



Court Appointed Special Advocates  
FOR CHILDREN

FORSYTH COUNTY

SEPTEMBER 2025

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF FORSYTH COUNTY CASA

# THE FORSYTH VOICE



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- *CASA teen and reaching her dream*
- *Hispanic Heritage Month, National Recovery Month, & Suicide Prevention Month*
- *What would you do?*



### September and awareness themes

There are a lot of awareness themes this month! Check out the trainings on page 8, which have been specifically curated to align with the different themes!



### We ROCKED the House!

Our Rock the House event at School Street Playhouse, featuring Junior's Farm Band, was a huge success! The night was filled with great music, community spirit, and strong support for CASA's mission.

## Upcoming Events

**Thursday, September 25th**  
***New CASA Swearing-In***  
Juvenile Courthouse | 1PM

**Tuesday, September 30th**  
***Book Club***  
SliceAbility | 5:30PM

**Thursday, November 6th**  
***Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast***  
Browns Bridge Church | 9AM

**Saturday, December 6th**  
***Rudolph Run Through***  
Cumming First UMC | 11AM

Make sure you check your email at the **end of September** for your invite and to RSVP!



*327 advocacy hours*



*47 hearings attended*



*2,594 miles driven*

**AUGUST BY THE NUMBERS**

# August Monthly Recap

## CASAs and Advocacy Specialists attend Georgia CASA Conference

Last month, several team members and volunteers had the chance to attend the Georgia CASA Conference, where they connected with other CASA affiliates from across the state for a day of learning, connection, and inspiration. The keynote address was delivered by Tristian Smith, who shared his powerful lived experience as a foster child without a CASA volunteer to support him. Today, Tristian has come full circle—serving as a CASA volunteer himself and reminding us of the lasting impact advocacy can have on a child's life.

Throughout the day, participants joined breakout sessions on topics such as supporting older youth, addressing the unique needs of babies, and navigating juvenile court. The conference offered valuable tools and fresh perspectives that our CASAs and Advocacy Specialists are excited to bring back to their work with children and families.



## We Rocked The House

We are thrilled to share the success of our recent Rock the House event, hosted by School Street Playhouse and featuring the incredible Junior's Farm Band. The evening was filled with great music, community spirit, and strong support for CASA's mission. Thanks to everyone who attended, donated, and spread the word. The event not only raised vital funds but also raised awareness of the importance of advocating for children in foster care. We are so grateful to School Street Playhouse, Junior's Farm Band, and our community for making this night unforgettable!





# Highlight

## What Would You Do? Real-Life Advocacy Scenarios

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

*The child you advocate for is in their third placement in three months. They're frustrated, withdrawing, and not engaging with you like they used to. What would you do?*

Situations like this are challenging but also an important reminder of the value of CASA advocacy. Frequent placement changes can make a child feel unsafe, disconnected, and powerless. When they begin to withdraw, it's not unusual—it's often a protective response to so much instability.



### Next month's scenario

You are assigned to a child with Down syndrome. At school visits, you notice the child is pulled from class frequently for therapies, but the foster parent mentions that the child still isn't receiving all the supports written into their IEP. The child enjoys social activities and being included with peers, but opportunities seem limited.

### 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:

- **Acknowledge their feelings.** Let the child know it's okay to be upset, angry, or tired of constant changes. Simply saying, "I understand this has been hard, and it makes sense you feel this way," can help validate their experience.
- **Stay consistent.** Even if the child doesn't engage the way they used to, your presence still matters. Keep visiting, calling, and showing up as scheduled. Your steady presence provides the stability they may not be experiencing elsewhere.
- **Be patient.** Withdrawn behavior doesn't mean you aren't making a difference—it often means the child is testing whether you'll stay when things get tough.

**Sample court report recommendation:** *"The child has experienced three placement changes in the past three months. CASA has observed the child becoming increasingly withdrawn and less willing to engage with the CASA during visits. CASA is concerned that frequent placement disruptions are impacting the child's well-being and recommends that the child's need for stability and consistency be prioritized when considering future placement decisions."*



## Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month

At CASA, we are reminded during this month of how important it is for every child's identity and heritage to be respected, honored, and uplifted.

For CASA volunteers, this means more than just advocacy in the courtroom—it's also about ensuring that a child's cultural background is understood and valued in decisions about their care and future. When children are able to stay connected to their heritage, language, and traditions, it strengthens their sense of belonging and supports their overall well-being.

**Each year, September 15 through October 15 is recognized as Hispanic Heritage Month, a time to celebrate the history, culture, and contributions of Hispanic and Latino communities.**

As a CASA, you play a vital role in making sure children's voices are heard and their unique identities are protected. By being culturally curious and open, you help children not only feel seen but also celebrated.

This Hispanic Heritage Month, we invite you to reflect on how embracing cultural heritage in your advocacy can empower the children we serve.



# CASA Success Story: Helping a Teen Reach Her Dreams

This summer, one of our CASA teens achieved something extraordinary—she was accepted to a prestigious out-of-state university! While she was eager to begin her college journey, a major roadblock stood in the way: transportation. Without a solution, she might not have been able to attend.

That's when Advocacy Specialist Amy and CASA volunteer Ann stepped in. Ann and Amy thought outside the box to come up with a way to make this all work out. That's when Amy reached out to the CASA program in the student's new city, seeking local support.



