



2024 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT



Be the
ONE

Be the ONE

For more than 35 years, Hall-Dawson CASA has had the privilege of serving and advocating for children experiencing foster care in our community. In 1989, we were one of two pilot programs in Georgia, beginning the journey that led to CASA affiliates serving all 157 counties in Georgia. We are proud to be part of such an impactful legacy.

In 2024, 103 Hall-Dawson CASA volunteers — like local high school basketball coach Seth Vining, pictured on the cover — served 317 of our community's most vulnerable children. For those children with a CASA volunteer, having that consistent adult in their lives leads to measurably better outcomes: they are much more likely to succeed in school and cross the graduation stage; more likely to receive vital services; and — **most importantly** — more likely to find a safe and permanent home.

The work of being a CASA volunteer is challenging: walking with children through the chaos of foster care is filled with plenty of frustrations, setbacks, and roadblocks that must be navigated. But the rewards make the journey worth it. Seeing a child find permanency — whether

through reunification, adoption or permanent guardianship — makes the journey worthwhile. In the words of CASA volunteer Tina de Waart, “My favorite part of being a CASA volunteer is seeing the children with parents who love them, who nurture them, and who keep them safe. I’ve seen first-hand the huge improvements in children from when they enter foster care to when they find their forever family. And I’ve seen the joy in the faces of these children when they know they are with a family who loves them. There is nothing better than that.”

Our appeal to you is this: we believe that everyone has a role to play in serving our community's children. Whether you volunteer as an advocate, support us financially, serve on our board, or help us share our story, you can **BE THE ONE** to make a difference in the life of a child.

In the words of Buckminster Fuller, “It is always because of one person that all the changes that matter in the world come about. So be that one person.”

You can Change a Child's Story.

How will you **Be The One**?

With gratitude,

Carla Baker

Carla Baker
Executive Director

Linda E. Kern

Linda Kern
2024 Board Chair

Be the ONE



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.

103 volunteers provided advocacy services for children in care
4,203 volunteer hours of service to children in Hall and Dawson counties



94% of children whose cases closed in 2024 had the same CASA from start to finish



317 children served in Hall and Dawson counties in 2024

190 local children in foster care had **NO CASA VOLUNTEER** in 2024. When a CASA volunteer isn't available to advocate for a child, the county must hire an attorney to serve as a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL), which comes at a substantial cost to taxpayers.

\$415,000

savings to Hall and Dawson counties in GAL attorney fees

93 children

served by a CASA volunteer achieved permanency, following juvenile court intervention due to abuse or neglect.

- 45 reunified with their families.
- 35 were adopted into a new, forever family.
- 10 were placed in the legal guardianship of a caregiver.
- 3 remained with a parent while receiving services.

Learn more



It takes a TEAM

2024 Board

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Staff

Carla Baker, Executive Director
Alex Azbel, Office Administrator
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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 12/31/2024





CASA Volunteers

Ann Ahne
Marie Allan
Pat Allen
Karen Anderson
Beth Arends
Crystal Arnold
Brenda Barger
Pamela Bartz
Erwin Bligen

Amy Bogartz
Tina Bullock
Katie Carswell
Dawn Chapman
Latavia Cheeks
Mykiah Clark
Dana Cleveland
Jennifer Cleveland
Jodi Cofer
Cynthia Cooley
Connie Daniels
Peter Dcosta

Tina de Waart
Tamila Dover
Amy Edmunds
Kim Everhart
Jane Fischer
Debbie Fox
Elizabeth Frobos
Wanda Fuller
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Gregg Harrison
Nancy Hart

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Rita Johnson
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Kathy Kilgore
John Kohl
Patty Kurz
Susan Lahey
Lisa Lancaster
Wendy Lavergne
Allison Lee
Amy Leonard
Stefani Lesser
Gail Lombardo
Jennifer Mandall
Susanna Mann
Tracie Maxey
Robbie McCormac
Lisa McCulloch
Kaycee McElveen

Barb Mistarz
Fatemeh
Mohammadshirazi
Cara Montrief
George Moore
Heidi Mummau
Cristy Nave
Debbie Negley
Candy Nonnemacher
Teri O'Neill
Eric Owens
Tina Pangle
Brenda Parker
Ben Payton
Dee Payton
April Prete
Mohammad Rafiei
Jean Rector
Wati Rengasamy
Leslee Reuning
Brooke Reynolds
Gert Rhein
Shanni Roberts
Kylee Schacht

Christine Schroeder
Helen Scovill
Robin Session
Joanne Shufelt
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Anna Tobolski
Chris Tuttle
Laurie Vakili
Constanza Tironi
Vernal
Cathy Vining
Seth Vining
Shaunette Willis
Alex Wisnoski
Janice Young

"I would like to say to anyone that if you have a few hours, you can really make a difference in a child's life. It's very rewarding — you'll get more out of it than you put in."

