

THIS ISSUE

*DEAI: Committing to Change
Calling All Volunteers
A Night Out with CASA*

CASA STAFF

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Director

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DEAI: COMMITTING TO CHANGE

CASA of Jefferson and Gilpin Counties has always been committed to changing and improving. That's why last fall a committee of staff and volunteers was formed. Chaired by Audrey Miklitsch, CASA Jeffco/Gilpin Community Engagement Coordinator, the committee's goal is to assess CASA Jeffco/Gilpin's commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI).

"It took us a while as an organization to figure out our roadmap for DEAI," said Leah Varnell, CASA Jeffco/Gilpin Executive Director. "We wanted to do it in a thoughtful way and not just check the boxes; we wanted to make sure it was meaningful and sustainable and very broad and inclusive of all aspects of diversity. Audrey really helped us get into focus. And now, in the grand scheme, we're exactly where we need to be."

Through research, Audrey found the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's All Children, All Families Program.

"While the program is focused on LGBTQ+ inclusion, it helped us review things from a broader DEAI perspective so we were able to make changes that affect other marginalized communities as well," Audrey said.

As the first phase of the program, CASA Jeffco/Gilpin's DEAI team reviewed and started revising policies, procedures, and documents to be more inclusive. CASA Jeffco/Gilpin applied for the "Building Foundation for Inclusion" tier certification within the program and is waiting to hear back.

There are two additional tiers in the All Children, All Families Program.

"Our goal is to continue to improve through the program and move up in tier levels each year," Audrey said. The full list of requirements for each tier can be found on the All Children, All Families Program website. The All Children, All Families Program was developed in partnership with National CASA. Audrey learned about the program through Texas CASA.

The DEAI committee is currently composed of CASA Jeffco/Gilpin staff members and volunteers. Volunteers who might be interested in joining should contact Audrey Miklitsch at Audrey@casajeffcogilpin.com.

"We're always looking for community involvement and resources as we continue to improve our DEAI efforts," Audrey said. "Any and all ideas, input, and support are welcomed."



UPCOMING CASA VOLUNTEER TRAINING SCHEDULE

Mon, Sept 11
5:30 pm - 9:00 pm

Wed, Sept 13
5:30 pm - 9:00 pm

Mon, Sept 18
5:30 pm to 9:00 pm

Wed, Sept 20
5:30 pm to 9:00 pm

Mon, Sept 25
5:30 pm to 9:00 pm

Wed, Sept 27
5:30 pm to 9:00 pm

Tue, Oct 3
5:30 pm to 9:00 pm

Wed, Oct 4
5:30 pm to 9:00 pm

Mon, Oct 9
5:30 pm to 9:00 pm

Wed, Oct 11
5:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Swearing-In Ceremony

CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS

Whether you have thought about becoming a CASA volunteer or know someone who might be interested in being a CASA volunteer, CASA of Jefferson and Gilpin Counties would love your support. The need for trusted adult volunteers (must be 21 and older) has never been greater.

“I am receiving roughly half of the inquires to become a CASA volunteer this year as compared to last year,” said Audrey Miklitsch, CASA Jeffco/Gilpin Community Engagement Coordinator.

People may be reluctant to volunteer for many reasons so we connected with several current CASA volunteers to dispel some of the myths about volunteering.

MYTH: I WON'T BE PREPARED AS A CASA VOLUNTEER AND WON'T KNOW HOW TO NAVIGATE THE LEGAL SYSTEM.

Reality: CASA volunteers participate in 30 hours of robust training and then are paired with an Advocate Supervisor or Peer Coordinator who provides ongoing support throughout their volunteer experience.

“I was scared of not being able to navigate the legal aspects of the task. I am not a citizen. I did not grow up with English as my first language, and I was really afraid of all the legalese. It is such a relief that everyone is helpful- I have my CASA supervisor to ask, but also the GAL, the case worker, and even the other lawyers. Nobody is looking down at me because I don't know what is happening. They are just all trying to help because they appreciate the work a CASA volunteer does.” – CASA volunteer of 6 months

MYTH: YOU CAN'T VOLUNTEER WITH A FULL-TIME JOB

Reality: Roughly 70% of our volunteers work full time.

“The time commitment is not onerous. Scheduling can be a challenge but the demands on my time have been very manageable.” – CASA volunteer 2 years

“I really spend a few hours at a time once to twice a week with my CASA kid. I probably spend less than 30 minutes a week on the coordination of meetings and probably less than an hour a week documenting interactions. This varies based on what is going on with your specific case.” – CASA volunteer of 3 months

MYTH: BECAUSE I HAVEN'T BEEN THROUGH HARDSHIPS LIKE THE CHILDREN IN THE CASES, I WON'T BE AN EFFECTIVE VOLUNTEER.

Reality: “I think one of the misconceptions of potential volunteers is that you have no experience with the hardships these children live through so one couldn't be effective. But it is the consistent time volunteers give to the kids that makes the biggest difference. Children just need a caring, consistent adult in their life.” – CASA volunteer of 5 years



**SCAN THE QR CODE FOR MORE
INFORMATION ON BECOMING A
CASA VOLUNTEER!**

CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS, CONT.



MYTH: THE EMOTIONAL STRAIN OF VOLUNTEERING IS TOO HEAVY

Reality: Yes, the cases CASA volunteers are assigned to can be emotional; so we provide extensive training for volunteers to learn to recognize how to set and keep boundaries.

“Two of the things I’ve heard over the years is that people think they can’t be a CASA volunteer because they’ll get too involved or emotional. Others say, ‘I’ll just want to take all the kids home.’ That is why we provide the training and support that enables them to keep healthy boundaries and be a strong support for the children in their case. Through training, volunteers also start to realize that ‘taking a child home’ really won’t solve what’s going on, and that you can make a bigger impact by developing a trusting relationship with the child and making sure their voice is heard in court.” – Leah Varnell, CASA Jeffco/Gilpin Executive Director

“The nature of the interactions with the families and kids means that it is easier than I thought to remain sufficiently objective so that the emotional distresses do not become overly burdensome.” – CASA volunteer of 2 years

MYTH: THERE ARE NO RESOURCES TO SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS

Reality: CASA Jeffco/Gilpin has worked for years to establish relationships with county resources and donors. CASA volunteers are trained to ask for supports they feel might benefit their interactions with the children on their cases as well as their families. CASA Jeffco/Gilpin also offers various activities and groups to volunteers so they feel connected and supported.

“There are a lot of resources available to tap into to help your CASA kid and their families. I have been able to submit requests to WeeCycle to get a brand-new car seat to keep in my car full time. I have been able to get diapers, wipes, and pull ups for my CASA family as well.” – CASA volunteer of 3 months



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5:30 PM



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