



the Advocate Newsletter

2026 Vol. 1



A CASA Advocate can be a life-changing presence for a child in foster care. By showing up consistently, listening without judgment, and speaking up in court, Advocates help ensure each child's unique needs and voice are heard. For children navigating a system that can feel overwhelming and uncertain, a CASA Advocate often becomes the one stable, trusted adult in their corner.

Together, We Advocate

Together, We Can Change Lives

Dear Friends,

Volunteers are the backbone of our work at CASA of Yellowstone County, and the impact of their work is made possible through the generous support of people like you. Every Advocate brings heart, commitment, and a belief that every child in foster care deserves to be seen, heard, and supported.

Last year, CASA of Yellowstone County was supported by 169 volunteer Advocates. They represent a broad and vibrant cross-section of our community: 82% women and 18% men, ranging in age from 21 to 84. They are teachers, medical providers, accountants, social service providers, small business owners, skilled trades professionals, retirees, students, stay-at-home parents, and grandparents. Some work full-time, others part-time; some are lifelong Montanans, while others have recently made this state their home. Their diverse backgrounds are united by a single purpose: to advocate for children who need a consistent adult in their corner.

What makes this group extraordinary is not just who they are, but the generous commitment they choose to make. Each volunteer devotes hours every month to visiting children, attending court hearings, writing reports, and ensuring that judges have the critical information needed to make decisions in a child's best interest. On average, our Advocates are assigned to cases between 18 to 24 months and stay at CASA of Yellowstone County for four years. As one Advocate shared, "I volunteer because every child deserves an adult who shows up just for them—someone who listens, believes in them, and refuses to give up. If I can be that person, even for one child, it's worth every moment."

Your support makes this work possible. Together, we restore stability, strengthen voices, and help children move toward safe, permanent homes with hope for their future.

Sincerely,

Shayla Fox Brown



Shayla Fox Brown
Program Director

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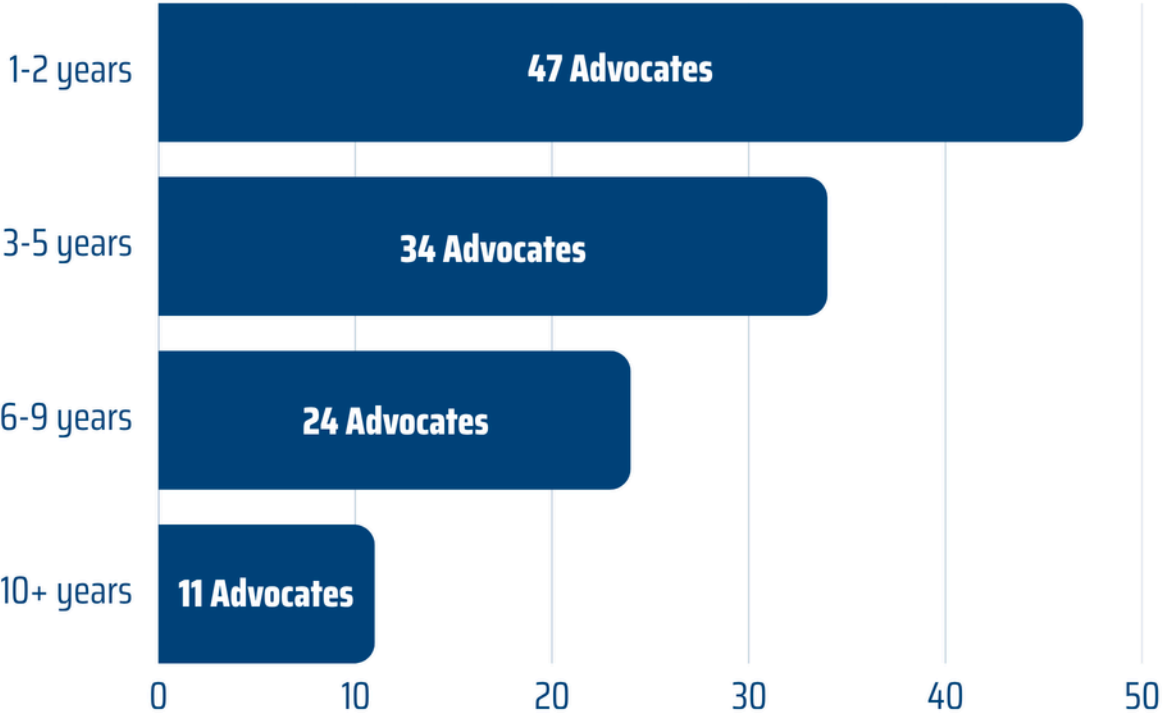
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Between July 2025 - January 2026, Advocates have conducted



