



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

HALL-DAWSON
CASA PROGRAM, INC.

2025 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT



**CHANGE A
CHILD'S STORY.™**

The story begins...



Each year at Hall-Dawson CASA, we witness the profound difference a community can make when it chooses to stand alongside children experiencing foster care. In 2025, more than 380 children were supported through our program. Ninety-nine CASA volunteers gave their time, their voices, and their steady presence—contributing over 6,000 hours of advocacy that helped bring safety, stability, and hope to children who have experienced abuse or neglect.

While these numbers are meaningful, the true impact is found in the quiet, life-changing moments. When a child is removed from their home, they often carry fear, confusion, and a deep sense of invisibility. A CASA volunteer steps into that uncertainty as a consistent, trusted adult—someone who listens, speaks up, and believes in that child’s worth and potential. As Nelson Mandela said, “There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.” Every volunteer who walks beside a child helps shape a more compassionate and hopeful community.

In 2025, children were safely reunited with their families, others achieved permanency through adoption or guardianship, and many experienced stability for the first time. These outcomes are not by chance. They are made possible by volunteers who show up again and again, by judges who value CASA’s voice, by donors who invest in this mission, and by partners who believe every child deserves the opportunity to thrive.

Because of your support, children do not have to navigate the foster care system alone. A teenager

who once felt invisible now has someone advocating for her future. Siblings separated in care are reunited sooner. A young child who has experienced trauma is heard, understood, and supported on the path to healing. Their stories are rewritten, and the next chapter is more hopeful.

Looking ahead, our commitment is unwavering: to serve every child who needs a CASA volunteer. We cannot do this without you. The need is growing—and so must we. Your time, resources, and partnership, make this work possible. You are part of every success, step forward, and moment of healing.

Thank you for believing in the power of advocacy. Thank you for believing in children. And thank you for standing with us as we continue building a community where every child’s story can change for the better.

With gratitude and hope,



Carla Baker

Carla Baker
Executive Director



Andy Stewart

Andy Stewart
2025 Board Chair

Learn more



Our Mission

To ensure children experiencing foster care because of abuse or neglect have the right to a safe placement and permanent home. CASA provides trained, screened and supervised volunteers to advocate for the best interest of children requiring court intervention as a result of abuse or neglect.

387 children

served in Hall and Dawson counties in 2025

99 volunteers provided advocacy services for children in care

89% of children whose cases closed in 2025 had the same CASA from start to finish

\$600,000

savings to Hall and Dawson counties in Guardian Ad Litem attorney fees

92%

of children now have a permanent home

When conditions are unsafe, a child's world can be changed in an instant. Home, school, routine—everything familiar is suddenly gone.

Every story deserves more than an interruption.

Authors of Hope



Staff

Carla Baker, Executive Director
Catherine Allen, Advocate Supervisor
Alex Azbell, Operations Manager
Joy Green, Development Specialist
Jason Hewett, Advocate Supervisor
Patricia Jode-Dominique, Advocate Supervisor
Christie Ledlow-Hodges, Advocacy Director
Kristin Peppel, Advocate Supervisor
Lisa Sexton, Advocate Supervisor
Keyla Suero, Advocate Supervisor
Tracy Verrigni, Outreach Specialist

Reflects active staff as of 12/31/2025

“Being a CASA has taught me the true meaning of compassion, resilience, and hope. It’s shown me that our voices—when used to speak up for those who cannot—carry tremendous power. And it’s reminded me time and again that love and advocacy can create ripples that reach far beyond what we can see.”

— Erwin Bligen, CASA volunteer

Board

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Dena Bosten - Bridge Accounting Services, CPA
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Dorothy Gilbert, Ameris Bank
Patsy Kilmartin, Retired, AT&T
Linda E. Kern, Retired, Brenau University
Dr. Carol Reed, Retired, Professor of Occupational Therapy
Terry Spicer Sr., King’s Hawaiian Training Manager
Dana Vandiver, Retired, Mortgage Broker
Janie Wolf-Smith, Retired Professor, Sociology and Social Work

CASA Volunteers

- Ann Ahne
- Pat Allen
- Karen Anderson
- Beth Arends
- Crystal Arnold
- Leigh Asher-Rabun
- Pam Bartz
- Erwin Bligen
- Amy Bogartz
- Chasity Cantafio
- Katie Carswell
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- Susan Lahey
- Lisa Lancaster
- Wendy Lavergne
- Allison Lee
- Amy Leonard
- Stefani Lesser
- Gail Lombardo
- Jennifer Mandall
- Jodi McAfoos
- Robbie McCormac
- Lisa McCulloch
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- Barb Mistarz
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 Mohammadshirazi
- Cara Montrieff
- George Moore
- Heidi Mummau
- Cristy Nave
- Debbie Negley
- Teri ONeill
- Eric Owens
- Christina Pangle
- Ben Payton
- Dee Payton
- April Prete
- Mohammad Rafiei
- Jean Rector
- Leslee Reuning
- Gert Rhein
- Shanni Roberts
- Barbara Russell
- Kylee Schacht
- Christine Schroeder
- Ariana Schultz

