

- 2025 STAND OUT CHAMPION -

An award to recognize people, with and without developmental differences,
who go above and beyond to advocate for the DD community.



A Lifetime of Advocacy

MELANIE KASTEN-KRAUSE'S LIFELONG DEDICATION TO SERVICE

For over four decades, Melanie Kasten-Krause was a tireless advocate for individuals with developmental differences in Medina County through her work with The Society. "I started as a social worker, then became the director of social services, which became the director of development, and then, the executive director," says Melanie. Under her guidance, The Society became a cornerstone of support for not only people with disabilities but families in Medina County as well.

"Nothing gets in Melanie's way from helping those she serves and supports. She always pushes forward for them, whatever it looks like. She does whatever she can to make sure people with developmental differences are able to live their best lives. She is very much a part of this community and that is truly a benefit to everybody around her."

*- Annie Finnerty,
MCBDD Assistant Superintendent*

Kasten-Krause, who retired as The Society's Executive Director in 2024, says, "I have had the ability to see where the field has come, and we've come a long way but the important thing is that we are not done.

The work always needs to continue. We've had so many years where people were sent away to institutions, and people didn't see them. When you don't see them, you don't know them.

Everyone should be seen and have a voice, and be a driver of their life to truly live their best lives."

Kasten-Krause's advocacy stretches beyond her time at The Society. She also serves on the board of directors for the Medina County Mental Health and Recovery Board (MHRB), where she collaborates on initiatives that integrate mental health and developmental differences. These roles reflect her broader mission: to build an integrated community where everyone has the chance to be seen, heard, and supported.

While Melanie recently retired from The Society, she remains hopeful for the future. "I really hope I have set an example and that other people will follow. I also hope that the community continues to work together so that everyone has an opportunity to be a part of the community and have the supports that they need."

Melanie Kasten-Krause's legacy is a testament to the power of dedicated service and compassionate leadership in creating a inclusive and supportive society for people with developmental differences. Her words and actions serve as a powerful reminder that inclusion is not a destination, but a continuous journey, and one she's been walking for more than 40 years with unwavering passion.



Congratulations Melanie Kasten-Krause for being chosen as a recipient of the Medina County Board of Developmental Disabilities' 2025 Stand Out Champion Award.