

Abused children can't wait

Carrie, a Dallas CASA volunteer since 2011, retired from a career as a special education teacher, but life without children didn't suit her.

"I just felt I didn't have a purpose when I wasn't helping a child," she said. "I lost who I was, but CASA brought me back to who I am."

Three years, nine cases and 22 children later, Carrie's proven an invaluable advocate for Dallas CASA. Every case has made a place in her heart. She remembers a special needs child adopted by a loving family. She remembers a family nearly torn apart by deportation and the last-minute green card that kept them together. She remembers language barriers broken down by mutual love for a child that needed no language. And she remembers one child who still calls her an "extra grandma."

"She is truly a superwoman for CASA," said Carrie's supervisor, Shashaunda Williams. "She never leaves a stone unturned. She fights for what every individual child needs. And she's fearless, never afraid to speak up when a child's involved."

Carrie makes connections with her children by bringing paper and crayons to color together. She establishes good communication with Child Protective Services and family members. And Shashaunda says she does it all with ease, never complaining and never losing sight of what's best for the children involved.

Her experience as an educator has proven to be a bonus, as she meets with teachers, counselors and schools to make sure the children have access to services they need. She can also direct families to resources and educational services they might not know are available. But her willingness to dig deep doesn't stop with education. She's called social service agencies for help with utility bills, housing and food if a family is struggling.

"If I'm helping the caregiver, I'm ultimately helping the child," she said. "My mom and dad always taught me to do the best you can to the best of your ability. I apply that to CASA, too."

A mother to three grown children, grandmother to eight and great-grandmother to five with one more on the way, Carrie doesn't plan to stop advocating for CASA children any time soon.

"Just because a case is over doesn't mean I forget about the kids," she said. "I still think about them, I still hope they're doing okay."

"CASA just completely fills me up."

