

VOICES RAISING VOICES

In 2016, Georgia CASA launched a project, Voices Raising Voices, for CASA volunteers throughout the state to share their volunteer stories. The goal is to help recruit a new wave of CASA volunteers so that even more children can have a voice for their best interests in court. By raising more volunteer voices, we can all help ensure more children across Georgia benefit from CASA volunteers by their sides. Here's the story of how one CASA volunteer can change children's lives.

MEET PAMELA

In 2005, Pamela Curley went to a CASA informational session in Sarasota, FL (known as the Guardian ad Litem program in Florida). Shortly thereafter, she completed the pre-service volunteer training and received her first case at the swearing-in ceremony. During the training, as the trainees sat in the jury box for observation, a red-haired baby was brought into the courtroom and placed in front of everyone. The baby's eyes were blinking and opening and closing and it was revealed, when the parents were brought in from jail, that the baby had been blinded by being shaken by the parents. The Department of Children and Families whisked the baby away after the hearing – but Pamela never forgot that baby. It was at that moment that she knew she had to do something to help children...

I have been a CASA volunteer in Georgia since 2010, having advocated for about 50 children on 29 cases. My longest case has been seven years, and I currently have three cases (still ongoing) that have lasted anywhere from two to four years. I am committed to serve the children involved in these cases until their cases are closed and permanently resolved.

One case I served on that was monumental to me involved watching three little girls grow up in foster care after they were removed from their mother's custody – four different times over the course of seven years. I visited them every month of those seven years, as they moved around to many different homes. When they were finally placed in a loving foster home, that eventually become their adoptive home, they blossomed into beautiful young girls with distinct personalities. At ages two, four and five when I met them, they physically huddled and moved together in order to protect each other. Today, they are 13, 11 and nine, and beautifully independent!

Being a CASA volunteer has changed my life. Choosing to do good for others and the community gives me a sense of accomplishment, pride and satisfaction. And I really feel I am making a difference in the lives of children!

On a personal note, Pamela is originally from Chicago and enjoys watching the Chicago Cubs. She and her husband live in the North Georgia mountains with their three dogs. Believing that life is better when you are healthy and take care of yourself, she tries to start most days on the treadmill, loves to cook (and eat), and grows her own vegetables. As an avid reader, she can read several books a week when she has down time. But truly, her schedule revolves around her CASA volunteer work with court hearings and visits to the children she serves!