



CASA Connection

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Abuse Hotline
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The Honorable Sharon W. Sigalas



Sharon W. Sigalas served as Jackson County Youth Court judge since being elected in 2002. Throughout her tenure as the Youth Court judge, she served on numerous task forces and committees. Judge Sigalas was instrumental in starting two new programs at the Youth Court, the Heartbeat and Fostering Futures programs. The Heartbeat Program helps families and children achieve permanency in a timely manner. The Fostering Futures Program helps children between the ages of 14-20 in becoming productive members of their communities as they age out of the system.

Judge Sigalas was actively involved in the training of new CASA volunteers. She took the time to talk to each training class about the law and procedures of the Youth Court. Her support of the mission provided compassionate and professional leadership that helped to prepare the new volunteers for their role as an advocate. Without a doubt, she was and will always be a champion for children.

As the Youth Court judge, the Honorable Sharon W. Sigalas was committed to making a difference in the lives of the children and families that came before the court. She was a dedicated force that led the Youth Court staff and CASA program. She will be missed. Thankfully, the many wonderful memories made during her time as the Youth Court judge will keep her forever in our hearts.

The following message is from Judge Sigalas given at the 2022 CASA Blues.

As I write this brief message, it hits me that this will be my last year to be the Youth Court Judge for Jackson County. To say that it has been an honor to have served in this position for almost 20 years would be an understatement. My life has been truly blessed by the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children and families in Jackson County. I will retire knowing that I have done my best. Even when I made mistakes, I took that opportunity to learn from my mistakes. I have enjoyed watching our CASA program grow under the leadership of Frances Allsup from a mere four volunteers serving 11 children in 2006 to over 100 volunteers today serving 217 children in the calendar year 2021. I have personally seen the difference a CASA volunteer makes in the lives of the children they touch. I will be forever grateful for the honor of working so closely with such a wonderful group of dedicated community volunteers.

As I enter into this next chapter of my life, I ask that each of you remember to pray for whomever takes my place. This is a job that requires a great deal of patience and compassion. It is not always easy to make decisions that will change the direction of a child's life, but it is a job that must be done. To all who have helped me throughout my 20-year journey, I say thank you. I love each of you, and I will definitely miss each and every one of you. Sincerely, Sharon W. Sigalas

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The Honorable Sharon W. Sigalas



**A Champion for Children
A true Superhero**



An agency of United Way for Jackson and George Counties since 1999



Latest Program Statistics

JC CASA is a volunteer-powered organization that advocates for the abused and neglected children of Jackson County. We have an amazing group of dedicated volunteers that provide a voice for these children throughout their court process. As of April 30, 2022, **102 Volunteers** have served **165 children** from **105 families** with **1,471 donated hours of service during the 2022 calendar year.**

FYI



A huge thank you to the Junior Auxiliary of Pascagoula-Moss Point for the generous donation of four large coolers in early May! Samantha Bignell, CASA Governing Board member, made the surprise delivery to the office. These have been so needed to help volunteers and staff who work the recruitment and awareness events throughout the year and those who do the fundraising activities. You will never know how much generous community support means to our CASA mission.

Volunteers, board members, and staff were invited to attend the Fetal & Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) Community Action Team Review held at the MSDH Southern Region Auditorium in Biloxi on May 11. The entire staff and some volunteers attended. Southern Christian Services, a group that provides many services to children in foster care, was the presenting speaker. The meeting provided valuable information and allowed time to network with other CASA programs and professionals.



Friday May 13, proved to be a wonderfully special day for Jackson County CASA and the foster children the advocates and CPS serve! The wonderful folks from the Mark Seymour VFW Post 5699 in Ocean Springs delivered 111 filled duffle bags and backpacks. Each was personalized with a special message for the recipient and contained some basic items. This was their first Inaugural VFW Day of Service. They plan to continue helping by providing items for the babies, new shoes, and gift cards. We are so blessed to have received these items and look forward to sharing them with the foster children we serve.



FYI



CASA staff, Frances Allsup and Brenda Lancaster, attended the 32nd Annual Jackson County Industrial Tradeshow, which was held at the B.B. "Mac" McGinty Memorial Civic Center in Pascagoula, May 17. A booth was set up to spread the word of the CASA mission and for volunteer recruitment. It was an opportunity to network with participating businessmen and visitors of the event. Many guests visited our booth to learn more about CASA. Several volunteers and governing board members stopped by to provide support. Board member Mark Maples won a door prize, a Yeti cooler, provided by Helms Polyfoam. Volunteer Stacie Zorn stopped by to lend a helping hand.