## ***Just a reminder***

CASA volunteers cannot transport children they are appointed to. In this case, the out-of-state CASA volunteer was not appointed to the child, which allowed them to provide this extra support.

## **Advocacy over state lines**

Through this partnership, a CASA volunteer in that city—who was not court-appointed to the child—met her at the airport, helped her get settled into her dorm, and even made plans to show her around her new community.

Because of this creativity and collaboration, this teen is now right where she belongs: on campus, chasing her goals and building her future.

This story reminds us that with strong advocacy and teamwork, a child's dreams don't have to be limited by circumstance.



# Standing Together to Prevent Suicide

Youth in foster care face unique challenges that can increase their risk of suicidal thoughts, including trauma, frequent transitions, and feelings of isolation. As CASAs, we play a critical role in noticing warning signs, listening without judgment, and connecting children and families with the right resources. Suicide Prevention Month is a time to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and remind ourselves that every life has value and hope is always possible.

**IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS  
STRUGGLING, CALL OR TEXT 988,  
THE SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE,  
FOR IMMEDIATE SUPPORT.**

**September is Suicide Prevention Month, a reminder that every child's life matters. Youth in foster care face unique risks due to trauma and frequent changes, but CASAs can make a difference.**

What you can do as a CASA:

- **Listen and validate.** If a child expresses sadness, hopelessness, or thoughts of not wanting to live, take it seriously.
- **Know the warning signs.** Changes in mood, withdrawal from activities, or talking about death are all red flags.
- **Connect to help.** Share concerns with the child's case manager or therapist immediately and document what you observed.
- **Be a consistent presence.** Simply showing up and reminding the child that they matter can be protective in itself.



## Birthdays & Anniversaries

-  **Sept 7<sup>th</sup>** - Shelly Hipps
-  **Sept 8<sup>th</sup>** - Carolyn Reed
-  **Sept 13<sup>th</sup>** - Lori Gillman
-  **Sept 14<sup>th</sup>** - Debra Wallace
-  **Sept 15<sup>th</sup>** - Tracy Douchy, Mark Najjar,  
Debra Wallace, Diane Janson, Danielle Smith,  
Emma Mazer (*each are celebrating 3 years!*)
-  **Sept 17<sup>th</sup>** - Sheila Castelein, Steven Castelein,  
Kristin Miller, John Cannady, Leigh Ann Cannady,  
Kim Painter (*each are celebrating 5 years!*);  
Erika Zelada, Mary Cate Summerlin, Liz Draper  
(*each are celebrating 1 year!*)
-  **Sept 20<sup>th</sup>** - Mary Cate Summerlin & Toni Flowers
-  **Sept 25<sup>th</sup>** - Kim Strauss
-  **Sept 29<sup>th</sup>** - Desiree Carlisle



## CASA Tip of the Month

Always listen more than you talk — kids often reveal important things in small way. A simple comment about a friend, a change in routine, or even their tone of voice can offer clues about how they're really doing. By giving them space to share at their own pace, you show that their voice matters and that you're a safe, steady presence they can trust.

## CASA Book Club

***Raising Other People's Children: What Foster Parenting Taught Me About Bringing Together A Blended Family***

by Debbie Ausburn

The book, *Raising Other People's Children*, helps you navigate the complicated world of foster and step-parenting with better awareness and greater empathy, providing real-life solutions for forging strong relationships in extraordinary circumstances.

The responsibility and complexity involved in raising someone else's child can seem overwhelming. Regardless of whether you're a stepparent, foster parent, adoptive parent, or a CASA, it is on you to take on the challenge of caring for them, helping them to move forward while also meeting their unique emotional needs.

***We'll be meeting at SliceAbility on September 30<sup>th</sup> at 5:30PM!***



The poster features a background image of a smiling woman holding a young girl. It includes several speech bubbles with text in different languages: "Hovoríte viac ako jedným jazykom?", "Hablas más de un idioma?", "您会说多种语言吗?", "Èske ou pale plis pase yon lang?", and "Parlez-vous plus d'une langue?". The main text reads "VOLUNTEERS NEEDED" in large, bold letters, followed by "Speak 2+ languages? Use your voice to change a child's story. Become a CASA." At the bottom, it says "More Information: www.ForsythCountyCASA.org" and "EVERYDAY HEROES".

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!



## ***Suicide Prevention Trainings***

### **Understanding Suicide**

- Virtual Live - Wednesday, Sept 17 at 1pm

*Mindspring Mental Health Alliance*

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

### **Why Are Youth Ending Their Life By Suicide**

- On-Demand

*Georgia Center for Resources and Support*

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

### **Why Are Youth Ending Their Life By Suicide**

- On-Demand

*University of Michigan*

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

# **Learning & Growth**

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

### ***Cultural Competency Trainings***

**Supporting the Legal Needs of Immigrant Children in Foster Care**

- On-Demand

*Center on Immigration & Child Welfare Initiative*

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

### ***Substance Abuse Trainings***

**Building Healthy “Parenting” in Recovery**

- On-Demand

*Illinois CASA*

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

**Opioids and Foster Care**

- On-Demand

*Georgia Center for Resources and Support*

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

**Parental Substance Misuse and Child Welfare**

- On-Demand

*Florida State University Stoops Center*

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**CHANGE A CHILD'S**  
**STORY**

 **CASA**  
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