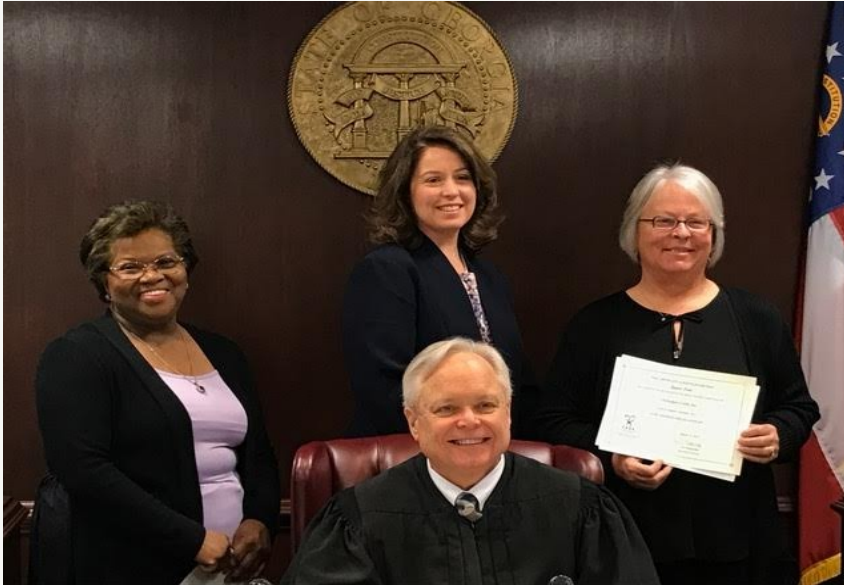


Ocmulgee Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) CASA CONNECTION

MARCH/APRIL 2017

Three New CASA Volunteers Sworn In



Three new CASA volunteers were sworn in on March 16, 2017. Pictured behind Judge

Phil Spivey are (L-R): **Frances Brooks, Julie Lewis and Janice Lam.**

Welcome to the CASA team, ladies! We look forward to working with you.

Tell your friends and family:

New Volunteer Training begins the beginning of May at the CASA Office, 100 S. ABC Street Milledgeville

Please call us at 478-452-9170 or visit ocmulgeecasa.org for details.



Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

OCMULGEE COURT APPOINTED
SPECIAL ADVOCATES

Executive Director's Message

Helping Your CASA Child in School

For so many children, school is a place of learning, laughter, and a place to make friends and form relationships. Not so for children in foster care. It is a very difficult place, where academic failure and behavior problems are the norm. For your child from

foster care to truly have a chance to succeed, you can blaze a path as an advocate, fighting for your child's every chance. Most likely, you will be the only one fighting for your child, as the caseworker and teacher are overwhelmed with all they have to do. Therefore, it is often up to you. You need to become as involved as possible.

The more active CASAs are in the child's academic progress, the more likely children will succeed. Here are some tips to help your child from foster care succeed in school.

Keep in Contact. Reach out to school employees and form a positive working relationship with them. Let school counselors, teachers and adminis-
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Director's Message, cont.

FACTS DO
NOT CEASE
TO EXIST
BECAUSE
THEY ARE
IGNORED.
~ ALDOUS
HUXLEY

trators know that they can always call or email you if needed. Also obtain contact information from your child's teachers. Attempt to remain in contact with them. Use all forms and means of communication. Through text messages, email, cell phones, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms, there are numerous ways to reach out to teachers and school employees. It is essential that you remain up to date with your child's progress, both with academics and behavior.

Update Teachers

You can request regular behavior updates from the child's school, but also provide such information to the school as well. If your foster child is having a particularly difficult time at home, let the teachers and counselors know, allowing these educators to be prepared and equipped to handle any difficulties that might come their way.

