

CASA in the Community



The Salem Indiana Rotary Club made a generous donation of \$500 to CASA of Washington County! The donation was made with funds from the Rotary's Daddy Daughter Dance. If you know a Rotarian, please thank them for the generous donation!

Courtney was invited present about CASA to the 2022 Class of Awareness Washington County during their meeting on April 14th. Awareness Washington County is a leadership development program for residents of Washington County. The presentation led to one new volunteer who started training in April!



CASA of Washington County set up a booth at the 2022 Leader Publishing Company Home and Garden Show! We met lots of new people and were able to spread the word about CASA!

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

227—number of contacts made with children and parties to case in April

43—number of children served in April

3—number of new volunteers who began training in April!

2,634—number of people CASA of Washington County reached on Facebook. Please like and share our page on Facebook!

\$9,100—total amount of NEW grant funds awarded to CASA of Washington County; more info coming soon!



Child Centered Advocacy

During our training as CASAs we often hear the term “best interest advocacy” or “child centered advocacy”. Our primary job as a CASA is to advocate for the **best interest of the child** in court. How can we make sure that is happening? Face to Face contact with the child is paramount to practicing child centered advocacy. Building a relationship (that is age and developmentally appropriate) with the child or children in your case is so important. How can you advocate for a child you do not know? **You can’t!** By getting to know the children in your case, you are able to advocate for services they may need but aren’t getting, advocate for a change of placement, advocate for increased or decreased visitation with parents, and more. As a CASA, you have a large amount of influence on different potential outcomes for children, which is a very big responsibility. Every recommendation you make in a court report, and every testimony you give in court, has the potential to influence the future of a child. These recommendations and testimony **must** have the best interest of the child at the forefront. Another important piece of child centered advocacy is the ability to be objective. Sometimes, what is in the best interest of a child is not always what *you* as a CASA would prefer to see happen in your own life, to your own children or grandchildren, etc. However, if it is in the best interest of the child you are serving, then that is what you must advocate for in both court reports and testimony. When advocating for older youth, remember to advocate **WITH** them and not just **FOR** them. Older children often have very strong opinions about what is best for them. Listen to them and take their wishes into consideration when making recommendations to the court. An adage often shared by the State of Indiana CASA Office when discussing objectivity and child centered advocacy is:

“nothing about me without them”

Remember this phrase next time you are working on recommendations for the children you serve.



TO DO

1. Welcome new volunteers!



In March 2022, our newest CASA volunteer was sworn in by Judge Larry Medlock. Get to know a little bit about Savannah and take some time to welcome her!

A little bit about me:

I am a mom to an 11 year old son, Riley, who is the greatest part of my life. My family is a very important part of my life. I am thankful for my parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. I work for the State of Indiana through the Division of Family Resources. I love listening to music like The Beatles, watching movies and all the Ken Burns documentaries, and telling bad mom jokes! I am a lifelong learner and try to sprinkle some kindness wherever I can.

Why I decided to become a CASA Volunteer:

I did not have the typical nuclear family as a child. I hope to use the lessons from my childhood and create an environment where children can feel understood and accepted, especially when dealing with the choices adults make that children have no control over.

What I am most looking forward to as a CASA Volunteer:

I cannot wait to further find my voice as a CASA volunteer. I have always loved the quote “Be who you needed when you were younger”. I look forward to being a positive force in the lives of children. I hope to empower them and guide them (or caregivers) to the tools/resources to create a positive change.

One thing I want other volunteers to know about me:

I am excited to work with you all and collaborate. I’m naturally an “idea” person but I am also very shy and end up not sharing. Feel free to message me and give me tips as I start this journey.

You can reach Savannah to say hello or give her some advice at:

savannah.jones@casawc.org

Volunteer

Spotlight

Sonja Heath



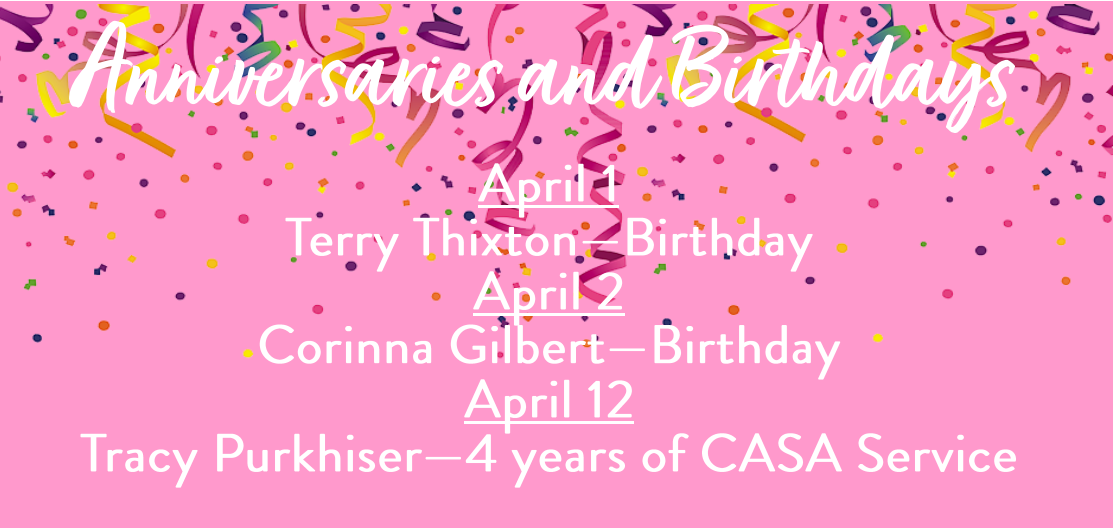
Hello! My name is Sonja Heath. My husband, Jeromy, and I have lived in Washington County for several years as renters, although neither of us grew up here. We finally purchased a home just outside of Salem during the early part of the pandemic where we raise beef cattle, and enjoy living the country life close enough to the city to feel connected. I have a grown son, Austin, and a granddaughter, Lilly, both of whom we love to see as often as possible. In addition to our small cattle herd, we have a labradoodle, Bully. He keeps life interesting. After working from home with him for the last two years, I'm not sure which one of us is going to hate me going back to the office a couple days a week more!

For my day job, I am a Senior Internal Auditor at Humana. People always assume this means I work with numbers, but mostly I work with people and ask questions.

Outside of all of that, lately I have been learning to bake bread with the sourdough method. Making bread with only three ingredients intrigued me initially, but I really do love doing it. I am still working on perfecting it though. My husband hasn't complained about this hobby once!

It is interesting that Courtney asked me to do this in April, since April is National Volunteer Month. Humana encourages employees to give back and provides various resources and avenues for associates to volunteer both through Humana sponsored events, and locally in our own communities. A few years ago during National Volunteer Month, I was searching the Humana volunteer database for opportunities to volunteer near Salem because I wanted to do something in our local community, as opposed to in Louisville where I was working. The CASA opportunity included an email address that went to the Indiana CASA office that ended up getting connected to what was then the CASA of Washington and Floyd Counties. There was a training class starting soon, so I got to learn all about being a CASA volunteer with three other amazing ladies. Class with George and Aubrey is a real learning experience, and they keep it real.

The most rewarding part of being a CASA is always when a case ends, and you know that the child you have been working with is finally in a good place. Or of course seeing a child succeed even when the odds are stacked against them. Plus I get to work with so many other amazing CASA volunteers. I mostly wish though that people knew how rewarding being a CASA volunteer really can be, and how many kids there are that need CASA volunteers. It is true that sometimes it breaks your heart, but that is part of being human and loving. The rewards of seeing a child reunified with their family, or adopted into a loving home far outweigh the sad times.



- CASA of Washington County will have a booth at the Washington County Fair this year! The fair is Monday June 20th through Saturday June 25th. This will be a great opportunity to spread the word about CASA and hopefully recruit new volunteers, board members, and/or donors! If you have any fun ideas for our booth, please let Courtney know! It would be great to have something at our booth that draws attention. Also, if you want to volunteer to man the booth please let Courtney know! Times that the booth will be open are as follows:

Monday 6/20 6pm to 10pm

Tuesday 6/21 to Friday 6/24 6pm to 9pm

Saturday 6/25 5pm to 8pm

- The State CASA Conference for all Directors, Staff, and Volunteers will be held in French Lick, IN on **Saturday October 1, 2022**. If you are interested in attending, please let Courtney know! It would be great to have as many volunteers there as possible to represent Washington County but also learn from presenters and other volunteers!

AND REMEMBER

IF IT ISN'T IN



THEN IT DIDN'T HAPPEN!