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CASA OF JACKSON COUNTY, INC.
409 N. Front Street
Medford, Oregon 97501



OREGON BUSINESS 100 BEST NONPROFITS

For the sixth year in a row, we are honored to be recognized as one of the 100 Best Nonprofits in the state of Oregon. This year, we rank #2 in the Small Organizations category! Employees and volunteers at CASA of Jackson County and CASA of Josephine County work diligently each day to advocate for children who have been abused and neglected. This work is a never ending, challenging effort. We could not do it without the support of our community. Employees praise leadership and a culture of transparency. “This is the first place that I have worked where the statement of ‘open door’ is true,” says one worker. “Our management team always finds ways to show their appreciation and there is such a genuine care for personal/family needs,” says another.



STANDING UP FOR CHILDREN

Court Appointed Special Advocates support children who need it most.

I am Sara, the oldest of seven children. We almost took care of ourselves. I was only fourteen, and I felt the weight of the world on my shoulders. Everybody told us it would be a couple of weeks in foster care but it turned into months, then years.



Suddenly a new person walked into the life of me and my sister. With the constant changing of social workers and counselors, I didn't know what to expect. She asked us what our interests were, and we set up a time to meet every week. For the first time in a while I felt that this just might be a good thing.

As the weeks went by, we got to know each other better. I realized I could talk to her about problems, not only personal problems, but problems about the house we lived in. She was our voice, our stability, and our friend.

It turned into a lifelong relationship. She may not have even realized her impact on my life because she was simply just being a friend. Someone you can talk to, someone you can trust. I have found that its the simple things that make someone complete as a person.

I am Colby. I am fourteen and I like to have fun. Unfortunately the events in my life have not all been fun and games. I have been in the system since I was six weeks old. My CASA has helped me the last several years, since I was eight. She helps me get through hard times in my life. I honestly love her to death. She treats me as if I was her own son.



She is sweet, kind, and she does her best. Sometimes I wonder why she keeps getting me the things I need when I am a real jerk. Trust me on this one, I can be a jerk. One day I figured out it was because she truly cares for the children that she helps.

She gives me the emotional and mental support I need. I have gone through five failed adoptions. I didn't give myself any credit for trying to make the adoptions work. After the last one, I cried for two days straight. She told me that it wasn't my fault. She made me realize that even though I tried, I can't make people do anything. She helped me get the hope I needed. After time, I now am advocating for other children to be adopted. Children need families. Unfortunately, children cannot just dream up the perfect family and have that family ensure their safety. Having a CASA has helped me to improve my life. She is truly an inspiration. She has greatly influenced my life. I hope that I can inspire others to believe in themselves in the way that my CASA believed in me.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN ADVOCATING FOR A CHILD?

Court Appointed Special Advocates must:

- Be at least 21 years of age.
- Pass a background screening.
- Complete 30 to 35 hours of training.
- Commit to a child until his or her case has closed, or for at least two years.
- Commit to representing a child's best interests until the child reaches a safe, permanent home.





Jennifer Mylenek

“hating someone is like drinking poison and waiting for that person to die”. It only erodes our own humanity and our ability to move forward productively.

Parents can change, heal, and overcome addiction, and there is no greater joy than to witness a parent overcome addiction because they love their child. If a system fails a child, and when we can, we collectively examine what went wrong, what could we do better the next time, and how do we support that child in future safety and success. We can mourn and comfort one another but here is no time for hate; we have too many children needing our help.

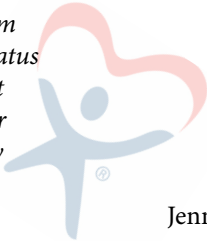
I want to close by saying our CASA volunteers, staff, and board are brilliant examples of the depth of humanity in our community. I believe the power is within us all to overcome whatever barriers we face so we can ensure a better world for our children.

