

# CREATING BRIGHTER FUTURES



**BRIGHTSIDE**  
CHILD AND FAMILY ADVOCACY

**2023 ANNUAL REPORT**  
10/1/2022 - 9/30/2023



**BRIGHTSIDE**  
CHILD AND FAMILY ADVOCACY



**CREATING A BRIGHTER FUTURE**

**ADVOCACY**



# TEAM

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chris Collins, Treasurer Wet Willie's  
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## EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Cole Eberle, CASA Volunteer, PPG Aerospace  
Eula Parker, Secretary, CASA Volunteer, South State Bank  
Chatham County Juvenile Court Judges:  
Honorable Thomas L. Cole  
Honorable Lindretta Grindle Kramer  
Honorable Roxanne Formey

## STAFF

Kate Blair, Executive Director  
Jennifer Graham, Communications Manager  
Julia Haddick, Director of Development  
Kenyatta Roebuck, Americorps VISTA  
Jenny McCord, Operations Manager  
Theresa MacBride, Administrative Assistant,  
Mon'a Houston, Part-Time Administrative Assistant

## BRIGHT HOUSE

Ja'Nae Brown, Bright House Manager  
Teresa MacBride, Family Support Specialist  
Tolejala Marsh, Family Support Specialist  
Seren Gunter, Family Support Specialist  
Alexis Marsh, Family Support Specialist  
Carole Fireall, Family Support Specialist  
Meylinda Williams, Family Support Specialist

## CASA

Mandy Roberts, Advocacy Director  
Sharon Newman, Lead Advocacy Coordinator  
Susan Ryncavage, Lead Advocacy Coordinator  
Karen Allen, Advocacy Coordinator  
Maggie Smith, Advocacy Coordinator  
Alicia Wilson, Advocacy Coordinator  
Tim Wright, Advocacy Coordinator  
Hollyn Green, Pre-Service Facilitator



# 231

## CASA VOLUNTEERS

Abraham, Pria  
Abraham, Theresa  
Adams-Edwards, Danny  
Alberto, John  
Allen, Rachel  
Amick, Christine  
Anderson, Helen  
Arner, Faith  
Atkinson, Malley Clemones  
Bailey, Cecily  
Barlow, Lori  
Barney-DiCianno, Christina  
Bath, Sandra  
Baxter, Aimee  
Beckley, Karen  
Bellamy, Annette  
Bohall, Sarah  
Bonaccolta, Julia  
Boswell, LaToya  
Boyd, Brianna  
Brickner Nye, Christine  
Brister, Tammy  
Brush, Cynthia  
Bryant, Leslie  
Buck, Chelsey  
Burch, Jo Hannah  
Burton, Ashton  
Camarillo, Cammie  
Campbell, Abigail  
Caputo, Laura  
Carper, Donald  
Chabala, Jolie  
Chadwick, Hunter  
Clemm, Timothy  
Cole-Grimes, Pam  
Coleman, Addie  
Collier, Megan  
Crimian, Robert  
Cronk, Ruth  
D'Angio, Sandra  
Danhof, Terry

Daniel, Ken  
Daugherty, Donna  
Davis, Kristi  
Davis, Sarah  
Dawson, Shed  
Dean, Lakesha  
Deich, Elle  
Denny, Mike  
Dickerson, Terrell  
Dietz, Jade  
Dixon, Jackie  
Donahoo, Omelia  
Donovan, Matt  
Donovan, Elizabeth  
Drescher, Carol  
Drescher, Joe  
Dubois, Kim  
Early, Jasmine  
Eberle, Cole  
Ellison Sr., Rick  
Ellison, Danielle  
England, Amanda  
Eubank, Lois  
Faul, Skylar  
Feldman, Danette  
Fletcher, Mary  
Flournory, Jacqueline  
Foreman, Les  
Forrest, Betty  
Frazier, Angel  
Frazier, Desharon  
Galegor, Anna  
Garrett, Carl  
Gaynor, Howard  
Gerrin, Carol  
Gire, Crystal  
Gire, Daniel  
Goedtel, Ann Marie  
Gomez, Lilia  
Granado, Summer  
Grant, Tia  
Gratias, Eric  
Grimes, Valarie  
Griffin, Alexander  
Gunter, Seren  
Hafer, Yvonne  
Hamlin, Cerise  
Hanna, Hillary

