

CASA Connections

SUMMER 2019 EDITION



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA by the Lakes

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Change A Childs Story

or form to such a degree that their safety is in question.

When a CASA comes into a child's life, their stories are full of heart-break, betrayal and potential trauma. A CASA will come into the child's story at a very pivotal moment that will affect the rest of the story of their life. Depending on what support they are given and what needs are met, a child's story may get better or worse. CASA volunteers can recommend support services and make sure all the needs of the child are being met.

That's not all a child needs to make their story better. Children also need someone they can trust. A child in the court system often feels like they can't trust anyone. A

CASA is someone that can prove their trustworthiness to the child they advocate for. This trust must be built. Once a child trusts their CASA, the story can begin to change for the better. The child may confide in their CASA, and the child can feel comfortable around a responsible adult in their life.

What can be the result of a CASA volunteer being on a case and working with a child? Not every case with a CASA will end perfectly, but every child who has a CASA benefits from their advocacy. A CASA cannot control the others involved with their case, but a CASA volunteer can change a child's story for the better.

Stories are accounts of events that happen in the lives of people. Some stories are beautiful. Some stories are scary. Then some stories are heartbreaking. On September 30th, 2017, 442,995 were living in foster homes in the United States. That was an increase from the same day in 2016 when 437,465 children were in the foster care system. There are many reasons children are removed from their parents, but every reason boils down to the parents failing their child in some way, shape

Superhero Spotlight

Angela Sames



Although we couldn't help the children in our communities without our great volunteers, the staff at CASA by the Lakes works daily to make sure these volunteers can advocate for children to the best of their ability. One of those staff members is Angela Sames and she is our CASA superhero for this issue of CASA Connections!

Angela graduated from Murray State University with a bachelor's degree in Agriculture. She is originally from O'Fallon, IL, but Murray has been home since attending Murray State. Angela started her career as a veterinary technician and spent years in the veterinary management field. Angela came to work for CASA by the Lakes at the beginning of 2018 and she has been working hard ever since.

Over the last year and a half, Angela has taught numerous volunteer training classes, managed dozens of CASA volunteers and works tirelessly to make sure every child that needs a CASA receives one. If you ever have a question, Angela will either know the answer or tell you the best way to go about getting an answer. Without Angela working so diligently behind the scenes and providing such great support to our volunteers, CASA by the Lakes would not be able to help as many children as we do now. Thank you, Angela, for all the hard work you do!

CASA Moment

This story includes two children who were living with their mom suffering from substance abuse issues. Mom had an extensive history with methamphetamine. Their dad was not a consistent presence in their life, and when he was around, domestic violence between himself and their mother often ensued. He also suffered from substance abuse issues. The mother recognized that she had serious issues that were putting her children at risk, and asked her own mother to take care of them. Mom was later arrested while under the influence of methamphetamine and alcohol. She was ordered to go to an in-patient 30 day rehab, which she completed. Two weeks after finishing rehab, she relapsed and was again arrested while under the influence of drugs. At this time, the maternal grandmother filed an emergency custody petition and was granted tem-

porary custody of the two children. CASA was then appointed.

From the beginning, the mother recognized that she needed help. She realized that she could not adequately take care of her children and took steps to ensure that her own mother would provide what she could not at the time. The CASA volunteer appointed to this case spent time with the children, getting to know them and their personalities very well. She aided in getting them started in counseling. It was clear to the CASA volunteer that the children loved their mother and that their mother was working extremely hard to complete the tasks ordered by the court. As the mother made progress, the CASA volunteer recognized that both the children and the mother would benefit from more visitation, and she advocated for just that. Mother was granted

"From the beginning, the mother recognized that she needed help"

unsupervised visitation based on the tremendous progress she had made. The mother had a large amount of support, from the grandmother, her children, and the children's CASA volunteer. This support helped mom to reach her goals, remain sober and regain custody back of both of her children. The CASA was happy that the children were able to get the counseling they needed and the time with their mother that was necessary for bonding and healing. The children and mother now live together in a safe, stable, environment. The children are happy and comfortable, and mom is dedicated to her sober lifestyle.

Join the Fight

We have had new volunteers join in the fight! These volunteers, like the others before them, have decided to join the mission to advocate for the timely and safe placement of abused and neglected children in Calloway and Marshall Counties. They will soon be providing a child a voice in the court systems right here in our counties. Neglect and abuse of children is not something that only happens in large cities across the United States, but also in our small communities here in Calloway and Marshall counties. Volunteers help us continue to do what we can for these children by stepping up to be the superheroes that they so desperately need.

So how can you join the fight? There are several ways you can help CASA by the Lakes and the children in need in our community. One way is to become a volunteer! Volunteers must be 21 years old before they can fill out an application. After the application is completed, the volunteer will have to successfully complete an interview and background checks here

at our office. After that, the volunteer will go through the required training and then take an oath of confidentiality. At that point, the volunteer will be able to take a case and begin working to help a child in need in our community.

What if you are a busy person and do not have time to dedicate to volunteering but still want to make a difference? We are always in need of financial donations and partners who can help us provide for a child's needs. A donation as little as \$10 can provide CASA by the Lakes with any needed office supplies or if you can give more, donations of \$20 or \$100 can provide a child with a snack bundle or counseling respectively.

If you are unable to donate time or money there are still ways you can help! You can share our posts from our Facebook page, share our website with your friends and just talk to others about the mission of CASA by the Lakes. There may be people in our community that have never heard of CASA or maybe they have heard the name but are not quite sure what we do at CASA by the Lakes. By simply spreading the word about CASA and what we do for the abused and neglected children in Calloway and Marshall County, you can help us accomplish our mission.

Thank you for the support you can and do provide for us at CASA. Without the amazing community of people like you, we wouldn't be able to provide a voice for the children who really need it. We do the best that we can to provide a CASA volunteer for as many children as possible. With your help, we hope to reach our goal of providing every child a CASA superhero! Thank you again for helping continue to change a child's story.



Superhero Training

Know someone who would like to start volunteering at CASA by the Lakes?

The next volunteer training will take place this September, so there is still plenty of time to sign up to be a part of the CASA by the Lakes mission! Send us a message on Facebook or call us at either of our offices in Calloway county (270-761-0164) or Marshall county (270-387-0063) to get more information. You can also go to our website at www.casabythelakes.org to fill out an application.

Important Dates

**LOTUS
Inservice Training**
August 12th @ 5:30PM
at the Calloway Office

Implicit Bias Training
Presenter: Edward Palmer
August 28th @ 1PM
at the Murray State University
Paducah Campus