— *Patty Kurz, CASA volunteer*



Volunteer of the Year

Kim Everhart

“CASA has been one of the most rewarding volunteer programs I have ever been involved with. I wanted to make a difference in children’s lives and those families who live in my community. It has changed my life and I hope those that I have served along the way. Being a child advocate allows me to be a caring, loving light to children who are going through the toughest days of their young lives.”

Kim Everhart was sworn in with Hall-Dawson CASA in May of 2019, and her impact on our program has grown each year. She has had eight cases with a total of 15 children. Juvenile Court Chief Judge Alison Toller says, “Kim has been a long-valued asset to the Hall-Dawson CASA program. In handling cases in Hall and Dawson Counties over the last five years, she has been able to step in wherever we need her.”

In addition to advocating in the courtroom for our kids, Kim advocates in our community for CASA. In her many, varied activities, she is always raising CASA’s profile. She gives generously of her financial resources and encourages others to do so who are able. We have lost count of the number of new volunteer advocates who have come to us through Kim over the years.

We are grateful to Kim for her commitment to advocating for our community’s most vulnerable children, and all the ways she supports our organization.



Creating Community

“We get together for social events. It’s an opportunity for us in a relaxed environment to just enjoy each other and get to know the other CASA volunteers. And through networking, we find other opportunities that can help our children.”

—Janice Young, CASA Volunteer



Community Supports Clothing and Toy (CAT) Center

The generous support of our community fills a gap for the children our CASA volunteers are serving. The CAT Center, located in the basement of The Little House, is a resource for our volunteers, DFCS partners and foster families to access gently used clothing, new toys, diapers and age-appropriate furniture. Community members, business partners and civic groups provide school supplies, which are collected and distributed before school begins in August, and toys at Christmas for CASA volunteers to “shop” for their kids.



Beyond the vital role of advocating for children in foster care, these are the “extras” that are important for kids to have during a chaotic time in their lives. We are grateful that these needs are met by our generous community.

Slam Dunks!

CASA Success Stories

“Permanency is being anchored. It is an abiding sense of safety and security tied to place and people that surround you when you need it and cheer you as you explore beyond its bounds. It is the bones-deep knowing that this is your place and here you can rest and rejoice, falter and heal, leave and be missed, return and be welcomed. Permanency is your shoes in the closet and your picture on the wall. Most of all it is the place that holds your ties to the past and your hope for the future.”

— Jason Hewett, CASA Advocate Supervisor

Consistent Presence

Our CASA volunteers are creative when it comes to connecting and forming a bond with the non-verbal special needs children they serve. The phrase “show up” comes to mind. The more the children see the volunteer in different settings such as placement, school, medical appointments and so on, the more at ease they will be. So much is shifting and changing in their little world; the consistency of presence is a must!

CASA volunteer Amber always brings the same small stuffed animal every single visit. The child

recognizes it and looks forward to holding it. After a few visits, the child will rub it on their face or snuggle it during court.

Amber says, “I also use a ‘thumbs up’ and ‘thumbs down’ method to communicate if something is good or something is bad. For example, when you see the child laughing or clapping or smiling, give them a two thumbs up until they copy you. If the child is angry or sad, give them a two thumbs down and do it until they copy you. What you will find is that they will start using this to communicate completely





unprompted by you, helping you better navigate the mood they are in or what their preferences are.

“The main goal is to keep yourself regulated emotionally, and be a steady presence for their highs and lows. It can be frustrating for them to not be able to communicate or express how they feel with words.

“But most importantly, just show up. Your presence is the key to a successful bond with the children,” Amber shares.

