



JANUARY 2024

Volume 11: Issue 1

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Thank you to everyone who helped make the **2023 Holiday Happening** in Jackson County a huge success! We could not have done this without the help of so many dedicated volunteers. Thank you to those who helped prepare for the local event and manned the gift distribution in the two locations: **Larry Fowler, Karen Watson, Teresa Landrum, Anna Stewart, Trudi Dixon, Suzanne Delarosa, Jimmy Allsup**, and board member **Rene' Shaw**. The amazing **CASA** staff contacted foster parents, CPS workers, and **CASA** volunteers in advance of the day and worked hard before and after the event to see that everything was delivered to the children before Christmas. A huge thank you to **Frances Allsup, Abby Clark, Amber Ehlers, Beverly Goff, Karen Horn, Teresa Jaye, Brenda Lancaster, Zoey Lamkin** and **Jonathan Mills** for helping us survive the stress and chaos that only a **CASA** Christmas can create.

This year we were excited to celebrate Christmas not only in Jackson County, but expanded the gifting and holiday festivities into both George and Greene Counties as well. Please enjoy some of the people and events that made December 2023 a very special one to remember.



Santa arrived a little early at **CASA of Southeast Mississippi** when **Jason Edwards**, Director of Marketing and Community Outreach, showed up with this check for the grant **CASA** received from the **Papa John's Foundation**. These funds are designated for recruitment of volunteers as we kick off the year 2024 and to provide additional awareness opportunities as we continue to spread the word about the **CASA** program and the need for additional volunteers in Jackson, George and Greene Counties.

Pictured at the presentation which took place on November 29 are **Jason Edwards**, representing **Papa John's**, and **CASA** executive director, **Frances Allsup**.



Angels of CASA

260 children in the foster care system in Jackson, George and Greene Counties had a wonderful Christmas this year! This would not have been possible without the kindness and generosity of you, our dedicated community supporters. Numerous local businesses and their employees, community organizations, and individual citizens sponsored these children ensuring that the holiday season would be extra special by granting their Christmas wishes. Each and every one of you is truly a very special **CASA Angel!**

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to each for sponsoring a child or children. There is no way that you could ever know how much your gifts have meant to the children and each of us at **CASA of Southeast Mississippi, Inc.** We wish we could show you the excited smiles on the children's faces as they opened their gifts, but we can't. So just know that your kindness and generosity are deeply appreciated.

SPECIAL 2023 CASA CHRISTMAS ANGELS

Doug Adams • Barnes & Noble, Gulfport • Priscilla Battley • Bridgett Beesley & family

Samantha Bignell • Theresa Blair • the Blankenchip family • Brenda's Pokeno group

Cadence Insurance • Lisa Cannon & Drew Koschny

Suzanne Delarosa & family • Emily Dishman

Dixie Dart Association • Shelley Eubanks & friends • First State Bank of Lucedale employees

Beverly Goff • Golden Nugget staff & employees

*Janice Griffith • Gulf Coast Association of Realtors • Hancock Whitney Bank employees
at the Gautier, Gulfport, Ocean Springs East, & Ocean Springs Washington Avenue branches*

Handi Lock Self Storage in Gautier employees • Mollie Hillburn • Sara Hollis & family

Karen Horn • Jackson - George Regional Library System employees

Jackson County Civic Action Committee

Junior Auxiliary of Biloxi - Ocean Springs

Junior Auxiliary of Pascagoula - Moss Point • Wendy King & other MDOC officers

Keesler Federal Credit Union • the Krewe of Barry members

Jen & Chuck Miestchovich • Carol & Steve Messer • Mississippi Business Women

Ocean Springs Carnival Association • Operation Candy Cane Chevron employees

Pav & Broome Fine Jewelry • Judge Cheryl Pierce • Jennifer Bates Presley • Shanna Reid

Brandon Riches Law Firm • Marty Seib • Serena Smith • Sparklight employees • Amanda Tanner & family

Sue White & family • William Wilmoth & the staff at O'Bryant - O'Keefe

Cynthia & Larry Wilson • WIN Job Center • Zachry Care Team • Other Anonymous Donors

THANK YOU

FYI



Laurie Godfrey and **Mohler-Whitney** pictured at right and the staff at the Washington Avenue Branch of **Hancock Whitney** in Ocean Springs were excited to show off all the special gifts they purchased for the child they sponsored.



