

**Kentucky CASA Network Presents**

*40th Anniversary Volunteer  
Appreciation Dinner*

**1984 - 2024**

Bowling Green, Kentucky  
October 29, 2024



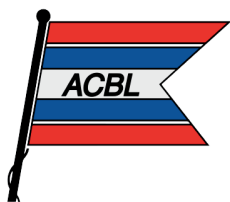
# Thank You to Our Sponsors and Partners!



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2024 KY Bar Foundation Grant

# 40th Anniversary Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

## Welcome

Bryan Bulkley - Kentucky CASA Network, Board Chair

## Keynote Address

Andrew Bridge, Author and Children's Rights Lawyer

## 40th Anniversary Remarks

Sally Erny - National CASA/GAL Association for Children, Deputy CEO

Andrea Bruns - Kentucky CASA Network, State Director/CEO

## 2024 Volunteer Awards of Excellence

### Bob Babbage CASA Volunteer of the Year

Toni Miller - CASA of West Kentucky

### Longest Serving CASA Volunteer

Diane Drescher - CASA of the River Region

### CASA All-Star Awards

#### Legacy of Service

Sandra French

#### Determined Driver

Linda Halter

#### Limitless Enthusiast

Barb Davis

#### Lifelong Learner

Carol Walker

#### Community Connector

Vivian Secrest

#### Tough Case Navigator

Kacey Clanahan

#### Unsung Hero

Mary Jo Cleves

#### Notable Newcomer

Sarah Childers

#### Perseverance Champion

Clarice Davie

Joseph DeMarco

Christina Morris

Tim Moss

Martha Steil

Amy Wilcher



## Keynote Address by Andrew Bridge

Andrew Bridge spent 11 years in Los Angeles County foster care. After aging out, he attended Wesleyan University, then graduated from Harvard Law School and was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship. He began his legal career representing children against the State of Alabama, where his work resulted in the closure of one of the country's most notorious psychiatric institutions, the Eufaula Adolescent Center. Returning to Los Angeles, he became CEO of The Alliance for Children's Rights, representing children in the foster care system where he grew up.



Andrew is the co-founder of National Adoption Day and New Village Girls Academy for pregnant and parenting teens. As Chair of Los Angeles County's Blue Ribbon Task Force, he called for an end to the disproportionate removal of Black babies from their mothers. His memoir Hope's Boy was a New York Times bestseller. His second book about that fight against Alabama, The Child Catcher, released in September, is a National Bestseller and has been nominated for the American Library Association's prestigious Alex Prize, with Kirkus Literary Reviews stating, "Our Verdict. Get It!"

## 40th Anniversary Remarks by Sally Erny

Sally Wilson Erny is Deputy Chief Executive Officer for the National CASA/GAL Association. In this capacity, she leads the Network Development and Stakeholder Engagement teams which include the functions of network program development and support, internal and external communications, judicial engagement, government relations, and resource development. Sally also works with legislative, judicial, executive, and national partners, with a focus on federal appropriations and policy work. During her 26-year career with National



CASA/GAL, Sally has served in a number of roles including Director of Program Development and Chief Program Officer before assuming her current position. Prior to joining National CASA/GAL, Sally served 13 years as Executive Director of CASA of Jefferson County (now CASA of the River Region) in Louisville, Kentucky and earlier served as a Policy Analyst for Kentucky Youth Advocates.



## 2024 AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

### 2024 BOB BABBAGE VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

#### **Toni Miller - CASA of West Kentucky**

Toni has made a lasting impact as a CASA volunteer, touching the lives of numerous children with her dedication and compassion. Her tireless and persistent efforts to advocate for stability and the best interests of each child, even in times of uncertainty, showcase her deep commitment to ensuring positive outcomes. Toni's heartfelt advocacy and her personal connection with each child she serves offers hope and security during their most vulnerable moments.

"Toni's gentle persistence follows her through every case and helps bring positive outcomes. She excels at identifying and eliminating barriers for families by getting to the bottom of what is needed in a situation."

*-Stephanie Moss, CASA Program Director, CASA of West Kentucky*

### LONGEST SERVING CASA VOLUNTEER

#### **Diane Drescher - CASA of the River Region**

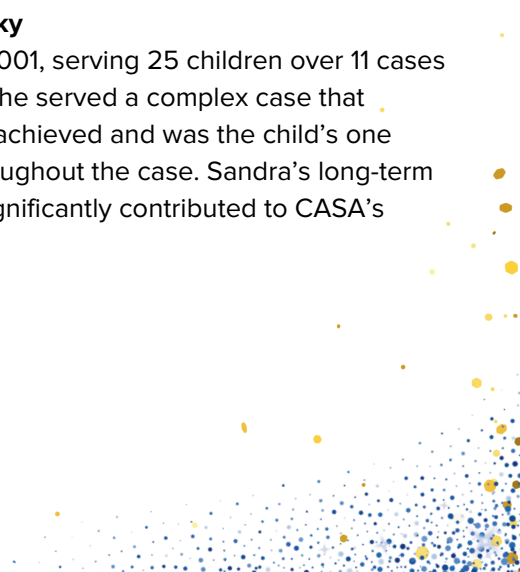
Diane is currently the longest-serving active CASA volunteer in Kentucky, having dedicated 26 years of service (and counting) to 18 children over 8 cases. She has diligently ensured that all children she served - ranging in age from 2 to 17 - had a voice for safe and permanent placements, including reunification. The KCN and CASA of the River Region both thank Diane for her longevity, tenacity, and ongoing commitment to CASA.

