

# DAVIS GEORGE CAMPUS

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• Being Trauma Informed During the  
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Christmas Home Tour

DEC 6 + 7  
CLICK FOR DETAILS

CHILD  
ADVOCATES  
OF FORT BEND

December 2024

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## Keeping you informed on our mission:

Strengthen the Child's Voice, Heal the Hurt, and Break the Cycle of Abuse and Neglect for Children and Families in Fort Bend and surrounding counties.



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5403 AVENUE N  
ROSENBERG, TX 77471  
281-344-5100



[WWW.CAFB.ORG](http://WWW.CAFB.ORG)



**WINTER**

# Sip & Strolls

**Tuesday, Jan 28**

**5:30 - 7:00pm**

**&**

**Thursday, Feb 27**

**9:00am - 10:30am**

Child Advocates of Fort Bend  
5403 Avenue N, Rosenberg, TX 77471

Join us for a tour through our Davis George Campus. Meet our staff, hear the stories of the children we serve and learn more about the work that we do.

**RSVP to Lisa at [LMoore@cafb.org](mailto:LMoore@cafb.org) or 281-344-5108.**





# from the ceo

*This is a special time of year here. . .*

Happy Holidays Friends,

This is a special time of year here at Child Advocates of Fort Bend as we make way for our 33rd annual Home Tour. This has been a tradition in Fort Bend County for over three decades and this year looks to be our best ever. With four beautifully decorated homes located close together, it will be a tour to remember. The holidays are also a special time as we celebrate our children and families with toys and treats. Our Realtor Toy Drive kicks off the month on December 4 as our very generous realtor community, led by Tammy McCall visits Child Advocates of Fort Bend to donate hundreds of toys and bikes. They come fully outfitted in seasonal costumes, including a visit by Santa and Mrs. Claus- it is truly a sight to be seen. We are incredibly grateful! Over the weeks, organizations and businesses including WA Parish Golf Committee, Sallyport Commercial Finance, BGE, TDECU, and a long list of

others have hosted toy drives and donate the toys to CAFB for the kids. All of this comes together the following week on December 10-12 when we distribute these toys and gifts to our children at our annual Elf Party. Our staff dress in their personalized "Elf Squad t-shirts", and greet each family as they drive through our parking lot and our decorated Santa's North Pole pavilion, to receive toys and bikes for their children. We are so delighted to be able to make the season special for our children through the generosity of these donors. **Thank you!**

As 2024 comes to a close, we give thanks to everyone who helped transform the lives of children who have experienced abuse or neglect. We were able to serve over 3000 children and families with life-saving services including advocacy, forensic interviews, therapy, psychiatric services, and medical exams. We are deeply grateful to our donors and volunteers whose commitment and

support made this possible. This year, we completed our building expansion by opening a Wellness Garden, unveiled our Forever Angels Legacy Society donor wall, and had three incredibly successful fundraisers including our Voices For Children Breakfast, Gala, and Home Tour. We opened our on-site medical clinic, introduced “18 Wraparound Services”, and completed a large research study of children and stakeholders as part of our CAP-C Prevention initiative.

Happy Holidays to all our Child Advocates of Fort Bend family. Thank you for standing alongside us on this journey!

For the Children’s Sake!



Ruthanne Mefford, CEO



### HERE ARE JUST A FEW WAYS THAT YOUR DONATIONS HELPED:

**Prevention:** We completed Phase 1 of a breakthrough initiative CAP-C which stands for Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative. With over 40 child welfare professionals across Fort Bend County, we’ve come together to focus on prevention so that we can keep children safe and avoid becoming a victim of abuse.

**Outreach:** Our prevention and outreach efforts are increasing with initiatives that have the potential to reach thousands more children, teachers, counselors and parents in their schools, churches and social groups with awareness and the signs and symptoms of abuse, reporting, internet safety and sex trafficking with focus on at-risk schools.

**Wraparound Services:** Our “18 Wraparound Services” platform provides each child with access to multiple services at CAFB, thereby setting the stage for what we believe will be “whole child” transformative healing and recovery.

