

Columbia Gorge CASA

Serving Hood River, Sherman, and Wasco Counties

Our Mission: To advocate for the needs and well-being of children and youth who have experienced abuse and neglect through continually-trained and professionally supported community volunteers.

DEC. 2024

CASA IN NUMBERS



**80
CHILDREN
SERVED
FY 23/24**



**46
ADVOCATES
SERVED
CHILDREN
FY 23/24**



**15 +
CHILDREN
NEED AN
ADVOCATE**

**LEARN ABOUT BECOMING A VOLUNTEER
ADVOCATE AT GORGECASA.ORG**

Columbia Gorge CASA

Phone: 541-386-3468

Email: outreach@gorgecasa.org

Physical Address: 1308 12th St.

Mailing Address: PO Box 663

Hood River, OR 97031



CONSISTENCY AND RESILIENCE

Mindy has dedicated an impressive seventeen years as a CASA advocate, and in that time, she's encountered a wide array of challenges faced by families in crisis. Her experience spans a diverse spectrum of individuals—families, caseworkers, judges, and, of course, the 12 children she has served. Yet, one particular case remains etched in her heart.

When Mindy first met this child, they were not yet two years old, entering the foster care system due to substance abuse issues in the home. Over the next eight years, Mindy became a beacon of stability amid an often-tumultuous path that included multiple attempts at reunification with their family.

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ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR!

Monica Carson was the recipient of this year's prestigious Susan Erickson Award for Excellence at Columbia Gorge CASA. Monica has been a steadfast advocate for her CASA youth for three and a half years—an impressive duration that represents over 90% of the youth's time in care. Her unwavering commitment has made a significant impact on the life of this young person, fostering a strong bond built on trust and understanding.

"Monica's creativity and thoughtfulness in her advocacy truly set her apart," said Leah Campbell, Program Coordinator of Columbia Gorge CASA. "She goes above and beyond to engage her youth in new experiences."

Throughout her time with her CASA youth, Monica has demonstrated diligence in her advocacy, consistently submitting detailed reports and maintaining regular monthly visits. CASA staff have had the privilege of witnessing the meaningful relationship between Monica and her youth, characterized by open communication and genuine care. Monica actively listens to her youth's thoughts and concerns, carefully considering how best to support and guide them.

"Monica exemplifies the spirit of CASA," added Campbell. "Her dedication not only enriches her youth's life but also inspires our entire community to advocate for children in need."



Program Coordinator Leah Campbell presents Monica Carson with this year's Susan Erickson Award of Excellence.

JOIN OUR TEAM OF ADVOCATES



Swearing-in ceremony for winter 2024 trainees.

Becoming a CASA volunteer is a powerful way to make a lasting difference in a child's life by offering the consistency, guidance, and advocacy they need within the foster care system. We are especially seeking volunteers from diverse backgrounds, including men, bilingual individuals, those with Tribal connections, and those willing to travel long distances to meet with children. Your unique perspective and dedication can truly transform lives. If you're ready to make an impact, contact us at 541-386-3468 or email training@gorgecasa.org. Together, we can create real change.

LEARN MORE AT GORGECASA.ORG





Swearing-in ceremony for summer 2024 trainees.

ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

An advocate found culturally-appropriate summer camps for CASA kids.

An advocate provided information that helped children get out of a abusive placement.

Some advocates informally assist their CASA children with homework during visits.

Some advocates travel for hours to regularly to see their CASA children.

An advocate actively helped their CASA kids learn to swim.

An advocate helped cook traditional food with children from their home country.

An advocate helped organize a photo gift of a CASA child's dog that they had to leave behind upon entering care.

CONSISTENCY AND RESILIENCE (Continued)

Despite Mindy's cautioning about the risks of premature returns, the child was sent home four times in the hopes of family reunification. Each time, the child's return was followed by yet another heartbreak as they were placed back into care due to relapse. But Mindy never wavered; she was a steadfast support system, always there to advocate for the child's best interests through every challenge.

Initially hesitant to speak up in court, Mindy gradually found her voice, gaining confidence as she realized the importance of her role. With each hearing, she passionately articulated her vision for a brighter future—one where the child could truly thrive.

Finally, after years of ups and downs, the moment of hope arrived: the child was placed in a permanent guardianship with a loving relative. At just nine years old, this child can now look forward to a stable and nurturing home, something they had long dreamed of. Though Mindy must step back from the child's life, she takes comfort in knowing they now have a family that can provide the love and security they need.

Mindy's journey highlights the profound impact a single, dedicated individual can have on a child's life. A Harvard University study underscores the significance of stable relationships, asserting that they are crucial for building resilience in children. Mindy was that rare constant for this child, offering unwavering support and advocacy when it was needed most.

As she reflects on her journey, Mindy finds solace in the fact that she was able to serve as a constant in this child's life when they needed it the most. This child, who experienced so many traumatic changes in their young life, has now finally found permanency with a relative who is able to nurture their growth and healing. This is the essence of why CASA volunteer's matter: they are champions of hope and the enduring support that can change the trajectory of a child's life forever.

The name of the advocate in this story was changed for confidentiality reasons.

26 CASES CLOSED FY 23/24

14 REUNIFICATION
7 GUARDIANSHIP
2 ADOPTION
3 TURNED 18 YEARS OLD

COLUMBIA GORGE CASA TEAM

Volunteer Advocates 2024

Anderson, Kym
Baker, Judi
Bentz, George
Bonnofsky, Mary
Bryant, Sherry
Carson, Monica
Chance, Jeannie
Concar, Pamela
Cordry, Norma
Crandall, Christine
Delaney, Bob
Drew, Ed
Erickson, Susan
Gettleman, Elise
Gibson, Glenna
Good Stefani, Giulia
Goter, Carol
Harrington, Chari
Hayes, Carol
Hickenbottom, Alan
Johnson, Amber
Jones, Valerie

Lannak, Susan
Mayer, Debbie
McGinley, Ashley
Moore, Amber
Parkinson, Theo
Pickens, Brandi
Poor, Susan
Sorensen, Susan
Spring, Amy
Swyers, Deb
Titus Israels, Suzanna
Veazey, Terra
Velarde, Ivy
Vital, Becki
Warneking, Jeffrey
Watson, Kathy
Watson, Stu
Weiler, Bill
White, Steve
Worthy, Sally
Zenorini, Mary

Board Members

Barnes, Brigitte
Bushnell, Peter
Fauth, Molly
Hart, Jenn
Hunter, Daniel
LaBar, Tyler
Mapes, Hannah
Myers, Carmen
Rivera Zuniga, Lindsay
Stice, Nate

Staff Members

Campbell, Leah
Hayes, Carol
Janetzko, Christopher
Martinez, Theresa
Wass, Jenn

GIVE *Hope*

GIVE BY MAIL

COLUMBIA GORGE CASA
PO BOX 663
HOOD RIVER, OR 97031

GIVE ONLINE

GORGEKASA.ORG

