

THE FORSYTH VOICE



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- *What would you do?*
- *Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month*

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, March 31st

Book Club Meeting

Virtual & at CASA Office | 5:30pm

Friday, May 1st

Lunch with the Judges

Juvenile Courthouse | 12PM

Friday, July 10th

Lunch with the Judges

Juvenile Courthouse | 12PM

Thursday, April 16th

Boots and Boogie

Reid Barn | 6:30PM

Tuesday, May 5th

DFCS & CASA Social

DFCS Office | 12PM



323 advocacy hours



16 hearings attended



3,710 miles driven

FEBRUARY BY THE NUMBERS

February Monthly Recap

Last month, CASA of Forsyth County hosted our Light of Hope celebration, honoring the individuals who make a difference in the lives of children and families in our community. We are grateful for the continued support that makes this work possible.

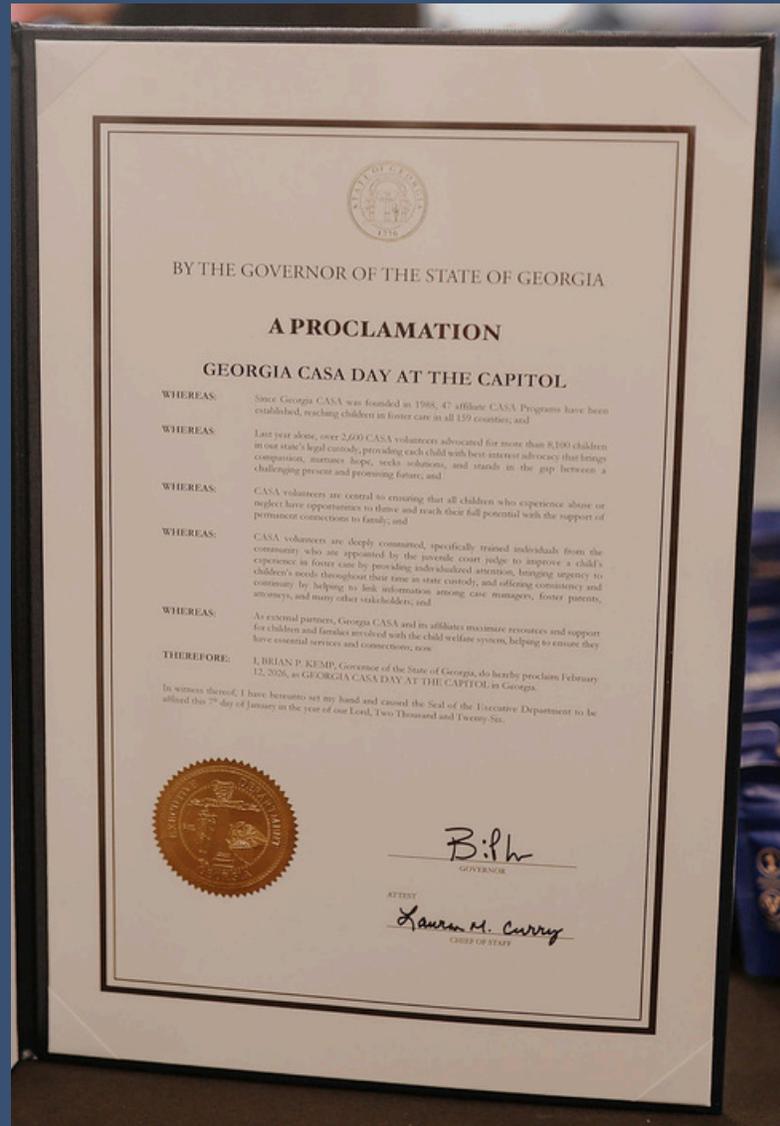
In February, we also participated in CASA Day at the Capitol, joining advocates from across Georgia to raise awareness and support for children in foster care.

Light of Hope Recipients

- Christal Smith
- SGT. Tyler Burns
- Meghan Noblett
- Maureen Bixler
- Wendy Goodrow



We also honored our 2025 CASA of the Year, Ann Sestrich, at the Light of Hope ceremony.



What Would You Do?

Real-Life Advocacy Scenarios

Last month, we asked you how you would respond in the following situation:

A 12-year-old child on your case has a developmental disability affecting communication and social skills. After a recent foster placement change, the child is showing increased anxiety, difficulty adjusting to routines, and occasional shutdowns. The foster parent wants to help but feels unsure about services and worries about “labeling,” while the birth parents have limited understanding of the diagnosis. The child has begun expressing fears about whether anyone will truly understand them or want them permanently.

What would you do?



Next month's scenario:

A 6-year-old child on your case has experienced chronic neglect and exposure to domestic violence. In the foster home, the child struggles with emotional regulation, has frequent nightmares, and becomes distressed during raised voices or conflict. The foster parent is supportive but unsure how to respond to these behaviors. The birth parent has had inconsistent participation in services and reports that the child “doesn't remember anything.” The case is progressing, but the child has begun expressing fear about going back home.

What would you do?

Look to next month's newsletter to see what the most effective course of action might be!

