

FALL 2023

Newsletter

Voices for Children Montgomery



Program Update

By Francha Davis, Executive Director

Voices for Children Montgomery is growing! As many of you know, in 2020 VFCM's Board of Directors set the bold goal of expanding to serve every child in Montgomery County foster care by 2026. We are currently serving just about half of the children in foster care in the County, so having a CASA volunteer available for every child who enters foster care will mean nearly doubling the size of our organization. The pandemic and accompanying shutdowns threw a temporary wrench in our expansion plans, but we are now seeing slow and steady growth. To support that growth, we have added a new part-time Case Supervisor, Mandi Waterman, and a new full-time Development and Volunteer Recruitment Coordinator, Alexis Staten, dedicated to recruiting more CASA volunteers and helping to raise the funds needed to support the training and supervision of volunteers. As we intensify our recruitment efforts, we are also continuing our focus on increasing diversity, equity and inclusion within every level of VFCM, including our Board of Directors, staff and CASA volunteers.

We continue to need your support to grow. We currently have **22 children** waiting to be assigned a CASA volunteer. And, while overall fewer children are being placed in foster care, the issues that bring them into care are more complicated and they are in even greater need of advocacy. We need more CASAs, and we also need Spanish-speaking advocates! Nearly 25% of people contacting us to inquire about volunteering come through word-of-mouth. So, recruit your friends, family members and co-workers! Another 20% of new inquiries come as a result of social media. So "like" our posts, share our posts and generally spread the word. If you belong to a religious or social organization that has a newsletter or would like a speaker, let us know. If you are on leave or inactive CASA, come back. In short, it's all hands on deck. We need to ensure that every child in foster care in Montgomery County has the critical one-on-one support provided by a CASA volunteer!

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Saying Goodbye and Thank You to Paul Sorlie

By Jen Carson, Program Director

When Paul Sorlie went through training to become a CASA volunteer in the fall of 1996, I'm sure he never envisioned that he'd still be volunteering for VFCM 27 years later. Staying with VFCM for 26 years past his one-year commitment speaks to Paul's dedication and commitment to helping at risk children and youth in the Montgomery County foster care system. Over the last 27 years, Paul has advocated for 11 children and youth in a variety of situations. He has worked with teenage boys aging out of foster care, young children returning home to their mother, a young teen who was placed under the guardianship of his grandparent, and a young non-verbal child on the autism spectrum, who was living in a group home. Paul has seen a lot in his work as a CASA; in fact, he could write a book and maybe will one day.

Throughout his work with us, Paul has always been a model volunteer. He rarely, if ever, missed a supervision meeting. He attended in-service trainings, even when he could have taught the trainings himself. He always turned in his contact notes and learned how to master our new volunteer tracking system. In all the years we have worked with Paul, he never looked for recognition (in fact, he felt that helping the children he served was all the reward he needed) but was always willing to help out in other ways; he was a regular on our volunteer panel, offering insight and advice to prospective CASA volunteers. When Paul told us he was going to retire, he did so when it made sense for his CASA child to transition to a new volunteer, and he did it in a thoughtful and careful manner, putting the child's needs ahead of his own desire to try something new. I was fortunate enough to supervise Paul for a few years when I first started working at VFCM in 1999. I consider myself lucky to have been able to supervise him for his last three or so years with us. We are all going to miss Paul, and I'm especially going to miss our monthly talks. And while this feels like a sad break-up, we wish Paul the very best in whatever he decides to tackle next. Thank you, Paul Sorlie, on behalf of our program, our staff, and the 11 children you helped change the lives of. There are no words that can adequately convey the appreciation and respect we have for you. You are irreplaceable and you will be missed.



thank you

Congratulations New CASA Volunteers!

Join us in congratulating these new CASA volunteers who completed their training this summer and fall.