How to wrap a bicycle!



Santa's sleigh is fully loaded for take off!

Nikki Skrmetti is pictured above with the huge load of toys and gifts donated by the employees at **Handi Lock Self Storage** in Gautier. Instead of buying gifts for the owners this year, the group used these funds to sponsor three children! The owners were super excited to be remembered in this special way.

Thank you to all of the wonderful employees at **Zachry** for again doing an amazing job of shopping for the children. These fantastic folks shop for toys, gloves, socks, and assorted baby items to add as stocking stuffers for the kids. Pictured below are two of the employees who made this year's delivery. **Mr. Charlie** and his award-winning smile always warms our hearts, on even the coldest of winter days.



Thank you to **Tonya McMillan** and the amazing crew from **Sparklight** pictured at left for sponsoring three very lucky children who were ensured a great Christmas morning opening their own personalized gifts compliments of these very generous employee donors. And yes, Santa might leave giant stuffed dinosaurs under some very special Christmas trees in the area.



Pictured at right: **Judy Jones** and **Jackie Castro-Cooper** arrived with a vehicle filled to the brim with special delivery items for the children the **Mississippi Business Women** members were sponsoring this Christmas. The only thing better than their generous spirits - their annual Christmas party where **CASA** found good food, fun games, and a wonderful raffle to raise funds for their scholarship program. Thank you for including **Judge Stacie Zorn** and some **CASA** staff in these holiday festivities.



FYI



Pictured above **Officer Wendy King** and her law enforcement crew showed up on a beautiful Saturday morning with vehicles filled with all types of toys, games, and sporting equipment to make the holiday special. Gifts were chosen for several special children, and the remaining items were made available for shoppers to select at the **Holiday Happening** event. Many thanks to all of those throughout the state who contributed to this very special toy drive to benefit the children



Pictured above is **CASA** governing board member **Brandon Riches** and his wife **Chelsea**. **Brandon** heard we had a need for additional donors for some older children, and he eagerly stepped forward to sponsor eight that were still available. He is pictured when he delivered the gifts to **Frances Allsup**. He admitted his wife helped with the shopping, but he single-handedly wrapped all of these gifts!



Pictured at left, just when we thought we had seen it all - Monday morning came and several with the **Krewe of Barry** arrived on site pulling a giant trailer loaded with 50 new bicycles of all sizes and colors to provide new wheels for some very lucky youngsters. **Mike Zuber** and the **Krewe** did a spectacular job collecting and delivering the bikes in time for the event. Thank you to everyone who supported the **Krewe's** efforts.



Pictured above are **Patty Nash** and the employees and staff from the **Golden Nugget Casino** in Biloxi who again sponsored 25 of our younger children. The only thing missing from this picture—the bikes that several of these lucky children received on Christmas morning!



Pictured below is **Courtney Gautier** with gifts from our faithful donors **JABOSkicks**. **Courtney** and her husband **Loren** delivered all of the gifts purchased for 10 children. **JABOS** later added three of our tiniest babies for gifting and brought in additional toys and stuffed animals.

FYI



Christmas events in George County included guest appearances by the **Grinch, Santa,** and a very special **elf.** The children enjoyed a fun evening complete with gifts and treats for all who attended.
Pictured at right **Beverly Goff,** Lucedale **CASA** office manager, **CASA** board president, **Doug Adams,** and board member, **Ashley McLeod,** get ready to join in on some of the holiday fun.



Pictured above **Lindsey Fairley** and **Alice Knight** with **First State Bank of Lucedale** display some of the gifts the employees purchased for two of the children from George County.