Keep Up with Academic Progress

School work will likely not come easy. Foster children, in general, tend to perform below level in regard to both academic performance and positive behavior. Most children in foster care

are behind in math and reading skills. It is important that the child's teachers set realistic goals for the child. Find out where the child's learning ability and level of knowledge is. Talk to your child's teachers about his/her abilities and if any accommodations need to be made. You should encourage your child to set goals and expectations, and celebrate every success, no matter how big or small they may be.

Be Involved

You can help your CASA child in his development by encouraging him/her to participate in activities outside of the classroom. Many schools have extracurricular organizations and activities with various school sports, music, and clubs. Along with this, community sports and organizations also allow kids the opportunity to not only participate and develop these skills, but to learn new skills, develop talents and to exercise.

Be Ready

It can be tough for your child. A child in foster care often has a very hard time exhibiting proper school behavior during the school day, as school is simply a constant reminder that they are, indeed, foster

children without a true home. The continuous reminder that peers are living with biological family members, while they are not, is a difficult reality for them and can be manifested in several ways. Some foster children simply withdraw and become antisocial in an attempt to escape their current environment. Others may lash out in violent behavior.

Understand This Is Probably Not Fun

School is the last place your foster child wants to be. He wants to go back to his home, his family, and is simply trying to survive each day. Foster children often have a difficult time exhibiting proper school behavior during the school day. For many foster children, violent behavior becomes the norm, as they not only act out in a negative and disruptive fashion in school, but in their foster home as well. This can prompt yet another move to a new foster home and another school. Your CASA child is depending on you to help him, not just in your home, but at school, as well. Quite simply, if you don't help him succeed, who will?

Georgia CASA Day at the Capitol, February 7, 2017

At the recent Georgia CASA Day at the Capitol, Ocmulgee CASA staff met with Rep. Rick Williams (right) and James (Bubber) Epps.



CASA staff from all over Georgia attended this special day to discuss CASA's advocacy and the budget request from the state.



YOUR DAY
WILL GO THE
WAY THE
CORNERS OF
YOUR MOUTH
TURN.

~ ANONYMOUS





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Volunteer Spotlight: Pat Wolf

CASA volunteer **Pat Wolf's** career experiences have uniquely prepared her for child advocacy. She has a B.S. in criminology, a Masters in Social Work, and a Specialist in Educational Leadership. In her 19th year with GNETS of Oconee, Wolf serves as director of a program for children with severe emotional and behavioral challenges. Prior to her work with GNETS, she worked as a therapist and behavior specialist.

"I became interested in CASA when Sharon Byner (a current CASA) came to our school to talk with one of her CASA children, and we had a long conversation. She told me about what it meant and how much she loved being a volunteer. Shortly after that, my friend, Linda Stewart, talked about attending the CASA training. Hearing the stories from each CASA and how they have impacted the lives of so many children was so impressive. These amazing, smart, caring individuals gave so freely of their time to make a difference for children. It meant a lot to hear first hand how passionate they were about their work with kids," she says.

Wolf says the most rewarding part about being a CASA is being able to see first-hand what a loving, stable, caring family can do to make such a difference in children's lives. "I love being able to help children in need be with the family that cares for and honors them so that they can grow up feeling safe and loved."

The family that Wolf is working with currently has really established a healthy, loving home for three of her CASA children, and she is so proud to be a part of that process. "I know they are in a good place, and I have seen the commitment and dedication that the family has to these children. One of the children had pretty significant emotional issues initially, but was just named Student of the Month for his school! They have all made progress, and I am so excited that we are working towards a permanent placement for them," Wolf adds.

Wolf is a proud single mom to Erin (21), Abby (19), and Ryan (18). Erin and Abby were both Valedictorians of their senior class and are both students at UGA. Erin will graduate as a Child Life Specialist this year. Ryan is an artist and dancer, hoping to get into the Savannah School of Art and Design.

In her spare time, Wolfe takes Zumba classes, which has been a huge stress reliever at the end of a long day. She also loves to paint, do arts and crafts, read, and be outside.

Thanks, Pat, for all you do for children in our circuit!