- Helen Scovill
- Joanne Shufelt
- Naveen Singh
- Carol Smith
- Laura Smith
- Vickie Smith
- Judy Spencer
- Lisa Spillane
- Mandy Steele
- Karen Swope
- Shari Tate
- Sherry Taylor
- Claire Thurber

- Constanza Tironi Vernal
- Chris Tuttle
- Cathy Vining
- Seth Vining
- Michele Waller
- Shaunette Willis
- Alex Wisnoski III
- Janice Young

Volunteer Service Achievement Awards

- 100-249 hours
- 250-499 hours
- 500+ hours



When a CASA volunteer steps in, something begins to shift. Consistency replaces uncertainty. Trust takes root.

When someone shows up again and again, the story begins to move forward.



Chapter Champions

CASA volunteers often describe the program as more than a mission—CASA becomes family built through shared purpose, big and small victories, and the kind of setbacks that can only be carried together. Through laughter, shared meals, tough conversations, and countless moments of support, CASA volunteers and staff form a community that feels like family—united by the belief that every child deserves someone in their corner.



Celebration of Hope

Each spring, we gather to celebrate the impact of our CASA community—volunteers, supporters and community leaders. It is a special day to remind us all that one consistent adult can change a child’s story. We are grateful to live in a community that shows up for children when it matters most.

A heartfelt thank you to our 2025 Celebration of Hope Presenting Sponsor Mar-Jac Poultry; Breakfast Sponsor Cadence Bank; Platinum Sponsor, Syfan Logistics; Gold Sponsors, Hasty Pope, Northeast Georgia Health System, and Peach State Bank; and Silver Sponsors, Carroll Daniel Construction Company and Pinnacle Bank.





Volunteer of the Year

Debbie Fox

Debbie Fox has been a dedicated CASA volunteer since September 2020. Throughout her service, she has been a powerful advocate for nine children across five complex cases.

A retired healthcare specialist, one of Debbie's greatest strengths is the ability to build trust with children, families, and community partners. CASA Advocate Supervisor Jason Hewett shares, "Her attention to detail and determined follow-through are invaluable to kids with complex needs, and her ability to effectively communicate and bond with family members leads to a higher level of service and stability in the cases she serves.

Debbie's engaging warmth, kindness, and bright personality make her a great friend and a sought-after advocate." Family Treatment Court Advocate Supervisor Lisa Sexton echoes this, adding, "She's a joy to work with and spreads so much love and kindness to anyone she meets. She has a great reputation amongst our community partners and works well with the entire family."

Judge Toller reflects, "Debbie has been an amazing gift to the family she currently serves. She was a friend and supporter to a mother who struggled to trust anyone outside of her bubble, helping the family navigate challenges in housing, education, and mental health. In another case, Debbie was instrumental in working through difficult family dynamics and supporting reunification transitions. She is a tireless advocate and a lifelong supporter for the children she serves."

Debbie Fox's steadfast service, compassion, and unwavering dedication to children and families make her a truly outstanding and deserving choice for Hall-Dawson CASA's 2025 Volunteer of the Year.

**In the courtroom and beyond,
decisions shape a child's future.
CASA volunteers bring clarity—
ensuring every child is seen,
understood and represented.**

**When a child's voice is heard,
their story gains direction.**

Stories Rewritten

Every child comes to CASA with a story — a childhood interrupted by circumstances outside of their control. CASA helps re-write the next chapter, working to achieve family reunification, adoption into a new family, or placement with a caregiver. Because every child deserves a safe and permanent home.

A Story Supported

One of the most grim statistics involving youth in foster care is their high school graduation rate. Lucky for Rick, Ann is in his corner. Like so many, Rick entered foster care years behind his classmates. Not only did his CASA volunteer Ann engage immediately with the school to make sure Rick got all the services and supports he needed, but she also made it her mission to help Rick's mother Jane gain her own knowledge of and confidence

With stability, support, and advocacy, a child's path begins to change. Confidence replaces fear. Goals that once felt unachievable seem possible.

A story that began with disruption becomes one of hope.



in how the educational system should work for her son. Ann sat with Jane in meetings and was always available for a text or a call of encouragement. After months of working together, Ann was thrilled to share a text from Jane that Ricky is now in the 45th percentile for reading on grade level stating, "If I do nothing else as a CASA, this fight to really push the education portion of the case was worth it." And thanks to Ann's dedication to this family, Jane will be well equipped and confident making sure Rick's younger brother has as great a chance to beat the odds as Rick now does.