Saturday, May 21, the Mississippi Maritime Museum hosted their second annual family friendly celebration of National Maritime Day at the Point in Pascagoula. The day was to honor our Mississippi coastal communities and their dedication to our local maritime heritage and culture. Food and many activities were available for the entire family to enjoy, including the Signet Maritime Tugboat water show, NOAA's famous "Turtle Hurtle", boats, kayaks, arts and crafts, and more.

On May 24, CASA received a very generous donation of stuffed toys from the Dixie Darts Association in Ocean Springs. Included in the wide assortment of animals were several hand-crocheted items provided by a former CASA volunteer who moved to Mississippi from Colorado and is now a part of the Dixie Darts Association. We know these will bring smiles to many faces when the children come to pick up back to school items and get to select a special animal of their own choosing!



Congratulations to our two newest volunteers who were sworn in by Judge Sharon Sigalas on Monday, May 23. New advocates are Reagan Bridley and Kathryn (Kathy) McDonald. Reagan and Kathy are the last CASA volunteers to be inducted by Judge Sigalas.

Summer Volunteer Training

It is not too late to join the volunteer training session that began May 24.

The curriculum used for the pre-service training, *Guided Learning*, is designed for independent learning. Participants receive material to review independently prior to the weekly in-person session with training facilitator, Patty Waters.

If you would like to participate in the current training session or would like more information on the CASA mission, contact Patty at patty_waters@co.jackson.ms.us, call the offices 228-762-7370 or visit the website jccasa.net

JACKSON COUNTY CASA, INC.

*Overview:

Part 1 and Interview

May 24 6:00 p.m. — 7:30 p.m.

*Overview:

Part 2

May 26 6:00 p.m.—7:30 p.m.

*The Bleux Case

May 31 6:00 p.m. — 7:30 p.m.

The Green Case

June 7 6:00 p.m. — 7:30 p.m.



The Amarillo Case

June 14 6:00 p.m. — 7:30 p.m.

The Redd Case

June 21 6:00 p.m. — 7:30 p.m.

Wrap-Up and Handbook

June 28 6:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.

To Be Arranged

Induction and Court Observations

***These sessions have been held and will require completion upon starting the pre-service volunteer training.**

Back-To-School

Yes, it's that time again! Most schools are out for the summer. That is until August when the children return for the 2022-2023 session. Local citizens, businesses, and organizations have already begun their back-to-school supply drives, collecting supplies for the many foster children we serve. Yikes!

Believe it or not, supplies are already being delivered to the office. Distribution of the school supplies is set for the week of July 18. As we get closer to July 18, volunteers will receive notice of the time, days, and location for the pick up of supplies.



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Continuing Education Opportunities

Reminder— to maintain your CASA standing, you are required to complete 12 hours of Continuing Education training each year. Be sure to include any completed Continuing Education hours on your monthly activity reports that are submitted in OPTIMA. We would like to add additional topics that would be beneficial to you as a volunteer. Please contact the CASA staff if you have special requests.

Donna Lewis LCSW, PLLC, is an independent counselor with more than 25 years experience specializing in trauma therapy. Thursday **June 16 at 6:00 p.m.**, Donna will present a discussion on mental disorders.

Thursday **June 23 at 5:30 p.m.** John Harry with *Hope for Mississippi*, a non-profit organization, will present a discussion on *Hope Against Adversity*. The discussion will focus on children exposed to domestic violence and how the violence affects behavior and personality and what can be done to support them. John has extensive experience in working with foster children and has a wealth of information dealing with drugs and their effects on the young brain.

RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED for both presentations which are **open to volunteers, governing board members, and the CASA, CPS, and Youth Court staffs.**

Reservations for the presentation by Donna Lewis are needed by June 13 and by June 20 for John Harry's presentation. Make your reservation now to attend both presentations and learn about their techniques for working with our foster children. Both presentations will be held in the Jackson County Youth Court courtroom. Call the CASA office at 228-762-7370 or email Beverly Goff at beverly_goff@co.jackson.ms.us

Many independent opportunities for continuing education can be found on our webpage, jccasa.net



12 hours of continuing education credit is required annually for volunteers and staff.

June Birthdays

June 1

Beth Keenan
Lisa Cannon
Stacey Dugger

June 7

Shanterra Armstrong

June 10

Reagan Bridley

June 11

Melanie Holden

June 16

Sandra King

June 28

Beverly Goff

