



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

Change a Child's Story

Yavapai County CASA Program Newsletter

December 2025

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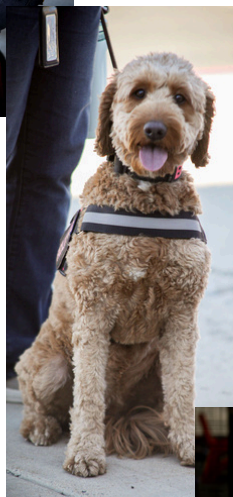
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*to all who made the
November Adoption Day
so special for all the
families
attending. Please
see pages 4 and 5
for more photos!*

*Have a wonderful and
safe Holiday Season!*



Coordinators' Corner



HERITAGE PARK
ZOOLOGICAL
SANCTUARY



Please take advantage of our memberships and free passes to these awesome establishments.

Click on each icon to be directed to each of their websites to see how many exciting things they have going on!

**THE 2026 CASA
CALENDARS ARE
HERE! STOP BY
THE OFFICE AND
PICK UP YOUR
COPY TODAY**

CELEBRATION!
Gift Cards

Does your CASA kiddo have a birthday coming up? Get a great report card or improve in a class they were struggling with? Successfully complete potty training? Any other event or milestone? Stop by the CASA office to pick up a Celebration Gift Card! Thank you YCFKF!

Child and Family Team Meetings

To receive information about an upcoming CFT with:

CFSS: please email: dawnr@cfssinc.com

Polar Health: please email: whenthecft@polarhealth.com

Spectrum: please email: susans@spectrumhg.org

Please give the clinics 48 hours to reply to your email



Welcome! Joseph

My name is Joseph Nisse. I was born in Michigan on a cold December morning right before the 70s started so I can say I'm a child of the 60s! I spent my childhood in rural Michigan before my family moved out to Arizona in the early 80s to be closer to my grandparents.

I remember thinking I was going to fall off the planet the first time I drove down a mountain. I also remember seeing the sign for the Prescott National Forest and thinking "Where are all of the trees??" Regardless, I soon fell in love with Arizona and never having to deal with daylight savings time again.

I spent my youth in Prescott, graduating from Prescott High School. Go Badgers! I served a religious mission for my church in Osaka, Japan for a few years right after high school. When I returned, I quickly fell in love with my future wife, Shannon. We were married in 1991 and have four beautiful daughters. Our three oldest are married and Shannon and I are proud grandparents to Lucy, age 3 and Everett, age 6 months. Family is everything to us. We greatly enjoyed raising our daughters here in the Prescott area, even though all my daughters went to Bradshaw Mountain High School and are Bears. Nope, I'm not bitter about that at all....

I've worn many hats over my lifetime. I am a veteran, having served my country as a soldier in the US Army. I am a retired Adult Probation Officer and then worked as an academic advisor at Yavapai College for a few years before returning to work here at the County. I am very excited to work as a CASA Program Coordinator, to be a part of this wonderful team that works to help the youth of our community to live happier lives. I hope to get to know all of you soon!

Adoption Day

FUN!





Prescott 2025

December

MON

TUE

WED

THU

FRI

1

2
FTC 2:00
Hearings

3

4

5

8

9

10

11 9:30AM

BOOK
CLUB

12

15

16
FTC 2:00
Hearings

17

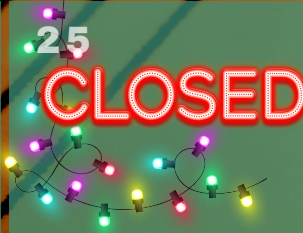
18

19

22

23

24

25

CLOSED

26

29

30

31

January 2026

MON

TUE

WED

THU

FRI

1

Happy
New Year
CLOSED

2

5

6

FTC 2:00

Hearings

7

8

FCRB

9

FCRB

12

13

Hearings

14

15

16

19

MLK DAY
CLOSED

20

FTC 2:00

21

22

23

26

27

28

29

Verde 2025 December

MON

TUE

WED

THU

FRI

1

2

FTC 2:00

3

Hearings

4

5

8

9

10

11

12

15

16

FTC 2:00

17

Hearings

18

19

22

23

24

25

CLOSED

26

29

30

31

Happy Anniversary

Lorraine West

6 years

Georgia Janik

5 Years

Tricia Crean

Deb O'Connor

4 Years

4 Years

Pam Pearsall

3 Years

Sue Fitzsimons

1 year

Greg Byram

12/3

Georgia Janik

12/6

Lauri Delfeld

12/7

Sandy Lowery

12/18

Happy

BIRTHDAY

Kathy McLaughlin

12/9

Debbie Throckmorton

12/9

Shelly Miali

12/4

Chris Tomkins

12/12

Laura Ashbrook

12/12

CASA Kudos

Kudos to Greg Byrum for sticking with his young man for the last 3 years and 8 months. It has been a pleasure to watch their relationship grow. I know this young man respects and appreciates you! He said to me, "I would choose Greg as my CASA again and again! Greg is the best support that I had, even when he got frustrated, he was still there."