J Mylenek
Jennifer Mylenek,
Executive Director and Child Advocate



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CASA GIVING TREES



Each year the CASA Giving Tree campaign is a special way for the community to participate by donating new toys, clothing, and gift cards to underprivileged children who are living in foster or relative care during the holiday season.

These children have been removed from their homes and families due to abuse and/or neglect. This is an opportunity for CASA, the community and the trained volunteers who advocate for these children to ensure they have a holiday season filled with love, hope and joy.

A sincere thank you to our **CASA Giving Tree sponsor, Lithia 4 Kids**- a partnership we value as we work together to support the children in our community.

Together, Lithia 4Kids, our many tree locations, individual family sponsors, special toy drives and community members helped over 555 children last year.

If you would like to host a tree location or sponsor a CASA family, please contact Erin Carpenter: ecarpenter@jacksoncountycasa.org

Tree locations will be listed at www.jacksoncountycasa.org

An Amazon wishlist is available for those who prefer to shop from home.

Donations toward gifts for CASA children may be mailed or completed online.



TOY DRIVE WITH MEDFORD ALERT

Medford Alert is delighted to announce an exciting new partnership with CASA of Jackson County this holiday season. In the spirit of giving, Medford Alert is initiating its inaugural Kids Toy and Clothing Drive to provide support for local children.

Starting on November 1st, the public is encouraged to contribute new-in-box toys and new-with-tags clothing, all of which will be directly delivered to CASA of Jackson County. The items can be donated into a specially marked box, generously created by Signs Now in Medford. The drop off site is conveniently located inside Pro Audio (1313 Court Street, Medford). Donations can be made Monday through Saturday, 9:30a-6:00p. The primary focus for donations is on toys suitable for ages 12 and up, and clothing for children aged 0 to 5. Gift cards are also welcomed, as they will play a crucial role in bringing smiles to the faces of local children during some of the most challenging days of their young lives.

This Kids Toy & Clothing Drive will come to a close on December 11th. CASA volunteers will ensure that all the generously donated gifts find their way to local children and teenagers, spreading joy and holiday cheer in our community. For more information, please visit MedfordAlert.com/CASA or contact Nick@MedfordAlert.com.



ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

Children need strong foundations. CASA Donna came to us with a rare statement. “I’m not afraid of teenagers. Give me a teenager.” After completing her extensive training, being sworn in by a judge and being assigned to a Case Supervisor, Donna was given court discovery and reports for a teenager that others had tried, but failed to connect with. A teenager who had been through so much in her young life, that she was placed in safe housing, monitored daily for multiple suicide attempts.

As this young girl would later say, Donna was the first person who did not ask her to tell her story. Instead, they talked about everyday things, shared laughter, and began a trusting friendship that continues today, three years later. Donna helped lead this young girl out of a dark place, by being there for her at all hours and never leaving her side during hard times. She never stopped fighting for her. While under a 72-hour psychiatric hold at the hospital, unable to leave to testify against her adoptive father, it was Donna who did not hesitate to drive hours to personally testify on the girl’s behalf, making sure her voice was heard and that her adoptive father would be sentenced to prison. He was.

As she aged out of the system, Donna helped make sure she graduated from high school, obtained her first job and applied to cosmetology school. She showed this girl what life could be, and should be. She taught her about family, about laughter and playing board games by the fireplace. She gently guided her towards imagining what she would one day like her own family to be.

She also helped her find her voice. Not just in the formality of a court setting, but in facing her fear and standing before 300 people to tell her story without shame. This CASA and former CASA child recently traveled to Salem together to give testimony on behalf of The Oregon CASA Network and our minimal statewide funding. Staff and board members watched her testimony live, witnessing the effect her story had on the legislative floor. Not only did this young girl overcome barriers, she is dedicated to changing them.



Jenna App, *Oregon CASA Network Executive Director*, Alysa Sabo, *Former CASA Child* and Donna Pelissier, *CASA*