Consistent Belonging

Jana, a dedicated CASA volunteer, has spent countless hours advocating for children in the foster care system. Her involvement goes beyond the formal duties of a volunteer — she’s become a trusted confidante and a comforting presence in the lives of the kids she serves.

One of the children Jana advocated for, a young boy who had been through multiple placements, had always been wary of forming connections. But over time, Jana’s consistent care and support helped him heal and feel safe again. One day, after spending several months with Jana, he turned to his placement mom and asked, “Can I call her Grandma Jana?” The question came as a sweet surprise, showing just how deeply Jana had impacted his life. Her unwavering support had created a bond that felt like family.

For this child, Jana was no longer just an advocate — she was a symbol of stability, love, and hope. Through her efforts, Jana had not only made a difference in this child’s life but had also shown him what it truly means to belong.

Consistent Guidance

Alicia, a college student who stayed in foster care after turning 18, was searching for an internship in social work. Her CASA volunteer helped her find an opportunity, provided guidance, and helped her pick out a professional outfit. They practiced interview questions together, and Alicia went in confident and prepared. Thanks to her hard work and Colleen’s support, Alicia aced the interview and landed the internship! It was a proud moment for both, marking a big step toward Alicia’s bright future.

2024 CASA SUPPORTERS

"I support CASA because I believe children in foster care need an advocate who will look out for their best interests. CASA volunteers are with these children as they go through many life changes. They provide guidance that helps children find success in their present and future lives." — *Starlet Jones*

Champions for Children

\$25,000 & up

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Arthur and Alison McElvery

"As a former CASA volunteer and supervisor I have seen first-hand the tremendous impact CASA has in the life of the children they serve. David and I support CASA because we firmly believe that every child deserves a safe and permanent home. Hall-Dawson CASA is crucial in helping ensure this for the most vulnerable children in our community." — *Shannon Hughes*

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Grantors





Women Working Wonders

Women Working Wonders (WWW) is a group of women who supports the children CASA serves, and helps share the CASA story throughout our community. Unlike donations that fund our budget to recruit, train and support our volunteers, members' annual dues of \$100 help fill the gap for children where there are no other resources. Examples include tutoring and tablets, fees for camps and sports, and beds to provide adequate sleeping arrangements. WWW also provides appreciation gifts for our CASA volunteers who do the hard work of advocating for our kids, all at their own expense.



Once again, our CASA family joined with our community as we gathered around The Giving Tree at The Little House. The Giving Tree provides a unique opportunity for supporters to honor friends and family members through a tribute gift. This effort supports maintenance and upkeep of The Little House, home of Hall-Dawson CASA & Edmondson Telford Child Advocacy Center (ETCAC). These gifts and sponsorships are vital to our operations and we are grateful to these supporters and the following sponsors:

Jordan Allen
Deborah Ames
Lynda Askew
Brenda Barger
Sharon Bozman
Jane Bradley
Abigail Carter

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& Miles

We are grateful to donors who made a tribute gift in honor or memory of their loved ones. These gifts to CASA are such a thoughtful and meaningful way to remember a loved one. Honorarium and memorial gifts are listed in alphabetical order by the name of the honoree. Donors are listed after the name of the person in whose honor they contributed.

In Honor

Jordan Allen

Patsy Kilmartin

**Debbie Fox and Kristy
Basinger**

Ellen Hagan

Debbie Fox

Sarah Johnson

Dian Hatfield

Shirley Hudgins

Chris Hollifield

Shirley Hudgins

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Mike and Tracy Verrigni

2024 Financials

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.

Support & Revenue

\$1,269,409

- 35% Federal and State Grants
- 12% Local Grants
- 4% Foundations
- 40% Corporate and Individual Giving
- 9% In-Kind Program Support

Expenses

\$1,132,058

- 80% Direct Services
- 13% Fundraising
- 7% General Operations

HALL-DAWSON CASA
PO BOX 907471
Gainesville, GA 30501

Will you
Be the One
to support our
community's
most vulnerable
children?



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



Be a Changemaker: Set up a monthly CASA donation. These gifts support the needs of children throughout the year.



Plan a gift: What will your legacy be? Consider a planned gift that not only helps secure the future of Hall-Dawson CASA but also benefits you and your family through tax advantages.



Share our story: Follow us on social media and subscribe to our monthly newsletter, then share it with your friends and colleagues.



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