Kudos to Laura Ashbrook for supporting her CASA children around the death of a parent.

Kudos to Meg Rowan for advocating for her CASA child to be in the best possible placement for her.

Kudos to Carol Hinrichs, Tricia Crean, Deb O'Connor, Karen Knecht, Greg Byrum, Eileen Roberts, Lorraine West, Kathy McCormick and Zoey S. for helping with all things Adoption Day!

Three brand new CASA's have all accepted their first cases! Eileen Roberts, Connie Buckner and Bob Robinette are full speed ahead!

Pam P. for diligently advocating for your CASA child's safety as she was being placed in a Guardianship with family.

Lorraine W. for tirelessly advocating for behavioral health supports for her appointed CASA kiddo and her placement.

Georgia J. for advocating for educational services and behavioral health support for her appointed CASA child as he reunified with his biological family and his case was dismissed.

Pat M. for consistent and dedicated advocacy and support of his CASA child as he reunified with his biological family and ultimately the case was dismissed.

All the CASAs who attended the CASA/DCS Meet and Greet. Thanks for your input and thoughtful questions.

Kudos to Elizabeth S. for leading with compassion and purpose within her role as a CASA volunteer and providing a powerful reminder of how meaningful and important the CASA volunteer role is! Elizabeth's encouragement helps others see their worth and strengthens our CASA Program.

Kudos to Jeni O. and Pat S. for seeing their case through to adoption for one of their CASA children 😊

Kudos to Lynn M. and Rose V.N. for helping at the Sedona Fest of Fall.

Kudos to Sharleen H. for tackling her first court report!

Kudos to Diane J. and Bob M. for representing CASAs at the Verde Valley Family Visitation Center 2-Year Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.



PREPARE THEM FOR WHAT TO EXPECT

Predictability helps regulate the nervous system. Before a visit, court hearing, or event, offer a quick roadmap:

- “Here is what the day will look like.”
- “Here is who will be there.”
- “If anything changes, I will let you know.”

This kind of gentle preparation helps reduce anxiety and creates a sense of safety.

FOLLOW THE CHILD’S PACE

Holidays often come with well-intentioned plans and activities, but not every child is ready for the social energy that comes with them. Give youth permission to step back, take breaks, or choose quieter, lower stimulation activities if they need to. Autonomy restores a sense of control that trauma often takes away.

CREATE SMALL MOMENTS OF CHOICE

Choice is an antidote to the helplessness many foster youth feel. Offering even small decisions such as:

- “Would you like to sit here or over there?”
- “Would you like to draw, play a game, or just talk today?”

Similar statements will help strengthen their sense of agency.

AVOID ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT TRADITIONS

Not every child comes from a home where holidays were celebrated, peaceful, or safe. Avoid assuming familiarity with rituals like gift opening, large gatherings, or holiday meals. Instead, ask open, curious questions such as, “What does this time of year usually look like for you?”

BUILD CONNECTION THROUGH GENTLENESS, NOT PRESSURE

Your grounded presence is the gift. When you show up calm, predictable, and without expectation, you become a source of stability in a season that can feel overwhelming.

THE HOLIDAYS ARE NOT ABOUT PERFECTION. THEY ARE ABOUT PRESENCE.

Your steady and compassionate support has the power to shift a child’s experience of this season from one of stress to one of safety. Thank you for everything you do, especially during times that can be emotionally heavy for the youth we serve.

If you ever need support, ideas, or a place to talk through a situation, our door is always open.



Mental Health First Aid

*Facilitated by Nikki Rosson
and Kimberly Gregory*

Monday, December 15, 2025

8am - 5pm

registration closes 12/8/25

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among adults.

The course will teach you how to apply the MHFA Action Plan (ALGEE) :

- Assess for risk of suicide or harm.*
- Listen nonjudgmentally.*
- Give reassurance and information.*
- Encourage appropriate professional help.*
- Encourage self-help and other support strategies.*

*This event is held in collaboration with
Konnnect Wellness Center.*



Registration is free and required to attend.

