

Ocmulgee Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
CASA CONNECTION

APRIL – JUNE 2018

Seven New CASAs Sworn In



Ocmulgee CASA swore in 4 new volunteers on March 15th. Pictured with

Juvenile Court Judge Phil Spivey are (L-R): Dot Greggs, Jody Reel,

Sheila Brennan and Bridgett Sykes.

Upcoming Events:
New Volunteer Training begins Monday, April 23 at the Good Samaritan Conference Room in Greensboro

CASA Golf Tournament
Thursday, Oct. 11
Bears Best Atlanta in Suwanee, GA



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

OCMULGEE COURT APPOINTED
SPECIAL ADVOCATES



Three new volunteers were sworn in on March 29th. Pictured with Judge Spivey are (L-R): Vicki

Heggen, Kim Schrage and Lillie Warren-Hill.

working with all of you!

Welcome, all, and we look forward to

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Wanda Zvanut's Education Advocacy Message

Educational Stability

Stability, defined as 'permanence, constancy, steadiness,' is not a factor always afforded children in foster care. The mere fact a child is living apart from their primary caretakers, indicates an unstable life. Events leading to state custody are stories of family discord and change.

Federal and Georgia laws recognize that foster children's relocations create instability. Specific mandates define ways to foster stability, including educational stability.

CASA volunteers provide essential support for foster children, including academic. Of everyone involved with a child's placement, CASA's most provide stability. Frequently a child's CASA is the consistent face throughout their foster care placement. Knowing the child's educational legal rights enables the CASA to efficiently coordinate with DFCS, the legal team, and local education agency.

Other than a right to a free education, an initial issue is "state welfare agencies are required to coordinate with local education agencies to

ensure that children remain in the school they are enrolled in at the time of placement into foster care unless that would not be in the child's best interest" (GA HB 1085 enacted 2010). When a child is placed into foster care, s/he has a legal right to remain in the original school. Transportation is provided if the child is out of school zone. CASA may work with the case worker and school to facilitate continued attendance. Note the clause 'unless that would not be in the child's best interest.' Consider that placements may be a great distance from the original school. Of course, remaining in the original school would no longer be in the child's best interest.

Another right is unfamiliar, even to school staff. "Children in foster care shall be immediately enrolled in school with full participation in all school activities, even if proper documentation cannot be provided at the time of enrollment" (Ga. Comp. R. & Regs. R. 160-5-1-28). Children in foster care often change placements. If school registration is delayed until paperwork is received, our children may miss multiple days with each move.

Absences negatively impact their academic progress. Immediate enrollment provides the foster child continued education without missing school. Again, many school staff members are not familiar with this law. The child's CASA may be instrumental in having the foster child immediately begin in the new school.

There are other educational stability laws addressing school expenses, college funding, transition plans, and such. Each child's CASA is a critical partner to educational stability. As the CASA Education Advocate, I am available to answer questions, research academic topics, discuss your child's educational progress, explain school procedures, especially Individual Education Programs (IEP) and 504 Plans, and attend school meetings with you. Please let me assist you as you serve our children.

Remember to complete the educational information about your foster child(ren) even if there are no academic problems. The form was emailed, and I am creating a database. Contact me for another form, if needed, or questions.
ocasawz@baldwin.k12.ga.us

**Our
greatest
glory is not
in never
failing, but
in rising
every time
we fall.**

- Confucius

Bash at The Briarpatch, March 24th, Raises \$4,200!



Everything
you ever
wanted is
on the other
side of fear.

- George Addair



**Save the date —
Next year's Bash at The
Briarpatch is Saturday, March
23, 2019. Mark your calendar!**



100 South ABC Street
PO Box 1586
Milledgeville, GA 31059

Phone: 478-452-9170

Fax: 478-452-0592

E-mail:

Dana Lowe
ocasatl@baldwin.k12.ga.us
Maggie Milner
ocasamm@baldwin.k12.ga.us
Lori Muggridge
ocasalm@baldwin.k12.ga.us
Elaine Odom
ocasao@baldwin.k12.ga.us
Wanda Zvanut
ocasawz@baldwin.k12.ga.us

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Volunteer Spotlight: Kathy Rainey

Kathy Rainey was a stay-at-home Mom, but during those years she worked as a paraprofessional and substitute teacher in the Fayette County, GA school system. Through these jobs, Kathy witnessed how problems at home affected children mentally, physically and emotionally. She saw the struggles they had with their school work and their self esteem.

About 20+ years ago, Kathy saw a Dr Phil episode about CASA. While it lingered in the back of her mind, it wasn't until a little over two years ago that she acted to finding out more. "I

learned my circuit had a wonderful CASA office, and I joined the first upcoming class available. It was during these classes that I realized how special and important being a CASA was and how I'd found something missing in my own life. Although we are volunteers, I take my position as a CASA seriously and know that we are providing a very important service for the children we serve and to the foster care system in general. I've seen scared, angry, frightened, hurt and abused children become better students, happy children, and trusting, loving individuals as they navigate through a process about which they have no understanding," she says.

Kathy has 3 adult children and their spouses and 6 grandchildren, and through marriage has gained 4 more wonderful children, their spouses and 5 grandchildren. When Kathy moved to Eatonton 6 years ago, she ran into an old family friend (Mike), and they have been married now for 5 years. Mike and Kathy live at Briarpatch Farm where he raises dairy replacement Holsteins and Angus beef cows. "We also have fundraising events in our barn, mostly benefiting child and youth-related groups such as Fellowship of Christian Athletes, First Call Pregnancy Center, Atlas Ministries, an autistic camp for children, childhood cancer, church youth groups, and recently a fundraiser for our Ocmulgee CASA (Bash at The Briarpatch). When away from the farm, we enjoy spending time with our family, antiquing, the beach, lake life, doing "fixer-upper" projects, and any place we end up in our RV. We enjoy meeting new people, our two mini Australian Shepherds and serving our community and church," Kathy adds.

Thanks for all you do, Kathy. We appreciate you!