**Breaking the Cycle for Foster Youth:** 100% of our high school seniors overcame the many barriers and challenges to achieve a major milestone – earning their high school diploma.

**Healing through Therapy:** We expanded our therapy and mental health services and were able to reduce the waitlist for therapy with a full team of licensed therapists and by offering group therapy with our clinical family advocates.

***We couldn’t do it without you. Thank you and wishing you all the blessings for 2025!***

Should you have an interest in year-end giving, please connect [here](#).



# HOME TOUR

Presented by Fred and Mabel R. Parks Foundation

**STARTS THIS FRIDAY - December 6 & 7, 2024**

Friday, December 6th 10am - 4pm and Candlelight 6pm - 9pm

Saturday, December 7th 10am - 4pm

*It is not too late to be a part of our fundraiser*

**WE need YOU!**

- Purchase your **entrance ticket** to see four gorgeous homes in Fort Bend County!
- **VOLUNTEER** in a home!  
Please email Tarina [TSheridan@cafb.org](mailto:TSheridan@cafb.org) to sign up!
- Check out the amazingly beautiful **items for purchase or raffle.**



**CLICK HERE** >

Or scan the QR code to participate TODAY!

# Nurturing Yourself During the Busy Holiday Season

By Yesenia Islas, LMSW Bilingual Therapist

As the holiday season approaches, it's easy to get swept up in the hustle and bustle of planning for loved ones and friends. While it's wonderful to show care for those around us, it's equally vital to nurture the relationship you have with yourself.

This time of year often prompts reflection. You may find yourself asking: What have I accomplished? Where can I grow? What didn't go as planned? In this season of giving, I encourage you to extend that same kindness and compassion to yourself. Remember, it's okay to acknowledge both your successes and areas for growth without judgment.

Mindfulness can be a powerful ally during this reflective time. It helps you stay grounded and present, allowing you to navigate the ups and downs with greater ease.

Here are some simple mindfulness techniques to help you center yourself, especially in moments of stress or sadness:

## 1. **Breath Awareness:**

Take a few minutes to focus on your breath. Inhale deeply through your nose, hold for a moment, and exhale

slowly through your mouth. Repeat this several times to calm your mind.

## 2. **Body Scan:**

Find a comfortable position and close your eyes. Starting from your toes, slowly bring your attention to each part of your body, noticing any tension or discomfort. Breathe into those areas and imagine releasing the tension with each exhale.

## 3. **Gratitude Journaling:**

Set aside a few minutes each day to write down three things you're grateful for. This practice can shift your focus from stress to appreciation and help cultivate a positive mindset.

## 4. **Nature Walks:**

Spend time outdoors, even if it's just for a short walk. Notice the sights, sounds, and smells around you. Allow yourself to be fully present in the moment.

As we approach the end of the year, let's embrace self-compassion and mindfulness together. Taking care of yourself isn't just a gift to you; it enables you to show up fully for those you love. Wishing you a season of reflection, growth, and inner peace.





## FEATURE STORY

# Being Trauma-Informed During the Holidays

By Jen Brown

The holiday season can be a joyous time, but for children in foster care, it can also be a source of stress and anxiety. Many of these children have experienced trauma, and the holiday season can trigger difficult emotions and memories. As a foster parent or caregiver, it's important to be trauma-informed and to create a safe and supportive environment for your child during this time.

“Trauma-informed” means approaching others with an understanding of the impact of trauma and a commitment to providing safe and supportive surroundings. It recognizes that many people have experienced traumatic events and that these experiences can significantly affect their mental health, behavior, and overall well-being.

### Tips for a Trauma-Informed Holiday Season:

**Acknowledge Their Feelings:** Children in foster care may experience a wide range of emotions during the holidays, from sadness and loneliness to excitement and hope. Let children know it's okay to feel sad, anxious, or lonely during the holidays.

