



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

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

[DONATE](#)

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

[VISIT  
OUR  
WEBSITE](#)

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

### **Letter from the Boardroom - Joe Walsh**

For over twenty years, I have had the pleasure of working with children and their families in various capacities, including as a school counselor, mental health therapist, and currently, a school principal. Through these roles, I have witnessed firsthand the critical importance of fostering healthy kids and families.

Joining the Montana CASA/GAL Association board has been an incredible honor for me. This opportunity allows me to give back to an organization that I deeply believe in and support a cause that profoundly impacts children and their families. CASA's life-changing work has shown me the power of dedicated advocacy and the positive difference it can make in the lives of those who need it most.

In our current world, it is more essential than ever for us to come together to strengthen our families and communities. Serving on the Montana CASA/GAL Association board enables me to collaborate with remarkable individuals who share a common goal: supporting the vital mission of CASA. I am committed to continuing our efforts to raise awareness about this powerful organization and to support the children of Montana.

**Support the Mission  
of MTCASA by contributing to**

# the MTCASA Endowment

Due to a generous gift provided by Tom & Carol McElwain, Montana CASA/GAL Association was able to establish and endowment with the Montana Community Foundation. Funds invested in the endowment helps our donors achieve philanthropic goals and will providing MTCASA stable income to support our mission's work in perpetuity.



*Receive a Montana Endowment Tax Credit and support providing CASA services to children and families by donating to the MTCASA Endowment Fund today.*

Different from charitable deductions, a gift to the endowment (Montana Endowment Tax Credit) provides a direct credit toward your Montana taxes.

Every dollar of your gift(s) qualify for is \$1 less that you will owe the state. While a gift for which you are claiming the METC can only be used as an itemized charitable deduction on your federal tax return, not state, the dollar-for-dollar tax credit generally provides a much greater benefit on your state tax return than itemizing the gift would yield. Additionally, should you choose not to itemize the gift on your federal tax return, you are still eligible to claim the METC on your state taxes.

*To Donate To the Montana CASA/GAL Association Endowment, visit:*  
<https://mtcf.org>

*Hit the tab: Make a Gift  
Type in Search: Montana CASA/GAL Association  
And Give!*

Want to learn more? Contact the Montana Community Foundation today.  
(406) 443-8313 info@mtcf.org

**Donate to the Montana CASA/GAL Association  
Endowment Here!**

## **Welcome New MTCASA Executive Assistant**

Elizabeth Bowles has joined the MTCASA team as our new executive assistant. Elizabeth graduated from the University of Montana with a Bachelors in Political Science in May!

Elizabeth was born and raised in Missoula. She enjoys camping and hiking in our beautiful state.



## **Welcome New MTCASA Board Members**

### **Mark Sanz**

Dr. Mark Sanz is a retired cardiologist in Missoula who wanted to volunteer with a worthwhile organization and chose CASA. The chance to work with children who had difficult circumstances and the possibility to improve their lives was, and is, a major reason he volunteers with Missoula CASA. The devotion of both CASA staff and volunteers has made this a rich and rewarding experience. Hopefully, I can add to the already excellent work by CASA at the state level.



### **Shannon Parker**

Shannon Parker comes to the MTCASA board with extensive experience serving vulnerable populations. Originally from Butte, Shannon began her career in Missoula, working for Youth Homes and Women's Opportunity and Resource Development. These organizations allowed her to serve children in foster care, teen parents, TANF families, and people experiencing homelessness. Additionally, she became a CASA volunteer while in Missoula, and the experience never left her. She is most recently from CASA of Southwest Montana in Anaconda, MT. Even after 20 years, the work still drew her attention, and she witnessed several children reunite with stronger, more resilient parents reminding her CASA is a vital tool for children in care.



## **Welcome New CASA of Southwest MT Executive Director**

### **Cheri Jeffs**

Cheri Jeffs joined the military right out of high school and did several tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. After being wounded and medically discharged from the military, Cheri went into the medical field. Cheri worked for intermountain health care for 14 years before leaving and going to work for the VA. Cheri enjoys helping people and proctor care for teenagers was one of those things. Most of these teens had put themselves into the system for mistakes they had made. In 2021 Cheri and her husband moved to a little cabin in Anaconda Montana. She had hoped to retire but found herself being pulled to a job as a Family Development Specialist with Anaconda Family Resource Center, where she did visit coaching and parenting





classes. Cheri was given the opportunity in June 2024 to become the program director of CASA of Southwest Montana and accepted it with the hope of helping even more families. Cheri and her husband have been married for 29 years and have 2 children and 6 grandchildren.



**HELENA COLONIAL HOTEL**

(2301 COLONIAL DR, HELENA, MT 59601)



[Register for the Conference Here!](#)

For More Information about our Annual Conference, email:  
[elizabeth@montanacasagal.org](mailto:elizabeth@montanacasagal.org)

# 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 before September 8th**

**Buy Tickets  
Now!**

## **Compassion: The Necessary Foundation to Reunify Families Involved in the Foster Care System**

"Compassion plays a critical role in ensuring that stakeholders can engage with, and support parents trying to reunify with kids in the foster care system. This Article will explore the compassion crisis in foster care, will present the research documenting the impact of compassion on engaging families, and will

identify key steps stakeholders can take to incorporate compassion into their work." -The Abstract

Article by: Katherine Markey, and Vivek Sankaran  
Published by: University of Michigan Law

[Click here to read the complete study](#)

## 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 THESE SUPPORTERS



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

[To see our full list of Supporters Click Here](#)

## OUR ORGANIZATION

### Montana CASA/GAL Board of Directors

*Board Chair:* **Jim Fitzgerald**, Helena

*Vice Chair:* **Laura Dever**, Polson

*Treasurer:* **John Menyhart**, Miles City

*Secretary:* **Karen Townsend**, Missoula

**Joe Walsh**, Billings  
**Kim Casey**, Great Falls (Program Director CASA-CAN)  
**Bob Brown**, Billings  
**Shannon Parker**, Butte  
**Mark Sanz**, Missoula

**STAFF**

**April Barnings**, Executive Director  
**Elizabeth Bowles**, Executive Assistant

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

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