

# Ocmulgee Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) CASA CONNECTION

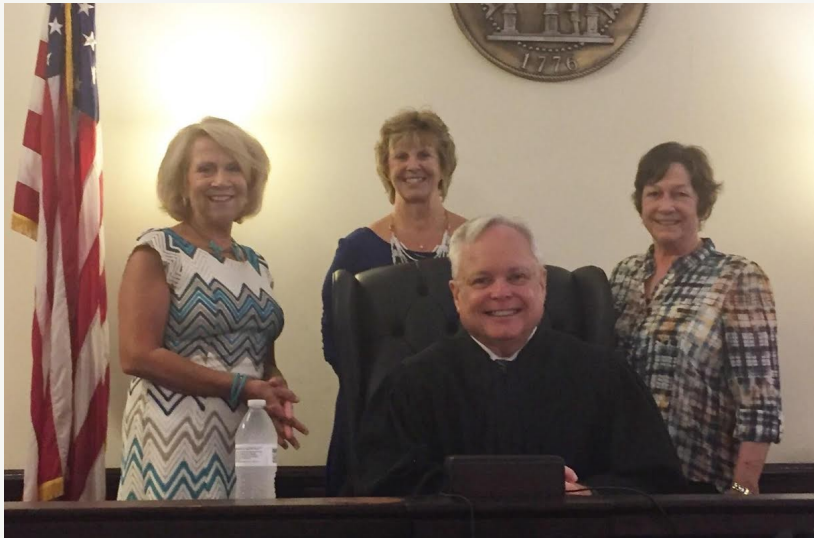
JULY/AUGUST 2017

## 8 New CASA Volunteers Sworn In

Juvenile Court Judge Phil Spivey swore in three new Greene County CASA volunteers on June 27th. Pictured are (L-R)

**Melinda Ward, Nancy Tkaczuk and Margie Smith.** These volunteers will advocate for abused and neglected children in-

the Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit. Welcome to CASA, Melinda, Nancy and Margie!



Tell your friends and family:

New Volunteer Training begins early August at the CASA Office, 100 S. ABC Street Milledgeville

Please call us at 478-452-9170 or visit [ocmulgeecasa.org](http://ocmulgeecasa.org) for details.



Court Appointed Special Advocates  
FOR CHILDREN

OCMULGEE COURT APPOINTED  
SPECIAL ADVOCATES

On June 22, Ocmulgee CASA swore in 5 new volunteers to advocate for children in foster care.

Pictured with Ocmulgee's Juvenile Court Judge Phil Spivey are (L-R):

**Samantha Riggs** (Wilkinson County), **Amy Carter** (Morgan County), **Anita Davis** (Putnam County), **Adele Abrahamson** (Greene



County) and **Maggie Morris** (Baldwin County).

Welcome to these

dedicated volunteers! We look forward to working with each of you.

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## *Executive Director's Message*

### **Methodist Home Tackling Georgia's Foster Parent Shortage**

In May, the Methodist Home in Macon announced a new effort to address the high demand for foster parents.

In Middle Georgia alone, there are more than **600** foster children in the system waiting to be placed with families. That's why the Methodist Home's Hope Foster Care program has been working to recruit and train more foster parents here in Middle Georgia—foster parents like Elle Garrison.

Elle Garrison is a foster mother to four children—a one year-old, two year-old, three year-old and 12 year-old. "I'm kind of out of the box of what people would picture for a foster family," she said. She's a single parent with a full house—and she was trained through the Hope Foster Care program.

"Our entire goal is to recruit train and then support foster Families here in Middle Georgia," said resource developer Loren Rae Grace.

Bibb County DCFS's Paul Williamson says the demand for local foster parents like Elle Garrison is high, but the number of families willing to become foster parents—not so much. "We just don't have the families so that we're able to place the children inside the middle Georgia area," he said. That's why Grace says she and others want to keep these kids close to home—by recruiting more local residents to become foster parents.

"If they're placed far away from their community then that means their ongoing communication with their biological family is much more of a challenge. If we can keep children here in middle Georgia we can make sure they remain connected to their community connected to their biological family," said Grace.