Harkins, Alison  
Harlan, Glenna  
Harris, Lori  
Harris, Mary Jane "MJ"  
Hartley, Diane  
Hassett, Tom  
Haverdeane, Katelyn  
Helm, Sally  
Hernandez, Veronica  
Hilleary, Peggy  
Hintz, Crystal  
Hinze, Heather  
Hirsch, Raia  
Holbach, Sarah  
Holland, Beth  
Horton, Randall  
Hostettler, Laura  
Jackman, Katy  
Jackson, Hillary  
Jackson, Lucille  
Janocha, Erica  
Johnson, Christy  
Johnson, James  
Johnson, Linda  
Johnson, Rose  
Johnston, Emily  
Jones, Alma Rita  
Jones, Kendra  
Jones, Mary  
Jones, Vernon  
Kabanda Mihigo, Abby  
Kaplan, Shelley  
Karnes, Michele  
Kettler, Nicole  
Kennedy, Angelina  
King, Megan  
King, Pam  
King, Paralee  
Kommel, Kelly  
Langbo, Betsy  
Lehmann, Katlyn  
Lemley, Ann  
Levy, Jane  
Lillard, Christie  
Linville, Genevieve  
Lobban, Francesca  
Lodato, Anastasiya  
Lovato, Natalie

Lovewine, Shenika  
MacBride, Teresa  
Martin, Jessica  
Mauger, Cynthia  
McCarthy, Jennifer  
McDonald, Kari  
McKay, Trish  
Melendez, Nikisha  
Merchan Alvarez, Lina  
Messinger, Katie  
Miller, John  
Mills, Yolanda  
Miracle, Ashley  
Miracle, Josh  
Mitchell, Sara  
Moore, Natalie  
Morse, Deborah  
Moss, Maria  
Mulherin, Lisa  
Nash , Deborah  
Nash, Daphne  
Navarro, Julisa  
Offutt, Maria  
Oliver, Linda  
Padgett, Glory  
Page, Meridith  
Parker, Eula  
Parker, Rosey  
Partain, Jessica  
Patel, Laukik  
Poole, Imani  
Poole, Sandra  
Postell, Gamu  
Potter, Amy  
Printup, Blair  
Quinley, Christine  
Quiroz, Carlos  
Raehn , Jennifer  
Raley, Alex  
Randolph, Taveyus  
Reeves, Valerie  
Roberts, Geneva  
Roberts , Kayara  
Rogers, Kathy  
Rooney, Mary  
Sanabria, Julissa  
Sayyar, Christi  
Schmoekel, Kimberley

Schoenwald, Carolyn  
Schrimsher, Anita  
Scott, Evelyn  
Scott, Tanya  
Sharp, Melissa  
Sheppard, Lorraine  
Shigemori, Satomi  
Shuman, Marly  
Simon, Arnicia  
Smith, DeShay  
Smith, Nikki  
Smith, Shelley  
Smith-Garvin, Katrina  
Snyder, Scott  
Snyder, Shelynne  
Sparks, Wendi  
Spidle , Jesse  
Stacy, Tiffany  
Stafford, Kristina  
Staton, Nancy  
Stowers, Liwandra  
Sywassink, Julie  
Szabo, Elliot  
Taylor, Mildred  
Taylor, Tinika  
Thomas, Dr. Kimberly  
Thomas, Michelle  
Thomas, Teorna  
Thompson, Amanda  
Thompson, Naima  
Trappio, Brandy  
Vereen, Maya  
Voelker, Kayla  
Waddell, Amy  
Walker, Bet  
Waltz, Ann  
Washington, Gabby  
White, Kären  
Williams, Tia  
Wilson, Amber  
Wilson, Andrea  
Woods, Cu'Quivia  
Wright, Terry  
Zeigler, Dawn  
Ziegler, Christine

# ADVOCATES

## 2023 CASA Awards

### Most Miles Driven By A CASA

Valerie Reeves (9104 miles)

### Most Hours of Advocacy By A CASA

Amy Potter (227.51 hours)

### Judges Choice

Amy Potter, Bob Crimian, Christine Amick, Brianna Boyd

### Handyman Award

Eric Harlan

### Partner of the Year Award

Promise686

### Best Cheerleader Award

Victor Kariker

### DFCS Case Manager of the Year

Jashanea Jones

### Juvenile Court Staff of the Year

Deborah Dixon

### Transporter of Year

Helping Hands, LLC

### Most Referrals

Jennifer Smart

### Foster Parent of the Year

Catherine Mathias



# SAVANNAH COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES (CASA)

**231** ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS

## VOLUNTEER DEMOGRAPHICS

### Race/Ethnicity

American Indian: 1%  
 Black/African American: 28%  
 Multiracial: 5%  
 White: 64%  
 Hispanic: 3%  
 Asian: 1%