**Maintain Routines:** While the holidays can disrupt routines, it's important to maintain as much consistency as possible. A familiar routine can provide a sense of stability and security for children who may be feeling overwhelmed.

**Create New Traditions:** Help your child create new holiday traditions that are meaningful to *continued next page*





## Note:

While this article talks about taking care of children in foster care, specifically, these tips will benefit all families. As mentioned, the holidays can be exciting and celebratory, but they can also be quite difficult for many children and families.

them. This can help them feel more connected and involved in the festivities.

**Avoid Overwhelming Sensory Experiences and Be Mindful of Triggers:** The holidays can be filled with bright lights, loud noises, and unfamiliar smells. These sensory experiences can be overwhelming for children who have experienced trauma. Be aware of potential triggers for your child, such as holiday music, decorations, or family gatherings. If you notice your child becoming anxious or upset, try to remove them from the situation or provide them with a safe space to calm down.

**Offer Choices:** Give your child choices whenever possible. This can help them feel more in control and empowered. For example, you could ask them to choose a holiday movie or a holiday activity. Make adjustments to your plans if necessary to minimize stress. If they're not comfortable participating in certain activities, respect their wishes.

**Be present:** Spend quality time with them, offering emotional support and reassurance.

**Seek Support:** Don't hesitate to seek support from other foster parents, therapists, or support groups. Talking to others who understand what you're going through can be helpful.

By following these tips, you can help create a positive and supportive holiday experience for your child and family. Remember, the goal is to provide a safe and nurturing environment where they feel loved and supported, therefore promoting resilience and healing.





## PARTNER APPRECIATION

The Partner Appreciation event was a huge success! Child Advocates of Fort Bend (CAFB) extended our gratitude to invaluable partners from diverse agencies, including the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), local law enforcement, County Attorneys, the District Attorney's office, and SANE Nurses. These dedicated individuals come from both Fort Bend and neighboring counties like Waller and Austin, demonstrating a strong commitment to children and their families across regional boundaries. CAFB hosted a fun evening filled with good food, lively music, engaging games, and well-deserved awards. Without our partners' unwavering support and tireless work, CAFB would not be able to provide essential services to children and their families.



**Awards and the recipients were:**

- DFPS Investigator of the Year - Obi N**
- Law Enforcement Detective of the Year - Det. Melissa Tobias**
- Professional of the Year - Sgt. Richard Rodriguez**
- MVP of Case Review Team - Sandra Salas**
- Cowgirl of the Year - Det. Dawn Eddleblute**
- Clean Up GURU - Det. Jeffrey Gragg**
- Forever Late Award - Kenitra Sanders**
- Waller Co. Partner of the Year - Det. Michael Berry**
- Austin Co. Partner of the Year - Brandy Robinson**



DAVIS GEORGE  
CAMPUS



# monthly spotlights

updates on training and MORE!

**Did you know that you can donate cars, airplanes, boats, motorcycles or trucks and select Child Advocates of Fort Bend to receive the proceeds?**

Visit [HERE](#) for questions or contact  
Lisa at [lmoore@cafb.org](mailto:lmoore@cafb.org)





## FRIENDSGIVING AT CAFB

Last month, CAFB hosted a heartwarming Friendsgiving event that brought together volunteers, staff, and building partners to celebrate the spirit of Thanksgiving and connect. The event was filled with laughter, delicious food, and a sense of togetherness.

This event is always a wonderful way to express gratitude for the volunteers who are a very large blessing for CAFB and the clients we serve.



# CAFB Staff Members Become Certified Youth Mental Health First Aid Instructors

In October, Jheri Walters, Clinical Director and Dana Mersiovsky, Training and Outreach Manager attended the National Council for Mental Wellbeing's Youth Mental Health First Aid Instructor Training. Mental Health First Aid USA's mission is to provide high-quality, evidence-based education so everyone has the first aid skills to support people with mental health challenges. Knowing that this is only possible in training environments that foster non-judgmental communication and understanding and reduce the stigma around mental health challenges.

