

September 2024

# Hometown CASA Newsletter



## CASA of Graham County

### History

The CASA Program is a National organization founded in 1977 by Judge David Soukup in Seattle, Washington. Judge Soukup was concerned about making significant decisions about children involved in the welfare system without sufficient information about their needs. Therefore, he conceived the idea of citizen volunteers who could grant a voice to abused and neglected children in the courtroom. Thus, the CASA program was born, and in 1985, Maricopa County began the first pilot program in Arizona through funding from the Phoenix Soroptimist and Phoenix Junior League. The CASA program has expanded to over 15 counties, including our own hometown program in Graham County, which began in 1990 and is still expanding.

### Mission

C.A.S.A stands for a Court Appointed Special Advocate. These individuals are everyday citizens who desire to make a change in the lives of children involved in the foster care system. By being the voice for a child during the most challenging time of their life, children are provided the resources they need to be successful. Simple tasks such as learning more about that child and their family, frequent visitations, and recommending services needed, an individual can make the difference a child needs. It has been shown that children who have a CASA are more likely to find safe and permanent homes, succeed in school, and HALF as likely to re-enter the Foster Care System. Being the stability in a child's life can be the difference in their future.

### Volunteer Spotlight

- Volunteer Story

### Highlights

- Welcome New Volunteers
- Birthdays and Events

### In the Community

- Volunteer Opportunities
- Events/News



## *Volunteer Spotlight*

### **Alysia Dodge**

My name is Alysia Dodge, and I am a Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) in Graham County, Arizona. Although I have lived in Arizona most of my life, I spent ten years in New Mexico after getting married and attending college. My family eventually returned to Arizona in 2004 and found a permanent home in Graham County. I am a mother of six and a grandmother to five beautiful grandchildren. I consider myself an optimist who loves connecting with others and trying to find the good in different situations. This trait has helped me find meaning in my work as a volunteer for the CASA organization. I began my journey as a volunteer after my children left the nest, and I needed to find a new purpose in life. After talking with my husband about his time in the CASA program, I decided to apply and learn more about the program. Being a mother and raising children of my own, I learned that I enjoyed working with high-risk children, even though I was not sure if I could make a difference for the children I worked with. Even though I was unsure what to expect once I started, Brandie Lee, the Supervisor over the CASA program in Graham County, assured me about my desire to volunteer and helped answer any questions I had. Since then, I have been able to work with many children who have blessed my life. I was surprised at how resilient these children and their families are and the difference a program like this can make in putting the needs of the children first. I have seen first-hand how this program works with the local court system to do its best to keep families together as much as possible. This is something that I wish that people knew more about with this organization. Although there are many challenges that I have faced as a volunteer, the differences you see in the children outweigh those challenges. One of the hardest challenges I faced was seeing the effects of substance use in our county and how it affected the children we work with. However, it was also amazing to see how resilient the children were, especially when they knew they had someone advocating and supporting them. I would definitely recommend someone interested in volunteering in a program like CASA of Graham County. The experiences you have in this program will stay with you for a lifetime.

# Welcome

## NEW VOLUNTEERS

Every new CASA receives training from the state department helping prepare them for their child advocacy role. This training occurred last week over a period of three days.



Thank you for all those involved in this process including our CASA Coordinator and the trainers at the State Department.

**Happy Birthday to all  
of our September  
birthdays!!**



# IN THE COMMUNITY



## New Partnerships

Recently, CASA of Graham County partnered with the Chamber of Commerce and JUSTSERVE to promote the CASA program's mission of advocating for the needs of foster children in our community and throughout Arizona. Through these partnerships, residents can learn more about our program, volunteer opportunities, and its impact on our community. Volunteers can now find more information on how to volunteer through the JustServe website, over the radio, and outside the Chamber of Commerce Building. We look forward to their partnership in helping us promote the mission of the CASA Organization in Graham County.



