



**CASA**

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
**FOR CHILDREN**

ATLANTA

# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

## ABOUT US

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The mission of Atlanta CASA is to educate the community and to recruit, train, and supervise court-appointed volunteers to advocate for the best interests, safety, and permanent placement of abused and neglected children in foster care within Fulton County, Georgia. Atlanta CASA is an affiliate of National CASA/Guardian Ad Litem, a network of nearly 1,000 nationwide state and local programs. The first CASA/GAL program was created in 1977 by Seattle Judge David W. Soukup.

## OUR PHILOSOPHY & METHODOLOGY

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A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a trained community volunteer who is appointed by a judge to advocate in the best interests of abused and neglected children involved in juvenile court deprivation proceedings. The CASA volunteer gathers information about the child's situation, attends court proceedings and makes a recommendation to the judge in order that the judge has the information necessary to make a sound decision about the child's future.

A CASA volunteer protects a child's right to be safe; to be treated with dignity and respect; and to learn and grow in the safe embrace of a loving family. In their unique role, CASA volunteers focus only on the child and the child's needs — until that child has a safe and permanent home. Under federal law, The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), Public Law 93-247, each state is mandated to provide a guardian ad litem (GAL) or a CASA volunteer to every abused or neglected child whose case results in a judicial proceeding. The Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.) § 15-11-9 and § 15-11-9.1 mandates this same law.

In the event a CASA volunteer is unable to be appointed, County tax dollars must be spent in order to appoint a guardian ad litem. That averages out to approximately \$75.00 per hour in Fulton County for a GAL to conduct the work associated with a case compared to the in-kind hours that our volunteers donate!

## KEY OPERATIONAL OUTCOMES

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This year, Atlanta CASA placed particular emphasis on further professionalizing operations and establishing our staff as thought leaders. The board of directors saw the creation of a nominating committee; a board retreat scheduled; and the implementation of board governance recommendations. On the staff side, we increased staff retention by 50 percent; put forth our advocacy coordinators as subject matter experts; maintained strong relationships with our key collaborative partners; and ensured all employees had accessed the training program "Tracking Youth Assessment Outcome Scores Education, Well-Being, & Development."

## KEY FUNDING OUTCOMES

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We have increased funding every year and through controlling expenses were able to achieve a 33% increase in net income towards securing long-term goals. We also retained government funding with no reductions in FY19 award levels.

# WHY WE CHANGED OUR NAME



As part of our 25th anniversary celebration, in 2019, we changed our name from Fulton County Court Appointed Special Advocates to Atlanta Court Appointed Special Advocates. This change was made after extensive careful thought and solicitation of feedback from key stakeholders. We are pleased to share our new name with friends and supporters and to begin this new chapter in our story.

Increase brand +  
community awareness  
of Atlanta CASA

Ensure stakeholders  
and community  
recognize Atlanta CASA  
as 501(c)(3)

Effectively communicate  
that Atlanta CASA serves  
the abused and  
neglected children of  
Fulton County

Cast a better-  
articulated story on  
behalf of the children  
we serve

Showcase the incredible  
impact made in the  
community & the lives of  
the children we serve

Attract more  
community members  
to become volunteers  
& advocates

Increase corporate  
and individual  
donor base

Motivate people to  
participate in events  
and social media

Celebrate 25 years of  
effectively advocating  
for Fulton County's  
abused and neglected  
foster children

## FROM THE BOARD CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear CASA Supporters,

In 1995 when Judge Glenda Hatchett founded the Fulton County Court Appointed Special Advocates (“FCCASA”, “Fulton County CASA”, “CASA”) program, the purpose was to provide sound advocacy to the voiceless and vulnerable children in Fulton County. Nearly 25 years later, that purpose remains true as we rely on the continued support of individuals, businesses, corporations, civic organizations, religious institutions, foundations, grants and stakeholders that allow us to improve and strengthen service delivery. Our program services to Fulton County’s abused and neglected children are dependent on dedicated volunteer advocates who help to ensure a safe passage out of foster care. With your support — and that of others like you — we will continue to raise awareness by recruiting and training community members to advocate in the best interest of abused and neglected children. We will keep working until every waiting child has a CASA volunteer.