*Contact MATFORCE at
(928) 708-0100 or
info@matforceaz.org
to register today.*

Learn More

MATFORCE Message | Resiliency, Stress Management and Self-Care

**Presented by Nate Auvenshine,
Redeemed Training and
Consulting, LLC**

Thursday, January 22, 2026

11:00 am to 12:00 pm

[virtual]

This course will give the attendee a basic understanding of what stress is, types of stress, how to identify stress in their lives, the three primary stages of stress, signs and symptoms of stress, techniques for building resiliency and capacity, and basic tools to manage stress. The emphasis will be on taking care of ourselves so we can better care for others.

**Scan the QR code or visit:
qrco.de/bgNa5Z**





CHRISTMAS TOY DRIVE

This holiday season the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors has partnered with **Yavapai CASA for Kids Foundation** to collect unwrapped toys for approximately 250 children who are under the care of the Yavapai County Juvenile Court due to abuse and/or neglect. These children come from families throughout Yavapai County and are in licensed foster and relative placements.

If you would like to donate look for the collection box in the lobby of the JJC in Prescott.

**Toy Donations will be accepted through
December 8, 2025.**

All gifts collected will be taken to a distribution site where foster parents, relatives, Court Appointed Special Advocates and Department of Child Safety workers will come and select special gifts for the children they work with.





Yavapai CASA for Kids

Christmas Holiday Toy Drive

Gift Distribution for Current & Former Foster Youth

Yavapai CASA for Kids Foundation wants to make the holiday season bright for all current and former foster youth in the county. The Christmas Holiday Toy Drive is for all youth in foster care who are dependents of the Yavapai County Juvenile Court System and/or youth placed in care in Yavapai County, youth in in-home dependencies, and those who have aged out of the foster care system and are enrolled in Keys to Success (KTS) or the Young Adult Program (YAP) with DCS. This program allows families and those closest to these youth to “shop” for holiday gifts for the youth in their care or caseload.

Those eligible to collect gifts are as follows: Foster and Kinship placements; biological parents with an in-home dependency or who are in good standing with Family Treatment Court, regardless of placement; attorneys; CASAs; DCS Case managers; and KTS/IL/YAP workers.

Requirements to collect gifts:

Your name

DCS Case manager name

Initials, gender, and age of youth(s)

Distribution Dates and Locations

Shop Dates

December 11: 10 AM - 6 PM
December 12: 9Am 4 PM

3298 Bob Drive
Prescott Valley, AZ 86314

Shop Dates

December 11: 10 AM - 6 PM
December 12: 10 Am - 6 Pm

LDS Church 1377 E. Hombre Dr.
Cottonwood, AZ 86326 - Follow
signs in the parking lot.

Please note
corrected dates

Nature Niños



2025-2026

10:00am - 12:00pm

One Saturday a month

Go Explore!



Park Rangers and community partners lead child-centered play events at a different family friendly park each month. At every Nature Niños event there are take-home items, a healthy snack, creative nature activities, story time, all encouraging us to Leave No Trace and make Healthy Choices. Nature Niños events are led by Park Rangers and community partners with a strong understanding of child development and experience leading child-centered outdoor programs.