### Gender

Male: 13%  
 Female: 87%

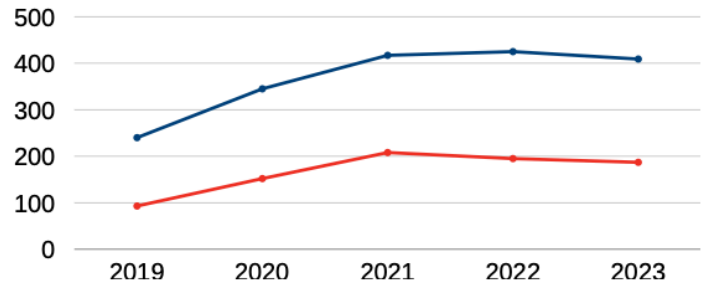
### Education

College: 62%  
 High School: 7%  
 Post Graduate: 21%  
 Some College: 10%

### Age

21-29: 11%  
 30-39: 23%  
 40-49: 22%  
 50-59: 20%  
 60 and over: 24%

## FIVE-YEAR OVERVIEW



■ Children Served ■ Assigned Volunteers

**409**

**CHILDREN SERVED BY**



In 2023, 187 CASA volunteers served 409 children. 124 cases closed. Of those cases:

- 36% were reunified with their parents
- 26% were adopted
- 19% achieved guardianship
- 14% aged out of foster care
- 5% custody granted with relative

### Child Demographics

Gender: Male: 221, Female: 188

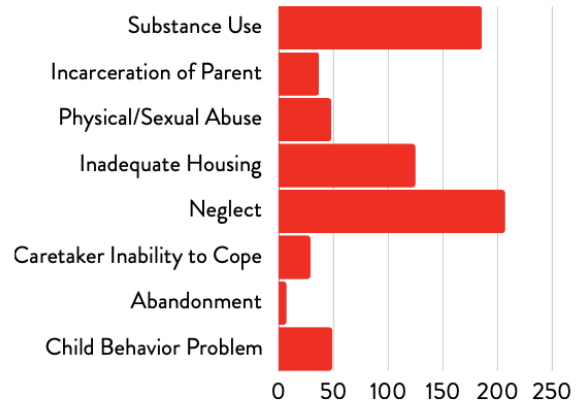
Age:

0-5 - 146  
 6-11 - 116  
 12-18 - 130  
 Over 18 - 17

### Race/Ethnicity

Hispanic - 4  
 Black/AA- 215  
 White - 147  
 Native Hawaiian/PI - 5  
 Two or more races - 35  
 American Indian - 2  
 Asian - 1

## REASONS FOR ENTERING FOSTER CARE IN 2023



**CURRENTLY SERVING 97% OF CHILDREN IN CARE**





## CASA VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR: TERRY WRIGHT

Terry Wright has been a CASA since December 2020 and has always been a leader amongst the other CASAs. She is a true CASA cheerleader with her positive outlook on every situation. Terry has advocated for 7 children during her time with CASA and has fiercely advocated for permanency. She has accepted three cases at once to ensure that each child had an advocate on their side. She encourages people to speak their truth and never displays any judgment.

Previous families still keep in touch with her when issues arise because they know that she will help find the right resources or connect them with the right person to talk to. Not only has Terry advocated locally for her CASA children, but she has traveled to Atlanta to advocate for policy change and regularly talks to policymakers about child welfare.





**THE  
BRIGHT  
HOUSE**

A PROGRAM OF  
**BRIGHTSIDE**  
CHILD AND FAMILY ADVOCACY



# THE BRIGHT HOUSE

A 35-year-old woman was referred to the Bright House due to ongoing substance abuse challenges. In September 2022, she began visiting her 1-year-old son twice per week. During her time with us, Mom was attentive, loving, and compassionate to her son. Mom took accountability for why her child was placed in foster care and was determined to cooperate with DFCS to become reunited with her child. Unfortunately, there were several obstacles in Mom's way. Mom would share those obstacles with her FSS and they would discuss ways to overcome them in order to achieve reunification. Many community partners left her discouraged and at times she felt her hard work would be done in vain. However, these brief pitfalls and hopeless moments did not stop her from pushing through the challenge.

Mom and FSS discussed the importance of being surrounded by a village. As a result, Mom took the initiative to join an online Mom Support Group. In doing so, Mom found her village and was educated on ways to properly communicate with foster parents. Due to this newfound confidence, she was able to build a friendly rapport with her son's foster parent; which allowed her to be updated daily on his progress. Although this was a success, Mom still faced the biggest challenge of them all; her DFCS case plan. Often, Mom did not have access to her case manager and was left in the dark about the court-ordered referrals that DFCS needed to complete in order for Mom to engage in rehabilitation services. Because of this, Mom took her independence a step further by researching programs and services that were aligned with the tasks on her case plan. DFCS and the Courts acknowledged Mom's diligent efforts by granting her reunification in January 2023. The Bright House team is thrilled to have been a part of this family's triumph story!