We were honored to welcome 73 newly trained volunteers to our roster in 2018. Combined, our compassionate, dedicated volunteers devoted 17,520 hours to 144 new children in the child welfare system. Those hours were spent towards initial assessments to make an independent assessment of the child’s best interest; advocacy to determine that the child’s needs and well-being are met while in care; legal advocacy to advocate for the child in court and/or during court-involved proceedings; and monthly follow-ups to ensure appropriate and necessary services are provided to the child and family.

Last year the program saw an increase in funding due to new funding streams being identified and increases in grant awards. The monies invested in our program allow us to recruit, train and retain our volunteers who are usually the one constant adult in a child’s life during the foster care years. We are able to make a child’s future brighter through the consistency of an adult’s presence of mentorship, supplying educational materials, promoting literacy, delivering gifts during the holiday season and other important milestones as well as identifying community resources to promote safety and permanency to our children.

The CASA model works! A child with a CASA volunteer spends substantially less time in foster care and is much more likely to find a safe, permanent, loving home. Please help us spread awareness of the vital work CASA volunteers are doing in Fulton County. Your support can Change A Child’s Story. A child in foster care is waiting for that one trusted adult who will remain until their case is resolved. That’s the impact of a CASA volunteer!

Sincerely,



George Georgiou  
2019 Board Chair



Robbyn Ingram  
Executive Director



Trudye Nesbit



## CASA TEEN SUCCESS STORY

His biological mother chose cocaine over him. However, it is possible to achieve stability in the midst of trauma and struggles. He entered the Florida child welfare at six- months old. He was adopted by a single mom at three years old. Mom later married, birthed two additional children and moved to Georgia. The stream of life-changing events proved to be a challenge for him and adoptive mom. Mom was unable to manage the behavioral challenges and turned him over to the Georgia Department of Family and Children's Services under the claim of inability to cope. TRAUMA again!

He was assigned Ms. Trudye Nesbit as his CASA. Trudye is one of Fulton County CASA's longest serving volunteers. She retired from her professional position as a program analyst and systems engineer; directing her passion to advocate in the best interest of abused and neglected children in foster care. Trudye consulted with every party associated with him to ensure plans and counseling were in place to give him the tools he needed to thrive academically and socially.

She saw beyond his challenges and saw a struggling child plagued by trauma, rejection, and feeling alone. Although he experienced emotional outbursts and acting out, Trudye did not allow this to keep her from loving him through her advocacy. Her advocacy included tough love as she gently reminded him, "You have no family. When you turn around, you're on your own. If anyone gives you something, it's a gift so don't depend on anyone else to do what you need to do." She stressed the importance of education as well as planning goals for when he aged out.

Because Trudye ensured an independent living plan was in place before he aged out, he is currently training to become a professional boxer; and if this plan is not possible, his backup plan is to join law enforcement as part of the SWAT team. He is so grateful for his CASA Ms. Trudye Nesbit, who did not give up on him. He recognized her as the most consistent source of support and encouragement as he weathered the waves of the judicial system. He is on the right path to embrace every gift given to him. With the help of Trudye, he made it through the trauma of being abandoned, suffering through a disrupted adoption, aging out and having to develop a plan without the family connection he needed so desperately. Thank you Trudye Nesbit for your undying advocacy. Congratulations to him for wanting to change his own story!