August 2nd

West Granite Creek

Splash Pad

350 N. Montezuma Street
Prescott, AZ 86301

September 6th

TEVA Community

Prescott National Forest

2900 N. Granite Basin Rd.
Prescott, AZ 86305

October 4th

Stricklin Park

1751 Sherwood Dr. Prescott,
AZ 86303

November 1st

Pioneer Park

Kayla's Hands

1200 Commerce Drive
Prescott, AZ 86305



December

No event

Go explore with our
Junior Ranger Guidebook

January 3rd

Vista Park

1701 Sarafina Drive
Prescott, AZ 86301

February 7th

Community

Nature Center

1980 Williamson Valley Rd
Prescott, AZ 86305

March 7th

Watson Lake

Upper Ramada

3101 Watson Lake Drive
Prescott, AZ 86301

April 18th

Prescott Earth Day

Downtown Courthouse

120 S. Cortez Street
Prescott, AZ 86301

May 2nd

Goldwater Lake

Upper

2900 S. Goldwater Lake Road
Prescott, AZ 86303

June 6th

Granite Creek Park

554 6th Street
Prescott, AZ 86301

July 11th

Antelope Park

6933 N. Cattletrack Road
Prescott Valley, AZ 86314

PRESCOTT
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



CITY OF PRESCOTT
ARIZONA

YAVAPAI
COUNTY



COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

NATURAL HISTORY INSTITUTE



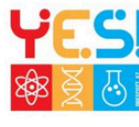
Cooperative Extension
Yavapai County



stepUp kids



girl scouts
LEAVE NO TRACE



CFSS | CHILD & FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES



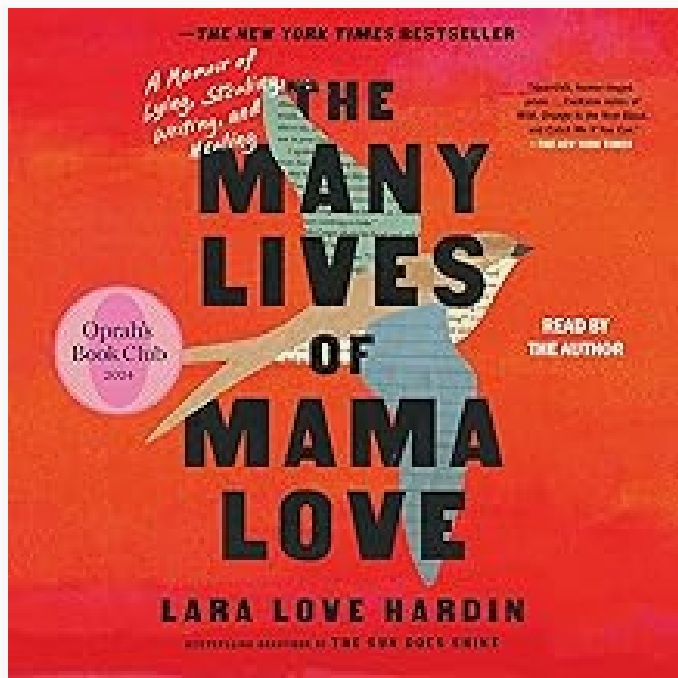
CASAs

Connecting

No CASAs Connecting Meetings in December

Attend CASAs Connecting Peer Support Group to help you be successful on your case. Because the work of a CASA is confidential, it is important to have a safe place to talk about your case. ALL CASAs are highly encouraged to attend a CASA support group. This support group provides lively and informative discussions. The attendees include a mix of veteran and new CASAs and CASA staff. These discussions can help you understand system issues, procedures, identify needs and solve unanswered questions.

Book Club



No one expects the police to knock on the door of the million-dollar two-story home of the perfect cul-de-sac housewife. But soccer mom Lara Love Hardin has been hiding a shady secret: she is funding her heroin addiction by stealing her neighbors' credit cards.

Lara is convicted of thirty-two felonies and becomes inmate S32179. She finds that jail is a class system with a power structure that is somewhere between an adolescent sleepover party and Lord of the Flies. Furniture is made from tampon boxes, and Snickers bars are currency. But Lara quickly learns the rules and brings love and healing to her fellow inmates as she climbs the social ladder and acquires the nickname "Mama Love," showing that jailhouse politics aren't that different from the PTA meetings she used to attend.

When she's released, she reinvents herself as a ghostwriter. Now, she's legally co-opting other people's identities and getting to meet Oprah, meditate with the Dalai Lama, and have dinner with Archbishop Desmond Tutu. But the shadow of her past follows her. Shame is a poison worse than heroin—there is no way to detox. Lara must learn how to forgive herself and others, navigate life as a felon on probation, and prove to herself that she is more good than bad, among other essential lessons.

The Many Lives of Mama Love is a heartbreaking and tender journey from shame to redemption, despite a system that makes it almost impossible for us to move beyond the worst thing we have ever done.

Books
Available
IN THE CASA OFFICE



MEETING

December 11, 2025
9:30am

CASA OF YAVAPAI COUNTY



LIKE US! FOLLOW US!

facebook

November in Yavapai County

6 New Cases filed

7 Children taken into DCS custody

197 Total number of children in DCS Care

78 Number of CASAs

95 Children with a CASA

Kids who still need a CASA 102

Contact Information

www.casaofyavapaicounty.org

Prescott Office

(928) 771-3165

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Lisa Watts, President

Greg Byrum, Vice

President/Secretary

Luke Lewis, Treasurer

Cheryl Micholofki

Eileen Bond, Emeritus Member

Jayne Schwantes

Marlene Joy



Yvonne Bartlett, Executive Director and
Interim contact for Grants for Kids Program
Mona Stephens, Development

Questions about YC4KF?

email: info@yavapaicasaforkids.org



SUPPORT A CHILD
CHANGE A LIFE