



the Advocate Newsletter

2026 Vol. 2



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.

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Continuing **the Mission**

Dear friends,

I'm grateful for the opportunity to open this newsletter. As many of you know, or will discover as you read, we are excited to share several internal staff transitions at CASA of Yellowstone County, including my position.

One of the things I value most about CASA is the opportunity it provides for growth and movement within the organization. Right now, we have four staff members stepping into new roles and continuing their work in different ways, without losing anyone from our team.

I will mark eight years at CASA of Yellowstone County this coming October, which is hard to believe. Over these past years as Development Director, I've had the privilege of interviewing more than 300 people as they've come through our doors to become Advocates, and that is one of the most meaningful parts of my time at CASA.

Every person brings their own story and shares just a small piece of it with us. Even more important, they offer something incredibly valuable: their time, their hope, and their compassion. In Advocate interviews, I often hear a common thread. People say, "I got tired of complaining about the challenges in our community, so I decided to be part of the solution." That mindset is powerful, and it is at the heart of what makes CASA's work possible.

I will be transitioning into the Grants Manager role at CASA. This opportunity allows me to share the stories of our Advocates and the children they serve with our funders in meaningful ways.

One thing I have learned through grant writing is that the story is not just about need. It is about possibility. It is about the future and how we come together as a community to support children and families during difficult times.

Thank you for the opportunity you have given me to learn and grow, and for trusting me with your stories and the reasons you care. I look forward to continuing my work with this incredible organization.

Sincerely,

Emily Malisani



Emily Malisani
Grants Manager

Same Faces New Roles

We're excited to share some news about recent staff transitions at CASA of Yellowstone County. As our organization continues to grow, we've been fortunate to fill several key positions with talented team members who already know our mission and the children we serve.

Emily has stepped into the role of Grants Manager, Shayla is now serving as Development Director, Carrie has transitioned into the Program Director position, and Alyssa has joined the leadership team as the Program Manager.

By supporting staff growth and advancement within the organization, CASA builds a stronger team who can provide a high level of support to volunteer Advocates and children in foster care in our community.

Please join us in congratulating Emily, Shayla, Carrie, and Alyssa on their new roles!



Emily Malisani
Grants Manager



Shayla Fox Brown
Development Director



Carrie Porter
Program Director



Alyssa Guerrero-Nelson
Program Manager

Congratulations,
Spring Class of 2026!





ADVOCATE APPRECIATION NIGHT



Thank you to everyone who joined us for our 2026 Advocate Appreciation Night. The evening provided a special opportunity to recognize the dedicated CASA Advocates, supporters, and community partners who help change the lives of children in our community every day.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our event sponsors—Ameriprise Financial (Ken Kallem), Billings Clinic, Huppert Law & Chase Brown Law, and Liz & Bob Wilmouth—whose generosity helped make this event possible.

Congratulations again to our award recipients, and thank you to every Advocate who generously gives their time, heart, and voice to support children. Your commitment makes a lasting difference.

Thank You, Sponsors!



Ken Kallem
Soundview Financial Group

A private wealth advisory practice of
Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC



Liz & Bob Wilmouth

2026 AWARD WINNERS



Libby Stone
Advocate of the Year



Terri Richards
Peer Coordinator of the Year



Jan Shorthill
Rookie of the Year



Denise Bouschor
Hope Award



Sandy Ellis
No Stone Left Unturned



Karla Aus
Heart of ICWA

CPS Worker of the Year- Emilie Leonhart CPS Worker of the Year- Fallon Snow Mount
Champion for Children- Tina Devoe

James & Ava's

Story



For James, 13, and his sister Ava, 7, the past six months have brought both change and challenge as they re-entered foster care and were placed with extended family. The children's complex medical and educational needs require stability, informed support, and strong advocacy to ensure their well-being. From the moment their CASA entered their lives, the impact has been immediate, even when it hasn't been loud or obvious. The CASA has not rushed in with answers. Instead, has shown up consistently, patiently, and with a genuine willingness to learn about the kids, their parents, and extended family.