*the year in review*

# LOOKING BACK

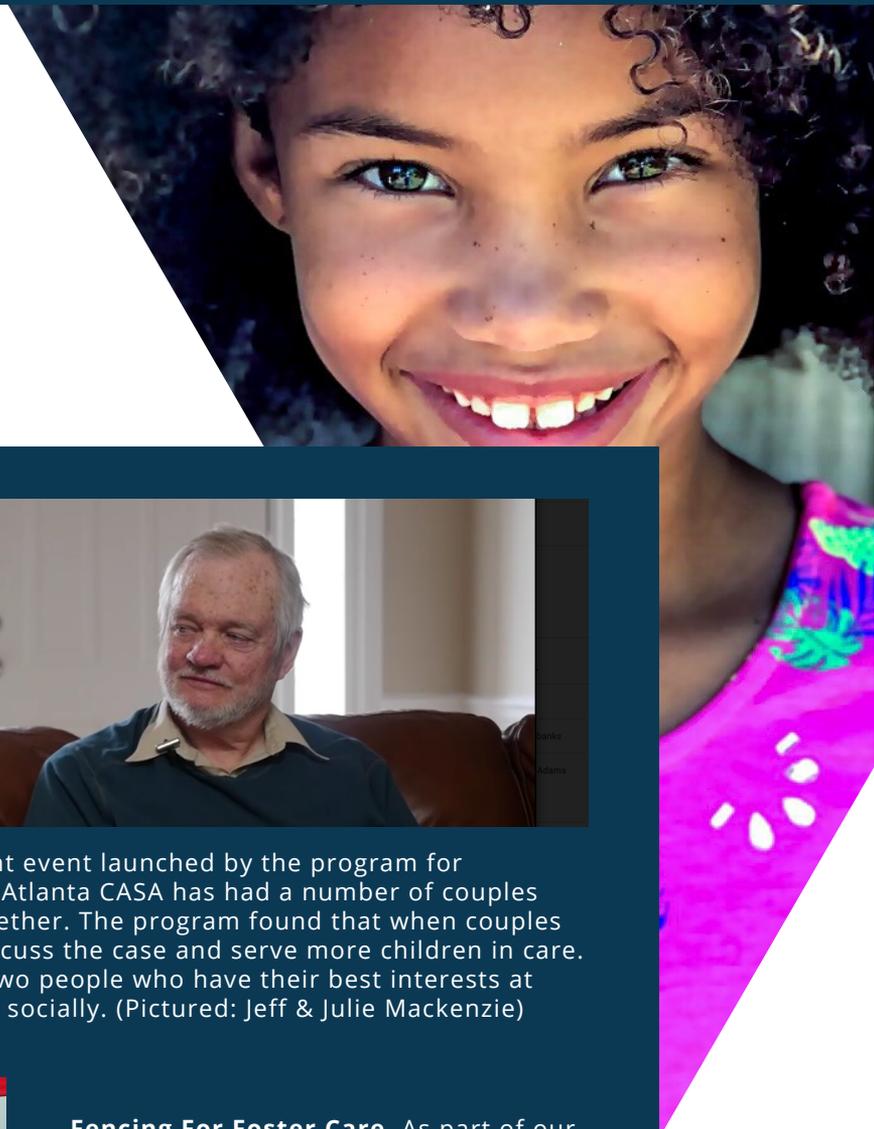


**Couples for CASA.** Another recruitment event launched by the program for Valentine's Day was Couples for CASA. Atlanta CASA has had a number of couples who were interested in advocating together. The program found that when couples advocate together, they are able to discuss the case and serve more children in care. When the children see that there are two people who have their best interests at heart, they do better academically and socially. (Pictured: Jeff & Julie Mackenzie)



**Fencing For Foster Care.** As part of our community outreach and recruitment, we launched Fencing for Foster Care in honor of foster care month. This will be an annual event to share info about us.

**Annual Holiday Wrap Party.** During the holiday season Atlanta CASA partners with corporations, organizations, and individuals to ensure that every child with a CASA experiences a traditional holiday season. Each year, Atlanta CASA provides over 400 children in care with a wishlist; each year we make certain that our children receive the items on the list; and each year we host a wrapping party where every item on the list is wrapped and delivered to the children by their CASA volunteers. Our friends in the community are gracious to spend a day with us to make every moment of this signature event worthwhile.





