

# Ocmulgee Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) CASA CONNECTION

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2024

## *Ocmulgee CASA Wins Established Affiliate Award at State Conference*



Ocmulgee CASA's impact. With a combined 40 years of staff experience, Ocmulgee CASA exemplifies leadership and commitment within the statewide

CASA network. In FY 2023, Ocmulgee CASA engaged 65 CASA volunteers and served 178 children. In the last year, Ocmulgee CASA increased its active CASA volunteers by 14% and children served by 33%, consistently demonstrating an unwavering commitment to community presence and outreach. Actively participating in local events, Ocmulgee CASA has broadened its reach and attracted new volunteers.

Active community involvement and a robust social media presence further amplify the mission and visibility in the communities served. Ocmulgee CASA's collaboration with DFCS and the judicial system underscores its excellence. A team member at one of the local DFCS offices recently said, "We wish we could have a CASA on every single case." This statement speaks volumes to the work and positive relationships Ocmulgee CASA has developed and maintained with all four of the DFCS offices in the broad and diverse circuit. Juvenile Court Judge Kelli Ruthford added to the praise, saying, "A CASA is always a good idea." Ocmulgee CASA's strategic initiatives, community support, and strong volunteer base highlight its status as a beacon of excellence within the statewide CASA network.

Ocmulgee CASA, serving the largest geographic judicial circuit east of the Mississippi River has received the 2024 Established Program Award of Excellence from Georgia CASA. The award was received at the Georgia CASA Conference in Atlanta on August 24. Boasting a 75% volunteer retention rate, Ocmulgee CASA creates a supportive family atmosphere through regular meetings and appreciation events for its CASA volunteers. The "Champions for Children" campaign has significantly increased community engagement and awareness. Financial stability is ensured through diverse funding sources, including an annual signature sponsored golf tournament. Strong partnerships with DFCS and the court system enhance



### Upcoming Events:

**Volunteer Training**  
Begins in November  
(dates TBD)  
Putnam Admin Building  
117 Putnam Dr., Suite A  
Eatonton

**CASA Volunteer  
Appreciation  
Banquet**  
October 21  
Rock Eagle 4-H Center  
Eatonton



**CASA**

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
**FOR CHILDREN**

**OCMULGEE COURT APPOINTED  
SPECIAL ADVOCATES**

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## *Kares 4 Kids Costco Shopping Day*



Thank you to Keller Williams Lake Oconee, Judy Roberts, and Kares 4 Kids for inviting us to their Costco shopping day! We can't wait to deliver all of these toys to our CASA children this Christmas. Thanks for supporting and bringing joy to the children we serve who are experiencing foster care!



## *Swing A Club for CASA Golf Tournament*

Ocmulgee CASA's annual Swing A Club for CASA golf tournament was held on September 12 at Bear's Best in Suwanee. Thanks to everyone who made this event possible, especially Hathaway Construction Services, the presenting sponsor.



Encouraging  
someone to be  
entirely  
themselves is the  
loudest way to  
love them.  
- Anonymous



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SPECIAL ADVOCATES

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Ocmulgee CASA's  
Board of Directors

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Diane Brooks  
James Goforth  
Justin Jones  
Ellen Torrance  
Linda Zarkowsky

## *CPRS Update Coming*

CPRS will be deploying an update in the next couple of weeks that will affect volunteers. The update will now require a multi-factor authentication to log into CPRS. In addition, all passwords will now be required to be 14 characters in length.

What does this mean for you? For users accounts with accurate email addresses, nothing at this time. In the next few weeks, you will receive directions to change your password or you'll be prompted to change your password at a future login if it is less than 14 characters.

Thank you for your patience as CPRS deploys this new security feature.

## *Volunteer Spotlight: Kara Latz*

**Kara Latz** knew in retirement that she wanted to give back through volunteering. She says, "I had thought about it for a couple of years and then after working with underserved teens in high school, I decided I was emotionally ready for challenges that I might confront."

Kara has been a CASA for a little over a year and has advocated for three children/youth. Over the course of her first year, she has found the kids and foster parents feel more at ease when they see her face in court. "I get answers to their questions and break it down in simple terms, i.e., minus the legal terminology. Both the children and parents can become frustrated when they are told different things by different people. It can be hard to gain their trust sometimes.

"Recently, one of my kids was unexpectedly called to court at the very last minute. She asked the transporter while driving if her CASA was going to be present. That made me feel good," Kara adds.

After earning a Bachelor of Arts from Emory University and a Masters in Business Administration from Mercer University, Kara spent her career of 20+ years in corporate America, working 17 of those years as a data analyst at BellSouth/AT&T. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, Cross-fit, yoga, crossword puzzles, and career coaching high school students in her community. Kara is also mom to a set of twins and a singleton (ages 20, 20 and 12).

Thank you, Kara, for all you do for the children we serve!