Here's how we recommend responding:

- **Center the child's emotional stability** and sense of belonging, recognizing that placement changes can heighten anxiety, especially for children with developmental disabilities affecting communication and social understanding.
- **Use clear, simple, and consistent communication**, allowing extra time for processing and expression, and reassure the child that their thoughts and feelings are important and valued.
- **Advocate for predictable routines and supportive services** (such as therapy or school-based supports), helping caregivers understand that these resources are tools to support the child's success, not labels.
- **Support both foster and birth parents** in understanding the child's diagnosis through a strengths-based approach, encouraging collaboration and shared commitment to the child's well-being and permanency.

Sample court report recommendation: “CASA recommends continued focus on the child's emotional well-being as permanency planning progresses. Given the child's expressed fears about being forgotten and uncertainty around permanency, CASA recommends age-appropriate communication about case developments and preparation before court hearings to reduce anxiety. CASA further recommends collaboration with caregivers and professionals to support open, reassuring conversations about permanency while avoiding unrealistic assurances. Increased communication among all parties is recommended to promote the child's sense of stability, belonging, and long-term well-being.”

Supporting Children with Developmental Disabilities

March is **Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month**, an important time to highlight the unique needs of children with developmental disabilities and the vital role CASA volunteers play in supporting them. Children with developmental disabilities, such as intellectual delays, autism, or communication challenges, are significantly overrepresented in the child welfare system. Research shows they are **2 to 5 times more likely** than other children to enter foster care, and they often face greater challenges in adjusting to new placements, routines, and relationships.

Once in foster care, these children may require additional supports to thrive, including therapy, educational interventions, and consistent routines. They may also experience heightened anxiety, social withdrawal, or difficulty expressing their needs. Without proper advocacy, these needs can be overlooked, which can affect both the child's emotional well-being and permanency outcomes.

CASA volunteers serve as critical advocates, helping to ensure that children with developmental disabilities:

- Receive **appropriate services** and supports tailored to their needs.
- Have **stable, consistent caregivers** who understand their challenges.
- Are empowered to **express themselves and have their voices heard** in court and daily life.



Did you know?

- **Nearly 9% of youth in foster care have a developmental disability.**
- **Rates of autism and intellectual disability are 2–5 times higher in foster care than in the general population.**

[Click here to read more!](#)

Birthdays

March 17th - Molly Hevia

March 17th - Kristin Johnson

March 19th - Heidi Morea

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

[CLICK HERE TO GET YOUR TICKETS!](#)

CASA OF FORSYTH COUNTY KINDLY INVITES YOU TO THE HOEDOWN OF THE YEAR!

BOOTS & BOOGIE



PRESENTED BY: **NORTHSIDE HOSPITAL**
FORSYTH

4.16.26 | 6:30 PM | THE REID BARN

LINE DANCING ★ HAT BAR ★ TASTINGS

★★ DUELING PIANOS ★★

[ALL PATRONS MUST BE 21+ TO ATTEND](#)

Live Trainings

Trauma to Resilience: Strategies to Support Children's Well-Being

- Friday, March 27, 9am-12:30pm

GA State Child Welfare Training Collaborative

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

Autism Spectrum Disorder in Children: What Caregivers Need to Know

- Monday, April 6 at 1pm

MindSpring Mental Health Alliance

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

Understanding Compassion Fatigue & Burnout

- Monday, April 8 at 1pm

MindSpring Mental Health Alliance

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

Understanding Intergenerational Trauma

- Wednesday, April 15 at 11am

MindSpring Mental Health Alliance

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

Talking to Kids about Mental Health

- Wednesday, April 22 at 11am

MindSpring Mental Health Alliance

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

The Book Club is meeting March 31st both virtually and in-person at the CASA office! Look out for an email from Ellie later this week!

Pre-Recorded Trainings

Supporting Children with Disabilities

- Pre-recorded

Omni Inventive Care

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

Disability Services and Transitional Planning for Youth Ages 14 1/2 Years Old to 22 Years Old

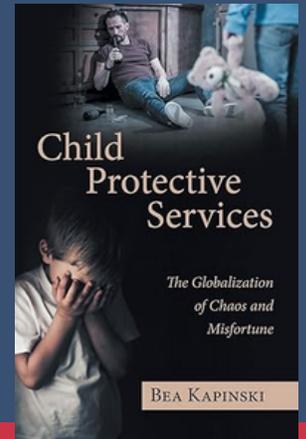
- Pre-recorded

Illinois CASA

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

Please remember to log your training in the tab marked "Training" on the main page in Optima- you need to log 12 hours of continuing education each year.

Reading along with Book Club is now worth 4 CE hours!



Child Protective Services: The Globalization of Chaos and Misfortune by Bea Kapinski

This is a memoir exposing the harsh realities of CPS work, arguing for systemic reform by detailing struggles against poverty, substance abuse, and mental illness, revealing how policies often fail struggling families and harm children, and advocating for better prevention and support over punitive intervention to address widespread family adversity. Kapinski, a former Arizona caseworker, shares haunting case studies, criticizing one-size-fits-all approaches and the system's focus on parental wrongdoing, urging a shift towards helping marginalized families trapped in cycles of inequity.

Thank You to Our Donors!



Jay Kirchoff

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CHANGE A CHILD'S STORY

