

THE FORSYTH VOICE



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CASA of the Month

She was recently awarded the ***Bridge of Trust*** superlative at our November Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast—and her words show exactly why. Read how one CASA volunteer builds trust, connection, and consistency with the child she serves.

Upcoming Events

Thursday, January 22nd
CASA Awareness Day
Statewide

Tuesday, January 27th
Book Club Meeting
Virtual and In-Person

Thursday, February 5th
Light of Hope Ceremony
Browns Bridge Church | 7PM





262.75 advocacy
hours



22 hearings attended



2,598.60 miles driven

NOVEMBER BY THE NUMBERS

November Monthly Recap

Another busy month on the books! From our annual Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast on November 6th to a visit from Georgia CASA on November 18th—and everything in between—we stayed busy serving children and families.

In November, **three children achieved permanency!** Thank you to the CASA volunteers whose dedication and advocacy helped lead these children to permanency through reunification and adoption.



Some of our CASA of Forsyth County staff alongside GA CASA during November 18th's visit!

December Volunteer Spotlight

This month, we are honored to spotlight one of our dedicated CASA volunteers. Through consistency, honesty, and a calm presence, **Melva** has built a meaningful and trusting relationship with the child she serves. Below, she shares, in her own words, reflections on connection, advocacy, and what it truly means to show up for a child.

Q: What's one memory with your child that always makes you smile?

*"Given that my teenage child has been in a residential treatment facility for over two years, her meals are typically cafeteria food. When I visit, I take some of her favorite snacks. **She always thanks me when I lay out the snacks and when she has finished eating.** Even though her journey continues to be difficult, **her consistent expression of gratitude warms my heart and makes me smile.**"*

Q: What has helped you build such a strong, trusting relationship with your child?

*"I initially communicated that **my role is to ensure she is healthy and safe.** I'm intentional with my words—making sure I don't give the impression that my role is to fulfill her every request, especially when some requests are not in her best interest."*

*"Given my child is a teenage girl, I try to discuss topics that may be of interest to her such as hairstyles or color, makeup, music, clothes, shooting hoops, and more. We sometimes color, **watch and sing along with Taylor Swift videos,** or just discuss issues she brings to the conversation."*

*"**I keep my word to my child.** If she asks that I pass along a message to her family, lawyer, caseworker, or others, I do it. If my child has verbal outbursts, **I stay calm, letting her express her feelings.** Then I follow up with probing questions. Most times this has a calming effect."*

Q: What advice would you give new CASA volunteers about building connection?

"Building a strong, trusting relationship with a child is a process."

"Your child may ask you a question in which you don't know the answer—and that's okay. Just be honest and say you will check into it. Then do what you say."

"If possible, let them do most of the talking. Sometimes you get a lot of information just by asking a few probing questions, and this information may help you serve them better."

"Sometimes the child may want you to ensure they are reunited with their family. That's tricky. In my case, the child's behaviors prevented her from returning home. Rather than point out her issues that prevented reunification, I asked her what she needed to do in order to return home. She clearly articulated them."



What Would You Do? Real-Life Advocacy Scenarios

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

A child in your CASA case will be spending the holidays with their foster family for the first time instead of with their biological parents. The child is anxious and unsure how to feel, while the foster family is eager to include them in their traditions.

What would you do?



A former youth in foster care shared this about the holiday season:

“As a foster kid, I used to hate the holidays because I wasn’t with my family. After my father died, the holidays were never the same. While I was in foster care, I was able to go home on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, but I learned that being with loved ones throughout the entire season is what truly makes the holidays special. Going home for just a day—or even a weekend—wasn’t enough.

During that time, I often felt like an outsider because I was ‘just a foster kid,’ especially during the holidays. Even though my foster family included me in their celebrations, I struggled emotionally. I wanted to feel what I thought they were feeling. To me, it felt like I was borrowing their family—and ultimately, their joy.”

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

Next month’s scenario:

A medically fragile infant in your CASA case requires frequent doctor visits, specialized feeding, and careful monitoring at home. The foster parent is capable but refuses to collaborate with the birth parents, even for supervised visits, and resists following certain care recommendations from the child’s medical team. The birth parents are motivated and willing to learn, but the foster parent blocks their involvement. The child seems unsettled by the tension between caregivers.

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:

- **Validate the child’s feelings** and let them know it’s okay to feel anxious, sad, excited, or unsure—often all at the same time.
- **Create space for the child** to talk about their worries, expectations, or questions about the holiday.
- **Help the child prepare** by talking through what the holiday may look like and identifying any potential triggers ahead of time.
- **Collaborate with the foster family** by sharing appropriate insight into the child’s emotional needs and encouraging flexibility with traditions and expectations.
- **Center the child’s voice** by emphasizing choice, emotional safety, and connection throughout the holiday experience.

Sample court report recommendation: “CASA recommends that the child’s emotional needs during the holiday period be carefully considered, particularly given this will be their first holiday spent with the foster family rather than their biological parents. CASA further recommends that caregivers provide flexibility around holiday participation and traditions, allowing the child choice and emotional space. Additionally, CASA recommends continued communication among all parties to ensure the child’s emotional safety and stability during this transitional period.”

