

Ocmulgee Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) CASA CONNECTION

JANUARY – MARCH 2018

Bash at the Briarpatch, March 24, 2018



Mark your calendars for Saturday, **March 24, 2018** for our Bash at the Briarpatch, 725 Pea Ridge Road in Eatonton. Join us from 6-9 p.m. for an evening of live music with The Jake Bartley Band. Tickets are \$30 each and tables of 8 are

\$240. The Varsity will have a food truck there and will offer two entrees (hotdogs or hamburgers) and your choice of fries or onion rings for \$8. Please bring the beverage of your choice (bottled water will be provided).

All proceeds from the Bash will benefit our CASA program and the children we serve. We hope to see you all at this event on March 24. Please tell your friends and family!

Upcoming Events:

New Volunteer Training begins in late April at the CASA Office, 100 S. ABC Street Milledgeville

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



Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

OCMULGEE COURT APPOINTED
SPECIAL ADVOCATES

St. Paul Baptist Donates Stuffed Animals

The members and youth of St. Paul Baptist Church in Milledgeville recently donated stuffed animals for Ocmulgee Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) children. Standing (L-R) are: Stephanie Wright, Barbara Scott, Cecelia Ingram, Pastor Dexter Burney, Lois Richardson and Sylvester Hurt. Maggie Milner (kneeling on left)



and Dana Lowe with Ocmulgee CASA received the stuffed animals, which will

be given to CASA children as they come into foster care. Thank you, St. Paul Baptist!

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Executive Director's Message

Aging Out of Foster Care

For most teenagers in America, turning 18 years old is an exciting time. High school graduation is around the corner and college or a career are on the horizon. A sense of independence fills the young adult with confidence and enthusiasm. It is often seen as a rite of passage into adulthood. For roughly 25,000 teens in America each year, turning 18 is filled with anxiety, concern, and often, tragedy. Typically, children from traditional homes have parents who are able to guide them through these changes, providing help and advice as these 18-year-olds determine the next stage in their lives. Most young adults are still able to rely on their parents not only for good advice, but for help financially. Foster children do not have these resources or lifelines to help as they ease into their own lives of independence. When they are sick, there is no one to take care of them. Struggling in college? Often, there is no one to help them with their studies. Car broken down? Most former foster children have no one

to call.

Foster youth often leave the system without the necessary skills, experiences, or knowledge they need in order to best adjust to society. Without a family to turn to, many foster children find themselves in difficult times and situations. According to foster Chris Chmielewski, an alumni from foster care, and editor and owner of *Foster Focus* magazine, "The lack of life skills being taught before a youth aging out of care is seemingly inadequate."

Even the most basic of tasks: cleaning, laundry, setting up a bank account or finding housing, seem to be foreign concepts to youth leaving care. Without those skills, these kids stand very little chance of not ending up on the streets."

These young adults, who are separated from their foster families through the intervention of the government, face higher rates of homelessness, as most have no options for future housing. Unemployment is higher in former foster children, and many struggle financially, due to the roughly 50% of those foster youth who age out do not complete high school. Rhonda

Sciortino, a foster care alumni, business owner, author, and advocate says, "There are an estimated 12 million former foster kids in the U.S. These survivors of abuse need job skills and employment; job skills that so many do not have." Many of these youth are more than twice as likely not to have a high school diploma than those their own age. Less than 6% of former foster children ever make it to college, let alone graduate with a degree. One third of youth seek mental health care. Perhaps more shocking is youth are twice as likely to suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as U.S. war veterans. Roughly 71% of young women end up pregnant by age 21, and the cycle of foster care continues for the next generation. For so many youth, it is a system that fails them at a time of anxiety. It is a system that does not prepare them for a future, and it is a future of tragedy.

Source: Written by John DeGarmo

*Lori M. Muggridge,
Executive Director*

Be good to
people. You
will be
remembered
more for your
kindness
than any level
of success
you could
possibly
attain.

- Mandy Hale

CASA In the News

Ms. Smart and Ms. Massey's John Milledge first grade classes donated toys to Ocmulgee CASA children for Christmas. Thanks for their generosity and for helping make Christmas brighter for our children.



Ocmulgee CASA was the recipient of Louie Herron's January Love Bucket. We received a \$500 donation and had the opportunity to speak about our mission and volunteers with several local radio stations with live remote. Pictured (L-R) are: Julio with Q92.3; Dana Lowe and Lori Muggridge with CASA; and Louie Herron with Louie Herron Jeep, Dodge, Ram in Madison, GA



Ocmulgee CASA received a generous donation from the Arians Family Foundation Annual Golf Tournament, held each July at Lake Oconee. Pictured (L-R): are Elaine Odom and Lori Muggridge with CASA, and Bruce and Chris Arians. (Bruce Arians recently retired as the head coach of the St. Louis Cardinals, and he and Chris have retired to Lake Oconee).

The solution to
adult problems
tomorrow
depends on
large measure
upon how our
children grow
up today .

- Margaret Mead



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Volunteer Spotlight: Bette Grotke



CASA volunteer **Bette Grotke** clearly has a heart for serving others. This University of Toledo alumnae (Biology major) previously worked as a program director for NW Ohio Heart Association; a special education tutor; a volunteer advocate and board member in the prevention of substance abuse in youth; built recreational facilities and programs; and helped Putnam County students apply to colleges.

“In the 1980s, I worked with the Junior League task force in Toledo, Ohio to begin a CASA program for Judge Andy Devine. I served in re-

cruitment of volunteers and setting up the training program. When we moved to Georgia in 1999, I was excited to learn that Ocmulgee CASA was having a training program for new volunteers, and I signed up and took the course in Madison in early 2000.

“Being able to work with various agencies, schools, the court system, and families - all in the best interest of the child - proves to be very fulfilling to me. Because Judge Spivey is so supportive of me as a CASA, it makes me feel my time spent is worthwhile,” says Bette.

She enjoys working with the parents and foster parents to figure out the best outcome for the child. Bette’s biggest joy was when one of the foster parents realized they could and would adopt 2 brothers, when initially they thought they would try to only adopt one of them.

Bette and her husband (Mike) have been married 52 years. They have three children and 5 grandchildren: Greg and wife Judy live in Colorado; Kevin and wife Pam live in Illinois with their three children, Jack (15), Ryan (12), and Kate (9); and daughter, Kristen and husband Brian live in Ohio with their 2 sons, Brady (12) and Will (10).

In her spare time, Bette plays bridge, sings in the Reynolds Chorus and Greensboro Methodist Church Choir, and enjoys swimming, road biking, and knitting.

You are appreciated, Bette! Thanks for all you do for CASA and the children we serve.