

## **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 inspiring story of a CASA volunteer from Cobb County CASA in metro Atlanta.

### **MEET JULIAN**

Julian Bishop has been a CASA volunteer with Cobb County CASA since 2017, and during his tenure, he has served on four cases and advocated for 14 children. He states that one thing he really likes about the CASA program "is that the backgrounds and challenges of each case are so different. This means that you don't get stale, because there is always something very different to learn and a different perspective to understand." Originally from the United Kingdom, Julian previously volunteered for many years in checking on the welfare of detainees in London police stations and prisons as well as running youth clubs. When he learned about the CASA volunteer opportunity, the CASA role seemed to build upon his previous volunteer experience as well as offered new personal growth.

Most of the children Julian has advocated for have had, or are on the way to having, successful outcomes. For example, he has remained in touch with the children from his first case, along with their guardian grandmother. The eldest child will finish college next year and he looks forward to her graduation. He knows that children with a CASA volunteer are statistically much more likely to spend less time in foster care, perform better at school, and find safe, permanent homes. He believes this benefit to the children as well as to society as a whole is one of the strongpoints of the CASA program.

Julian describes being a CASA volunteer as a unique opportunity. During his pre-service training, he learned from each fellow trainee's perspective and existing skills that were different than his. While CASA volunteers may use different approaches in their volunteer work, he believes the various approaches ultimately lead to positive outcomes for the children. Julian shares that his "Britishness made it really easy to develop relationships with the older kids who would spend hours asking questions on obscure British bands."

Julian regularly promotes being a CASA volunteer to people he meets. While understanding it is not for everyone, he has found being a CASA volunteer a fantastic way of enhancing your own skills and broadening your outlook, while at the same time helping kids in great crisis. CASA volunteers are asked to remain on a case until it is permanently resolved. As Julian states, "once you have committed to being a CASA for a child, you have to see through that commitment...these kids in care have a history of

having been let down by adults in their life.” Julian has been inspired in his work as a CASA volunteer by being surrounded by people involved in child welfare who are pragmatically trying to improve the world – one action at a time.

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Julian has just published *High, Wide, and Handsome*, a witty travel book that seeks to explain American culture and how it developed. He wrote the book for first-generation U.S. immigrants and British people with a strong interest in the U.S. In a world where all of America's political leaders are widely ridiculed around the world, Julian wanted the book to be an antidote to the narrative that everything American is broken. It isn't, but some things could be improved. What surprised him is that naturally-born Americans are really enjoying the book and telling him that they have learned things about their own culture.

To read an excerpt and view more information about the book, visit <https://www.julian-bishop.com/full-excerpt>.