

Newsletter

Voices for Children Montgomery



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Meet Our New Staff



Lauren Barber

We would like to welcome our newest full-time case supervisor, Lauren Barber, who joined our staff in November 2023. Lauren graduated from Catholic University with a master's in social work (MSW) in May of 2016. Since that time, she has gained a wealth of experience as a social worker in a variety of settings. To highlight her experience, Lauren worked as a social worker at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital and as a counselor for Prince George's County Health Department. She also worked with foster parents and foster children as a social worker for the National Center for Children and Families. In addition, she has experience with our local child welfare agency, as she interned for Montgomery County Child Welfare Services in one of their assessment units. Lauren is a native of Washington, D.C., and she has proven to be a delightful addition to our team!

Congratulations Jen Carson on 25 years!

Please join us in congratulating Jen Carson, Program Director, for 25 years of service to Voices for Children Montgomery. We are so grateful for her dedication to our mission and serving children in Montgomery County foster care. Here is what Jen had to say as she reflected on her time with the organization:

“I have had the honor and the privilege of working for a program I love, in a field I continue to be passionate about, for the past 25 years. When I became a Case Supervisor for what was then CASA of Montgomery County, in January 1999, I was young but already a little burned out from working for Child Protective Services doing child abuse and neglect investigations. At the time, I thought I would take a step back, gain some supervision experience, and then maybe pursue another position within Child Welfare Services. Little did I know that I had found a home with an organization made up of staff and volunteers who continue to amaze me with their dedication and commitment to the children and youth we serve.



I love everything about my job, from the close relationships I have been able to develop with our Executive Director, Francha Davis, and the rest of our staff, to the volunteers who spend hours on their cases trying to ensure their CASA kids are okay and getting the best services they can, to the various stakeholders I get to interact with, to having opportunities to go to court, which I find fascinating. I cannot imagine working anywhere else. I have learned so much and have met so many amazing and interesting volunteers along the way. I count myself lucky to have had the opportunity to work for VFCM for the past 25 years, and I hope to continue to work here for many more years to come.”

Upcoming Pre-Service Training

[Sign Up for Training](#)

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, June 24, 2024 | 6pm-9:30pm |
| Wednesday, June 26, 2024 | 6pm-9:30pm |
| Friday, June 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 |

A Child is Waiting

Child Welfare Services received a report alleging the neglect of three-year-old Joey* in October 2022. It was alleged that Joey's mother had a serious mental health condition, which prevented her from adequately caring for her young son. His father was unable to be a resource for Joey because he was dealing with his own addiction issues. Joey's grandparents were involved and helped as much as they could but, due to Joey's mother's escalating behaviors, Child Welfare Services eventually had to remove Joey from his mother's care. He was placed in kinship care with his grandparents, where he currently remains. He is now four years old and could benefit from having a CASA volunteer involved to help ensure he achieves a permanent living situation as soon as possible, since he has already been in foster care for a year.

Volunteer Spotlights

Gloria Peterson was appointed as the CASA for Annie* in August 2023. Annie is a four-year-old who has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and speech and language delays. Annie's mother has worked very hard to complete her court-ordered services, and she has demonstrated that she is ready to again care for her daughter in her home. This change in her placement, coupled with a transition to a new social worker, has left Annie with a gap in several very important services that are crucial to her development. Gloria has worked diligently to advocate for Annie with MCPS as well as the Department. Gloria's involvement has ensured the timely implementation of Annie's special education services in a new county, and she will continue to advocate for additional school and private resources to be put in place.

