

JULY 2026

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF FORSYTH COUNTY CASA

THE FORSYTH VOICE



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

FORSYTH COUNTY

THE POWER OF PARKS AND RECREATION



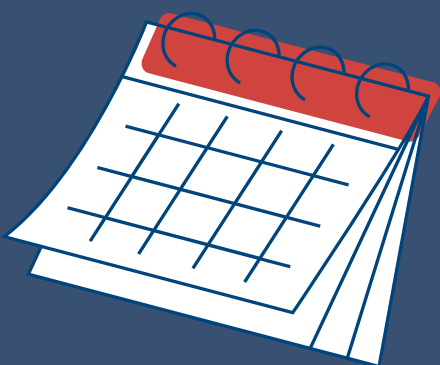
Photo courtesy of Montgomery Parks



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- *Minority Mental Health Awareness Month*
- *National Park & Recreation Month*
- *Social Wellness Month*

UPCOMING EVENTS:



JULY

Friday, July 24th

Back to School Bash

Cumming First UMC | 11:30AM

Monday, July 27th

CASA Book Club

SliceAbility | 5:30PM

AUGUST

Saturday, August 22nd

GA CASA Conference

Atlanta | 8:30AM

Join us for our next book club meeting as we discuss our plans for the future of the book club!



*306 advocacy
hours*



36 hearings attended



3,317 miles driven

JUNE BY THE NUMBERS

June Monthly Recap

This June, 1 child achieved permanency through adoption, and 1 child achieved permanency through reunification!



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT:

***Forsyth County
Community
Connection***



— FORSYTH COUNTY —
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At our most recent Lunch with the Judges, **Forsyth County Community Connection Executive Director Sarah Pedarre** shared the results of the **Community Needs Assessment**, a collaborative effort to better understand the resources currently available in Forsyth County and identify gaps in services. This effort is designed to strengthen the network of support for children, youth, families, and individuals across our community by informing future planning and collaboration.

To learn more, explore community events, search local organizations and resources, and view community data, visit forsyth.ga/cfp.org.

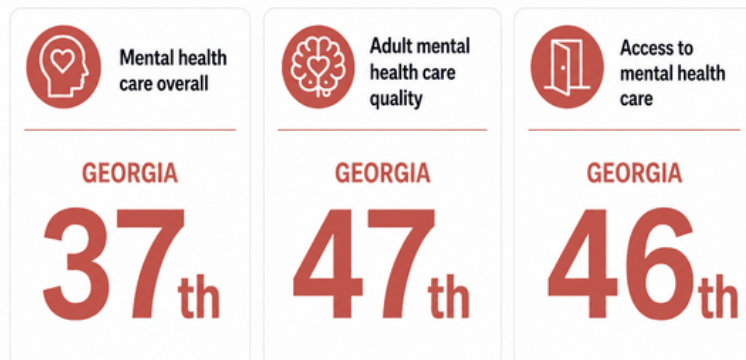
Minority Mental Health: Recognizing the Importance of Culturally Responsive Care

July is **Minority Mental Health Awareness Month**. This month, we work on raising awareness about the unique mental health challenges that many racial and ethnic minority communities face. Factors such as stigma, limited access to care, language barriers, and cultural differences can make it more difficult for children and families to receive timely, appropriate mental health services.

Did You Know?

- **Children of color are disproportionately represented in the U.S. foster care system.** In 2022, Black children made up approximately **14%** of the U.S. child population but accounted for about **22%** of children in foster care. American Indian/Alaska Native children also experience disproportionate representation in foster care compared to their share of the child population.
- **Mental health stigma remains a significant barrier.** Research shows that children and families from racial and ethnic minority communities are less likely to access mental health services and are more likely to discontinue treatment early due to barriers such as stigma, cost, language, and lack of culturally responsive providers.
- **Culturally responsive care improves engagement.** When services acknowledge and respect a child's cultural background, identity, and lived experiences, children and families are more likely to engage in treatment and experience positive outcomes.

Georgia Ranks Near the Bottom for Mental Health Care Access



 Source: Mental Health America 2025 State of Mental Health in America report.

Did you know?

Youth who identify as more than one race have the highest rates of severe major depressive episodes.

Social Wellness Month: Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others

CASA volunteers make a meaningful difference by building consistent, supportive relationships with children experiencing foster care. While advocating for others is deeply rewarding, it can also be emotionally demanding. Social Wellness Month is a reminder that caring for yourself is an important part of being able to care for others.

Social wellness is about nurturing healthy relationships, staying connected to your support system, and knowing when to ask for help. Taking time to connect with family, friends, fellow CASA volunteers, or your Advocate Supervisor can help you process difficult experiences and maintain balance.

Why It Matters

Research has found that strong social support can help reduce stress, improve emotional well-being, and increase resilience. By taking care of your own mental and social health, you're better equipped to be the consistent, dependable advocate that children need.

Remember: you don't have to carry the weight of a case alone. Your CASA team is here to support you every step of the way.

Ways to Prioritize Your Social Wellness as a CASA

- ***Join CASA Book Club!***
- ***Come to events like Lunch with the Judges, CASA Corner, etc!***



How Outdoor Play Supports Children's Mental Health

July is **National Park & Recreation Month**, making it the perfect time to recognize the powerful role that outdoor play can have in supporting children's mental health and well-being. While a trip to the park may seem simple, research shows that spending time in nature is associated with reduced stress, improved mood, stronger attention, and healthier social-emotional development in children.

