

Ocmulgee Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
CASA CONNECTION

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2018

First Friday Movie Night, October 5th



Join us for Milledgeville Main Street's First Friday Movie Night on Friday, October 5th at the Farmer's Market Pavilion at dusk.

"Inside Out" will be shown. This event is free and open to the public. Popcorn and drinks will be for sale for a nominal fee.

CASA staff will also be on hand with volunteer recruitment materials. Hope to see everyone there!

Jewelers for Children Day, Sept. 29th

On Saturday, September 29, Jewelers for Children (JFC) Day, people across the country stopped by their local jeweler to say thanks! JFC was founded by the U.S. jewelry industry to help children in need and is National CASA's largest private funder. JFC Day is an opportunity to let jewelers know you appreciate JFC's support, which helps children who have experienced abuse or neglect.

JFC's ongoing and generous commitment plays an instrumental role in furthering our vision of every child having the opportunity to thrive in a safe and loving home. Since 2003, JFC has granted more than \$10.25 million to the National CASA organization, with nearly \$8.5 million going directly to local CASA programs across the U.S. Thanks to JFC and

to its thousands of supporters, who make a difference for children every day. Locally, **J.C. Grant Company Jewelers** is part of the JFC effort. Additionally, **Justin Jones** of J.C. Grant serves on the Ocmulgee CASA Board. Thanks for all you do for CASA, Justin and JFC!

Upcoming Events:

CASA Golf Tournament
 October 11
 Bears Best

New Volunteer Training begins
 October 15 at 1 pm at the
 CASA Office



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Executive Director's Message

Foster Kids on Psych Drugs

Thousands of foster children may be getting powerful psychiatric drugs prescribed to them without basic safeguards, says a federal watchdog agency that found a failure to care for youngsters whose lives have already been disrupted.

A report released by the Health and Human Services (HHS) Inspector General's office found that about 1 in 3 foster kids from a sample of states were prescribed psychiatric drugs without treatment plans or follow-up, standard steps in sound medical care.

Kids getting mood-altering drugs they don't need is only part of the problem. Investigators also said children who need medication to help them function at school or get along in social settings may be going untreated.

The drugs include medications for attention deficit disorder, anxiety, PTSD, depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Foster kids are much more likely to get psychiatric drugs than children overall.

"We are worried about the gap in compliance because it has an immediate, real-world impact on children's lives," said

Ann Maxwell, an assistant inspector general. Among the situations investigators encountered was the case of a 6-year-old boy diagnosed with ADHD, learning and speech disorders, outbursts of temper and defiance, and hair-pulling disorder. He had been put on four psychiatric drugs. A medication review questioned the need for some of the medications. Of the four, two were discontinued and one was reduced in dosage, investigators said. Two different medications were then prescribed.

Investigators found no evidence that a treatment plan for the boy had been developed in the first place, before starting him on medication.

In another case, an 11-year-old boy had been put on two medications after being diagnosed with ADHD, anxiety and behavior problems. Over a three-month period his foster mother had problems getting prescription refills. By the fourth month, the boy's life was out of control. His decline included stealing, lying, bullying and an in-school suspension.

Investigators found there was no requirement in that state for case workers to follow up with foster parents about medications. The lack of effective follow-

up contributed to the boy's downward spiral. "These children are at greater risk of not getting the medications they need, but equally important, they are at risk of getting powerful medications that they do not need," Maxwell said. The inspector general is recommending that the HHS Administration for Children and Families develop a strategy to help states meet their existing requirements for prescribing psychiatric drugs to foster children, and to generally raise standards for case-by-case oversight.

In a formal response to the report, the children's agency said it may need additional legal authority. The agency also said it is committed to making sure foster children get psychiatric medications only when medically appropriate. Officials noted that the inspector general's findings covered just five states.

Foster children come into the mental health system with added complications. Their most basic connections in life have been stressed or severed. They may have suffered neglect or abandonment. They may have witnessed or been a victim of abusive behavior or violence.