## Volunteer Opportunities Available



Our current CASA program, with five volunteers in the Gila Valley, is doing commendable work. On September 18-20th, four more will complete their training at CASA Academy and join our team. While our program is growing, the need for more volunteers is urgent. We need your help to reach more foster children across Graham County. If you are interested or know anyone who might be, please reach out to us on Facebook or contact our CASA Coordinator, Brandie Lee, @ 928-792-5103.

### Become a Casa Volunteer

As a volunteer you will help a child in foster care in our community have a voice. Children in foster care who are paired with a CASA are more likely to be successful in school and are half as likely to re-enter the foster care system later. You can make the difference!

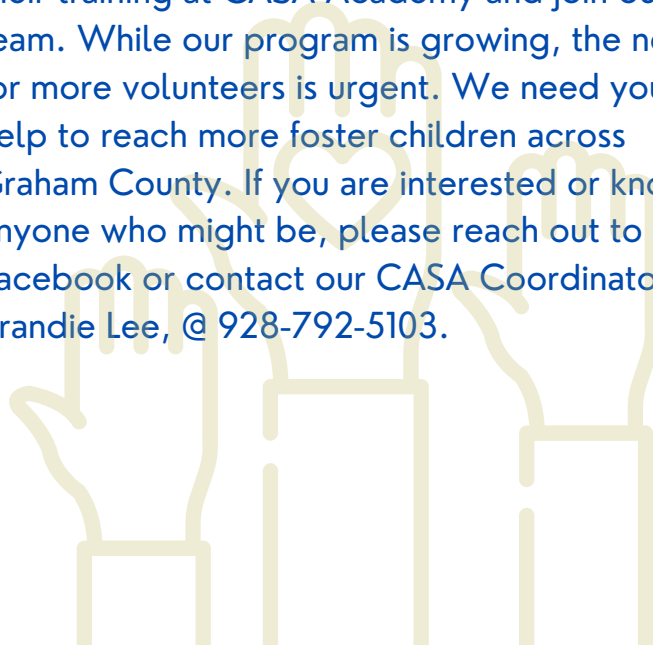
Volunteer Today!  
Scan the QR Code  
or  
Find us on Facebook  
CASA of Graham  
County



CHANGE A  
CHILD'S STORY.



[www.casaofgrahamcounty.org](http://www.casaofgrahamcounty.org)

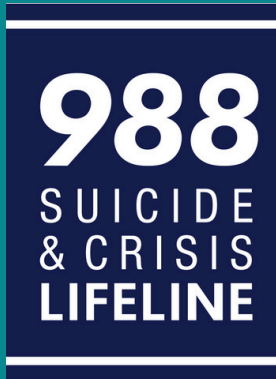


# September is National Suicide Prevention Month

## Suicide Prevention Month

If you or someone you know is in crisis:

Call or Text:



or chat [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org)

### DISCUSSION ABOUT:

- Wanting to die or kill oneself
- Feeling empty, hopeless, or no having no reason to live
- Feeling trapped or feeling there are no solutions
- Feeling unbearable emotional or physical pain
- Being a burden to other or withdrawing from family and friends
- Talking about death more often

September is National Suicide Prevention Month. As we remember those we've loved and lost to suicide. Let's educate ourselves on warning signs and risk factors. Let's raise awareness of resources and ways we can help.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, suicide is considered a leading cause of death and is the third leading cause of death among people ages 15 to 24 in the US. Many of the people we encounter while in our CASA roles have significant risk factors for suicide.

### WARNING SIGNS COULD INCLUDE:

- Giving away important possessions
- Saying goodbye to friends and family
- Increased risky behavior that could lead to death (i.e driving fast, taking drugs, etc.)

### More serious Warning Signs

- Extreme mood swings such as going from very sad to calm or happy
- Planning to kill themselves (i.e buying a gun, online searches about lethal methods, stockpiling pills)
- Using alcohol or drugs more often

**Suicide is not a typical response to stress. If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts or actions, seek help as soon as possible, especially if this behavior is new or has increased recently. These signs SHOULD NOT be ignored.**