeared before him in his court, Judge Soukop felt that more individualized attention would produce better recommendations and outcomes. Therefore, he began training community volunteers to provide needed information in child abuse cases.

In 1977 the Volunteer Guardian *ad Litem* program was created which recruited and gave authority to concerned community members to investigate and to make reports to the Court about a child abuse victim's particular circumstances independently of overworked State Child Protection caseworkers and attorneys. These volunteers became the "eyes and ears" of the court and could assist the Judge by providing information pertinent to the child's best interest. Similar programs were developed in other localities as judges spread word of the concept. In 1982, National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association (National CASA) was established to support volunteer child advocate programs.

Observing the success of CASA in other communities, a group of concerned Victoria citizens established Golden Crescent Court Appointed Special Advocates (Golden Crescent CASA) in 1994. Golden Crescent CASA, based in Victoria County, became the "voice" of abused children in eight counties: Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Gonzales, Jackson, Lavaca, Refugio, and Victoria. Today, Golden Crescent CASA is governed by a ten member Board of Directors representative of counties served and is dedicated to our mission, *to utilize trained volunteers, who are appointed by the court, to advocate for the*

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*best interests of abused and neglected children and assist in placing them in nurturing, permanent homes.*

Golden Crescent CASA is appointed Guardian *ad Litem*, free of charge, in the counties we serve. It is noted that children with a CASA volunteer spend less time in the foster care system - on average nine months. Spending less time in foster care lessens anxiety, trauma and the likelihood of these children developing psychological disorders. **Our CASA volunteers insure that abused children get the attention they deserve, facilitate involvement and responsiveness of family service professionals, and promote the best interests of the child in the court system.**

III. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Golden Crescent CASA believes in protecting and enriching the lives of children. Since 1995, Golden Crescent CASA has been recruiting, training, and retaining citizen volunteers to represent the best interests of abused and neglected children in the Golden Crescent region. This year Golden Crescent CASA has served 393 children 306 had a trained CASA volunteer.

Our goal is to increase the number of volunteers to advocate for abused children so that 100% of our cases are served by Golden Crescent CASA volunteers. In accomplishing that goal, we want to have our volunteer's mirror the ethnic diversity of the children served and increase the number of male volunteers. This will be accomplished through a detailed plan of action steps and timelines that have been developed in our strategic and diversity plans.

These action steps include targeted advertisement in local and area newspaper, radio, and television about Golden Crescent CASA and our need for volunteers. Also, Golden Crescent CASA will participate in community events to educate the public about Golden Crescent CASA's mission; materials will be available describing the benefits for abused children served by CASA volunteers. Staff, board members, and volunteers will provide presentations to community organizations in order to increase public awareness of our mission and to recruit volunteers.

Our retention strategy will focus on volunteer recognition of service, training on topics to hone the volunteer's skill set which will enable the volunteer to best meet the needs of the children served, and retaining qualified CASA staff to provide support to CASA volunteers.

To date Golden Crescent CASA has served 393 children: 188 female, 205 male, 53% Hispanic, 37% Caucasian, and 10% African-American. Golden Crescent CASA serves children of all ages and ethnicity.

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Golden Crescent CASA is unique in the volunteer services provided to abused and neglected children, since 1995, Golden Crescent CASA has been utilizing volunteers to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in the court system. CASA volunteers make sure a child's best interests and made known, the child isn't overlooked in an overburdened foster care system, and the child is placed into a nurturing and permanent home as quickly as possible. Golden Crescent CASA continues to strive to give each child in need a CASA volunteer thus, ensuring that every child has the best possible outcome.

Project Budget: A Volunteer for Every Child in Need

Retention	\$10,000
Training	\$10,000
Recruitment	\$20,000
<u>Total</u>	<u>\$40,000</u>

All funds received from this grant will be expended on offsetting the costs of the project budget above. Golden Crescent CASA is requesting \$5,000, but accepts, and appreciates any funds received from Texas Rural Communities, Inc.

Golden Crescent CASA will continue to use the data base program CASA Manager for our child and volunteer data, this information is reported monthly to board and quarterly to state and national CASA organizations. Staff will meet monthly to evaluate and review the recruitment plan, training and volunteer retention numbers, tracking progress towards goals, and recommend needed action to meet goals.

The following timelines have been developed as benchmarks for accomplishing our goal of 100% volunteers with the proposed grant funds being utilized in the second quarter of 2017:

- By March 31, 2017, 85% of cases will be served by a CASA volunteer.
- By June 30, 2017, 93% of cases will be served by a CASA volunteer.
- By December 31, 2017, 100% of cases will be served by a CASA volunteer.