Community Action in Lucedale recently gifted the **CASA** program with several boxes of new clothing in assorted sizes. Shown above **Terra Johnson** presents **Beverly Goff** some of these donations just in time for the holidays. This generous gift was made possible by **Terra Johnson** and the **Magnolia Café, June Bug's General Store, Tina Hamilton & Inspiring Minds,** and **Gregory Ludgood, Jr.**



Members of the **CASA** staff traveled to Greene County for **Cookies and Cocoa with Santa.** During the afternoon event, Christmas gifts were distributed to the children in attendance. The fun evening included music, dancing, food, and building gingerbread houses. Thank you to the great Greene County **CPS staff, Santa, Judge Cheryl Pierce** and **Judge Neil Harris** for making us feel so welcome at their holiday event.



Training Coordinator, **Karen Horn,** traveled to Ocean Springs to pick up a very generous donation given by **Superior Optical** to help with **CASA of Southeast Mississippi's** end-of-year funding drive. Pictured above with **Karen** is **Kendall Sherman,** administrative assistant with **Superior Optical.**

Teresa Jaye, Outreach Coordinator, pictured at right joined other **CASA** staff from along the coast to receive gift cards donated by the members of the **Gulf Coast Association of Realtors** at their annual Christmas party. These gift cards made great stocking stuffers for the older kids during the holiday season. Thank you to all of the members for these thoughtful donations.



FYI



Shanna Reid is pictured above with the colorfully wrapped gifts she delivered to provide special Christmas memories for two lucky children this Christmas.



Pictured above are special Santa helpers **Karen Watson, Teresa Landrum, and Suzanne Delarosa** who were ready and waiting to help with gift delivery and bike selection at one of the locations on the day of the event.



Thank you to all of the folks at **Keesler Federal Credit Union** for collecting toy donations at their many locations before the holidays. Pictured above is **KFCU** Community Development Officer and **CASA** board member **Samantha Bignell** as she helps make the delivery before the start of the **Holiday Happening** afternoon event.



Members of the **Junior Auxiliary of Pascagoula - Moss Point** put on a razzle dazzle display of the beautifully wrapped gifts their members were able to provide for several special folks this Christmas.



The amazing group from **Operation Candy Cane** showed up to deliver the 90 bags of gifts for the children they sponsored. We feel so fortunate to have the support of this dedicated group of **Chevron** employees.



Trevor Perkins and **Madeline Bonifay** with **Operation Candy Cane** were the master minds behind Santa being able to fill some of those orders for bikes and trikes. Truly they are our **Champions for Children!**



Pictured at left, the members of the **Ocean Springs Carnival Association** hosted their annual wrapping party at Val's. The organized chaos resulted in wrapped and bagged gifts being prepared for 25 children the members raised funds to sponsor. Thank you goes out to **Chris Ball** for again coordinating this year's efforts.



Shown at left, members of the **Dixie Dart Association** got together to sort and wrap gifts for the several children. In addition, members prepared filled stockings for 25 of the younger children. They also provided wrapped clothing items sorted by size and gender for the little kids.

Continuing Education Opportunities

Reminder— to maintain your active 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.

Carlos Moulds with the human resources department of Huntington Ingalls will be presenting this month's continuing education program, "**Crucial Conversations: Discovering Your Purpose,**" on **Friday, January 19th** in the conference room at **Citizens Bank** in Pascagoula from 10 - 11:30 am. **CASA** volunteers are invited to attend. Please contact your advocate supervisor to reserve a spot since space is limited.

All Rise: For the Good of the Children is an outstanding documentary showing TBRI being used in practice in the Texas youth court system. The video lasts 1 hour and 15 minutes and will count as 1 hour CEU. This is the link: Allriseforchildren.com

Save the Date

March 15

*Putting the music
back in little lives!*



Additional volunteers are needed to serve in Jackson, George and Greene Counties!

Contact us today to learn more about the 2024 winter training!



January Birthdays

January 1

Paul Scheibel

January 4

Israel Briggs

January 6

Cathy Wildschuetz

January 12

Shawn Landrum

January 16

Kayla Manning

January 22

Allyson Lawrence

January 23

Alice Rainey

January 24

Kathy Smith



Latest Program Statistics

As of November 30, 2023, 120 CASA volunteers have served 158 children with 2,496 donated hours of service for the calendar year. Thank you to each dedicated volunteer who has worked to provide a voice for a child who is journeying through the Youth Court process. As the number of children in custody continues to grow, we are in need of additional advocate volunteers to serve in 2024!