Earl Coaston
Diego Cubas
Amy Egan
Darren Fenwich

Alex Ferre
Cindy Loose
Rachel Rehert
Eleanor Simpson

Sharon Spagnuolo
Carissa Swanson
Jeanette Weisflog
Rebecca Zavala

Meet Our New Staff



Mandi Waterman

VFCM is happy to announce that we recently expanded and hired an additional supervision staff member. We would like to welcome Mandi Waterman, who joined our staff as a part-time case supervisor in September. Mandi recently relocated to Montgomery County after living in Germany for the past nine years with her family. She earned her MSW in 2014 from the University of Texas at San Antonio, and has had experience working in a nursing home, in a child abuse assessment clinic within San Antonio Children's Hospital, and as a hospital advocate for sexual assault victims. Mandi has been a welcome addition to our staff, and we're so excited to be working with her.

Welcome to Alexis Staten, our new Development and Volunteer Recruitment Coordinator. Alexis joined the staff in September and has already jumped in with both feet! Alexis has a Master of Science in Leadership and Human Resource Development and rich experience in staff and volunteer recruitment and research. We are thrilled to have her on board!

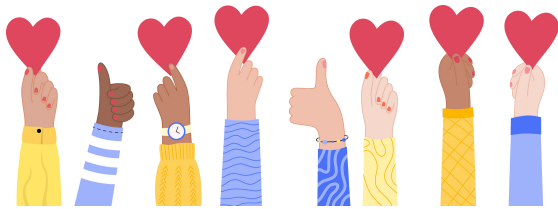


Alexis Staten

Giving Tuesday

Join the movement and give back this Giving Tuesday! Each year our volunteers, staff, board members, and supporters come together to reach our goal of providing this critical support to every child in foster care in our community by 2026.

Will you help us raise funds this Giving Tuesday?



Upcoming Pre-Service Training

Winter 2024

Saturday, January 6, 2024 9 am-4:30 pm

Monday, January 8, 2024 6 pm-9:30 pm

Wednesday, January 10, 2024 6 pm-9:30 pm

Friday, January 12, 2024 9 am-4:30 pm

Tuesday, January 16, 2024 6pm-9:30 pm

Thursday, January 18, 2024 6pm-9:30 pm

Monday, January 22, 2024 6pm-9:30 pm

Spring 2024

Saturday, April 6, 2024 9am-4:30 pm

Monday, April 8, 2024 6pm-9:30pm

Wednesday, April 10, 2024 6pm-9:30 pm

Friday, April 12, 2024 9am-4:30pm

Monday, April 15, 2024 6pm-9:30pm

Wednesday, April 17, 2024 6pm-9:30pm

Wednesday, April 24, 2024 6pm-9:30pm

Summer 2024

Saturday, June 22, 2024 9am-4:30pm

Monday, January 24, 2024 6pm-9:30pm

Wednesday, January 26, 2024 6pm-9:30pm

Friday, January 28, 2024 9am-4:30pm

Monday, July 1, 2024 6pm-9:30pm

Wednesday, July 3, 2024 6pm-9:30pm

Monday, July 8, 2024 6pm-9:30pm

Fall 2024

Saturday, September 21, 2024 9am-4:30pm

Monday, September 23, 2024 6pm-9:30pm

Wednesday, September 25, 2024 6pm-9:30pm

Friday, September 27, 2024 9am-4:30pm

Monday, September 30, 2024 6pm-9:30pm

Wednesday, October 2, 2024 6pm-9:30pm

Monday, October 7, 2024 6pm-9:30pm

[Sign Up for Training](#)

A Child is Waiting

Mary* and Michael* are 11 and 9-year-old siblings who were recently placed into foster care as a result of alleged physical abuse and sexual abuse by an older sibling. One of the children also has an ongoing and chronic medical condition that was not being appropriately treated. The children are placed together in a foster home in Montgomery County and could benefit from having a CASA volunteer to help ensure that their needs are being met and that all medical appointments are occurring as needed.

