



Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

FORSYTH COUNTY

FEBRUARY 2026

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF FORSYTH COUNTY CASA

THE FORSYTH VOICE



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CASA of the Month

Meet our CASA of the Month, Elisa! Since joining CASA, she's shown remarkable dedication to advocating for children and making sure their voices are heard. Learn more about what inspires her and why this work matters so much on page 3.

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, February 24th

CASA Corner

CASA Office | 2pm

Tuesday, March 31st

Book Club Meeting

Virtual & at CASA Office | 5:30pm

Thursday, April 16th

Boots and Boogie

Reid Barn | 6:30PM

Friday, May 1st

Lunch with the Judges

Juvenile Courthouse | 12PM

Tuesday, May 5th

DFCS & CASA Social

DFCS Office | 12PM

Friday, July 10th

Lunch with the Judges

Juvenile Courthouse | 12PM



237.68 advocacy
hours



35 hearings attended



2,440 miles driven

JANUARY BY THE NUMBERS

January was a strong start to the year at CASA of Forsyth County, with seven new CASA volunteers sworn in and already stepping into their advocacy roles. We also kicked off the first Lunch with the Judges of 2026, offering volunteers valuable insight and connection with the court. This was followed by a helpful training from Susan Lancaster focused on recognizing and managing compassion fatigue in advocacy work.



143

children served



96

CASA volunteers



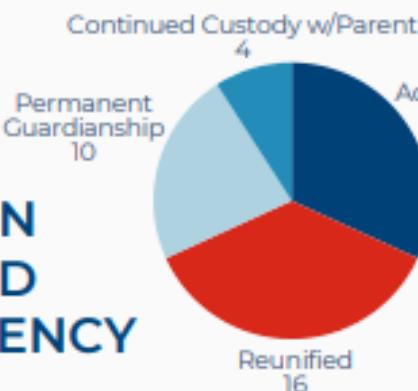
391

hearings attended

PERMANENCY OUTCOMES

44

CHILDREN
ACHIEVED
PERMANENCY



ADVOCACY SUPPORT & IMPACT

\$22

provides one day of
advocacy for one
child

\$667

provides one month
of advocacy for one
child

\$8,000

provides one year of
advocacy for one
child

VOLUNTEER STATS

40,000+

miles driven

355

in-service training hours

6

new CASAs sworn in

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

85+

interagency,
training, and
community
events attended
by volunteers
and staff

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW
CASA OF FORSYTH

February Volunteer Spotlight

We're excited to spotlight one of our incredible CASA volunteers, **Elisa**, recently recognized as our Rookie of the Year! Since joining CASA, she's shown strong dedication to advocating for children and helping ensure their voices are heard. We asked a few questions to learn more about what inspired her and what this work means to her— here's what she shared.

Q: What inspired you to become a CASA volunteer?

"I attend North Point Church and our Pastor, Andy Stanley, was preaching about keeping in step with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ - and that the focus of our activities while serving others was indicated by what breaks our heart. Children who are abused or neglected break my heart - so CASA is a natural fit for me."

Q: If you had to describe CASA volunteering in three words, what would they be?

"Reliability - service - love for children"

Q: What's one thing you wish more people understood about foster youth or advocacy work?

"How important our role as advocates of children is and how much we need to pull together to give them solid opportunities to become well rounded, productive members of our society."



What Would You Do? Real-Life Advocacy Scenarios

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

An 8-year-old child on your case has been in foster care for over a year and is doing well academically and behaviorally. However, the child frequently tells you they feel “forgotten” and worries they will never go home or be adopted. The case plan has shifted multiple times due to changes in the birth parents’ circumstances, and court hearings are often continued with little explanation given to the child.

The foster parents provide stability but avoid conversations about permanency, saying they don’t want to “get the child’s hopes up.” Meanwhile, the child’s anxiety increases before court dates, and they are beginning to withdraw socially at school.

What would you do?



Next month's scenario:

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?

 **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 well-being alongside permanency planning, recognizing that **prolonged uncertainty can increase anxiety, feelings of abandonment, and social withdrawal** even when the child appears stable academically and behaviorally.
- **Provide honest, age-appropriate explanations about the case process and court delays** so the child feels included rather than “forgotten,” while avoiding promises about outcomes that cannot be guaranteed.
- **Collaborate with foster parents** to encourage supportive permanency conversations, helping them understand that **thoughtful transparency often reduces anxiety more effectively than avoiding the topic altogether.**

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.”

Honoring Black History Month: A Legacy of Child Advocacy

As we recognize Black History Month, we honor the legacy of Black leaders whose work continues to shape child welfare today. One such pioneer is **Janie Porter Barrett**, a social reformer and advocate who dedicated her life to supporting vulnerable children at a time when compassion and opportunity were often denied to them.