A Story Nurtured

On the day he was sworn in as a CASA volunteer in the spring of 2017, Baker accepted his first assignment. Four children, the oldest an undocumented minor, needed advocacy. Baker set to work conducting research and forming bonds. In 2019, the two youngest children achieved permanency. The oldest two remained in care going through four attorneys, 12 Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) case managers, 11 foster placements (and at least as many schools, churches, peer groups) but only one CASA. Baker was the constant in these boys' lives, even as they were ultimately separated from each other. Month in and month out, they knew he would be there. Through 22 court hearings over 8 years, these boys had one voice. In July of 2025, the oldest aged out of care at 21. Baker had fought to establish the legal documentation that kept him from being put on the street at 18.

Undocumented youth cannot remain in care. That child moved in with a mentor at age 18 and, as far as we know, remains in that home today. The final child had remained in care at 18 but, in October of 2025, he felt well equipped — thanks in no small part to his CASA's years-long advocacy — to step out into the world on his own and signed himself out of care. Four kids, eight years, one CASA volunteer, whose dedication cannot be quantified.

“CASA volunteers are such a valuable partner in child welfare work. They get to know families on a different level and are often involved well beyond the life of a case. They offer a unique perspective on a child and what is best for them. We're grateful for all that CASA volunteers do to support the children of our county.”

— Joshua Holt, County Director,
Dawson County DFCS

A Story Advocated

Families with multiple siblings can create a particularly challenging situation for CASA volunteers with many varied needs and challenges to address. One case involved eight siblings ranging in age from one to 16 years of age, who needed a CASA. Two veteran volunteers joined forces and partnered to advocate for these children. The outcome of this collaboration has been so successful, enabling our CASA volunteers to advocate for these children and their wide-ranging needs.



Stewards of the Story

Champion for Children

\$25,000 & up

America's Home Place, Inc.
Mar-Jac Poultry, Inc.
Syfan Logistics
The Starlet Rhodes Jones Fund*

Beacon of Hope

\$10,000-\$24,999

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\$2,500-\$4,999

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Warren and Jamie Stribling
Tamara Strickland
Tim and Jill Brackman Taylor
Tip Top Poultry
Vanguard Charitable
Brenden and Rebecca Worth

"Every child deserves a voice and a hand to hold. The advocates at CASA are that unwavering support for children in foster care navigating tough times. Their work is making a difference and creating brighter futures for these kids."

— Counte & Amy Cooley,
CASA donors

Hero for Children

\$1,500-\$2,499

Chestnut Mountain Cattle Company	Marsha Lehr
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Friend of Children

\$1,000-\$1,499

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Pinnacle Bank
George Searing
Karen Sellers
Tom and Cathey C. Sexton
Shoreline Transfer
Smith, Gilliam, Williams & Miles, P.A.
Steve and Julie Taylor
United Community Bank
US Charitable Gift Trust
Steve VanBrackle
Violet Waldrip
Randy and Sue Wells

None of these stories change alone. It takes a community—volunteers, donors, partners, and advocates—showing up together.

When a community stands together, stories change.

Patron

Donate
today



\$1-\$499

Denise Aguero
Diego Alvarez
Ameris Bank
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Linda Loye
Robert Lund
Deborah Mack
Stacy Martin
Israel Martinez

“My mom made Hall-Dawson CASA a priority with a monthly donation to honor my work. Since her passing, I feel giving to CASA in her memory is a wonderful way to keep this important work funded.”

— Carol Smith, CASA volunteer and donor

Alison Falls McElvery
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 Ashley McGraw
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 James and Jeanette McKinzey
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Grantors



* through the North Georgia Community Foundation

Learn
more



Women Working Wonders

Women Working Wonders is an auxiliary group dedicated to supporting the mission and work of Hall-Dawson CASA. The purpose is to unite women who are passionate about ensuring that children in their community experiencing abuse or neglect have a voice, an advocate and the opportunity for a safe and permanent home.

Funds raised by members' annual \$100 dues support direct needs of children served by Hall-Dawson CASA not covered by other services, as well as volunteer activities and treats.