It's a 10 week program to guide parents through the process. "It's called IMPACT training so they go through the training, and we equip them to meet the needs of children who have come through trauma, we equip them to make sure their homes are ready and we help them through the home steady

process," Grace added.

Garrison says even though fostering isn't always easy she wants others to know you don't have to be perfect to be a parent. "You know to love kids and to embrace a different family that probably comes from a different place than they come from." She continued, "If you are willing to provide for one child a safe place to go you'd be a great fit for foster care."

There are more than 13,000 foster kids across the state and 650 of those are here in Middle Georgia.

The first IMPACT session began on May 25th. We hope this program helps in keeping more of our CASA children in the circuit for foster care.  
*Source: WMGT*

*Lori M. Muggridge,  
Executive Director*

**How do we  
change the  
world?  
One  
random act  
of  
kindness at  
a time.**

**- Morgan  
Freeman**

## *Ocmulgee CASA Benefits from Golf Tournament*

Ocmulgee Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) staff attended the Arians Family Foundation's 2017 Georgia Celebrity Golf Classic on July 6 at Reynold's Plantation on Lake Oconee. Proceeds from this tournament benefit CASA and help provide children in foster care with a volunteer advocate who looks out for their best interests.

Pictured (L-R) are Elaine Odom, Lori Muggridge, Arizona Cardinals Head Coach Bruce Arians and Chris Arians.



If not me  
then who?

## *Ocmulgee CASA's New Recruitment Billboard*



If not now,  
then when?  
- Anonymous

As part of Georgia CASA's 2016-2017 Growth Grant, Ocmulgee CASA has a new billboard in Jones County to recruit volunteers! It is located on the right side of Gray Highway (headed towards Gray before you reach Exchange Bank). Look for it as you pass through Jones County!



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### Ocmulgee CASA Board of Directors

Milton Appling  
Diane Brooks  
Curt Flournoy  
James Goforth  
Daniel Hathaway  
Justin Jones  
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## *Amazon Smiles Benefits Ocmulgee CASA*

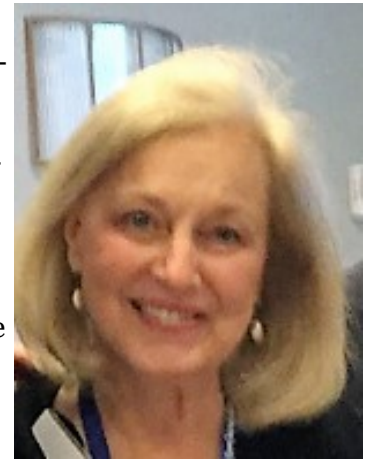
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### *Volunteer Spotlight: Diane Halloran*

CASA volunteer, Diane Halloran has spent her entire career serving children as a school counselor in Titusville, Florida; Conyers, Georgia and most recently at Morgan County Primary School in Madison, Georgia. She holds a MA and an Ed.S in counseling and guidance and spent 35 years in the field working with children before retiring in 2014.



Diane says, “When I worked as a counselor, I often worked with the CASA volunteers who would visit the children in our school. I was so impressed with what they did for children through the relationships they built. When I retired, it just seemed so logical to devote my time to continuing to help children. I was moved by the fact that Judge Phil Spivey told our ‘graduating class’ that he paid much attention to the CASA volunteers’ opinions and leaned heavily on their assessments of situations. He let us know that our opinions really mattered – he really listened! This convinced me that I could use my training and my love of children to continue to assist children whose lives needed some stability.”

Diane has been involved with several CASA cases, but has been very impressed with three siblings in one of her more complicated (and lengthy) cases. “Their love and protectiveness of one for another has lasted throughout abandonment, separation and hardship. There is a bond there that results clearly from their survival and goes beyond ordinary sibling relationships. They have had to survive on their own for so long, and they have done so remarkably well. When given choices to make decisions concerning their future, each clearly considers the others before making their own decisions. It really is a beautiful thing to watch. They have taught me much, “ she adds.

Diane is married to Jim, a retired college professor. They have 2 grown, married sons and 4 grandchildren.

When not involved with her CASA kids, Diane enjoys spending time with her grandchildren and working at the Madison Visitor’s Center. Diane and Jim also enjoy traveling and are doing so much more now that they have the time to do so.

We appreciate all that you do for the children in our circuit, Diane!