1,180 visits with children



Years of Service for 116 Current Advocates

Small Wins. **BIG IMPACT!**

Not every victory is newsworthy, but at CASA, we celebrate the small yet significant moments our volunteers witness. These include a child sharing for the first time, a parent making progress, breakthroughs in school, and moments of trust. Though subtle, these small wins are impactful, fostering confidence and strengthening relationships, highlighting that progress often occurs one step at a time.



Christine DiBrizzi built trust with a guarded mom and her children, through weekly support and encouragement. Thanks to Christine's dedication, the mother is completing her Recovery Court journey and is fully reunified with her children. Even before this case closes, Christine has already agreed to serve as CASA for another young mother entering family Recovery Court.



Scott Leap addressed a child's dental hygiene issue related to an autism diagnosis while in foster care. He provided a three-headed toothbrush and flavored toothpaste to encourage the child to brush more easily and reduce the trauma associated with the experience.

Congratulations, Fall Class of 2025!



When You Donate to CASA, What Does It Support?

Pre-Service Training for New Volunteers

Donations help prepare CASA Advocates before they ever step into a courtroom or meet a child. Each volunteer completes 30+ hours of pre-service training covering the child welfare and legal systems, child development, trauma, and effective communication. This structured, interactive training equips Advocates with the knowledge and skills needed to confidently serve children in foster care.

Ongoing Support and Coaching

Once an Advocate is sworn in and assigned to a case, CASA's support continues. Volunteers are paired with a volunteer Peer Coordinator and supported by program staff who provide guidance, coaching, and hands-on support during early meetings and court hearings. This ongoing support ensures Advocates never feel alone and that children receive consistent, informed advocacy throughout their case.



Screening and Background Checks for Prospective Volunteers

Donations support CASA's thorough screening process to ensure each Advocate is a safe, reliable presence for a child. This process includes background checks, reference checks, and interviews designed to protect the wellbeing of vulnerable children. Because children in foster care have already experienced significant disruption, CASA is committed to carefully vetting volunteers who are both well-qualified and prepared for this important role.

Continued Training and Resources

Donations support ongoing training, resources, and connection for CASA Advocates well beyond pre-service training. From continuing education and debriefing opportunities to peer support and case-specific guidance, CASA ensures volunteers have the tools they need throughout their service. Your support sustains a strong, compassionate network of Advocates who remain prepared to walk alongside children for the long term.

When you donate to CASA of Yellowstone County, your gift stays right here in Yellowstone County and directly strengthens the foundation of advocacy for children in foster care.

Advocate Spotlight

Elise Fouts



I was born and raised in South Dakota, and my college and graduate studies took me to Minnesota and North Carolina, where I earned a Master's Degree in Secondary Education. In 2000, my husband and I moved to Montana, and we now call Red Lodge home. We have two adult daughters, and in my free time, I enjoy biking, cross-country skiing, and hiking with my husband and our dogs.

For more than 25 years, I have worked with children in a variety of roles, including as a high school science teacher, middle school basketball coach, Young Life leader, and children's ministry director at my church. My faith has instilled in me a deep desire to show love and compassion to children, and serving as a CASA allows me to live out that calling in a very meaningful way.

I first learned about CASA through a friend who was an Advocate, and the idea stayed with me for years as something I felt drawn to. After our daughters graduated from high school, I found myself with more time and knew that becoming a CASA was the right step for this season of life. I completed Advocate training in March 2025 and began my first case shortly thereafter.