From the start, the CASA has been a regular visitor at school, taking time to understand each child's strengths and needs, and building trust with both children, especially Ava, who now eagerly asks for her CASA by name. James has also begun to feel supported and understood, knowing someone is listening and advocating for him in every setting. When James experienced a medical emergency at school that resulted in hospitalization, both children were understandably frightened and unsure of what was happening. The CASA immediately took action to gather accurate information and ensure their caseworker, placement, and medical team had a clear understanding of the situation. She contacted the school, communicated with key professionals, and relayed timely updates to those involved in the case. Her prompt response helped clarify the circumstances surrounding the emergency, reduced confusion, and ensured that the children's needs remained at the forefront during a stressful and evolving situation.

The CASA has participated in school meetings, collaborated with service providers, and worked closely with the children's parents to ensure the entire family is supported. Her steady presence and deep commitment have helped bring clarity, connection, and hope during a difficult time. The Reunification Specialist Case Worker stated that "The CASA has gone above and beyond for this family. Both children have significant and complex needs, and the CASA has devoted extraordinary time and care to understanding and supporting them."

As James and Ava's journey continues, their CASA remains a constant Advocate who celebrates progress, amplifies their voices, and helps build a path toward greater stability for their future.

I am a **CASA** because...

"foster kids matter."
- Rhonda King
CASA Since 2026



"every kid needs to know they
have people in their court"
-Anne Cole
CASA since 2025



"I want to help children in
difficult situations."
-Shaun Anderson
CASA since 2026



"kids deserve a voice."
-Taylor Anderson
CASA since 2026

STEPS TO BECOME A CASA

- 1 ATTEND AN INFORMATION SESSION
- 2 APPLY & INTERVIEW
- 3 JOIN CASA TRAINING
- 4 GRADUATE & SELECT A CASE



Take the first step and sign up for an
upcoming Information Session TODAY!



HOPE

“Run” 0.5K. Eat a Donut. Give Children Hope.

Think you've got what it takes to conquer a 0.5K “Run”? Join CASA of Yellowstone County on Saturday, October 3, at Canyon Creek Brewing for the most fun you'll have “running” just 1640 feet!

Whether you're a seasoned runner, a casual walker, or simply in it for the laughs (and the donut aid station), this event is for you. Grab your friends, family, coworkers, or neighbors, throw on a fun costume if you're feeling extra festive, and help us make a difference for children in our local foster care.



REGISTER TODAY!

WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU AT THE STARTING LINE!



Become a Sponsor for CASA's 0.5K "Run"!

The CASA 0.5K “Run” may be short on distance, but it is big on impact. As CASA's largest fundraiser of the year, this event raises critical funds to support volunteer Advocates and children in foster care.

This fun-filled fundraiser offers sponsorship opportunities for businesses of all sizes, making it easy to show your community support while gaining valuable recognition. Become a sponsor and make a difference in the lives of children.



Sponsorships deadline is August 28.

Find out more at yellowstonecasa.org/become-a-sponsor

Help Shape the **Future of CASA**

Not everyone is in a position to become a CASA Advocate, and that's okay. There are many meaningful ways to make a lasting impact for children and families, and one of them is by serving on our Board of Directors.

As a board member, you'll help guide the future of CASA of Yellowstone County by providing leadership, supporting the mission, and ensuring CASA can serve the community for years to come. Your experience, ideas, and passion can make a real difference.

If you're looking for a meaningful way to give back and strengthen your community, we invite you to consider joining CASA's Board of Directors. Together, we can help ensure every child we serve has someone in their corner.

Interested in learning more? We'd love to visit with you about what board service looks like and answer any questions you have. Contact drew@yellowstonecasa.org or call 406-259-1233



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 Betty Aman
Audry & James Bonogfsky

In Memory of Tara Sinkler
Emily Malisani

In Honor of Dennis McCave
Ben & Celina McKee

In Honor of Patty Muir
Tom & Mari Hagen



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Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF YELLOWSTONE COUNTY