## Transporter of the Year

Helping Hands, LLC

## Most Referrals to Bright House

Jennifer Smart, DFCS

## Statistics

(2/14 to 9/30)

Referrals - 60 foster care referrals

Families - 55 families

# of Visits - 720 visits





**BRIGHTSIDE**  
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## Reasons for Entering Foster Care in 2023

Abandonment: 7  
Caretaker Inability to Cope: 29  
Child Behavior Problem: 49  
Inadequate Housing: 125  
Incarceration of Parent: 37  
Neglect: 207  
Substance Use: 186  
Physical/Sexual Abuse: 48



**CREATING A BRIGHTER FUTURE**

# FUNDERS

We are so grateful for our wonderful 2023 Funders who believe in our mission and vision for families.



# DONORS

Special thanks to all our donors in 2023. Your support allows us to have an impact in the lives of children.

## FRIENDS OF BRIGHTSIDE

Jordan Alexander  
Sarah Beth Atkins  
Sandra Bath  
Joseph Brown  
LeRoy Burke III  
Thomas Cole  
Chris Collins  
Victoria Conley  
Andrew Conn  
Bronwyn Dawson  
Joseph Eberle  
Toby Friedman  
Wendy Furey  
Joel Gerber  
Joe Gill  
Eric Gratias  
Leah Shay Groover  
Holly Holdsworth  
Jackie Jackson  
Marilyn McDonald  
Christine Noha  
Gillian Karatassos

## CHAMPION

Katy Aldridge  
Harley Ashbaugh  
Harold Cronk  
Howie Gaynor  
Will and Hope Gruver  
Jennifer Haddad  
Justin Jones  
Lindsey Kiefer  
Harrison Kreisberg  
Edward McCarthy  
Lisa McCaslin  
Michael Minard  
Debra Powell  
Rodney and Nicole Rawls  
Susan Roberts  
Jerry and Mary Rooney  
Laura Trizna  
Lawanna Tsoulos  
Cori Williams  
Russell Zittrauer  
LaTrisha Brown

## INNOVATOR

Julian Boanen, Jr.  
Gregory Plaunt  
Nikki Parks  
Jeff & Leann Kole  
Courtney Reich  
Earl Hagan  
Kent Gregory  
Karen Daring  
Chris and Janis Dieringer

## VISIONARY

Kent Gregory  
Rick & Regina Roney

## MONTHLY

Jackie Jackson  
Amy Zettle & Harrison Kreisberg  
Debra Powell  
Dan Tanner  
Holly Holdsworth & Katie Ban  
Cheryl Wiemero  
Gillian Karatassos





## RECORD NUMBERS IN 2023

Our 2023 Dancing with Savannah Stars Dancers raised a total of \$186,114. We are so proud of our top dancer and volunteer, Sally Helm, who raised a whopping \$33,417. Special thanks to all our phenomenal dancers who worked hard to ensure that children experiencing foster care have the support needed to thrive.