I am currently working with two young sisters, and it has been incredibly encouraging to see their growth over time. With the support of their placement, CPS, counselors, recovery court, and school, the girls have gained confidence and new experiences. They are now taking gymnastics lessons and learning downhill skiing. A key part of my role has been sharing observations and advocating for areas that need attention. My background as a teacher has been especially helpful in understanding their academic needs and identifying ways to support their success. It has truly been a privilege to work alongside so many dedicated individuals who are championing these girls.

I am deeply grateful for the support of the CASA staff and my peer coordinator, who have patiently answered my questions and helped me navigate the foster care and court systems. I would encourage anyone considering becoming an Advocate to take the next step. The training is thorough, and the CASA staff is always willing to offer guidance and support along the way.

Welcome to Our Newest CASA Class!

Our newest group of volunteers began CASA training in January! These dedicated community members have been diving deep into learning what it truly means to advocate for children in foster care. In the photos, you will see them participating in a hands on activity designed to better understand how trauma impacts a child's developing brain and behavior.



Through their commitment, compassion, and willingness to learn, these volunteers are preparing to stand beside children in foster care and help create pathways toward safety, stability, and hope.



“Sometimes I feel invisible, like nobody notices what I’m going through. But my CASA always makes me feel like I matter. She gives me hope that things can be better.” -Layla, 14



Make a difference for children like Layla and become a CASA Volunteer

Building Brighter Futures Together



YEAR LONG EVENT SPONSOR



ADVOCATE APPRECIATION NIGHT



0.5K "RUN"

We are currently seeking local businesses and community partners to join us as CASA sponsors this year. Sponsorships play a vital role in supporting our events, trainings, and outreach efforts, helping ensure that every child we serve has a dedicated Advocate by their side.

By becoming a sponsor, your business demonstrates a meaningful commitment to children and families in our community. We would love to partner with organizations that believe every child deserves to be safe, heard, and supported. Together, we can continue making a lasting impact for children in Yellowstone County.



To learn more about sponsorship opportunities, please visit yellowstonecasa.org/become-a-casa-sponsor or contact Laura Molodecki (laura@yellowstonecasa.org)

"Run" 0.5K. Eat a Donut. Give Children Hope.



Mark your calendars for October 3rd

Memorial & Honor Gifts



Your donation in honor or memory of your loved ones has a direct impact in the lives of children in our community. Thank you!

In Memory of Patrick Fischer

Diane & Tom Fischer

In Memory of Tillie Carrico

Dennis & Diane Powers

In Memory of Calton Bretz

Mary Bretz

In Memory of Brian & Taylor Cook

Nancy & John Cook

In Memory of David Munson

Kathy Munson

In Memory of Virginia K. Weston

Donald & Carol Roberts Foundation

In Memory of Greg Melchert

Patty Muir

In Memory of Robert Morehead

Mary Ann Morehead

In Memory of Michael Paul Morehead

Mary Ann Morehead

In Memory of Damon Gannett

Kat & Drew MacLeod
Dixie Bertagna

In Memory of Ted Lechner

Patty Lechner
John & Debra Miller

In Honor of Donna Giesek

Larry & Nina Sheneman

In Honor of Amy & Jake Wiggs

Patty Muir

In Honor of Kelly & Ben Carlson

Patty Muir

In Honor of Bonnie & John Davidson

Patty Muir

In Honor of Sherri Carlson

Ben & Celina McKee

In Honor of Tom & Mari Hagen

Patty Muir

In Honor of Vera Ulschak

Lillian & James Hartung

In Honor of Anne Easton

Patty Muir

In Honor of Sheryl Killham

Margene Bernhart

In Honor of Donna & Rick Beitel

Judy Lampi

In Honor of Kurt Anthony

Hannah Reno

In Honor of Barrett Kaiser

Gina & Shane Colton

In Honor of Kari McIntyre Kaiser

Gina & Shane Colton

In Honor of Julie Kleman

Gail Kleman

In Honor of all CASA Volunteers!

Barb & Steven Klang



Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF YELLOWSTONE COUNTY
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Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

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