

November 2023

Guadalupe County Children's Advocacy Center



Friends of Courage!

Seguin Area Youth Leadership Academy Helps Out

"As soon as the students walked into the Children's Advocacy Center building, something tugged at their hearts," Maria Castilleja, Membership Coordinator for the Seguin Chamber of Commerce said.

Maria is also the President of the Seguin Area Youth Leadership Academy (SAYLA) where she helps young adults receive a 'theoretical and operational foundation in the essential skills, beliefs, and practices of leadership to prepare the students to make a positive impact on the quality of life in their community.'

Earlier in the year, the students in SAYLA took a tour of 7 Guadalupe County non-profits and chose the GCCAC as the organization that would be the focus of their summer project.

"These young adults wanted a meaningful project that involved sweat equity and hard work--not just fundraising," added Maria. Although the project did require the students, who are incoming juniors and seniors, to raise funds to pay for supplies, the bulk of the work done was labor-oriented.

It only took the students until July to complete the project that included building a wooden flowerbed, re-planting bushes, landscaping the front area of the GCCAC and re-

organizing donated items. The flowerbed is intended to be an interactive project for counselors to use with clients during therapy sessions.



At the conclusion of the project, the students decided to purchase a personalized doormat to donate to the GCCAC complete with a logo. "This was an item that the students chose to present to the CAC because it was personalized and special. They wanted the front area to feel as welcoming as possible to kids."

8,000 Comfort Bags and Counting

Giving children a gift of comfort and love has been Patty Grones' passion for over nineteen years. In 2004, she was the Presbyterian Women's Mission Chairperson in Seguin and she read about a group that gave foster children comfort bags in San Antonio. Patty knew that this was a perfect project for the newly opened Children's Advocacy Center in Guadalupe County.

"Time flies! When we started, we worked out of a tote box, closet, and the bathroom in the old building. In the new building we have a room dedicated to our supplies. My husband, Mel, and I furnished the room with adequate shelving, chairs and table. Now we have plenty of room for supplies and work area."

The comfort bags are given to every child at the GCCAC after they complete a forensic interview. The interview is often the very first time a child talks about what happened to them with those in the child protection system. As they talk, the interview is recorded and is being viewed in another room by a multidisciplinary team of professionals (MDT) that often include law enforcement, child protection investigators, and prosecutors from the county attorney's office.



The recording can sometimes be used as evidence later in a court case.



Patty feels that kids who go through this process could use a gift of comfort. "Every child loves gifts, especially after having to tell their traumatic story."

Handmade cloth tote bags are filled with a quilt or blanket, stuffed animal, some school supplies, toothbrush, book and other items appropriate for the age such as coloring book, crayons, doll, ball, small game, cars, journal and small item that would appeal to a teenager.

"The bags are made up for boy and girls ages 3-5, 6-8, 9-11, 12-teen. We try to keep 7 of each age group on hand so they are ready to go when needed by the Center," Patty said.

The project relies upon several groups of volunteers to help make the tote bags come together for children. "It takes the generous help of many individuals, churches and organization in Guadalupe County. To name just a

few: the Seguin Silver Needlers sew tote bags, Christmas stockings and stuffed pumpkins; the HUGS from the Quilt Haus in New Braunfels sew quilts and blankets; the New Braunfels Area Quilt Guild sew quilts and tote bags; and Sue Bierman assists with assembling the tote bags. We are very appreciative of all the donations we receive,” Patty said.

Continuing to provide children with comfort bags for almost 20 years has been important to Patty. “I keep doing this volunteering project as there is nothing better than to see a little joy on a child’s face. Even if you make one child happier, it is worth our time.”

Over the last nineteen years, Patty and other volunteers and donors have put together and given out around 8,000 of these comfort bags for children following their forensic interview.



Want to help fill a bag?

See the wish list
on our website.

www.gccac.net

Most of the items on there
are used to fill the bags that
we give to children after their
forensic interview.

Interested in volunteering?

Multiple volunteer opportunities are available at the GCCAC, from a one-time experience to ongoing support. Volunteers help with:

- ⇒ ensuring children are safe and supported while they are at the CAC for forensic interviews or counseling sessions,
- ⇒ accompanying them to the hospital for necessary exams,
- ⇒ support the center staff with administrative tasks,
- ⇒ serve on fundraising committees to ensure the center has the necessary funds to continue this important work,
- ⇒ providing other support services (lawn work, repairs, etc.),
- ⇒ and by serving on the board.

Contact Trendy at tsharp@gccac.net or 830-303-4760, if you are interested. Share this information with someone you know who would be an amazing volunteer.

Upcoming Events - More information on our website and Facebook

STAY TUNED FOR...

VIVA
LAS VEGAS
Casino Night

FEBRUARY 2024
EXACT DATE TBD

SAVE THE DATE

SCHERTZ DESIGNER PURSE BINGO
MAY 9TH, 2024

The top graphic features a dark blue background with playing cards (aces and deuces) and dice. The bottom graphic features a blue background with bingo balls and confetti.

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If you would like to receive news and updates from the GCCAC electronically rather than by mail, or if your contact info has changed, please send an email to gccacinfo@gccac.net and let us know!

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The mission of the Guadalupe County Children's Advocacy Center is to advocate for and provide services to children and families when there are allegations of abuse and neglect throughout the investigation, prosecution, treatment, and prevention of child abuse, and to reduce the trauma to children by coordinating a multi-disciplinary approach.