Ann Ahne
Jordan Allen
Deborah Ames
Lynda Askew
Brenda Barger
Sharon Bozman
Rosemary Carter
Barb Cely
Julia Cromartie
Charlotte Crow
Blair Diaz
Debra Doncov
Tamila Dover
Regina Edmondson
Debbie Fox
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Lauren Hayes
Jane C. Hollingsworth
Shirley Hudgins
Starlet Jones
Patsy Kilmartin
Melody Kolb
Debbie Lasher
Tracy Lees-Grant
Marsha Lehr

Amy Leonard
Gail Lombardo
Rosemarie Long
Linda Loye
Deborah Mack
Linda Melvin
Barbara Mitchell
Carolyn Moses
Mandy Nash
Nancy Nash
Joan Nickels
Mazie Ostervold
Judy Pannell
Judy Paul
Sara Ann Pierson
Dorothy Pirkle
Carol Reed

Susan Rodrigues
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Cathey C. Sexton
Amy J. Smith
Carol C. Smith
Connie Stephens
Lauren Talley
Harriette Taylor
Lynnda Thomas
Claire Thurber
Dana Vandiver
Janie Wolf-Smith
Amy P. Youngblood

The Giving Tree

Each year, Hall-Dawson CASA partners with Edmondson-Telford Child Advocacy Center to light The Giving Tree, which provides a unique opportunity for supporters to honor friends and family members through a tribute gift. The Giving Tree supports maintenance of The Little House, where both agencies reside. These gifts are vital to our operations. We are grateful to these supporters and the following sponsors:

Cadence Bank
Cook's Pest Control
First Baptist Church, Gainesville
Gainesville First United Methodist Church
Georgia Power
Hasty Pope LLC
M&R Rentals
New Leaf Landscape Services
S&S Trucking
Smith, Gilliam, Williams & Miles, P.A.

Tributes

Making a tribute gift in honor or memory of a loved one is an impactful way to remember a loved one. Honorarium and memorial gifts are listed in alphabetical order by the name of the honoree. Donors (in black) are listed after the name of the person (in red) in whose honor they contributed.

In Honor

Jordan Allen

Patsy Kilmartin

Kristy Basinger

Ellen Hagan

Shannon Casas

Creative Arts Study Club

Connie Daniels

Margaret Daniels

Debbie Fox

Ellen Hagan

Sarah Johnson

Joy Green

Oasis Sunday School Class

Pat and Clyde Honeycutt

Drane and Juliet Watson

Rita Johnson

Mary Alice Swope

Allison Lee

Barry and Jody Sanders

Ricky Presley

Tony and Connie Stephens

Carol Smith

Mary Brown

Wendell and Lydia Starke

Lorry and Sherrie Schrage

Karen Swope

Mary Alice Swope

Cheryl Usher

Renee L Bernstein

Katherine Boggs

Marianne Falls

Roger and Kathleen Futrell

Rob and Rae Ann Gerhardt

Arthur and Alison McElvery

Judith Meyer

John and Rosemary Munsen

Linda M Rusch

Sandra Stanyer

H. Jane Williams

Patsy Kilmartin

Edward Bradley Respass

Tip Top Poultry

Philip and Mary Hart Wilheit

Dana Vandiver

Patsy Kilmartin

Joel L. Williams

Edward Bradley Respass

Tip Top Poultry

Philip and Mary Hart Wilheit

In Memory

Lee Wayne Avers

Frances Avers

Danny Dunagan

David B. Chester

Jennifer Dunaway

Danny & Lynda Askew

Dorothy Wheatley Hufftutler

Teri Davies

Mae Miller

Joe and Caryl Roark

Martha Martin

Martha Nesbitt

Robbie Swenson

Kelly Anderson

John and Stephanie

Copeland

Linda Verrigni

Mike and Tracy Verrigni

Penelope Wheeler

Ed Wheeler

The Story in Numbers

Support & Revenue \$1,244,261*

37%	Federal and State Grants
8%	Local Grants
4%	Foundations
38%	Corporate and Individual Giving
13%	In-Kind Program Support

Expenses

\$1,197,993*

80%	Direct Services
12%	Fundraising
8%	General Operations

*The condensed statement of activities reflects the fiscal year ending December 31, 2024, based on a preliminary audit. Hall-Dawson CASA prides itself on prudent financial practices, diversity of funding sources and the highest level of transparency.

Operational costs include recruiting, training, and empowering CASA volunteers. Full financial statements are available upon request.

A complete copy of audited financial statements is available at halldawsoncasa.org.



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

**HALL-DAWSON
CASA PROGRAM, INC.**

PO BOX 907471
Gainesville, GA 30501

CHANGE A CHILD'S STORY.™

There are still children waiting.
Still stories unfolding.
Still chapters yet to be written.

Every child deserves someone
in their corner. You can be the
one to help.



Volunteer: Submit an inquiry form online to learn more about volunteering, or contact tracy@halldawsoncasa.org.



Donate: Your gift can come in many different ways:

- a one-time or monthly donation;
- a distribution from your donor-advised fund;
- a qualified charitable distribution (QCD);
- or by leaving a planned gift.

Every dollar donated stays right here to serve children in Hall and Dawson counties.



Share our story: Invite our team to share our story with your civic club, church group or neighborhood friends. Follow us on social media. Subscribe to our monthly newsletter and share it with your friends and colleagues.



Contact us:
770-531-1964
halldawsoncasa.org