

Ocmulgee Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
CASA CONNECTION

JANUARY– MARCH 2019

Two New CASAs Sworn In

Ocmulgee CASA swore in two new volunteers on Monday, November 19. These new CASAs joined our fabulous corp of volunteers who advocate for foster children who have been abused or neglected. Pictured with Juvenile Court Judge Phil Spivey are (L-R): Lee Ann Emerson, who covers Morgan County, and Nikki Wiggins, who covers Jones County. Both Lee Ann and Nikki have jumped right in and already have a case. Welcome, ladies!



Upcoming Events:

New Volunteer Training begins at the CASA Office January 14th, 2019



Bash at the Briarpatch, March 23



Mark your calendars for Ocmulgee CASA's second annual Bash at the Briarpatch on **Saturday, March 23**. The Jake Bartley Band will return to

provide a wonderful evening of live music. Details are being firmed up so watch our Facebook page and your email as we get closer to the date.

Tickets will be available soon, and we will be happy to mail them or deliver to you at court.

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Executive Director's Message

Family First Act

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) was signed into law on February 9, 2018 as part of President Trump's Bipartisan Budget Act. This new law gives us a rare opportunity to design a continuum of placement and services from prevention through permanency with additional funding from the federal government.

The FFPSA is the most significant federal welfare legislation in decades and it has the potential to have enormous impact on children and families. It aims to prevent children from entering foster care by providing federal funding for evidence-based mental health services, substance abuse treatment and in-home parenting skills training. It also seeks to improve the well-being of children by ensuring the quality and appropriateness of foster care placements.

The provisions of this new law are complex and multiple implementation dates apply. Some changes have already gone into ef-

fect, while others are on a longer timeline. DFCS is committed to a phased implementation approach that will include continuous engagement within and outside of the agency, transparency around decisions and an inclusive and participatory process. Georgia intends to implement the FFPSA fully by September 29, 2020. This timeframe will drive the changes that need to be made to state laws and agency policy, procedure and training. It also sets the pace for making necessary modifications to information management, financing, monitoring and data collection systems. It motivates capacity-building efforts for more evidence-based prevention services and foster family homes throughout the state.

To facilitate a systematic and comprehensive approach to planning for the implementation of the Act, a Steering Committee within the DFCS State Office has been established and workgroups and communication protocols are being created to guide and inform the change

management process. DFCS cannot do this alone, however. The sweeping changes made by the FFPSA impact the system from end to end and affect all child welfare system stakeholders, including CASA. Meaningful collaboration and open communication are more important than ever if we are to realize the full transformative potential of the opportunity we have before us. There will be communications provided to the child welfare community on the process, and I will share those as they become available. With CASA's continued help, we can make sure that Georgia's children live safely, in strong families, and are supported by their communities. Thanks for all you do!

Source: Office of the Child Advocate

- *Lori Muggridge,*
Executive Director

Let
kindness
settle in
the
spaces
between
us all.

Christmas Gifts Given to CASA

Ocmulgee CASA children were blessed this Christmas with toys from private donations, Sons of the Confederacy, Toys for Tots and John Milledge Academy. Our CASA volunteers came by the office in December to



"shop" for the children for whom they advocate. Pictured above are students from

John Milledge Academy with their gifts.

Volunteer Appreciation Banquet, October 30



**Cherish the
children
marching to the
beat of their
own music.
They play the
most beautiful
heart songs.**



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Volunteer Spotlight: Adele Abrahamson

Adele Abrahamson came to Ocmulgee CASA with extensive experience, as she has been a CASA volunteer in several different states.

Prior to her involvement with CASA, Adele worked in the hotel industry in front office management. When she married, her husband's career was also in the hotel industry, and they moved over 20 times in 35 years of marriage. "With all those moves, I became a stay at home mother, but I always worked as a volunteer in several agencies — a domestic abuse shelter, a program for teenage mothers and I worked with troubled teenagers who called our state hot line for help. I discovered CASA and was thrilled that it was an organization in all 50 states so wherever we moved — I had a family to join. It was the first group that actually put me into the court process which makes me feel like I have a direct impact on the lives of these children," says Adele.

CASA volunteers who have done this for a long time, have cases that haunt them and cases that brought them joy. Success to Adele is seeing closure for the children, either by reunification with family or adoption. Adele says, "The hard cases are children who spend years in foster care and age out of the system. When people see a terrible situation going on such as child abuse, they shake their heads and say that 'someone' should do something about it. As a CASA, I have been that 'someone' who is doing something about it. That is a wonderful reward."

Adele has been married to her husband, Jim, for 36 years and they have a son and daughter-in-law who live in Chicago.

Thanks for all you do for CASA, Adele!