Earl Coaston was a CASA in a previous state and brings a lot of knowledge and confidence to the CASA role. Earl was recently appointed to a ten-year-old youth, Tyler*. Tyler is currently placed with his aunt, in fictive kinship care. Earl hit the ground running and within two weeks of being assigned to his case, he was able to contact the social worker, Tyler's family member who cares for him, and Tyler. Earl also made a significant contribution to the case by speaking directly with Tyler's father, who has not been very engaged. Tyler's current permanency plan is to reunify with his father; however, not many courts ordered services have been completed by his father. Earl had a very insightful conversation with Tyler's father, who stated he was willing to set up a meeting to talk with Earl again. Earl's ability to engage Tyler's father is a major development to the case, because Tyler's father has shown reluctance to engage with other parties on the case so far. Earl is hopeful that progress will be made so that Tyler can go home to his father.

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

Upcoming Events

CASA Roundtable: Working with Children and Youth Who are Non-Verbal

Tuesday, March 12 | 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Gather with fellow volunteers to talk about challenges and strategies for working with children/youth who cannot communicate verbally. Share ideas and get support from other volunteers working with non-verbal youth. Please RSVP to Nancy King by March 5 at nking@voicesforchildrenmontgomery.org



MARYLAND
Department of Health

Developmental Disabilities Administration

Developmental Disability Administration (DDA): How does the DDA system work?

Tuesday, March 19 | 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Nichole Sheppard, Montgomery County Local Care Team and Transitioning Youth Coordinator/Matrix Score Coordinator, Southern Maryland Regional Office, DDA, Maryland Department of Health

Many of our CASA youth who have disabilities are eligible for some level of service from DDA, and many of us have questions about how those services are determined and implemented. Ms. Sheppard will explain how the DDA application process works, what the different waitlist categories mean, and how services are coordinated for youth. Please RSVP by March 12, 2024 at Nancy King at nking@voicesforchildrenmontgomery.org

Check out our events calendar to view all upcoming events.

[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

Vicki De-Javier
Lauren Epstein

2 years

Lisa Blumenthal
Alaina Flannigan
Quinn McMurtrey
Terry Melo
Elizabeth Quinn

3 years

Nicole Bellows
Melody Elliott
Cynthia Harris
Nuzhut Islam
Jennifer Kline
Aida Munoz
Joanna Salzman
Lisa Tompkins-Brown

4 years

Michele Isaacson
Aileen Moodie
Gloria Peterson-Ayigah

5 years

Andrew Finley
Heather Kasper

6 years

Karen Pinkston

8 years

Andrea Cali
Newton-King Stablein

10 years

Barbara Fribush

16 years

Leslie Greenberg

Congrats!

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

Donors Making a Difference

Donations received from November 1 to January 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.

Josh Adrian
Loris Ayirebi
Jane Batwinis
Erica Brown
Susie Buckley
William Butz
Eva Caldera
Andrea Cali
Rhoda Chanin
Heather Collier
Alison Corbett
Barbara Faigen
Andrew Finley
Trudy Fleisher
Elizabeth Gemoets
Jay Goldman
Dayna Goldsmith
Robin Harris
Thelma Harris
Christopher Hertz
Wiley Hodges
Richard Kerr
Heather Kramer
Martha Landesberg
Marjorie Lane
Maleka Lawrence
Andrea Littell
Glenn Lunden

John Marshall
Molly Matthews
Teresa McKenna
Peter McLoughlin
Terry Melo
Liora Moriel
Mark Newlan
Chito S. Okoye
Clare Overmann
Kathryn Park
Jarrett Perlow
Ann Perper
Olga Pilshchikova
Sasha Rene
Travis & Rachel Stalcup
Joseph Steinbock
Sandra Walter
Suzanne Waltzer
Kathryn Winsberg
Gerson Yalowitz
Norca Yarborough



In memory of Leon Lunden



Donors Making a Difference

Carl M. Freeman Foundation
Collier Florance Isaacs & Van Scoy LLC
Gail Kaufmann Family Fund
Institute of International Education
KBR Foundation
Marvin & Joanne McIntyre Family Foundation
New4You, Inc.

Robert I. Schattner Foundation
Sotos Family Fund
The Education Trust
United Health Group
Village Nonprofit Solutions LLC
Witt Family Foundation

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.