**Corey Howard:**

\$5,763.00

**Jordan Spohia Alexander:**

\$14,218.00

**Kenyatta Roebuck:**

\$11,815.00

**Will Gruver:**

\$22,331.00

**Latrell Gulotta:**

\$19,167.00

**Nikki Parks:**

\$23,440.00

**Trish Brown:**

\$6,131.00

**Marti Tomlin:**

\$22,735.99

**Total:** \$186,114

**Sally Helm:**

\$33,417.00

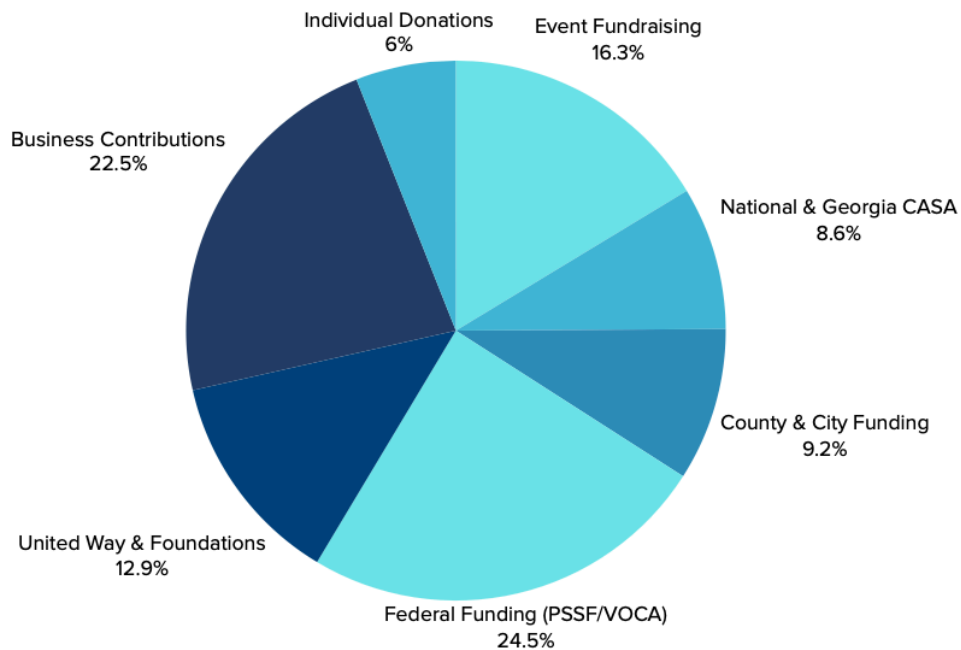
**Evan Goetz:**

\$7,435.00

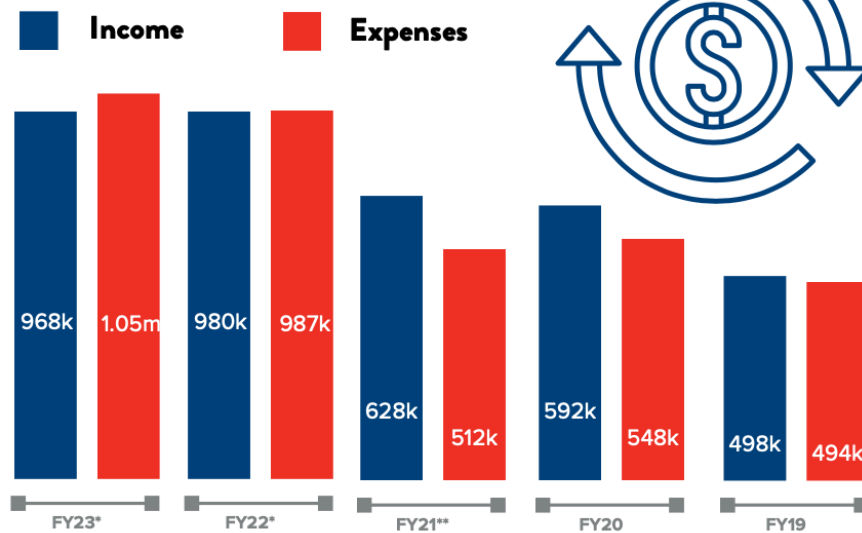
# DANCING WITH SAVANNAH STARS

# ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

## FUNDING BREAKDOWN



## FIVE-YEAR OVERVIEW



\*Unaudited \*\*9 Month Fiscal Year



# PARTNERSHIPS



## **DFCS Partnership**

Savannah CASA continued to improve our relationship with the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS). With COVID-19 behind us and staff back in person more, Savannah CASA was able to implement more to help the partnership with DFCS:

- Monthly DFCS supervisor/CASA coordinator staffings
- Coordinated and delivered Christmas gifts to foster children
- Assisted with case research
- Assistance with children who have to spend time at the DFCS office
- Joint Training Opportunities
- Celebrated a Caseworker of the Month/Year
- Trunk or Treat Event and Easter Egg Hunt

## **Juvenile Court Partnership**

Savannah CASA is only as strong as our relationship with our Juvenile Court Judges. Our advocates can only serve on a case if appointed by one of our judges. CASA staff works closely with the Juvenile Court to ensure that we are responsive and proactive in supporting their work. In addition to providing CASA volunteers to be appointed to dependency cases, Savannah CASA provides additional advocacy to Family Treatment Court (families impacted by substance use disorder), HOPE Court (youth who have been trafficked) and SPARC (youth with significant mental health concerns).

- Participate in quarterly stakeholder meetings
- Participate in truancy stakeholder meetings
- Participate in Court Improvement Initiatives
- Meet regularly with Judges and Juvenile Court leadership
- Participate in joint trainings
- Participate in Work Group to increase foster parent recruitment
- Restoration Savannah



**THANK YOU FOR  
YOUR SUPPORT!**



**BRIGHTSIDE**  
CHILD AND FAMILY ADVOCACY

[BrightsideAdvocacy.org](https://BrightsideAdvocacy.org)