**Below are the guiding principles for YMHFA instructors:**

- Strive to increase mental health awareness.
- Share the message that anyone can be a Mental Health First Aider.
- Understand that mental health challenges are common.
- Understand that recovery is possible.
- Understand that early intervention is key to positive outcomes.
- Strive to reduce stigma.
- Understand that culture is a key influence on mental health.
- Act with professionalism, integrity, accountability, transparency and respect.

We are grateful to our partners at Texana who helped make this training opportunity possible. Child Advocates of Fort Bend will be hosting Youth Mental Health First Aid training for staff, partners and community members several times throughout 2025.



**ABOVE:** Dana and Jheri pictured with **ALGEE**, MHFA's mascot for its **A**ction Plan - **A**pproach and **A**ssess for risk of suicide or harm and **a**ssist; **L**isten nonjudgmentally; **G**ive reassurance and information; **E**ncourage appropriate professional help; **E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies.

# CHILD ADVOCATES OF FORT BEND™



## Let's Do Something BIG together!

We set a big goal to raise \$50,000 on Giving Tuesday and \$100,000 by year end to help GIVE children the hope and encouragement they need to know that there are kind people in this world who care about them. We have received a Challenge Gift by a donor who believes in all of us and will double your gift by matching every dollar you donate with a second dollar up to \$25,000. **There is still time to make a gift!**  
*Together, we can reach this transformational goal you can help make it possible!*

# 01

### Donate

Make a donation [here](#) or mail a check to 5403 Ave. N - Rosenberg, TX 77471. Please mark #GivingTuesday in the (Leave a Comment) box so we can double your dollars. Be sure to keep CAFB in mind for your year-end giving.

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# 02

### Honor Someone

What a wonderful gift to give to that "hard to shop" for friend or family member. Make a gift or personalized brick paver in their honor. Click [here](#)

Would you like a named room in our building or in our new Wellness Garden and Park? Contact [LMoore@cafb.org](mailto:LMoore@cafb.org)

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# 03

### Payroll Match

Do you have connections with a company that matches your financial donations or volunteer hours? Let us help you get those donations set up. Contact [Jodell@cafb.org](mailto:Jodell@cafb.org)

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# 04

### Planned Giving

What legacy will you leave when you pass? Join our Forever Angels Legacy Society and let your legacy become the future for children. There are so many choices visit [here](#) to learn more.



The **Forever Angels Legacy Society** donor wall was officially unveiled at Child Advocates of Fort Bend during a reception on November 12, 2024. The inaugural group of 29 donors who have honored CAFB with a planned gift are each recognized with a permanent “star” on the donor wall prominently featured in the agency’s lobby. A legacy or planned gift is the result of a donor incorporating their charitable giving into their estate plan or will. CAFB Chief Executive Officer, Ruthanne Mefford said, “These loyal donors have shown us an unmatched level of trust by nurturing us over the years to be healthy and

strong, and now with a legacy pledge they will help sustain us well into the future.”

Donors choose to honor organizations with a gift of this nature for very personal reasons. Dee Koch, a longtime CAFB supporter and new **Forever Angels Legacy Society** donor, traveled all the way from her current home in Costa Rica to attend the dedication ceremony. She says, “Knowing that I can do my small part to continue to help protect the children of Fort Bend County gives me a great deal of gratification and joy.”





There are often misconceptions associated with the topic of "Planned Giving." Many mistakenly believe legacy giving is only for the ultra-rich. But that's a myth. In fact, there are number of simple ways to honor an organization that has been significant in your life while reducing the estate tax burden on your loved ones:

### **IRA Charitable Rollover or Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)**

Starting at age 70 ½ a gift of up to \$105,000 a year can be made directly to a chosen charity from an IRA. The QCD, as it's commonly called, goes directly to the charity. Donors don't report QCDs as taxable income and therefore don't pay any taxes on the funds. At age 73, when individuals must start to take money out of an IRA account, the QCD also counts towards satisfying that annual Required Minimum Distribution (RMD).

