

ADVOCATE ADVISOR

CASA OF THE EASTERN PANHANDLE NEWS & UPDATES

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UNITY CAMPAIGN



Unity
Campaign

Powered by United Way of the Eastern Panhandle



223
CHILDREN
SERVED
2021 YTD

16
NEW
VOLUNTEERS
2021 YTD

This spring's Unity Campaign powered through the United Way of the Eastern Panhandle raised an amazing \$11,300 to support CASA-EP's Fostering Futures program. An enormous thanks goes to you, our supporters, and to the anonymous donors who provided the incentive match which nearly doubled every donation raised. Contributions made to this new program go towards helping grow initiatives which advocate for youth aging out of the foster care system in this community.

➤ *continued*



\$20,581.75
raised to support
Fostering Futures

Thanks to the amazing generosity of the incentive match sponsors, the total impact amount contributed to Fostering Futures was \$20,581.75!

With the backing of the United Way of the Eastern Panhandle, support of local media, some incredible incentive match sponsors and a strong group of nonprofits, the Eastern Panhandle has achieved an enormous community-wide impact of **over half a million dollars**

through this one event, including many agencies with whom we partner. That is the power of working together! ■

THANK YOU
FOR HELPING A CHILD
Thrive!



MISSION MOMENT

OUR CASA STORY

BY SHEILA ANDERS & KATHY BARKER

My name is Sheila Anders. I originally joined CASA of the Eastern Panhandle as a volunteer in 2016. However, I became inactive when I was diagnosed with breast cancer for a second time. After successful surgery and chemo, I decided to rejoin CASA in 2019, when I realized my work as a CASA volunteer was not finished.

And I'm Kathy Barker. My co-worker, Sheila, first introduced me to CASA when she was going through volunteer training. It was after reading an article in The Journal newspaper in 2019 about CASA-EP and the urgent need for more advocates that I felt led by God to also become a CASA volunteer.



Sheila Anders and Kathy Barker

We are a co-CASA team. We work for Wee Disciples Christian Academy, where Kathy is Director of Business/Finance and Sheila is a preschool teacher. Having dedicated over 20 years each to early childhood development and education, we both felt a calling to help children who are caught up in unfortunate situations involving abuse and neglect.

Initially, we worried that our jobs might prevent us from being able to dedicate enough time and energy to effectively support the children we represent. However, because we both have such a love for children and the desire to help and support those in need, we knew that together we could make a difference. Working as a co-CASA team ensures that at least one of us can attend all hearings and necessary meetings. We rely on each other to share ideas and recommendations. With the help and support of our Volunteer Supervisor, we are learning new ways to ensure our kids and their families are receiving the best support possible.

Being a CASA is not always easy, and at times it can be frustrating. It has been particularly challenging in the age of COVID-19 where physical interaction is limited. However, with each case we are assigned, we know we are making a difference in the life of that troubled child. We work to provide emotional support to each child, so they know that someone cares and is going to stand by them as they make their way through a confusing legal system. Our Hearing Reports speak to the

➤ *continued*



MISSION MOMENT

Court on behalf of that child. Most importantly, we want to give them hope and be the one person they can count on no matter what!

Our first case was such a positive experience for us. We supported a little boy who was born to a mother with substance abuse issues. Her disease made it impossible for her to care for herself or her son. This little boy was incredibly fortunate because he had loving grandparents who were 100% dedicated to adopting their grandson and raising him as their own. Our job was to provide as much help as possible to represent this precious child, to be his voice, literally and figuratively. He is now in a stable family and receiving the love that every child needs and deserves.

Our second case is a young girl whose family has been ravaged by ongoing drug abuse, resulting in neglect and a very unstable home. We are present at court hearings to ensure that her needs remain the foremost priority. She and others involved have a lawyer to represent them, while our role is to be there to voice her best interests and desires. We also work with DHHR and the school system to ensure that she is receiving educational

services such as speech or occupational therapy to help with developmental needs. We will continue to advocate for her as we all work toward a permanent, safe and loving home.

“We will continue to advocate for her as we all work toward a permanent, safe and loving home.”

