

## *Abused children can't wait*

A volunteer advocate since 2009, Amie Plunk doesn't just specialize in teenagers. With five cases involving teenagers currently open, she's working on an advanced degree in teenagers.

Amie and her husband, Ben, parents to a blended group of nine children, often share cases. Amie's volunteer supervisor Judy Maloney says when she has a tough teen case that needs a special touch, she knows Amie and Ben can always be counted on.

"Amie truly goes the extra mile in everything she does," Judy said.

A Mesquite resident and insurance investigator by trade, Amie once drove to Houston to attend a critical doctor appointment with a child and plans to attend the follow-up appointment in Houston again next month. She's been to Palestine, Denton, Waxahachie and Houston to visit her kids who are often placed in geographically distant treatment centers. She even flew to Washington state to ensure a child was doing well and to confirm whether the child wanted to stay in the placement long term.

Initially interested in being a foster parent, Amie found Dallas CASA as an outlet for her need to love children.

"Instead of trying to reinvent the wheel, I found where God was already working in the world," she said. "And it's not been at all what I expected – I feel so much closer to these kids than I expected I would."

One of her CASA teens recently ran away from a foster home in Houston. When the police weren't able to find the girl, Amie would not take no for an answer. She drove to Houston and personally distributed flyers with pictures and information. When the girl resurfaced later that week, she said it was because she had seen one of the flyers and knew she was loved.

Amie's ability to connect with teenagers in crisis is what makes her unique, Judy says. Amie's had teenagers ask her to be their support system during criminal cases against their parents. She's often able to work with teenagers in danger of running away and some of her CASA youth even call her for support long after their CPS case is closed.

"In other words, Amie is a gift from heaven to her kiddos," Judy said.

Amie says being a CASA volunteer has changed her for the better, broadening her mind and her world view. "I'm more accepting and understanding of how people get places in their lives," she said. "Parents can really love their children but just not have the tools to parent."

But Amie's CASA kids have her beside them, walking the walk and talking the talk.