### **Beneficiary Designations**

Designating a percentage (possibly 1-5%) of a retirement account, IRA, Donor Advised Fund, or life insurance policy is one of the easiest and most meaningful ways to honor a charity after death. A simple bequest form is all it takes and does not require altering or amending an existing will. Beneficiary designations can be changed at any time during your lifetime.

*If you would like to learn more about how to become a Forever Angels Legacy Society donor, please email [Plannedgiving@cafb.org](mailto:Plannedgiving@cafb.org).*

We would be honored to explore options that would be meaningful for both you and your family.

## **Forever Angels**

Cynthia Barratt & Nat Adkins  
Dr. Betty Baitland  
Sandy & Jill Curtis  
Eileen Gallagher Akerson  
Doug & Ellen Earle  
Dee Koch  
Carl & Vickie Looney  
Pat & Brad Somers  
David M. Lanagan & Angela McCain, MD  
Bonnie & Bruce Longaker  
Sylviane & James Hoare  
Nancy & Pete Olson  
Bob & Jane O'Dell  
Irene Wisner

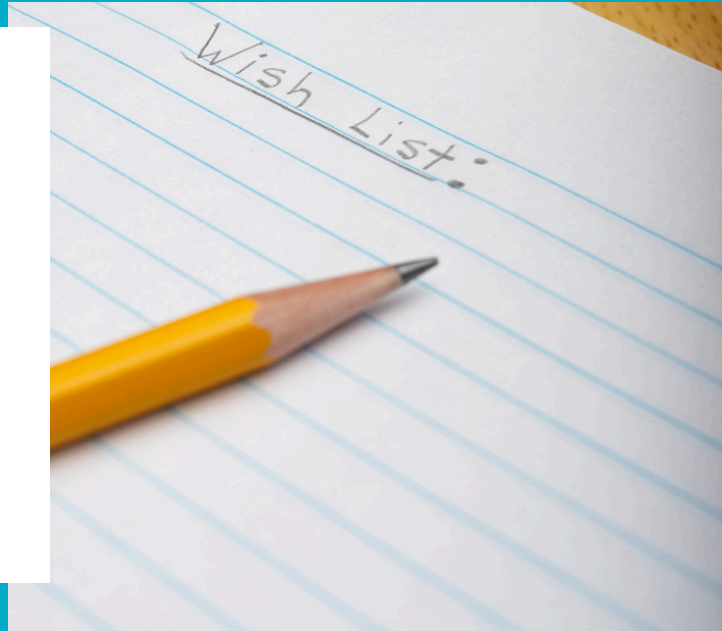
Jim McClellan  
Ruthanne Mefford  
Patti & Gary Tuma  
Bill Rohrbach  
Brigit Engleman  
Farha Ahmed, Esq.  
Mary Favre  
Kathy & Tom Brauen  
Carol Holton  
Linda & Dan Shultz  
Jim Shaw  
Sue & Jim Lockwood  
Letty Cooley  
Zeenat and Iqbal Mitha

# our needs

This month, we have immediate need for:

- **Snack bags: individual serving bags of goldfish, teddy grahams, and fruit snacks in sandwich baggies**
- **Large River Rocks- 1 pack of 40.**  
(We use these for therapy graduations.)
- **Gift cards of all kinds, in any amount.**  
Walmart, Target and VISA are best.
- **Uber and/or Lyft gift cards**

Amazon **Holiday Toy list**  
can be found [here](#)



## License to Help!

Did you know that Child Advocates of Fort Bend participates in the TX CASA Specialty License Plate Program? You can order a custom license plate with the phrase "Big Voices for Little Texans". Not only can you spread awareness and show your support for us but a portion of the cost of the plate goes to Texas CASA and the local programs to increase our statewide efforts to advocate for



every child in the foster care system. To order your plate go to <https://www.txdmv.gov/motorists/license-plates> and search for CASA under specialty plates OR visit your local tax assessor's office and ask for the Court Appointed Special Advocate license plate.



