

Grantee Spotlight:

CASA of Polk County

Advocating for Children in the Dallas Community

A 2 month-old with a broken collarbone. A tiny body covered with bruises. A child burned with a cigarette. A young girl sexually abused. Beaten, neglected, starved, abandoned. These children have suffered at the hands of those who were supposed to love them the most. Taken from their parents, they become wards of the court and are placed in foster care. They undergo a variety of assessments to evaluate their physical and mental health, as well as any developmental delays and learning issues. Depending on the specific and often changing emotional needs of each child, they may be moved from one foster home to another. In the absence of parents, the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program of Polk County serves these children. CASA volunteers are the voice in court for children who find their fate resting in the hands of a judge.

CASA is a legislatively mandated, yet unfunded program that relies on dedicated volunteers. "It is a job of the heart," says Tess Gebauer, CASA and Program Manager. CASA volunteers must pass a background check, complete 40 hours of training and commit to 2 years of service as well as 12 hours per year of continuing education. CASAs put in an average of 10-12 hours each month. CASAs dedicate many hours to



investigating the lives of the children, reviewing assessments and compiling a report to the judge. "We have amazing, supportive judges in this county. They have the childrens' best interests at heart and they don't make decisions lightly," says Gebauer. CASAs also advocate for the children in school where they often struggle due to developmental delays. They work closely with DHS caseworkers and make home visits. They attend all meetings regarding the child and all court hearings.

At a time when these children have already experienced sudden disruption, their CASA is a trustworthy, dependable adult. Their caseworker, foster home, attorney and teachers may change, but their CASA will remain consistent.

"Our ultimate goal is to ensure that the child's needs are being met and that they will have a safe, permanent home, free of abuse and neglect," says Katey Axtell, CASA of Polk County Executive Director. In Polk County, there are over 200 children currently in foster care for abuse and neglect. Of these children, 109, or about 49% are being served by a CASA. That leaves 113 children without an advocate. The program has set an ambitious goal of recruiting enough volunteers, approximately 80, to serve 100% of the children by 2018. Through a DCF grant to support outreach efforts, CASA has been making progress towards that goal.

While it takes a lot of time and effort, CASA volunteers gain a tremendous sense of accomplishment, doing something so incredibly important,

potentially making a huge difference in the life of a child who has been a victim of abuse and neglect. Gebauer recalls a girl who was being reunited with her family. "The smile on that little girl's face, I've never seen a child smile like that. She had a balloon in celebration of the day; another little boy was there and wanted her balloon. She kindly gave it up. 'He can have it,' she said, 'because I'm so happy.' This is why we do this."

For more information on the Polk County CASA program, visit www.casaofpolkco.com.

Dallas Community Foundation To Distribute Grant Funds

The Dallas Community Foundation will accept applications for the 2016 grant distribution beginning January 1, 2016.

The Foundation is seeking to fund projects that benefit the people of the Dallas area, with preference given to projects that serve urgent needs and have a broad and meaningful impact on the community. This year, the Foundation will distribute \$40,000 in grants. A portion of this amount will come from the Anthony and Pearl Proal fund which places a preference on projects that benefit senior citizens.

For more information, please contact Mia Mohr by phone 503-798-7847 or email mia@dallascommunityfoundation.com. Non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations or other qualified tax-exempt entities that serve the Dallas area are encouraged to apply. The application deadline is **January 31, 2016**.



When One Door Opens Another...

This summer, a volunteer mentor for the Dallas Creation Vacation program discovered that his weekend opened a door to a new relationship and an opportunity to make a difference he never expected. On the first day of camp, a young boy hurt himself. The mentor drove the boy and his mother to the hospital for treatment. Through their time together, the volunteer became better acquainted with the family. He learned that the boy had no father in his life; he lived with his mom and four sisters. After the camp ended, the mentor inquired about becoming a Big Brother for the boy. Both mother and son were thrilled to have this opportunity. This chance meeting opened a new door for both the mentor and the young boy. "We now have a wonderful friendship through our weekly get-togethers," says the mentor. "We have gone to a Beaver's game, have done school work, rode bicycles, hiked Silver Falls and have done some woodworking together."

Dallas Community Foundation is a proud supporter of the Dallas Creation Vacation Program, an educational outdoor experience, assisting low-income families to strengthen their interpersonal and community relationships.

Board Member News

Farewell Mike and LaVonne

Mike Buhler and LaVonne Wilson, founding members of the Foundation, retired from the board this fall. In their 20 years of dedicated service, Mike and LaVonne were a guiding force in the Foundation's growth and instrumental in establishing programs that give back to the community. Both will be greatly missed, but their efforts will continue on. Thank you for your service, Mike and LaVonne!