We had not planned on taking on an additional case. However, our CASA Supervisor asked us to consider becoming an advocate for an 11-year old girl in desperate need of someone to help her during a critical time in her development. Every child you represent touches your heart in many ways. However, this young girl has really made us appreciate the importance of the CASA organization. Imagine being 11-years old and in your entire life, you’ve never known a safe and loving home; all you’ve known is foster home after foster home, facility after facility. She has been let down by every adult she has ever known. As a result, she has put up self-protecting barriers because she doesn’t trust anyone. She’s never known love and as a result, she doesn’t know how to love anyone, including herself. It’s heartbreaking to watch her struggle as she tries to find her place in this world through a judicial and welfare system that she can’t begin to understand. As her advocates, we will stand by her and with her for as long as it takes to help her see that she is worthy of love, that she should have hope for a brighter future, and that she is not alone in this world.

Why do we volunteer as Court Appointed Special Advocates? We advocate because we have been blessed in our own lives and have an overwhelming desire to give back. We are fortunate to be able to help innocent and hurting children who need a helping hand. Through our CASA work, we continue to feel blessed ourselves and strive to be a blessing to each of our kids. ■

IN THE NEWS

WE'VE MOVED!



CASA-EP celebrated the opening of its new main office in April. We are now located off Mid-Atlantic Parkway and I-81, near WV DHHR in Martinsburg. Come by and see us!



IN THE NEWS

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Court Appointed Special Advocates of the Eastern Panhandle (CASA-EP) has appointed six new members to the organization's board of directors for 2021.

Newly designated directors include the Reverend Dr. GT Schramm, the Reverend Dean Lawrence, Kristen Gingery, Mary Butler, Gloria Shoemaker and Amy Panzarella.

"We are delighted to welcome our newest directors to help guide this growing agency," said Michelle Sudduth, executive director. "They each bring unique talents and perspectives to advance the mission and vision of best-interest child advocacy in the Eastern Panhandle."



THE REVEREND DR. GT SCHRAMM has been Rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Shepherdstown since 1983 and served in many positions of community advocacy for area nonprofits. He is a graduate of Wheeling Jesuit University and Virginia Theological Seminary. Schramm and his wife, Susie, are the parents of two children and grandparents of two. He joins the CASA-EP Board of Directors thanks to the inspiration of his parishioners, many of whom have served as CASA-EP volunteers who have shared the growing needs of vulnerable children and families in the Eastern Panhandle.

THE REVEREND DEAN LAWRENCE, rector of Zion Episcopal Church in Charles Town, moved to the Eastern Panhandle in the summer of 2020 with wife, Sarah, and young daughter. Prior to ordination in 2009, he had worked for twelve years as a Software Engineer. Lawrence earned his MDiv from Virginia Theological Seminary and his BS in Computer Engineering from Texas A&M University. He previously served in the Diocese of Texas before moving to West Virginia.



KRISTEN GINGERY has served as the Executive Director of Morgan County Partnership since 2018. Prior to this role, she served as the executive director of the Family Resource Network of the Eastern Panhandle. Gingery is currently a Doctor of Education student at Frostburg State University, having received a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Shepherd University and Masters of Arts in Psychology from The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. Currently, her efforts are targeted towards promoting assessments, planning, and implementation of evidence-based programming and therapeutic supports in Morgan County's public-school system. Gingery is a CASA volunteer for youth in Morgan County and joins the CASA-EP Board of Directors to further promote positive outcomes for underserved youth in the community.

IN THE NEWS

MARY BUTLER currently serves as an Academic Retention Specialist for the TRIO Student Support Services Program at Shepherd University. She holds a bachelor's degree in Exercise Science and Master's Degree in College Student Development and Personnel; both degrees were earned from Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania. Butler's experience and skills facilitating student growth and development aid her as she serves humbly on the CASA-EP Board of Directors. She has a passion for life-long learning and will never pass up an adventure. She currently resides in Winchester, Virginia with her partner, Melissa.



GLORIA SHOEMAKER is the Program Director of West Virginia Counseling and Advocacy, a division of Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. Shoemaker holds a Bachelor's degree in psychology, as well as having experience in business administration, management and healthcare industries. Having worked within the behavioral health field for over a decade, Shoemaker admires the dedication of CASA volunteers. She is pleased to collaborate with an amazing group of people committed to helping our community's youth and families to thrive.