In the early 1900s, Barrett founded the **Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls**, one of the first institutions in the South focused on rehabilitation rather than punishment for Black girls involved in the juvenile justice system. The school was created to foster a nurturing environment for Black girls who had been sentenced to prison for being labeled delinquent or for being dependent upon the state for their welfare. At the time, there were **no foster homes available for African American girls**, leaving incarceration as one of the only options.

Barrett believed deeply in each child's potential, famously emphasizing that "**every child has possibilities.**" Her work laid important groundwork for modern child advocacy by prioritizing dignity, individualized care, and hope.

This Black History Month, we reflect on how advocates like Janie Porter Barrett continue to inspire CASA volunteers to stand beside children, ensure their voices are heard, and advocate for futures defined by safety, stability, and opportunity.



“The problem child is not a bad child, but a child in need of understanding, guidance, and opportunity.”
— Janie Porter Barrett

Barrett and the Virginia Industrial School



THE GIRLS OF THE HOME SCHOOL ARE ON THE UPPER PORCH.

[Click here to read more
about Barrett and her work!](#)



FROM THE MERRY-GO-ROUND, OVER THE SLIDING BOARD INTO THE POOL.

1.—Merry-go-round.

2.—Sliding Board.

3.—Swimming Hole.

Birthdays

Feb 7th - Kimberly Murray

Feb 18th - Danielle Smith

Feb 21st - Barb Taylor

Feb 27th - Sheila Castelein

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

Yeehaw! Get ready to **SAVE THE DATE!** 📅

Dust off your boots for the inaugural Boots & Boogie Gala, benefiting CASA of Forsyth County!

Join us for a night of incredible fun:

- Line Dancing 🕺
- Dueling Pianos 🎹
- Custom Hat Bar 🎩
- Bourbon & Wine Tasting 🍷

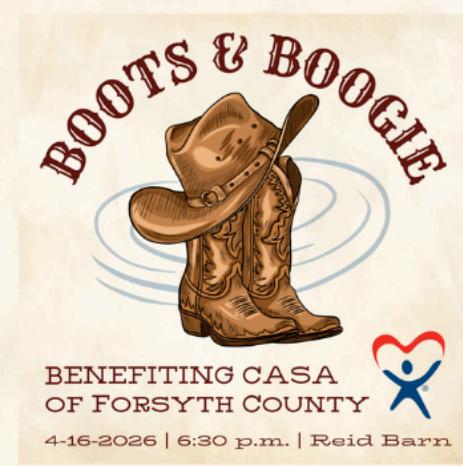
While we boogie, we'll be raising vital funds to ensure every child in Forsyth County has a powerful voice and a caring advocate in their corner.

📅 When: Thursday, April 16, 2026, 6:30 p.m. 🎫 Where: Reid Barn, Cumming

You won't want to miss this! More details coming soon!

#BootsAndBoogieGala #CASAForSyth #SaveTheDate #CharityGala #CummingGA

#SupportKids



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!



Learning & Growth

In-Person, Virtual, and Self-Guided Training Opportunities

Black History Month

Racial Inequality: Mental Health Effects on Black, Male Youth

- On-Demand

GA Center for Resources & Support

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

How Race and Ethnicity Affect Views of the Child Welfare System

- On-Demand

Bipartisan Policy Center

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

General Child Welfare

A View from the Bench: Importance of Best Interest Advocacy

- On-Demand

National CASA-GAL

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

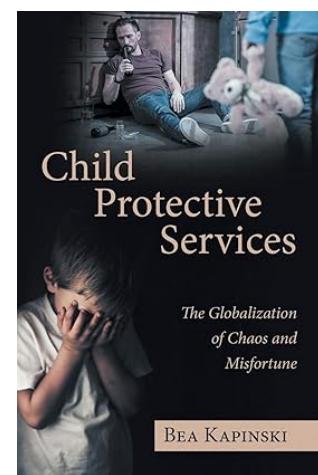
CASA Book Club

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.

Book club will be held virtually via Teams and in person at the CASA office! Check your email for a message from Ellie!



Thank You to Our Donors!

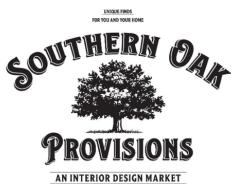


WADE WORKS
REAL ESTATE • ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN • CREATIVE



Jay Kirchoff

Bettina Hammond



Rotary



Hardie-Hughes
Foundation



Paula Gault

Marybeth Leamer



BROWNS
BRIDGE
CHURCH



BENJAMIN F. BRADY
Charitable Foundation



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 -

Vanguard Management Group - Northpoint Mortgage

Unity Class of First Baptist Church - Bald Ridge Chapel Trustees

CHANGE A CHILD'S
STORY