2024  
TOY  
DONATIONS

Benefitting abused and  
neglected children



Scan for Amazon  
wishlist

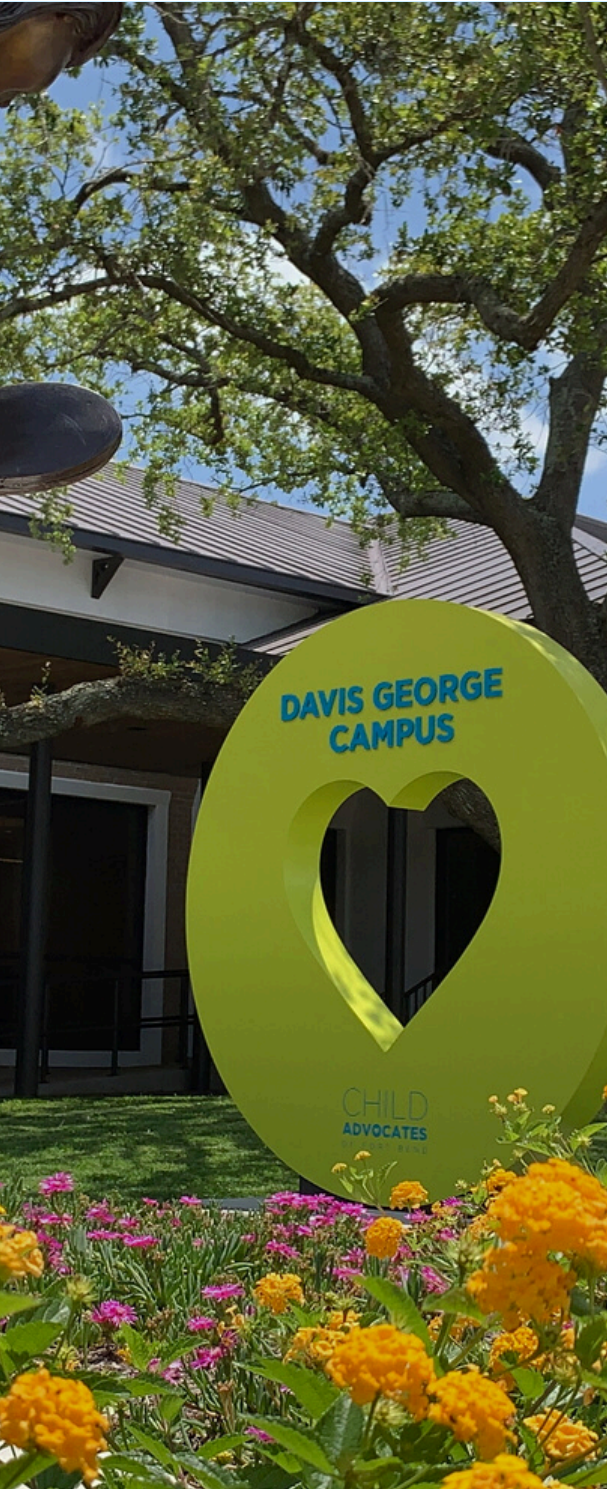
**TOY DONATION DROP OFF DATES:**

**December 2 - 5 from 9am until 5pm**

5403 Avenue N, Rosenberg, TX 77471

For more information, please contact **Jen Brown** at [JBrown@cafb.org](mailto:JBrown@cafb.org)

