



2022 KCN Awards of Excellence

CASA Pioneer Awards

The CASA Pioneer Award is awarded to individuals who have been instrumental in the development and creation of CASA programs in Kentucky. This award was created in 2019 to recognize board members and/or advisory committee members who went above and beyond to create and nurture the beginning or redevelopment of a CASA program in Kentucky. These are volunteers who contributed significant hours of their time, talent, and expertise to ensure that a solid foundation was in place for sustainability of the Court Appointed Special Advocates program in their community.

Ruth Lynch | CASA Program of Christian County, KY

Ruth Lynch was part of the first CASA Program of Christian County Board of Directors, serving on the board for the first five years of the program and as board treasurer for the past four years. During periods of staff transition, Ruth stepped up to keep the program solvent by undertaking the general operations of the program. Ruth frequently completed grant reporting and ensured that the program had the needed financial structure in place for program operations. She recruited numerous new board members and worked with community partners to elevate the program's name in the community, including raising awareness for the need for CASA volunteers. The Kentucky CASA Network is proud to present this award to Ruth.

Carolyn Self | CASA Program of Christian County, KY

Carolyn Self served for four years on the CASA Program of Christian County Board of Directors, and was board chair for two of those years. Carolyn played a significant role in recruiting new board members and provided outreach to stakeholders in the child welfare and court communities to ensure that the program was ready to begin serving abused and neglected children with court-based advocacy. Carolyn helped lead fundraising events and was a staunch ambassador for the program, having recruited some of the program's first CASA volunteers. The Kentucky CASA Network is proud to present this award to Carolyn.

Joseph Schuler | Kentucky CASA Network

Joseph Schuler has more than twenty years of service to the Court Appointed Special Advocates program in Kentucky, and most recently served for six years on the Kentucky CASA Network Board of Directors. Joe served several of those six years as the board chair. He joined the board in 2016 after the redevelopment of the association and joined the new at-large statewide board of directors. Joe has taken the lead on board recruitment, board development, and strategic planning to ensure that the state association had the capacity and financial resources needed for long-term sustainability to support the continued development of CASA in Kentucky. "Joe is the very definition of an exemplary board member and one of the biggest champions of the CASA mission in Kentucky," said State Director/CEO Andrea Bruns. The Kentucky CASA Network is proud to present this award to Joe.

CASA Board Member of the Year

Carol Lomicka | CASA of the River Region

Carol Lomicka has been involved with CASA of the River Region since the 1980s, serving many of those years as a board member. Her work has been to gain financial support for the organization, while also working tirelessly to grow the program. She has been instrumental in fundraising, soliciting volunteers, and telling everyone she knows about CASA. Carol's biggest achievement to date has been securing CASA of the River Region's building space, which she did by playing a significant role in raising over \$750,000 to rehabilitate the building. The building was named "The Lomicka House" in her honor, and she continues to chair the Building Committee. Carol's heart for children, combined with her passion for the CASA organization, has no limit. The Kentucky CASA Network is proud to present this year's award to Carol.

CASA Judge of the Year

The Honorable Deborah Hawkins-Crooks | Graves County District Court

Graves County District Court Judge Deborah Hawkins-Crooks is a powerful advocate of CASA, and she supports the CASA program within her community. Starting in 1989, Judge Crooks served as one of the initial directors for the agency and has supported the program since. Locally, she has provided training for volunteers, recognized the work of the program during court proceedings, and written countless letters of support for CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY. She is said to be an honest, patient, and fair judge who cares for children tremendously. Judge Crooks has also generously recorded several public service announcements calling for CASA volunteers, as well as attending and speaking at various Child Abuse Prevention Month events. The Kentucky CASA Network is proud to present this year's award to Judge Crooks.

CASA Program of the Year

CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY | Carlisle, Fulton, Graves, and Hickman Counties

CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY has been making a significant impact on the lives of vulnerable children since 2000. The program has undergone several obstacles throughout the past couple of years, including an EF-4 tornado that left the CASA office in shambles, but they have exhibited extreme determination and perseverance during these times. Despite all the challenges they faced, the program maintained continuity and achieved great accomplishments. Throughout the past year, they have welcomed new volunteers into their program, served 100+ children, and ensured their 30+ volunteers were educated, trained, and appreciated. The program was innovative in developing a three-year strategic plan to assess sustainability, volunteer recruitment and retention, and organizational infrastructure. The program displayed extreme resiliency when they were affected by the 2021 tornado as they worked tirelessly to ensure their volunteers and children were safe, assisted those who had been impacted by the tornado, and showed great flexibility as they searched for a new office building. The Kentucky CASA Network is proud to present this year's award to CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY.

CASA Program Director of the Year

Stephanie Floyd | CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY

Stephanie Floyd has been with CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY since 2009 and has been instrumental in expanding the program and directing them through times of

adversity. Stephanie started out as the Executive Director for Graves County CASA, and successfully expanded the program to include three adjoining counties. In December 2021, Mayfield and Graves County were severely affected by a tornado, including the destruction of the CASA office as well as the homes of several volunteers. Stephanie worked diligently to relocate the CASA office, secure donations to provide financial support, and assist her impacted volunteers and the children they serve, all while maintaining continuity in advocacy. According to Kristin King, Board Treasurer for CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY, “Her wholehearted devotion to CASA, her tireless work for the kids, belief in an actions for best interest advocacy, her public relations, recruitment of volunteers, and education and training every person from the board to the children all point to her unparalleled work.” The Kentucky CASA Network is proud to present this year’s award to Stephanie.

Bob Babbage CASA Volunteer of the Year

Jackie Kennedy | CASA by the Lakes

For the past sixteen years, Jackie Kennedy has been an incredible asset to CASA by the Lakes. Since 2016 alone, Jackie has been appointed to 25 children in fifteen different cases. CASA by the Lakes Executive Director Jessica Foust notes, “It doesn’t matter what Jackie is going through personally, she never loses her contagious smile and optimistic outlook. She demonstrates her professionalism both in and outside of the courtroom.” Jackie is known to go above and beyond for the children she serves. In addition to her advocacy in the courtroom, she supports other CASA volunteers and makes time to mentor new CASA advocates. Earlier this year, Jackie was awarded the Donna Herndon Lifetime Achievement Award and was acknowledged for dedicating her life to the betterment of others. It is evident that Jackie has a significant impact on the lives of all who know her. The Kentucky CASA Network is proud to present this year’s award to Jackie.