**Sanctuary Model.** The Sanctuary Model brings to Atlanta CASA the ability to better respond to trauma. We are all in some way affected by various forms of trauma. The Sanctuary Model is a tool that enables us to redefine our organizational culture, support our volunteers better and enable our volunteers to better serve the population of children for whom we advocate. The Sanctuary Model represents a theory-based, trauma-informed, trauma-responsive, evidence-supported, whole culture approach that has a clear and structured methodology. It is a set of interactive tools to change people's minds and the way we go about working together, thinking together, acting together, and living together. By the year 2022, our organization will be an official Trauma Informed site.

## STRATEGIC ACHIEVEMENTS

Thanks to pro bono contributions by **Leadership Atlanta, IBM Consulting, Atlanta-area Evaluation Association, Catchafire, and Pro Bono Partnership of Atlanta**, we developed a three-year strategic plan, including a new recruitment logic model; implemented the trauma-informed sanctuary model; created a comprehensive marketing and rebranding plan; and engaged legal counsel to direct our name change to Atlanta CASA. We also engaged the **Georgia Aquarium's Joe Handy** as signature fundraiser host committee chair.



## INNOVATION & GROWTH

Following consistent feedback from potential CASAs that the necessity of in-person training was often a deterrent to participation, in 2019 Atlanta CASA began working to establish the technological infrastructure that would enable us to offer all-online training. We anticipate launching this new offering in early 2020.

## SERVING CAPACITY

Our staff and volunteers are always working hard not only to serve children in care, but also to help decrease the total number of foster children and increase our capacity to serve those who do make it into the system. A year-over-year summary of our serving capacity growth is provided on the following page.

2019

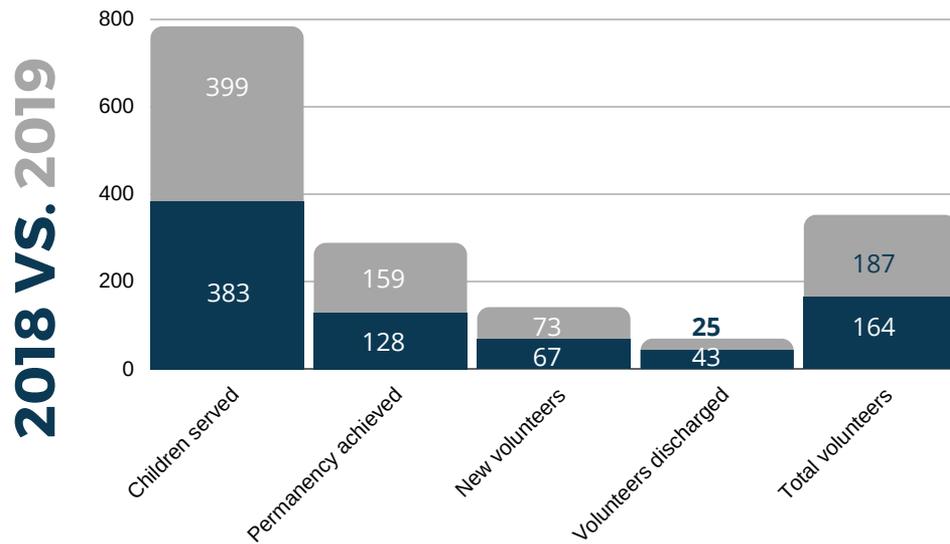
# HOW DID WE DO?

Atlanta CASA is pleased to report across-the-board growth and a significantly increased capacity to serve the foster children of Fulton County. *Special thanks to the Jesse Parker Williams Foundation for funding our youth wellness and well-being tracking initiative.*