# save these dates



get tickets today!  
**December 6+7, 2024**  
Christmas Home Tour

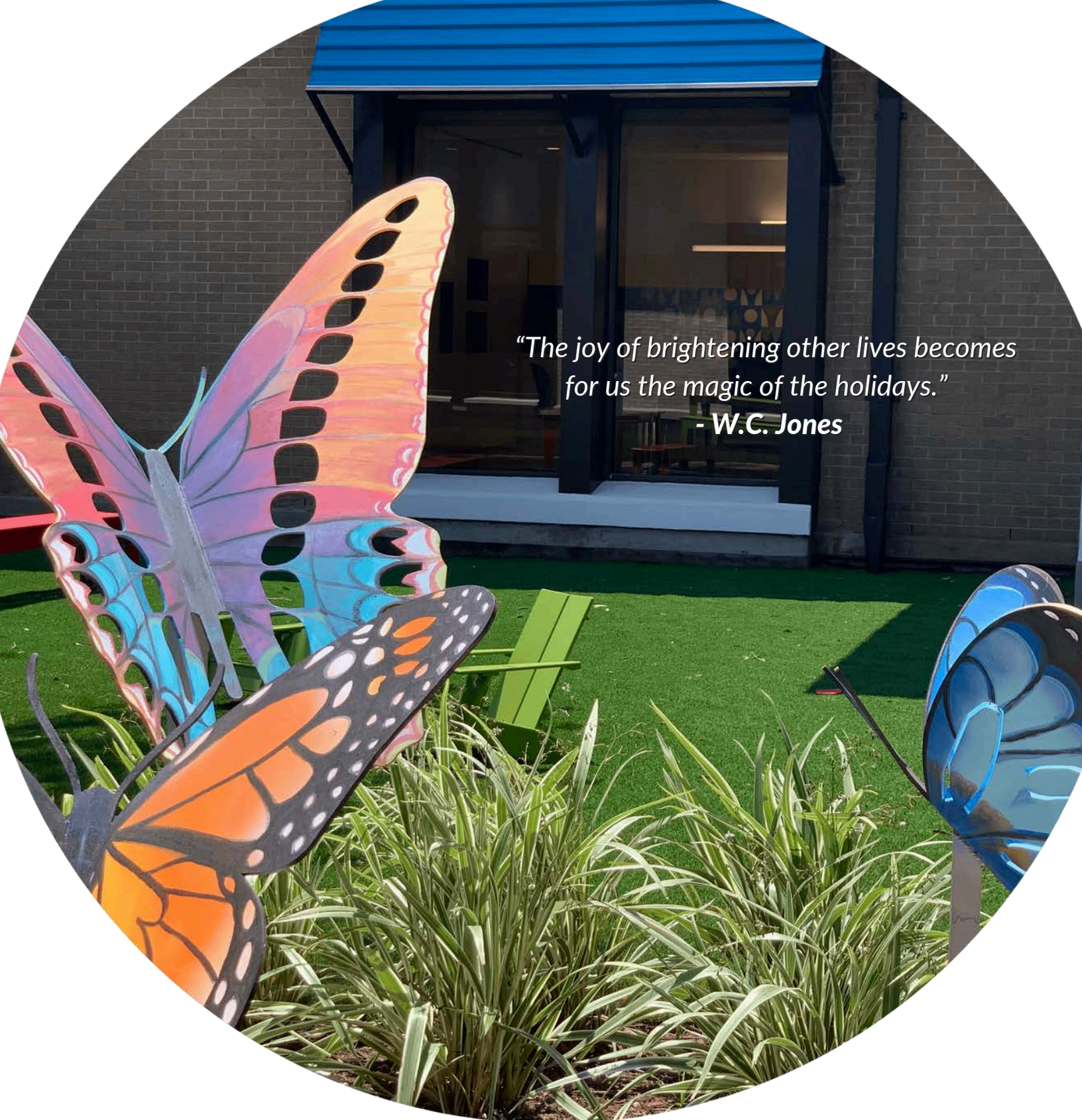


For details contact **Tarina**  
at [TSheridan@cafb.org](mailto:TSheridan@cafb.org)  
or go to [www.cafb.org](http://www.cafb.org)

**January 28, 2025**

Sip & Stroll  
5:30pm - 7:00pm

Contact **Lisa** at [LMoore@cafb.org](mailto:LMoore@cafb.org) to reserve your spot



*"The joy of brightening other lives becomes  
for us the magic of the holidays."*

**- W.C. Jones**

CHILD **ADVOCATES** OF FORT BEND™