AMY PANZARELLA is a seasoned human resource professional with 26 years of experience working in a variety of industries. She recently started her leadership coaching and HR consulting business, and attended George Mason's rigorous Leadership Coaching for Organizational Well-Being program. She holds a Master's degree in Management with a concentration in human resources; and she has her Senior Professional Human Resource Certification (SPHR) and the SHRM Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP) designations. Panzarella serves on several non-profit boards in West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle, including CASA-EP. She joined CASA-EP due to her desire to take an active role in improving the lives of vulnerable children and to help promote the great work of this organization within her community.



"We are fortunate to have a very dynamic and committed group of individuals on the CASA-EP board of directors. They provide invaluable support and insight, particularly so during the growth and evolution of this past year," said Susan Caperton, president of the CASA-EP board of directors. "Their passion for the organization is pivotal to ensuring that we provide the best possible advocacy for the children and families of this community."

The new directors are appointed to a two-year term on the CASA-EP board. The 18-member includes broad representation from Morgan, Berkeley and Jefferson Counties. CASA-EP believes that every child who's been abused or neglected deserves to have a dedicated advocate speaking up for their best interest in court, at school, and in our community. To accomplish this, CASA-EP educates and empowers diverse community volunteers who ensure that each child's needs remain a priority in an overburdened child welfare system. Apply, donate, or learn more at www.mycasaep.org, call 304-263-5100, or find CASA of the Eastern Panhandle on Facebook. ■

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEW VOLUNTEERS



CASA-EP welcomed a new class of advocates on June 14th, 2021, sworn in by Twenty-Third Circuit Court Judge Debra McLaughlin. The newest CASA volunteers include April Younker, Matt Douglass, Danielle Swope, Kimberly Horst, and Brittney Greene.

Our newest advocates shared why they decided to become a CASA volunteer...

- ...to make a clearer path to good things for children in need
- I have a heart for the children. I want the satisfaction of knowing that I've made a significant difference in a child's life, by having a positive impact on their day-to-day life.
- It is 100% about voicing the emotional, physical and mental needs of the children affected. They NEED protection and to know they are loved and cared for, that they matter and have worth. I can help provide that voice when it is lacking.
- I chose to be the voice of the abused and neglected because if not me, then who?

2021 TRAINING

Guided Learning
Open Enrollment

Self-paced online training;
on your own schedule/time

In-person Virtual Training
Mon Aug 23 to Sept 2:
Mon Oct 25 to Nov 4

In-person CASA-EP staff-led
training; M-Th from 1-4:30 p.m.

**NEW
FORMAT**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CINDY JOHNSON NAMED PIP VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



Cindy Johnson

The Partners in Prevention Committee for Berkeley and Jefferson Counties honors individuals each year for their outstanding efforts and accomplishments on behalf of children. This year CASA-EP Advocate Cindy Johnson was awarded PIP Volunteer of the Year.

Cindy Johnson has been a Court Appointed Special Advocate with CASA of the Eastern Panhandle since May 2019. In that time, Ms. Johnson has served 34 children who have been subjects of 11 different child abuse and neglect petitions. Ms. Johnson has donated approximately 150 hours of her time in her CASA volunteerism by conducting independent investigations, facilitating communication and

service provision, advocating – speaking on behalf of the children – in the form of written reports to the Court, and monitoring the progress of parents on Improvement Periods and the well-being of the children in placement.

***Nothing you do
for children is
ever wasted.***

–Garrison Keillor

Ms. Johnson is a fierce advocate for the children she is assigned to. She is a strong, well-spoken individual who has earned the respect of many of the “players” in the abuse and neglect community in Berkeley County. This includes the Judges, the attorneys, and even the Department workers. Recently, CASA-EP staff were contacted directly by a Department worker specifically requesting Ms. Johnson be assigned to a case thanks to her strong advocacy skills.

