

Abused children can't wait

"I hope my story can be used to inspire other little Ashleys out there, living in foster care and waiting for a home," she said. "But I also hope it inspires more people to want to be CASA volunteers. It's critical we invest in our children and I really believe we all can be part of the change."

Jana and Mike Brosin were event co-chairs, and Gloria Campos served as honorary chair of this year's Champion of Children Award Dinner, which raised \$600,000. Dallas CASA honored AT&T and its employees with the Judge Barefoot Sanders Champion of Children Award for their service and contributions to children. AT&T employees serve on Dallas CASA's board, volunteer as advocates, work on the Children's Council and Young Professionals Council and play a major role in various Dallas CASA events.

"When you look at this organization, you see a different dimension," said Randall Stephenson, chairman and chief executive officer of AT&T. "Dallas CASA requires a level of emotional commitment I have never seen in another organization. What you are doing is really important."

In 2013, AT&T strengthened its commitment to abused and neglected children by joining Pioneer Natural Resources and Goldman Sachs in hosting the Dallas CASA Classic, the single largest one-day golf charity tournament in Texas. More than 40 AT&T employees volunteer more than 800 hours annually to make the event a success.

Following the award presentation, AT&T and Dallas CASA supporters learned more about the impact that one constant, caring adult can have on the life of an abused child. In a live, on-stage interview with former WFAA anchorwoman Gloria Campos, Ashley recalled her difficult childhood.

"I'd been disappointed so many times in foster care," Ashley said. "I'd even seen kids adopted and then returned. What I ultimately learned from CASA is that some people can, in fact, be trusted. My volunteer advocate was the only one who believed me."

Ashley was living in a filthy, two-bedroom trailer home with 16 children, many of them babies, when her volunteer advocate, Mary Miller, encountered her for the first time.

"Oh, I was awful to Mary at first," she said. "I thought 'Who is this lady?' Man, I could not get rid of her! She was like my own private fan club."

Mary advocated for permanency for Ashley and ultimately changed the entire course of Ashley’s life, resulting in her adoption at age 12. Ashley recounts with pride and gratitude the difference having a family made in her life. She had a family to come home to when the dorms in college closed at Christmas. She had a father to walk her down the aisle. And her own children have grandparents.