**Names changed and photos are not of CASA children*



Volunteer Spotlights



Dick Kerr has worked with 17-year-old Steven* for 6 years. Steven has been in foster care for over 9 years in a succession of placements. It seemed that no one wanted Steven. Two years ago, Steven's adult brother expressed interest in having Steven visit. Dick helped connect Steven's brother to the Child Welfare social worker so that visits could be initiated. The visits went so well that Steven's brother asked to have Steven placed with him permanently. Things seemed to stall at one point, due to a communication break-down between Steven's brother and the Child Welfare social worker. Dick actively communicated with Steven's brother and the social worker to ensure that all the documentation completed and helped clear the way for a final permanency plan of Custody and Guardianship with the brother. In large part because of Dick's commitment and advocacy on Steven's behalf, Steven's case closed in October, with Steven in a safe, permanent and loving home with his brother.

Emily Ware has been working with 12-year-old Tammy* for 7 months. Tammy came into care due to physical abuse by her mother and has been in numerous foster homes and residential placements during her three and a half years in care. Currently Tammy is placed in a residential treatment center and attends a Level V school. Tammy is triggered by physical contact so her therapist has instructed staff to avoid hands-on responses whenever possible. Emily discovered that Tammy had two incidents in 6 weeks where staff restrained her. In one instance, staff put Tammy in a restraint chair for an hour after she walked into an office and refused to leave. Emily was very concerned about the use of restraints on Tammy and notified the social worker and Tammy's attorney, who immediately addressed this issue with the therapist and placement staff.

**Names changed and photos are not of CASA children*



Upcoming Event

Teen Dating Violence: Red Flags and Resources for Youth

November 28, 2023 | 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Smita Varia, Program Manager, Montgomery County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

Everyone can use a reminder and refresher about the hold that domestic violence can have on people of all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Ms. Varia will speak about the effects of domestic violence on families and youth; how to recognize when a CASA youth is in an unhealthy relationship and how to talk about healthy relationships and support with your CASA youth. Ms. Varia will also share local resources and legal options for individuals experiencing domestic violence.

Please RSVP by November 21, 2023

Nancy King at nking@voicesforchildrenmontgomery.org



Smita Varia

Event Calendar

CASA Anniversaries

Thank you to each of the following CASA volunteers for your years of service and dedication to helping vulnerable children and youth. Happy Anniversary!

1 year

Kylie Horn
Jacinda Miller
Ellen Bronfield
Meaghan McHugh
Raakhee Sharma
Megan DePasquale
Terry Panarese
Alexandra Woo

3 years

Sujata (Susie) Buckley

4 years

Kathleen Allen
Erica Brown
Patricia Louden
Christine Smith
Cindy Woodfield
Susan Burger

5 years

Elizabeth Cherneff
Kyle Krasnoff
Candace Carrington
Leah Schwartz

9 years

Richard Kerr
Debbie Blumenthal

2 years

Kelly Goldstein
Kimberly Manthei
Maryanne Waller
Mercy Griffith
Emily Schabacker
Tammy Goldberg
Emily Ware

Congrats!

Donors Making a Difference

Donations received from July 18 to October 31

Thank you to everyone who made a donation! Because of you, we are able to continue to advocate for children in Montgomery County foster care.

Jennifer Fairfax
Otto Graham
Leslie Greenberg
in memory of Norman Goldberg
Robin Harris
Alysse Henkel
Glenda Koby
Jarrett Perlow
Liora Moriel
Chito S. Okoye
Travis & Rachel Stalcup
Jessica Swope

PNC Matching Program
The Kay Family Foundation
Women of Washington Hebrew Congregation



Become a Volunteer

Be the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer that every child in Montgomery County, Maryland's foster care system needs. CASA volunteers bring a variety of experiences to their work as advocates on behalf of abused and neglected children.



[Volunteer](#)

Donate

Voices for Children Montgomery depends on donations from people like you to continue its work. Make a donation today to help us reach our goal of serving ALL children in foster care in Montgomery County by 2026. Thank you!



[Donate](#)



Voices for Children Montgomery is a private, 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation and receives partial funding from the Montgomery County Dept. of Health and Human Services and the Administrative Office of the Courts Dept. of Juvenile and Family Services.