**50%**  
*increase in staff retention*

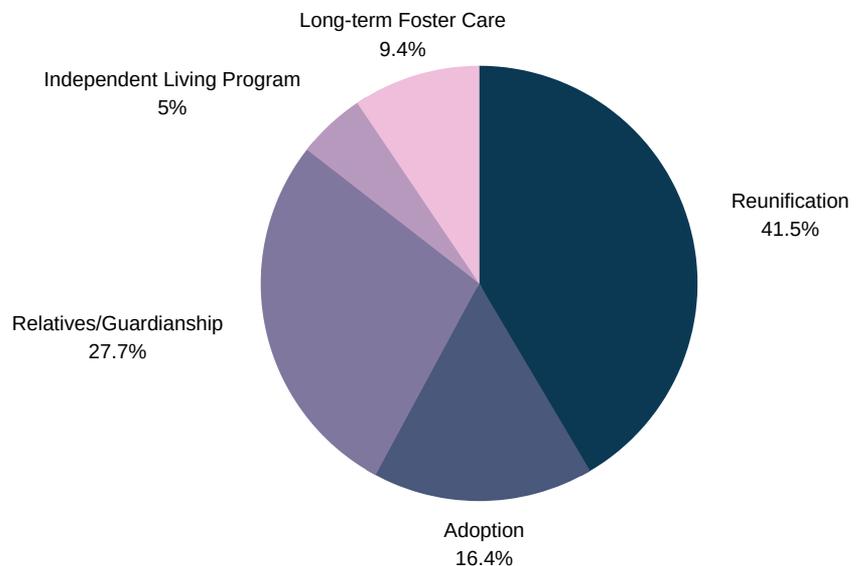
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**13%**  
*increase in volunteer retention*



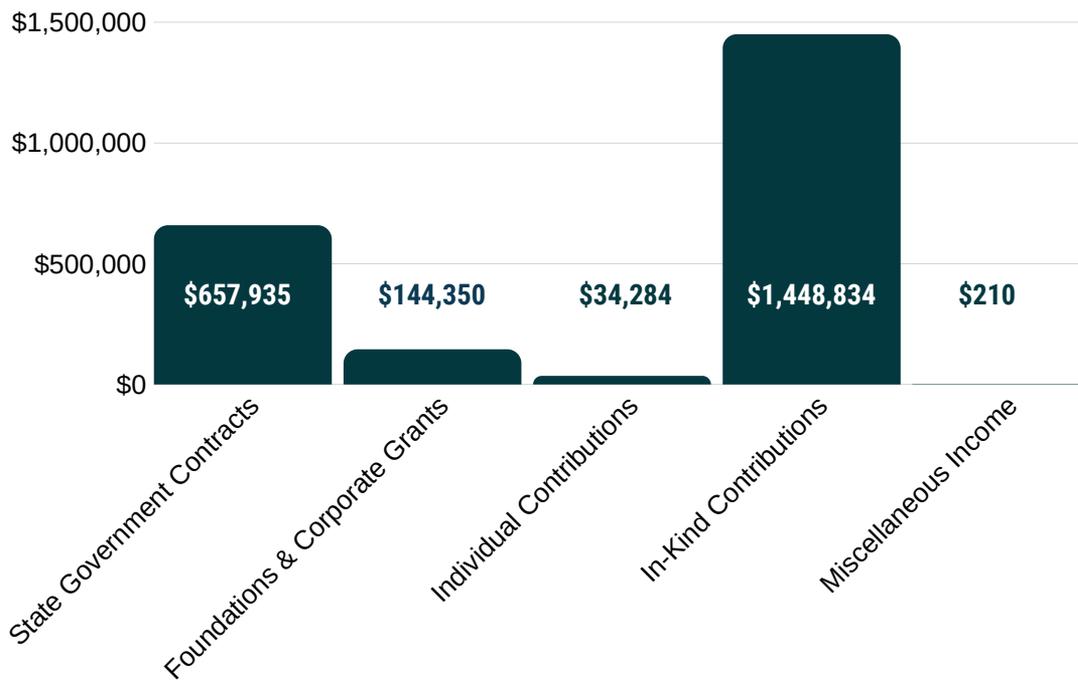
## CASE OUTCOMES

Of the 159 cases in 2019 in which permanency was achieved, 66 children were reunited with their biological family; 26 were adopted; 44 are under the guardianship of relatives; 8 are enrolled in an independent living program; and 15 are in long-term foster care. Reunification with a biological parent(s) is always the preferred outcome, so we are pleased that it makes up the largest percentage of cases.