A 2010 study from the Tufts Clinical and Transitional Science Institute *continued on page 3*

Nothing in
life is more
liberating
than to
fight for a
cause
larger than
yourself.

- Sen. John
McCain

Volunteer Appreciation Banquet, October 30th

Ocmulgee CASA volunteers will be honored at our annual Volunteer Appreciation Banquet on **Tuesday, October 30** at the Rock Eagle Senior Pavilion.

Our guest speaker this year is Jen King, the new director of Georgia CASA. Jen is a dynamic speaker, and you won't want to miss hearing her vision for CASA.

Join us for a night of great food and fellowship with other CASAs. Invitations to this event will be mailed to everyone in early October. RSVPs are due by October 16th.

5:30
pm—
Social
hour

6:30
pm—
Dinner



Executive Director's Message, cont.

found that estimated rates of psychiatric drug use among youth in foster care are much higher (13 percent to 52 percent) than among youth overall (4 percent). Compounding the challenge for foster children is the fact that responsibility for their well-being is often divided among foster parents, birth parents, relatives and case workers. That can increase chances for miscommunication and conflict, not to mention everyday problems going unaddressed until they escalate. Caring for foster kids is a shared responsibility of state, local and federal

agencies. The federal government provides grants to state programs and also covers health care for foster children through Medicaid, which spends hundreds of millions of dollars annually on psychiatric drugs. Nationally, it's been estimated that about 120,000 children in foster care take at least one such medication. The inspector general scrutinized a sample of 125 cases from each of five states (Iowa, Maine, New Hampshire, North Dakota and Virginia) with the highest overall percentages of foster children treated with psychiatric drugs. Investigators looked at each state's compliance

with its own particular requirements for treatment planning and follow-up. Maxwell said the finding that 34 percent of children did not have either treatment plans or follow-up monitoring translates to about 4,500 children in the five states examined. She said the national number would certainly be higher, but the design of the inspector general's review did not allow for a simple extrapolation. Even among the five states cited there were wide differences. *(The Sacramento Bee)*

*-Lori Muggridge
Executive Director*

Survivors of
abuse show us
the strength of
their personal
spirit every
time they smile.

*- Jeanne
McElvaney*



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* Bookmark **smile.amazon.com** and use it each time you need Amazon. It is the same Amazon you know (products, prices, and service).

Volunteer Spotlight: Niccole Howard

When **Niccole Howard** joined CASA, she was looking for a volunteer opportunity where she could make a difference in the lives of children in our community.

“Volunteering takes me away from my daily schedule. It reminds me how lucky I am and to appreciate the opportunities that I have been given. I have been very blessed in life, and it is important to give back and hopefully make a positive impact on someone’s life so these children feel they have someone fighting for them,” Niccole says.

During her 1-year tenure with CASA, Niccole has watched children grow from acting confused, angry and even aggressive into calm and sweet children. She says, “The difference was these children were now being given structure, discipline, love and a stable, safe environment. I believe your childhood is the blueprint for the rest of your life. No child should have to worry about where their dinner is coming from. Anyway I can help these children and improve their lives, I’m going to do my utmost to fulfill it.”

“You have to be patient with the children, their families and the process, yet persistent to move the process along to achieve permanency for these children. A major challenge for me is not to take things personally and want to ‘fix’ all the issues for the children, as you need all the facts. It is easy to become emotionally involved, when the most important thing is to remain objective and prioritize with the aim for a positive outcome for the children,” Niccole says.

Niccole has a Bachelors of Arts degree in Film and Electronic Arts from California State University Long Beach and works in action Sports Media in underwater photography/videography. Originally from California, Niccole moved to Atlanta where she worked for the Atlanta Braves in their media department until moving to Eatonton last year. She just recently got married, and the couple have a cat (who is 17 years old), four rescue dogs, a horse and bee hives. In her spare time, Niccole enjoys scuba diving, hiking, kayaking and almost anything outdoors and water related. She also enjoys cooking and is on the look out for a good recipe for fried chicken and fried green tomatoes!

Thanks for all you do to CASA and our children, Niccole!

(Niccole is pictured above with her niece).