National Human Rights Month: Every Child Deserves a Voice

December is **National Human Rights Month**, a perfect time to reflect on children's rights to safety, stability, and a voice in decisions that affect their lives. CASA volunteers play a critical role in protecting those rights by advocating for children in court and ensuring their needs and wishes are not overlooked.

Across the United States, **more than 340,000 children live in foster care on any given day**, relying on advocates like CASA volunteers to safeguard their well-being. Children in care face unique challenges as they navigate the child welfare system, making consistent, strong advocacy all the more important.

Every child deserves a voice — CASA ensures it's heard.

Gifts that Care: How to Make Holiday Giving Emotionally Safe for Children in Foster Care

December is also **Safe Toys and Gifts Awareness Month**- a perfect opportunity to remember that gift-giving isn't just about physical safety. For children in foster care or children who have experienced trauma, certain gifts can unintentionally trigger difficult memories or feelings. Emotional safety matters just as much as preventing physical harm.

Why it Matters:

- Foster children are more likely to have experienced trauma, abuse, or neglect.
- Holidays can bring up feelings of loss, separation, or anxiety.
- Research shows that children with trauma histories are more sensitive to reminders of past events, and even seemingly benign toys, games, or media can trigger stress responses.
- Simple acts, like thoughtful gift choices, can help a child feel safe, valued, and understood.



Things to Remember:

- *Avoid violent or scary toys/media that may trigger memories of trauma.*
- *Consider sensory impact: Loud toys, flashing lights, or strong smells can be overwhelming.*
- *Focus on empowering gifts: Art supplies, books, board games, or experiences that allow creativity, learning, or connection.*

Birthdays & CASA-versaries!

 Dec 2nd - Patti Ann Allen

 Dec 4th - Katie Magers

 Dec 4th - Ann Sestrich, Jennifer Howell, Ed Jones (each celebrating 8 years!)

 Dec 5th - Diane Janson

 Dec 5th - Joanne MacAdam (celebrating 9 years!)

 Dec 8th - Elisa Love

 Dec 17th - Marybeth Leamer, Diana Arnold, Carolyn Reed (each celebrating 5 years!)

 Dec 23rd - Jeff Cohen

 Dec 29th - Erika Zelada

CELEBRATE

CASA Tip of the Month

Children in foster care often face challenges that feel overwhelming, so noticing and **celebrating even small accomplishments** can make a big difference. Whether it's completing homework, trying a new activity, expressing their feelings, or simply getting through a difficult day, acknowledging these moments helps children feel seen and capable.

During visits, take a moment to **highlight positive efforts, offer encouragement, and reinforce their strengths**. Simple recognition can boost self-esteem, strengthen your relationship, and remind the child that progress—big or small—is meaningful.

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

Human Rights

HarvardX: Child Protection: Children's Rights in Theory and Practice

- On-Demand (free if you audit the course!)

Harvard University via edX

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

Here are My Rights

- On-Demand

GA Center for Resources and Support

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

Holidays and Children in Foster Care

Make New Trends but Keep the Old: Celebrating Holidays with Foster and Adoptive Children

- On-Demand

GA Center for Resources and Support

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

Helping Foster Youth Through the Holidays

- On-Demand

FosterClub

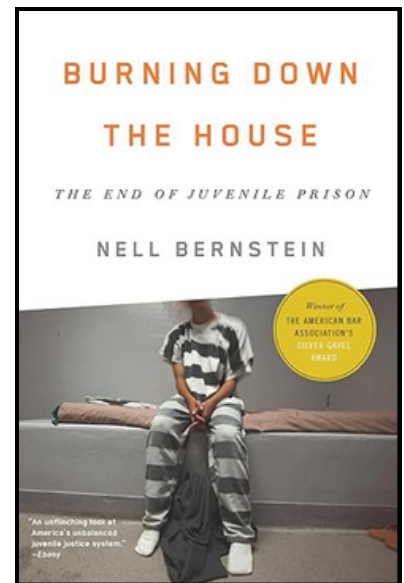
[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)

We'll be doing both in-person and virtual book club meetings! Stay tuned for details.

CASA Book Club

Burning Down the House: The End of Juvenile Prison
by Nell Bernstein

In *Burning Down the House*, Nell Bernstein exposes the harsh realities of juvenile detention in the U.S., where isolation and abuse too often replace care and guidance. One in three American children will be arrested by age 23, and many spend time in facilities that fail to support their growth or rehabilitation. Through the voices of youth who have endured these conditions, Bernstein highlights their resilience and determination to maintain their humanity. She presents these young people as full, complex individuals—not just victims of a broken system. Interwoven with these stories are examples of innovative programs that offer real alternatives to incarceration. Bernstein's work is both a powerful critique of the current system and a hopeful vision for how children can thrive when given support, connection, and opportunity.



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

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CHANGE A CHILD'S STORY

 **CASA**
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN
FORSYTH COUNTY