Welcome Bob and Chantel

The Foundation welcomes new board members Bob Brannigan and Chantel Williamson. Both bring valuable skills and experience to the board.



Chantel Williamson is a long time Dallas resident. After graduating from Dallas High School, she went on to get her accounting and finance degree from Western Baptist College (now Corban University) and later became a Certified Public Accountant. She currently is a partner at Buhler & Meyer CPAs LLP. She enjoys working in Dallas because it offers the opportunity to build a great working relationship with her clients.

Chantel is very active in the community. In addition to her new position as a board member for the Dallas Community Foundation, she currently serves on the board of the Dallas Education Foundation as treasurer. She also volunteers with the Parent Teacher Club and James 2 Community Kitchen. She coordinates the mid-week kids program at Salt Creek Baptist Church, where she is a member.

Chantel enjoys living, working and raising her family in the community where she grew up. Her husband is a 5th grade teacher at Whitworth Elementary School; her three children all attend school in Dallas and are involved in various sports.

Bob Brannigan moved to the Dallas area in early 2010 as the administrator for West Valley Hospital and Willamette Health Partners. He is a registered nurse and graduated from St. Mary's College with a business degree and achieved a Master's in Business Administration. He served in several senior management roles in California and Virginia including Chief Nursing, Chief Operating and Chief Executive Officer positions. Bob retired January of 2015.

Bob is active in several organizations in the Dallas area including President of the Chamber of Commerce, Board member of the Dallas Rotary Club, Board member of the Polk County Commissioners Health Advisory Committee, Vice Chair of the Dallas Economic Development Commission and Chair of the Dallas Streets Task Force.

Bob lives with his wife of many years, Lori in rural Polk County.



Thank You Contributors!

It is through your generous gifts that the DCF can support efforts that touch the lives of those in need, making a difference in the Dallas community, for good, for now, forever.



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New Opportunities for Learning

Students in the Dallas School District will soon have some additional learning tools to enhance their education. Through support of a DCF matching grant, Dallas Education Foundation recently funded grant requests from teachers. From technology to books to supplies, students will benefit from opportunities to gain skills and enrich their learning experiences.

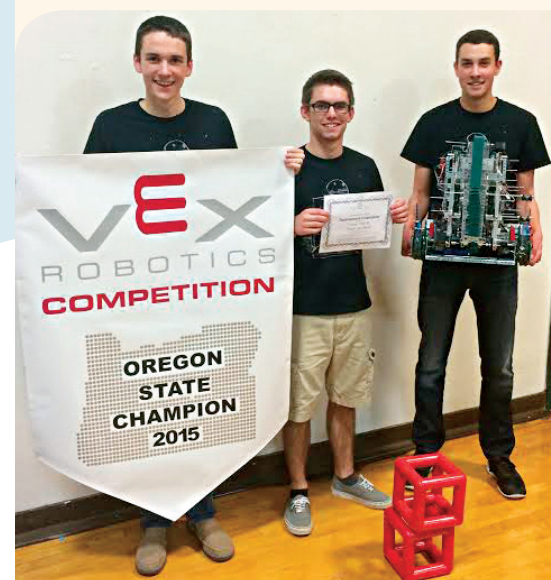
Grants included:

- Music instruments for K-3 schools
- Music software for school plays
- Calculators/scientific/graphing calculators
- Platforms for drama department
- Digital scales for science department
- Reptile/avian Incubator for science department
- Materials for genetic lab
- Microscopes
- 7th grade language arts novels
- Chrome book charging cart
- Wiggle seats, weighted lap pads and bouncy bands
- Art supplies
- Autism materials for iPad
- Kitchen Aid mixer
- High interest/low reading level chapter books
- Robotics team equipment

Are you a supporter of culture in Oregon?

Have you made a donation to the Dallas Community Foundation in 2015? If so, remember you can make a donation to the Oregon Cultural Trust and get that same amount back as a tax credit.

For more information, visit www.culturaltrust.org.



Gaining Insight on Local Needs

This fall, the DCF board of directors toured some of the programs that received DCF grant funds. It was a great opportunity to learn more about the unique needs and issues facing the Dallas community and the local efforts to address them. Board members gained insight on how grant funds are making a difference and how funds could be used in the future.



DCF board members learn more about the Dallas Food Bank. Leonard Hlavinka explains the Food Bank's food distribution system.



Dallas Community Foundation

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Our mission is to enhance the quality of life in the Dallas community by building a culture of giving.



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