## CASA ALL-STAR AWARDS

### LEGACY OF SERVICE ALL-STAR

#### **Sandra French - CASA of Midwest Kentucky**

Sandra has been a CASA volunteer since 2001, serving 25 children over 11 cases in her 23.5 years of service. Most notably, she served a complex case that spanned 10 years before permanency was achieved and was the child's one constant when everyone else changed throughout the case. Sandra's long-term commitment and enduring presence has significantly contributed to CASA's mission.



## **DETERMINED DRIVER ALL-STAR**

### **Linda Halter - CASA of Madison and Clark Counties**

Linda has demonstrated unparalleled dedication to visiting with the child on her current case, driving over 17,500 miles total and over 2,100 miles in 2024 alone. Linda visits her CASA child in a residential treatment facility twice per month and continues to advocate for accommodations for the child's mother to be able to travel to the facility for family therapy. Linda has been a consistent presence for this child since appointed in 2021.

## **LIMITLESS ENTHUSIAST ALL-STAR**

### **Barb Davis - CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY**

Barb's positivity and enthusiasm is unmatched, and she carries this attitude into her CASA advocacy. She takes on difficult cases and works to ensure that the child's needs are identified and met, and is not afraid to speak up for the child. She can always be counted on to lighten a room, offering humor when it is most needed. Barb also helps with recruiting CASA volunteers and at fundraising events.

## **LIFELONG LEARNER ALL-STAR**

### **Carol Walker - The Buffalo Trace CASA Program**

Carol has completed nearly 300 hours of continuing education since she became a volunteer in April 2015. She averages 32.42 hours per year and so far in 2024, has completed over 16 hours. Carol is always attending and taking advantage of CASA's continuing education trainings. Her dedication to continuous learning and engagement shows her willingness to learn about the challenges faced by children and families on her cases and how she can best support them.

## **COMMUNITY CONNECTOR ALL-STAR**

### **Vivian Secrest - CASA of South Central KY**

Vivian excels at seeking out community resources to ensure the children for whom she advocates have a positive outcome. She once worked on a case in which a language barrier was hindering the reunification of the family. Vivian sought out various community partners to assist in overcoming this barrier and acted as a bridge between the family and the community. In addition to her CASA advocacy, Vivian has played a vital role in recruiting new volunteers in her home county and her efforts led to the largest training group in one of the program's outlying counties.

## **TOUGH CASE NAVIGATOR ALL-STAR**

### **Kacey Clanahan - CASA of West Kentucky**

Kacey has been a CASA volunteer for 4 years, advocating for 6 children across 3 cases. Her most recent case, which lasted 2.5 years, was especially challenging due to the mother's severe mental illness. At times, Kacey was concerned about her privacy and her family's safety, leading her to take steps to protect her anonymity in court and online. Despite these difficulties, Kacey remained committed to the children, traveling over 1,000 miles to visit them and dedicating more than 300 hours of service. Her resilience and dedication never wavered, even in the face of such a tough situation.

## **UNSUNG HERO ALL-STAR**

### **Mary Jo Cleves - CASA of the Northern Bluegrass Region**

Mary Jo has been a CASA volunteer for 12 years and has had a profound impact on children. Her current case has been ongoing for 7 years, involving 5 children, 10 foster families, and multiple placement changes. Mary Jo has been the children's constant throughout these disruptions. She continues to diligently show up and advocate without seeking recognition or displaying fanfare and her dedication to CASA's mission is unwavering.

## **NOTABLE NEWCOMER ALL-STAR**

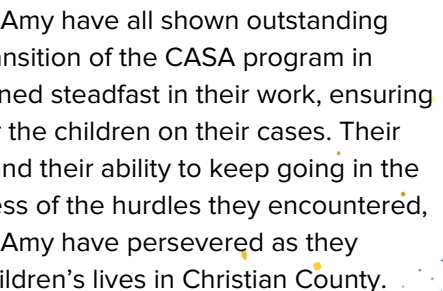
### **Sarah Childers - CASA of the Lincoln Trail**

Sarah has displayed exceptional commitment to her role as a CASA volunteer in her first 4 months of service. She has successfully recommended a more suitable placement, ensured that the siblings have had contact with each other and their mother, and provided educational advocacy. Sarah has worked diligently to be the best possible advocate for these children, displaying sincere dedication to their well-being and stability.

## **PERSEVERANCE CHAMPION ALL-STAR**

### **Clarice Davie, Joseph DeMarco, Christina Morris, Tim Moss, Martha Steil, and Amy Wilcher - Christian County CASA Volunteers**

Clarice, Joseph, Christina, Tim, Martha, and Amy have all shown outstanding dedication and resilience throughout the transition of the CASA program in Christian County this year. They have remained steadfast in their work, ensuring that there was no disruption in advocacy for the children on their cases. Their unwavering commitment to the CASA role and their ability to keep going in the face of difficulties is truly inspiring. Regardless of the hurdles they encountered, Clarice, Joseph, Christina, Tim, Martha, and Amy have persevered as they continue to make a meaningful impact in children's lives in Christian County.



## 2024 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

Debbie Childress - CASA of the Heartland

Chastity Helm - CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY

Ruhiyyih Henderson - CASA of the River Region

Kathy Kenney - CASA of Madison and Clark Counties

Meredith Lepp - CASA of Madison and Clark Counties

Mara Maldonado - CASA of the River Region

Tracy Mann - The Buffalo Trace CASA Program

Sharon Meade - CASA of the Northern Bluegrass Region

Teresa Nolet - CASA of the Bluegrass

Karen O'Hara - CASA of the River Region

Debbie Oliverio - CASA by the Lakes

Vikki Rehberg - CASA of the Bluegrass

Linda Seagle - CASA of South Central KY

Sharon Stevens - CASA of the Bluegrass

Brittney Thomas - CASA of Lexington

Kathy Urbach - CASA of the River Region

Vicki Writsel - CASA of the Bluegrass

