



## Montana CASA/GAL Association Making A Difference May 2024

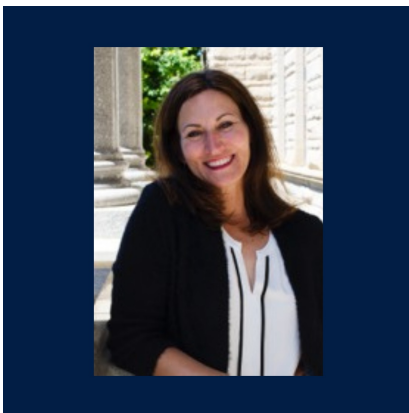
**Montana CASA/GAL Association  
empowers advocacy for abused and  
neglected children.**

[DONATE](#)

**The 15 Local Programs in the State of Montana  
have helped:**

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OUR  
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*Approximately 1,250 Children with  
577 Advocates this past year.*



### **Letter from the Boardroom Laura Dever, Board Vice Chair**

I served as a court appointed special advocate for several years with the CASA-CAN Children's Advocate Network in Great Falls, MT. It was some of the most challenging, educational, and rewarding work that I've ever experienced. When we relocated to Polson in 2020, I was very fortunate to meet Elaine Meeks, the then-chair of the Montana CASA/GAL Association Board of Directors. Elaine encouraged me to consider serving on the MT CASA board, and I came on board in July 2022; I served as board secretary and am currently the board vice-chair. It's enlightening to be involved at the statewide organizational level after working on the ground at the local level: the way that the local programs and the state board are collaborating and growing together is so encouraging! All of the hard work that everyone involved with CASA does for Montana kids and families is fundamentally important to our communities. It makes a difference, and I'm honored to be a part of this team.

With an increased focus on funding, branding, development and strategic planning, the effectiveness and positive impact of CASA on kids and communities statewide will continue to grow and improve. Thank you for your continued support!

## MTCASA MONTANA SHARES ANNUAL RAFFLE

ENTER TO WIN ONE  
OF THE 18 GREAT  
PRIZE PACKAGES.  
RAFFLE PROFITS  
SUPPORT ADVOCACY  
FOR ABUSED &  
NEGLECTED  
CHILDREN.

RAFFLE  
AUCTION  
SEPTEMBER  
11, 2024

VISIT OUR  
WEBSITE  
TO BUY  
TICKETS

\$10/TICKET  
3 FOR \$25  
6 FOR \$40  
18 FOR \$100



MTCASA is a proud member of Montana Shares, a partnership of Montana-based nonprofit groups devoted to improving the quality of life in the communities throughout the state. MT Shares Annual Raffle Tickets are for sale! **Raffle ticket sales go to support advocacy for abused and neglected children in Montana's court system.**

Buy Tickets  
Now!

# Getting Ready To Launch



Here's a Sneak Peak of projects  
MTCASA is getting ready to  
launch!

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## **Statewide Video Series**

To spread awareness about the important work CASA does, MTCASA is in the beginning steps of putting together a video series that will include stories from CASAs, foster and bio parents, and aged-out youth. These videos will showcase a state-wide perspective of CASA, spreading awareness and helping recruit more volunteers to our local programs to ensure that every child who is eligible for a CASA, has one.



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## **Montana CASA Conference**

The Montana CASA Conference will be hosted in Helena this September. This conference provides training and networking for our 15 local programs across Montana. Staff, board members, and CASA volunteers are invited to attend. We're finalizing our great agenda with presenters like Mississippi County Court Judge Favre and a lived experience panel which will include a parent whose child was reunified with them, with the support of a CASA!

## **Keynote Speaker Spotlight**



Judge Trent Favre was named Mississippi's 2019 Champion for Children (judicial branch) and the Child Welfare and Child Advocacy Committee (The Mississippi Bar) Reunification Hero (2019). In 2021, he was selected to serve on CASA's National Judicial Leadership Council. Last year, he presented at CASA's National Conference in St. Louis.

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### **More Expansion & Growth**

TANF funds helped CASA programs across the state serve more children this state fiscal year. Projects funded by TANF include volunteer recruitment, CASA awareness campaigns, and expansion of programs. Our second year of TANF funds begins July 1 and we can't wait to see the continued expansion & growth throughout the CASA network.



With the help of TANF funds, CASA of Lake & Sanders opened a new Connections Room in Sanders County where they can provide supervised family visits and CASAs have access to a safe space to meet with children or parents. Soon a private room for parenting classes will be available.

Read the story below for one of many CASA success stories, made possible with TANF funds!

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### **CASA Success Story from CASA of Missoula**

When CASA Susan Monahan was appointed to her case, all four of the children in the family were living in an RV with their parents. Both parents were addicted to methamphetamine, and the mother was violent toward the father. The family was in so much upheaval that none of the children were in school.



In Mineral county, the court met infrequently and informally. Susan saw this and immediately formed a close team with the foster placements and the CPS on the case.

Together, they helped the four children recover from the trauma of their early childhoods in safe placements. All of the girls were old enough to understand what was happening and Susan honored their curiosity and made sure her work with the court was transparent.

When Susan heard the twins wanted to move back in with their dad, who was



in treatment, she realized it was her role to help the family court case stay at the pace of his recovery. Across two foster placements in two different counties during four years, Susan would check in with the twins each month and make sure they were paying as much attention to school as they were to their court dates. This summer, the twins moved in with their baby half sister and their father. They say they've never been happier: they have a new extended family and a sense of belonging they say they never had in their foster homes.

## Eastern MT CASA/GAL Expands into Fort Peck Reservation



A year ago, Eastern MT CASA/GAL learned that Tribal children on the Fort Peck Reservation were not represented by an attorney. This was when Executive Director, Cherie LeBlanc-Dyba, started a conversation with the Tribal Courts about having CASA advocate for children in foster care. In March, Eastern Montana CASA/GAL began working with the Assiniboine Sioux Tribal Nation on the Fort Peck Reservation to provide support for American Indian children in the foster care system.

“CASA volunteers come from all walks of life, and we are looking for people within the Fort Peck area/Reservation to become volunteers. Kids need to have people from their community so they feel comfortable and supported,” said LeBlanc-Dyba. “We will provide the training and support volunteers need to be the best advocates possible for the kids you serve...we are here to learn and be a part of the network of people supporting children.”

## Keep Up To Date with MTCASA

In addition to spreading awareness about CASA through our upcoming video series, MTCASA is also doing active work to increase our presence on social media and in local newspapers. Keep up to date with MTCASA through our [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#) and keep an eye out in your local newspaper op-ed sections to learn more about our local programs and how you can get involved!



# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS



**Without support, MTCASA/GAL wouldn't be able to fulfill their mission. Thank you for your generosity in supporting our vision.**

## OUR ORGANIZATION

### Montana CASA/GAL Board of Directors

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**April Barnings**, Executive Director  
**Maggie Jensen**, Executive Assistant

Visit [montanacasagal.org](http://montanacasagal.org) for more information about our board, staff and mission.

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Montana CASA/GAL Association | 225 West Front Street | Missoula, MT 59802 US

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