ACTION ON DEI COMMITMENTS: TRAINING WITH LADONNA WATTLEY

Licensed Clinical Social Worker and gifted presenter LaDonna Wattley, joined us in May to conduct two workshops on diversity, equity, inclusion and culturally relevant service provision. This powerful two-part inservice is already making a difference in local advocacy. Volunteer Supervisor Sarah Pauletti offers one of her recent experiences:

Thanks to LaDonna’s training I was able to cultivate a different turn of events at a recent family meeting. I did not try to compare any of my struggles to what they are going through or any of the



LaDonna Wattley

➤ continued

ANNOUNCEMENTS

other typical or accidental things people may do in that situation. Instead, I listened deeply and then summarized what was said back to them, so they knew I heard and understood them. I focused on the positive changes and steps they are taking to get their family back together.

It can be easy to think we might not need DEI training, but growing in compassion, empathy, and communication is something we all can continue to improve. Building trust and rapport is essential to our work and mission, especially with the families that we serve and the emotions that they experience. There have been a few times since the training that I have acknowledged and noticed that I took something from the training. I look forward to continuing these important discussions and growing together.

CHAT N' CHEW

Chat n' Chew continues the first Saturday of every month at 10am and Lunch Bunch on 2nd Weds at 12 noon. These sessions are great opportunities for new and seasoned advocates to discuss court advocacy issues, resources and best practices. Get to know your fellow volunteers! Contact Cari Lefeber for more information: cari@mycasaep.org ■



CASA

**CHANGE A
CHILD'S STORY™**

WWW.MYCASAEP.ORG



HELP A

CHILD THRIVE

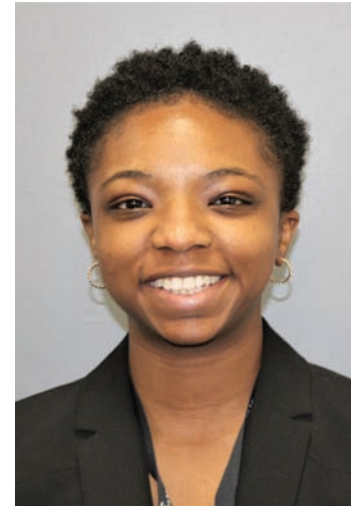


USF COURSE

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

BY NIKKI JOHNSON, PROGRAM COORDINATOR

University of South Florida's Muma College of Business offered a free, 14-hour (7 weeks), online certificate program to business and community leaders across the world to educate on the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace. Sponsored by Florida local organizations Tampa Bay Lightning and Jabil – they focus on how organizations can build a substantial business model to create a more diverse workplace. They do this by addressing equity issues in and outside of the workplace and emphasizing the importance of fostering inclusivity in sustaining the longevity of your organization.



Nikki Johnson

The program had so many keynote speakers from USF's very own President to Jennifer Arnold, star of TLC's docu-drama 'The Little Couple.' They all brought such knowledgeable and insightful takes on what it means to incorporate diversity amongst their own work and how impactful it is. Out of the 7 modules that were needed to pass this course; module #3: Understanding Your Organization, really touched on why creating an inclusive work environment is the way to go with any organization.

Organizations with above average diversity and level of engagement, which happens as a result of having an inclusive work environment, outperform organizations with below average diversity and engagement by 46%-58%. 67% of job-seekers and entrepreneurs consider diversity as an important factor when considering employment opportunities and doing business. That in mind; much of job seekers cohort are millennials - 92 million. This also happens to be the most diverse group with a 44% Latino population, 35% Black population, 30% Asian population and 27% white population. DEI in the workforce really matters, maybe now more than ever. It is time to be intentional with the work we do.



My biggest take away from this program and something I will consider while working toward CASA-EP's DEI initiative is that this is a journey not a marathon. There is no completion stage when working through diversity, equity and inclusion. However, I do have a clear understanding of where this starts and that is the top. Aligning our diversity, equity, and inclusion vision and having accountability at all levels of our organization is the goal. CASA-EP is an organization allows room for growth and this is a growing process – we're excited to go on this journey and grow our diversity initiative by fighting anti-discrimination within our operations and governance. ■

SAVE THE DATE



SUPERHERO RUN



OCTOBER 2021

Details to come!