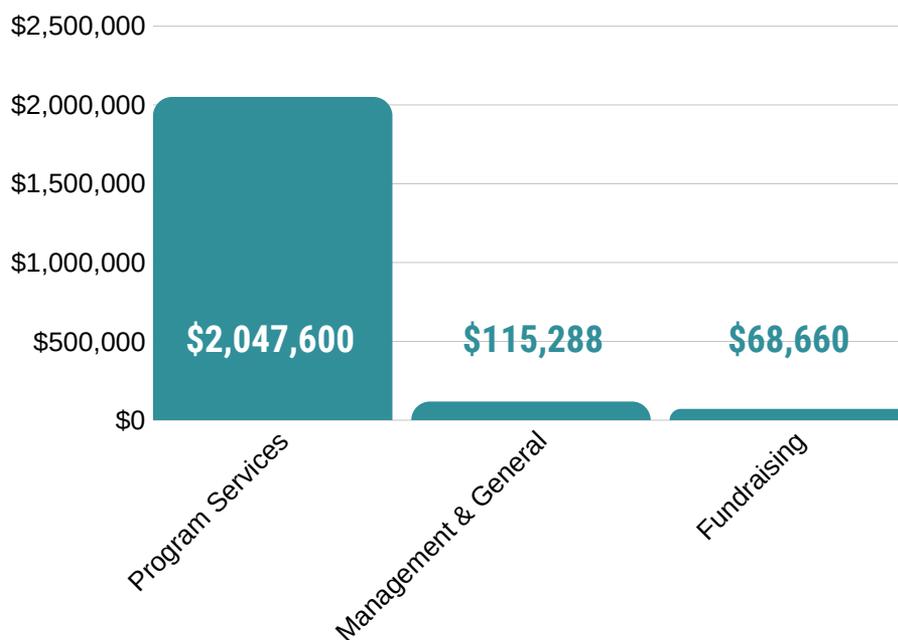


# Statement of Activities

## Public Support & Revenue | Total: \$2,285,613



## Expenses | Total: \$2,231,548



## ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

AEC Trust	Imlay Foundation
Amerigroup	Jesse Parker Williams Foundation
Atlanta Bar Foundation	Jewish Federation - A Hand Up
Atlanta Fulton Family Connection	JM Family Enterprises
AT&T	Kappa Alpha Theta
Baker Donelson	Kroger Companies
Billian Family Foundation	Mary Allen Lindsey Brannan Foundation
Centers for Disease Control	McMaster Carr Supply Company
Connolly Family Foundation, Inc.	National CASA
David Helen Marian Woodward Fund	Porsche Care Network
Emory University Women's Club	Promoting Safe & Stable Families
Flight Buddies, Inc.	Safer Communities in South Fulton
Frances Wood Wilson Foundation, Inc.	Sandy Springs Society
Georgia Court Appointed Special Advocates, Inc.	Thalia and Michael C. Carlos Foundation
Grant Thornton LLP	United Way
Help for Children	Victim of Crime Act
IBM	Wilemal Fund
	Winston Salem Foundation



Atlanta CASA is honored to count these wonderful groups among our strongest and most loyal allies in our **efforts to bring peace, hope, and stability to Fulton County's foster children**. Their selfless gifts of time, attention, and tangible resources have made it possible for us to extend our reach far beyond what we otherwise would have, and for that, we are deeply, eternally grateful.

## INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

Aaron Bawcom	Felix Faerber	Leyla Compani	Sarah Flesher
Abigail Gross	Gary Barnes	Linda Klein	Sarahnell Walsh
Alexis Wells	George Georgiou	Lisa Richman	Sebastian Meis
Alicia Weltner	Jackie Walker	Lisana Owens	Shameka Marsh
Allesen Cann	Jairo A. Rivera	Lonnie Howard	Shanon Perry
Anne Hux	James G. & Susan G. Behnke	Luis Gomez Pineda	Sharon Anderson
Ashley Thompson	Jamie Douglas	Manry Kelly	Stacey Thalken
Brianna Ohonba	Jamila Cowan	Margaret Maloney	Stephanie Robinson
Brittany Miles	Jennifer King	Marie Allen	Steven Hall
Brittney Hill	Jennifer Williams	Mark Barber	Suneel Gupta
Bruce Gilbert	Jessica Ryan	Mark Carlson	Susan Glatt
Cara Knott	Joan Murphy	Melissa Stanford	T.M. Lyons
Casey Creal	John Cahill	Melissa M. Stanford	T.R. & S.T. Brown
Cassandra Mann	John Hinton	Michael Burks	Teresa Bailey
Chris Pomor	Joseph Delgado	Mike Dewald	Thomas Baker
Chris Rich	Josephine Taylor Reed	Monique Jones	Virginia Stanley
Christine Ryan	Justin Sullivan	Mr. & Mrs. Charles Conklin	Vivien Servenka
Christy Gunther	Karen Perritte	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Hopkin	William G. Benjey
Claud P. & Carla J. Czaja	Kat Reynolds	Myra S. Parris	Yolanda Polk
Clint Crosby	Katie Gangell	Otisia Seay	Omesede Oriakhi
Dama Stephenson	Katrenna Casey	Pascal Lewis	Rachel Davidson
Daphne Jordan	Keri Griffin	R. & Thomas C. Jowers	Stephen Marion
Davina or Debra Blair	Kiiyanta Johnson	Ralph Culpepper	Nicole Harper
Diana Solano Rivera	Kimberly Murray	Rebecca Kiszkiel	Capt. Miller Johnson
Diana A. Chica	Lani Garner	Ricardo Gomez	Robbyn Ingram
Duane F. & Ann Ellis	Leesa Akins	Robert & Sharon Benjey	Terry Bushell
E.A. Lyons	Leesa Flora	Sandra Thomann	
Emilia Walker			



## Atlanta CASA Board of Directors

**George Georgiou**  
Board Chairman  
Mercury Z

**John F. Cahill**  
Vice Chairman  
Md7, LLC

**Leesa Flora, Esq.**  
Secretary  
Community Volunteer

**Omosede Oriakhi**  
Treasurer  
Anthem, Inc.

**Pascal Lewis**  
Delta Air Lines, Inc.

**Justin A. Sullivan**  
PNC Wealth Management

**Rachel Davidson**  
Office of the Child Advocate

**Stephanie Robinson**  
Cohesive Solutions

**Stephen Marion**  
Business Solutions Consulting

**Leyla Compani**  
Welcoming America

## Atlanta CASA Staff



**Robbyn Ingram**  
CEO

**Debra Carson**  
Director of Programs

**Otisia Seay**  
Program Administrator

**Terry Bushell**  
Community Development  
Coordinator

**Charles Wilbanks**  
Advocate Engagement  
Coordinator

**LaShondra Adams**  
Lead Advocacy Coordinator

**Lisa Bishop**  
Advocacy Coordinator

**Danielle Daniels**  
Advocacy Coordinator

**Iniki Franklin**  
Advocacy Coordinator

**Allison Gibbs**  
Advocacy Coordinator

**Courtnie Nikitaides**  
Advocacy Coordinator

**William Herrin**  
Advocacy Coordinator

# Thank you to our FY2019 Atlanta Court Appointed Special Advocates



## Volunteer Appreciation Extravaganza

Every year Atlanta CASA honors its advocates for the seamless hours they put in to ensure abused and neglected children have a voice in judicial proceedings and find a forever home. We honored the advocate of the year by presenting her with the Judge Glenda Hatchett award; honored our longest serving volunteer with the service award; and connected with community leaders who vowed to support and promote the CASA program.

