

December 1, 2004

Volunteers Advocate for Texas Kids

Texans are known for opening their hearts during the holiday season. The demand for volunteers is year-round for many organizations like Texas Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). The Lone Star Proud For Kids specialty license plate funds recruitment of CASA volunteers, and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is featuring it during the month of December.

Texas CASA is part of a national volunteer organization that began over 25 years ago, when a judge in Seattle began using community volunteers as a "voice in court" for abused and neglected children. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) provided him with the detailed information he needed to safeguard the children's best interests and ensure that they were placed in safe, permanent homes as quickly as possible. The program was so successful that it was copied around the nation. There are more than 900 CASA programs in operation – at least one in every state – and more than 52,000 trained volunteer advocates nationwide.

Lone Star Proud For Kids specialty license plates can be viewed online at www.dot.state.tx.us/vtr/spplates/allplates.htm. Since 1998, when the plate was introduced, more than \$398,000 has been raised for CASA and nearly 16,000 vehicles have displayed the Lone Star Proud specialty plates.

The graphic on the left side of the plate features a child's drawing of a red heart within a yellow star on a red and blue flag. The phrase "Lone Star Proud For Kids" runs across the bottom of the plate. The license plate can be purchased at any time, regardless of when a vehicle registration expires. These plates are available to motorists for a \$30 annual fee, plus \$40 if personalized, in addition to regular vehicle registration fees. Of the \$30 annual fee, \$22 goes to the credit of the Attorney General Volunteer Advocate Program account for funding recruitment of Texas CASA volunteers. The remaining \$8 fee is deposited into the state highway fund to cover administrative costs.

Applications for the Lone Star Proud For Kids plates are available at county tax offices, on TxDOT's website (www.dot.state.tx.us), by calling the TxDOT Help Desk at (512) 465-7611, or TxDOT's Fax-On-Demand forms line at (888) 232-7033. Customers requesting orders for specialty license plates through the fax service should enter the code 0999 to receive the form for the license plate they are ordering.

TxDOT started its specialty license plate program in 1965. Today, there is a wide variety of different plate designs, many of them benefiting a particular group, organization, college or university. Since 1994, more than \$10 million has been raised for sponsoring organizations, colleges and universities.

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For more information, call Darah Waldrip in TxDOT Vehicle Titles and Registration Division, (512) 302-2076. For a view of the plate and ordering information go to www.dot.state.tx.us/vtr/spplates/allplates.htm.