For children in foster care, these benefits can be especially meaningful. Many have experienced trauma, loss, or instability, and opportunities to play, explore, and connect with nature can help foster positive experiences and build resilience. Whether it's climbing on a playground, taking a walk on a trail, or playing a game outside, outdoor recreation encourages confidence, emotional regulation, problem-solving, and healthy relationships.

A systematic review of 35 studies found that children and adolescents who spent more time in nature showed improvements in:

- Emotional well-being
- Self-esteem
- Stress reduction
- Resilience
- Symptoms related to attention difficulties



CASA-versaries

Melva Payne, Jeni Smith, and Patti Ann Allen are each celebrating 5 years with CASA!

Kim Boudet is celebrating 8 years with CASA!

*Thank you!
FOR YOUR
Hardwork*

Birthdays

July 2 - Lina Vergara Martinez

July 9 - Kim Painter

July 10 - Bert Boudet

July 12 - Diana Arnold

July 17 - Bridgett Milam-Crooks

July 22 - Ann Sestrich

July 24 - Carolyn Burruss

July 27 - Shel Seidman

July 28 - Kristin Miller

July 31 - Emma Mazer

CASA volunteers! Did you know that one of your fellow advocates serves as a liaison to the Board, helping bring your feedback and experiences straight to leadership?! If you have feedback, suggestions, or concerns you'd like elevated, **Diana Arnold** is a great resource and connection point!

dianaarmold1.casa@gmail.com

Susan Lancaster, a recent graduate of the University of North Georgia counseling program and former CASA volunteer with Enotah CASA, is offering free counseling support to volunteers through CASA of Forsyth County. She understands firsthand the emotional impact of advocacy work, including secondary trauma, and provides a supportive space to process experiences and build resilience.

CASAs are encouraged to reach out if they would benefit from confidential counseling support at any point in their advocacy journey.

Susanlancaster.pc@gmail.com

Learning & Growth *In-Person, Virtual, & Self-Guided Training Opportunities*



Minority Mental Health & Child Welfare

Healing While Black: Reimagining Mental Health for Black Men & Boys

- Pre-recorded

NASW

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

How Race and Ethnicity Affect Views of the Child Welfare System

- Pre-recorded

Bipartisan Policy Center

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

Understanding Minority Mental Health

- Podcast

Rady Children's Health

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

Social Wellness

Mindfulness, Wellness, and Creative Self-care for the Helping Professional

- Pre-recorded

MSU School of Social Work

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

The Edge of Compassion

- Pre-recorded

TEDx Talks

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

Thriving in the Field: Resilience Building for Child Welfare Professionals

- Pre-recorded

Florida Institute for Child Welfare

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

Nature & Mental Health

The Impact of Nature in Child Development

- Pre-recorded

Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

Helping Kids Ease Anxiety and Build Confidence by Exploring Nature

- Pre-recorded

PESI

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

Healing Spaces: Reducing Trauma, One Garden at a Time

- Pre-recorded

Mental Health Association of Maryland

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

Find additional learning opportunities on the next page with Georgia CASA's "Advancing Advocacy" Series!

ADVANCING ADVOCACY SERIES

Lunch & Learn Schedule

July 30, 2025	Advocacy Opportunities for Impact with Angela Tyner, watch the recording here .
August 28, 2025	Juvenile Court 101 with Ashley Willcott, watch the recording here .
September 18, 2025	Meet PACT from MAAC, watch the recording here .
October 15, 2025	Changing Landscape of Child Welfare Laws with Angela Tyner, watch the recording here .
November 12, 2025	School Discipline & Special Education Advocacy with Josette Franklin, Ph.D., watch the recording here .
December 10, 2025	Promise of Permanency with Angela Tyner and Jerry Bruce, watch the recording here .
January 28, 2026	BH Levels of Care and PRTF w/ Molly Abrokwhah & Patrick Aaron-Brown, watch the recording here .
February 18, 2026	Holding the Line: Consistent, Meaningful Advocacy for and Alongside Older Youth, watch the recording here .
March 11, 2026	Impartial Advocacy with Angela Tyner, watch recording here .
April 15, 2026	Educational and Legal Protections for Youth in Foster Care with Josette Franklin, Ph.D., watch recording here .
May 28, 2026	Distinguishing Red Flags From Blue Flags: Signs of Child Abuse versus Medical Pathology Presented by CHOA - Not recorded



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STORAGE

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Danny Bennett

VALUZZIA

Keller Williams Community Partners - North Forsyth Rotary Club - Jack & Becky Damico

Susan Kaufman - Steve Kirby - The Ledbetter Family - Alyssa Baskam

Fitzgibbons Family Charitable Foundation - Weaver Capital Management

Deer Creek Shores Presbyterian Church - George Lipsey - Hampton Family Charitable Fund Teleios Ministry -

Richard Warner - Georgia CASA Eggs Up Grill - Horizon Christian Academy Silvia Anderson - LEJ Capital -

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CHANGE A CHILD'S
STORY

 **CASA**
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