Ola Alexander  
 Guilherme Appollonio  
 Amy Arogeti  
 Ikhumatudabakya Aten  
 Lydia Bagley  
 Stephen Baxter  
 Alberta Bell  
 Ashton Brasher  
 Courtney Brown  
 Katherine Butler  
 Richard Butler  
 Amanda Cadore  
 Sudawn Carver  
 Katrenna Casey  
 Karen Celestine  
 Kay Copilevitz  
 Christy Costello  
 Casey Creal  
 Andrea Criste  
 Graham Crowther  
 Katie Cusumano  
 Michelle Davis  
 Allison Davis  
 Lorie Davis  
 Dianna Dillard  
 Eleanor Edmondson  
 Michelle Edwards  
 Katie Ehrlich  
 Jandra Eldridge  
 Amelia Elola  
 Samantha Embry  
 Gloria Ervin  
 Erika Estrada

Leanne Fallin  
 Samantha Fouche  
 Lawanda Hall  
 Kolen Hatchett  
 LaShonya Heard  
 Susan Heron  
 Charlie Holiday-Wilson  
 Marilyn Howard  
 Michael Huff  
 Latashia Huff  
 Shaneka Jeffers  
 Latrice Jones-Byrd  
 Marlo Klorfein  
 Leslie Kravet  
 Lynea Laws  
 Erika Lawson  
 Nicole Lee  
 Rachel Lempp  
 Dana Leshley  
 Donna Levin  
 Jacquelyn Lickness  
 Alexandra Lilly  
 Laura Lindor-Parker  
 Joyce Link  
 Jacqueline Lovelace  
 Faith Lyles  
 Sherida Mabon  
 Susan MacLaren  
 Monica Maddox-Thomas  
 Cathryn Mandrycky  
 Sandra Mannings  
 Natalie Marshall

Curtrina Martin  
 Donna McDermott  
 Pamela McGrath  
 Adam McKenzie  
 Barbara Mecchi-Knoll  
 Lauren Meeler  
 Craig Mihaly  
 Henry Moore, Jr.  
 Tiffany Nanguy  
 Trudye Nesbit  
 Beth Newton  
 Blanche Nichols  
 Brianna Ohonba  
 Walter Okakpu  
 Dhamana Onaje  
 Kimberly Owens  
 Lisana Owens-Davis  
 Kimberly Painter  
 Attallah Pamoja  
 Johnita Patterson  
 Melissa Paul  
 Renika Payne  
 Anthony Payne  
 Jessica Peterick  
 Susan Phelps  
 Jaquala Ponder  
 Vicki Proano  
 Toney Randle  
 Josephine Reed-Taylor  
 Candace Richardson  
 Daphne Richardson  
 Wendy Scales-Johnson

Beth Schlies  
 Alicia Schuster-Weltner  
 Lee Senne  
 Kedria Sheppard  
 Subijay Sheriff  
 Brigitte Smith  
 Tina Stern  
 Theresa Storey  
 Tracy Swearingen  
 Jackie Swiecichowski  
 Mary Quinn Templeton  
 Sandra Thomann  
 Patricia Thomas  
 LaTrece Thomas  
 Cassandra Thomas  
 Bianca Thrasher  
 Felicia Tillman  
 Rebecca Treacy-Lenda  
 Franklin Tucker  
 Jill Vantosh  
 Katrenna Washington  
 Chanda Washington  
 Robert Watts  
 Alexia Wells  
 Marie Wilbert  
 Lisa Williams  
 Erica Williams  
 Latoya Wilson  
 Chandra Wimbrush  
 Helaine Woodroof  
 Pamela Woods



# CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
**FOR CHILDREN**

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## ATLANTA

Atlanta Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Inc.

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*Funding provided in part by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners under the guidance of the Department of Community Development CSP Program.*

Atlanta CASA is recognized as a member program of the **National Court Appointed Special Advocates Association** and an affiliate program of **Georgia Court Appointed Special Advocates**. It is also a 501(c)(3) nonprofit agency that recruits, trains, and supervises community volunteers to advocate in the best interests of abused and neglected children who are under the jurisdiction of the Fulton County Juvenile Court. Atlanta CASA is proudly funded through direct public support and the following agencies:

