

NORTHEAST GEORGIA CASA

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES

ANNUAL REPORT

OCTOBER 1, 2022 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2023



(706) 886-1098

www.northeastgacasa.org

A WORD FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

The fiscal year 2023 has ended too quickly for me. Being the Chair of the Board of Directors that supports staff, volunteer child advocates, and a room of excited and committed board members has been a rewarding experience. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to be a part of an organization that can change the lives of children. I witnessed successes with the children of our eight county service area, stretching from Oglethorpe to Rabun. These successes are reported with distinctive and measurable outcomes. I accepted the opportunity to work alongside committed individuals. The people that volunteer and work in this region are filled with a professional nature and a compassion that is unsurpassed. They function well both inside the court and in the community. The court room involvement can be stressful yet our Court Appointed Special Advocates stay the course. They accomplish this over and over again seeking to improve and advocate for young lives in foster care. We understand that the future of our country depends on well educated youth with healthy minds, bodies and hearts. By meeting and working with these wonderful people, I have come to know that their work or rather love for the children, will be reflected in the future successes of our communities, cities, states, and ultimately our country. In addition, I want to give a special thanks to our Executive Director. As the Board Chair, I witnessed her unfailing efforts to support the Board of Directors. The late meetings, early meetings, countless emails and discussions where her participation was paramount to all of our concerns. Working within the budget was an outstanding masterpiece. All of the men and women of Northeast Georgia CASA have dedicated their time and demonstrate their concern for every child's future. This dedication is a reflection of their personal leadership and devotion. Northeast Georgia CASA is a success story. The fulfillment of its vision through the adherence to the mission statement provides the foundation for all CASA's. Those who serve are to be commended.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill".

BILL FLOWERS



A WORD FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our 2023 fiscal year was one of exploration, change and growth! The first several months of the year were dedicated to researching and gathering information to determine how we might best utilize the significant legacy gift we received from the late Dr. Lindy Harrell. Lindy had been a CASA with our program for nearly 4 years. We wanted to honor her and utilize her gift in a manner that would allow us to better serve children in foster care in our area. The Board formed a task force, led by Sam Johnson, and engaged an outside facilitator to conduct focus groups and have conversations with our judges while we also reached out to other CASA programs across the nation. All discussions and research ultimately led back to our program's mission of providing training, supervision, and resources for volunteers to advocate for the best interests of children in dependency proceedings. We determined that staying true to this mission felt both intuitively right and was supported by what we learned. We came to understand that "success" for our CASA program is defined by trusting relationships, clarity on the roles of all adults involved, and the ability to act - with confidence - in the best interest of the child. Our CASAs can and do feel isolated and experience frustration and empathetic strain. In light of this exploration the Board approved five initiatives to give increased support, knowledge and skills to our CASAs, so they can provide the children they represent with the strongest advocacy possible. These initiatives are: 1) A "Lindy Harrell Children's fund" where CASAs can apply to have a specific need for a child met when the need can not be met by DFCS, 2) Peer to Peer regional support groups to encourage connections, 3) Enhanced trauma training so we can fully operate as a trauma informed organization, 4) Counseling support to help CASAs recognize and process the secondary trauma they experience and 5) Gift card appreciation for our CASAs who drive several 100 miles each quarter. The second half of the year as we began rolling out these initiatives, saw significant staff change. An additional staff position was added. Also, two of our seasoned employees moved on and we filled these open positions. Although there is certainly a learning curve with so many new staff we are also excited about the new energy and skills and how we are melding as a team. We are looking forward to 2024 which will be a time of celebration for our program's 20 year anniversary, as well as a time of some challenges in light of recent cuts to some of our federal grant funds. We know that the one constant amidst it all is that the children need a compassionate adult speaking up for their needs and best interests. We are privileged to be in a position to fulfill that need.



Melissa

MELISSA MITCHELL BARRETT



Staff



(left to right) **Stacie Johnson, Kari LeBarron, Melissa Mitchell Barrett, Dana Weems, Jenifer Kulow, Jessica Kole**

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Tributes and Contributions

In Honor and Memory of those that inspire and connect others to the mission of CASA.

In Honor Of Al Battle

Bruce Battle

In Honor Of Alan White

Tom & Becky Callahan

In Honor Of Amy Ellis

In Honor Of Dr. & Rev. Hanahan

Betty Plagens

In Honor Of Christi Fordyce

Linda Statham

In Honor Of Betty Plagens

In Honor Of Wayne Miller

Wayne & Wanda Miller

In Honor Of Bill Gaik

In Honor Of Whitney Hutchinson

Arline McWhinney

In Memory Of Elizabeth Bryan

Max Housley

Joel & Deborah Bufford

Randell & Sarah Young

The New Journey Class

(First Baptist Church of Lavonia)

In Memory Of Elsie Lebaron

Kari Le Barron

In Memory Of John Cossart

Donna Kelley

In Memory Of Lindy Harrell

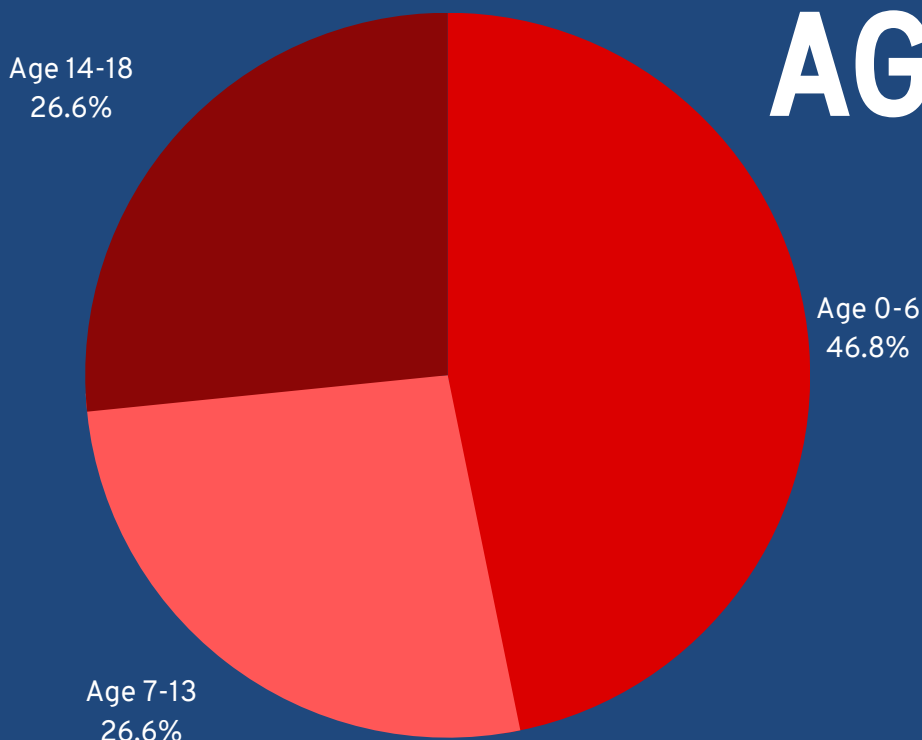
Mike & Steph Maley

In Memory Of Rico and Arnie

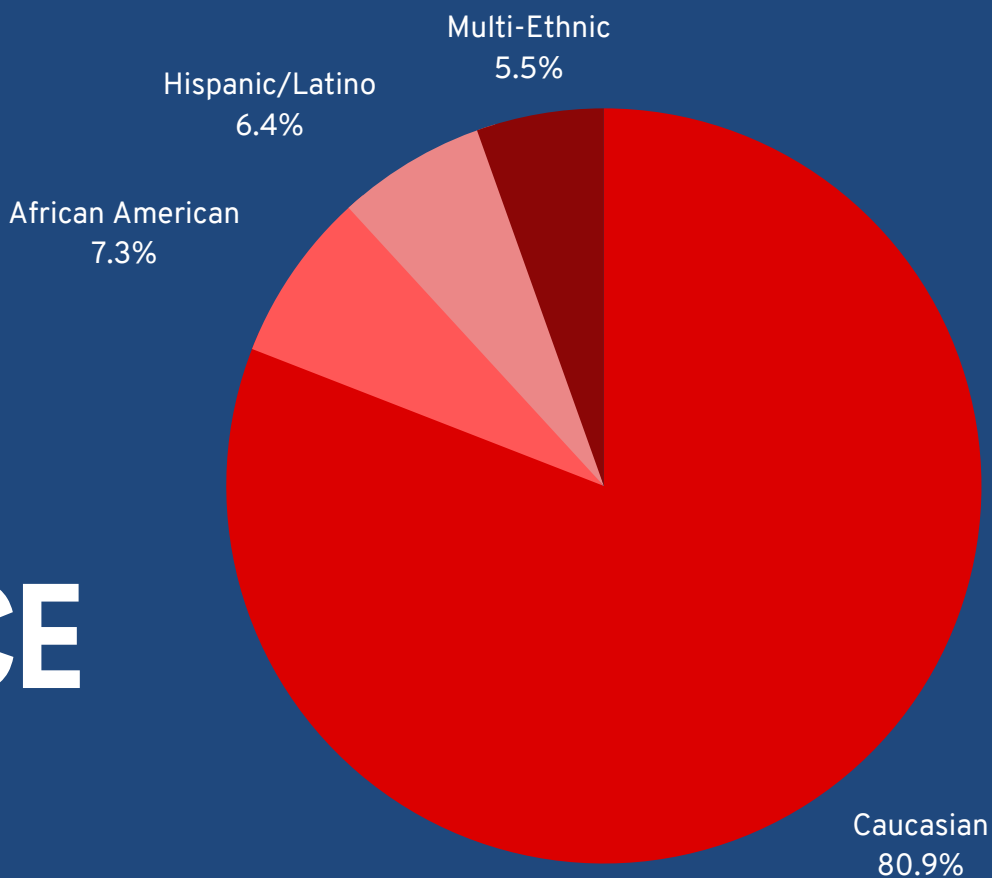
Bob & Debbie Rosenfeld

CHILD DEMOGRAPHICS

AGES



RACE



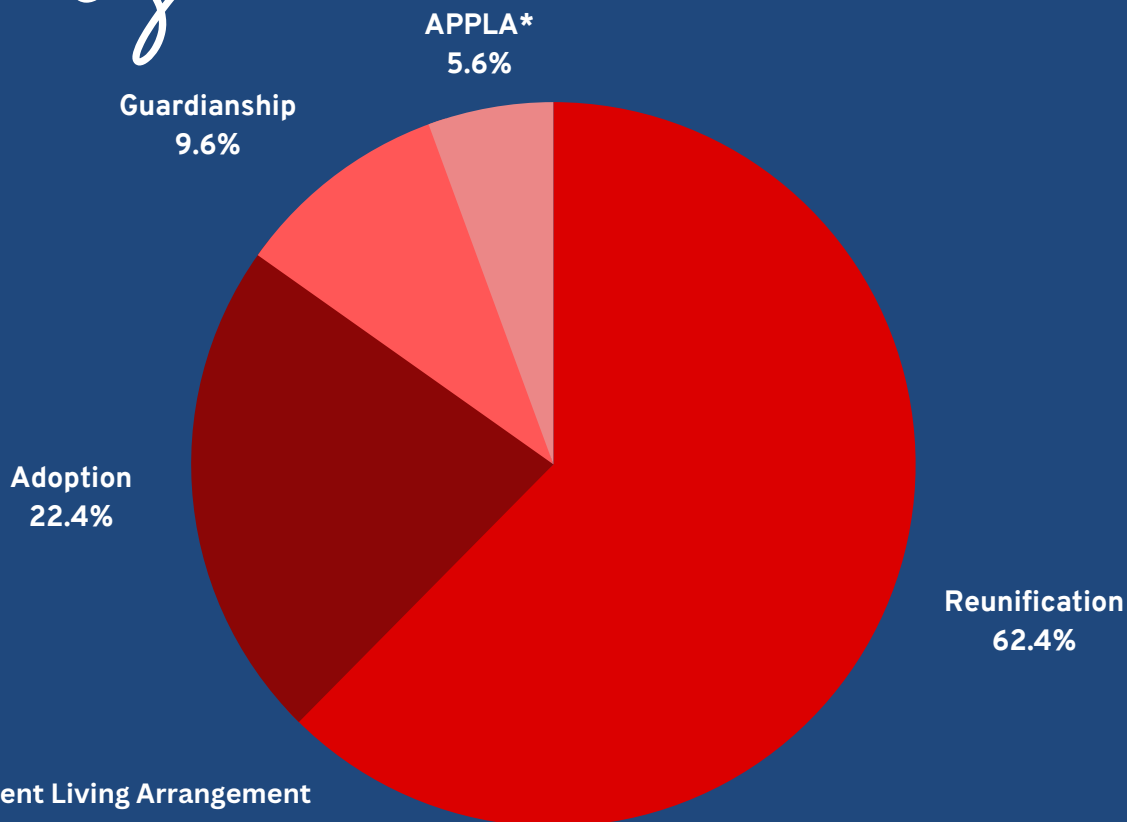
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Statement of Activities for Year Ended September 30th Unaudited
October 1, 2022-September 30th, 2023

	<u>Unclassified</u>
Ordinary Income/Expense	
<i>Income</i>	
Events/Donations	114,366.00
Foundations/Small Grants	2,000.00
Georgia CASA Annual Grant	82,311.40
Grants-Federal	249,792.00
Interest/Other/Reserve Transfer	20,803.90
Miscellaneous Income	76.74
United Way	32,000.00
Victim Assistance	40,750.11
Total Income	542,100.15
Gross Profit	542,100.15
<i>Expense</i>	
20th Anniversary Celebration	3,265.00
Advertising	1,553.00
Children's Funds	1,454.94
Copier Maintenance	202.10
Credit Card Charges	1,109.65
Equipment	3,851.55
Fundraising	15,166.46
Furniture	6,935.74
Insurance	7,754.00
L.H. Initiatives (mileage appreciation)	1,425.00
Membership Fees	695.00
Miscellaneous	47.39
Occupancy	21,389.31
Office Supplies	2,102.46
Payroll Expenses	336,300.83
Phone/FAX/Internet	2,677.76
Postage	632.25
Printing/Copying	659.86
Professional Services	2,300.00
Registration Fees (Govt)	50.00
Staff Benefits	52,698.16
Staff Mileage Reimbursement	10,847.48
Strategic Planning	7,750.00
Training	11,311.39
Volunteer Recognition	10,996.62
Website Creation	6,770.99
Total Expense	509,946.94
Net Ordinary Income	32,153.21
Net Income	32,153.21



Outcomes for children with CASAs



*Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

David & Barbara Setchel

JEFF SPRINKLE VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR RECIPIANTS



Dr. Barbara and Mr. David Setchel were sworn in as CASAs 10 years ago and have worked all their 47 children as a husband and wife tag-team. They utilize their individual expertise to generate unique and effective solutions for the children they encounter. Both Barbara and David have the highest of standards in ensuring that the children they serve have their needs and best interests met. This includes finding and speaking to all family members and fictive kin. In each case they ensure that any educational needs are being met. If these educational needs are not being met, Barbara assists with setting up meetings to ensure their CASA child's IEP/504 will provide all the services they need at school. If a child is moved, they ensure that the new school receives the IEP/504, and any other information required to create a smooth transition. Barbara and David each bring a unique skill-set and outlook to their cases. These unique skills lead to better outcomes, more effective solutions, and have even led to Barbara being qualified as an expert by the Juvenile Court on at least one occasion. The Setchels volunteer in both our judicial circuits and have earned the highest respect of both judges, who have recognized their work, dedication, and genuine care for the children. Their court reports have been directly cited by the Judges from the bench on occasions too numerous to count. The Setchels are an inspiration for all the other CASAs in our program. Their dedication and commitment are evident in all their conversations with their peers. Both Barbara and David are great ambassadors for CASA. Barbara has secured speaking engagements with the Retired Teacher Association. David has provided CASA shirts at a great discount to all our volunteers. He has also done our "child connection" for one of our Board meetings. Northeast Georgia CASA is proud to honor the Setchels as our "Jeff Sprinkle Volunteer(s) of the Year" award winners and our "Karen N. Sibley Volunteer of the Year" award state nominees.

Thank You

TO OUR
2023 DONORS

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PAYCO, INC
RABUN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OFFICE
STEPHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OFFICE
THE NORTHERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
UNITED WAY OF NORTHEAST GEORGIA



MISSION

The Mission of Northeast Georgia Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) is to provide training, supervision and resources for volunteers to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children within our communities.

VISION

It is the Vision of Northeast Georgia CASA that every child in foster care in our eight county service area have the support of a compassionate and well-trained volunteer to advocate for their best interest in the courtroom and the community.