

# Columbia Gorge CASA

*Our Mission: To advocate for the needs and well-being of children and youth who have experienced abuse and neglect through continually-trained and professionally supported community volunteers.*

DEC. 2023

## CASA IN NUMBERS



**77**  
**CHILDREN**  
**SERVED**  
**FY 22/23**



**40**  
**ADVOCATES**  
**SERVED**  
**CHILDREN**  
**FY 22/23**



**15 +**  
**CHILDREN**  
**NEED AN**  
**ADVOCATE**

**LEARN ABOUT BECOMING A VOLUNTEER  
ADVOCATE AT [GORGECASA.ORG](http://GORGECASA.ORG)**

## Columbia Gorge CASA

Phone: 541-386-3468

Email: [outreach@gorgecasa.org](mailto:outreach@gorgecasa.org)

Physical Address: 1308 12th St.

Mailing Address: PO Box 663

Hood River, OR 97031



## DEDICATION AND CREATIVITY

“Will you wait after court to speak to me?” said the Judge to Jane after her verbal report in court. Jane had been serving with CASA for years and attended court on several occasions but never had this happen. What had she done wrong?

While waiting for the court session to end, Jane mentally ran through everything she had said in her report. She knew everything for which she had advocated was in the best interest of the youth, so this left Jane even more confused and nervous as she waited to learn what she had unintentionally done to possibly upset the judge.

*cont'd p.3*



## OVER A DECADE OF SERVICE

Columbia Gorge CASA's board chair, Julie Nygaard, has been serving the organization for over 10 years. Julie has been an integral part of the program's leadership and direction over the years. In addition to her strong leadership, Julie has been an impactful ambassador of the organization. She is not afraid to share CASA's mission with her friends and encourage them to buy raffle tickets for the program's annual playhouse raffle.

"Julie's consistency and knowledge had been huge asset to our program over the years," expressed Executive Director Christopher Janetzko. "We are incredibly grateful that Julie has chosen to volunteer so much time to supporting CASA's mission."

## ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

In October, Program Coordinator Leah Campbell named Theo Parkinson as the program's Rookie of the Year. Parkinson received this recognition due to her self-awareness and ability to use a strength-based approach in her advocacy. "It can, at times, be difficult for advocates to understand the minimal sufficient level of care and set aside personal expectations in their advocacy," explained Program Coordinator Leah Campbell. "Theo has been able to successfully use a strength-based approach in her advocacy while still noting concerns and thinking up ways to help the family without judgment."





Swearing-in ceremony for summer 2023 trainees.

## ADVOCATE SPOTLIGHT: CAROL BEAMER

Carol Beamer has been a volunteer advocate with CASA for almost four years. She's been advocating for the same case for almost as long as she's been a CASA volunteer, having been assigned just a month after completing training. Carol's dedication to her case, which hasn't been easy, has been steadfast and unflappable, despite the many twists and turns encountered.

Carol became a CASA volunteer because she "wanted to be in-service in a very hands-on way to children who truly needed someone positive in their lives." She has indeed lived up to this goal, never failing to provide detailed court reports for each hearing and often speaking up in court even—especially—in the most challenging times. Carol balances eloquence, professionalism, and perseverance in every aspect of her advocacy. Her advocacy for her CASA children has been unwavering, her care and concern for the children always evident.

We asked Carol about her favorite part of advocacy, to which she replied, "The kiddos, of course! Their inherent joy and resilience are inspiring."

### DEDICATION AND CREATIVITY (Continued)

Eventually, after what seemed like an eternity to Jane, court ended and the judge was able to address her. To Jane's relief, the judge was not upset but wanted to thank her for dedication and creativity in her advocacy.

Jane knew that the youth for whom she was advocating was lonely. The youth had been moved around to several different placements and was currently in a setting where they didn't know anyone. In hopes of making this new transition slightly less traumatic, Jane had invited those in court to write letters to the youth to encourage them.

The judge, while acknowledging that they were unable to write a letter to the youth due to their role, urged everyone else present to send the youth letters of encouragement.

Jane's unique recommendation shows the value of having trained, community volunteers advocate for the best interest of our community's most vulnerable. Through their advocacy, volunteers' unique perspectives can bring creative recommendations to improve the child or youth's life while in foster care. The recommendations our advocates make can be seemingly small but address unique issues that make a huge difference. In other instances, the recommendations can change the entire course of the case for the better, helping to ensure long-term positive outcomes for the youth.

## BECOME A VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE

UPCOMING PRE-SERVICE TRAINING SESSIONS

WINTER 2024

SPRING 2024

REGISTER: [gorgecasa.org/volunteer](http://gorgecasa.org/volunteer)

# GIVE HOPE TO A CHILD!

As we approach the end of another challenging but meaningful year, I am filled with gratitude for all those who have given so generously of themselves—as volunteers, as donors, as partners—to provide hope to children who have experienced abuse or neglect in our community. Our volunteer advocates alone have dedicated over 2,000 hours to serving the children of our community.

The holiday season can be a time to make happy memories with family. **But it can be a very difficult time of year for the approximately 100 children in Hood River, Wasco, and Sherman Counties who were involved in dependency cases this year.** Many of these children are still in the system and have been placed in foster care. They're attending court hearings, adjusting to new foster homes, and transitioning to new schools. That is a heavy burden for a child to carry alone, especially during the holidays.

I would like to invite you to continue to support our mission and help our nonprofit increase its capacity to serve 100% of children in our region needing an advocate. Our program is currently serving around 70% of those children. **Children and youth with an advocate have significantly higher levels of hope.** When a child has more hope, they are also more likely to succeed in school and have greater self-control, increased optimism, and a higher overall sense of wellbeing.

Our team of volunteer advocates serve as caring, consistent adults who will be there for a child experiencing the loneliness and uncertainty of foster care this holiday season. Children with a dedicated volunteer by their side have someone who will speak up for their best interests in the courtroom and help them find a safe, permanent home.

**We at Columbia Gorge CASA are determined to continue to increase our program's capacity until we can serve every child who needs an advocate. Jeff and Melissa Rippey have graciously committed to helping CASA work towards this goal through providing a \$7,000 match in donations given to this year's appeal.** A gift of just \$20 a month can go a long way in helping our program increase its capacity to serve more children.

Please help us reach more children by making a gift today. Together, we can give hope!

Christopher D. Janetzko  
Executive Director  
Columbia Gorge CASA



## GIVE BY MAIL

COLUMBIA GORGE CASA  
PO BOX 663  
HOOD RIVER, OR 97031

## GIVE ONLINE

GORGE.CASA.ORG