

Abused children can't wait

After advocating for 37 children over the past decade, North Dallas resident Elizabeth Jenkins tells us what propels her forward.

What brought you to Dallas CASA?

I retired from EDS in 2004, then kept my grandson during the day for the first nine months of his life. When his family moved to California, all of the sudden what had been a very busy life for me was not so busy. One Sunday at our church, Dallas CASA was there and I thought this is something I could do. Although I didn't have experience working with children, being an advocate just felt like a natural fit.

What keeps you going?

The truth is I enjoy the children and seeing them grow. All it takes is hearing back from a child two or three years later with an invitation to a high school graduation or special birthday party, and you know it's worth it. Everything I do for them they give back to me tenfold.

What have you learned from being an advocate?

My five grandchildren are extremely fortunate. But I still see the tough times they go through, and it's made me realize how truly hard and awful things can be for children who aren't so fortunate.

Tell us about a moment when you knew you were making a difference.

When my own grandson was two, I happened to be working a CASA case with a two-year-old boy. My grandson was starting therapy for a minor speech delay, and at the same time my CASA child was being evaluated for ear tubes, hearing loss and a speech delay. The experience with my grandson had taught me a lot about a critical window for speech development, and I pushed hard for my CASA boy to receive the ear tubes he needed.

The day he got the tubes in his ears, his foster mother carried him out of the clinic and a bird sang high up in a tree. He turned his head and looked for the bird, and we realized he'd never done that before. It was the first time he heard a bird sing.

