



ALL ABOUT ADVOCATES

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A Message from RACHEL

Dear Advocate's Friends and Champions,

For many of us, childhood summer memories are happy ones. We fondly recall trips to the pool or family beach vacations. Sadly, for many of the children we serve at Advocates, summer can be a time of uncertainty, fear, and abuse. Nationally, child abuse reporting decreases during the summer months when children are out of school and no longer have teachers and school counselors to report abuse to protective services. While the reporting of abuse decreases, studies show incidents of domestic violence, sexual, and physical abuse increase significantly during summer months*. The reality of summertime abuse can be sobering, but we, at Advocates for Children, are working to protect children and build families so happier memories can be made.

Every year our friends at Iron Order Motorcycle Club ensure the children at Flowering Branch Children's Shelter (FBCS) will be able to make memories during their annual summer trip. In addition to taking a vacation, our FBCS children's summers are filled with day trips to amusement parks, their community swimming pool, and adventures around northwest Georgia. All of these memories are made possible by your generosity, whether by donating gift cards to area attractions or giving through our secure online giving page. Thank you for your support of Advocates and for partnering with us to build families and protect children in Northwest Georgia.

Warmest Regards,

Rachel Castillo

President/CEO

*National Institutes of Health



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GLEN MERRITT WITH RAYMOND JAMES FINANCIAL

Glen Merritt joined the Advocates for Children Board of Trustees in 2022 and has been a true champion of the children and families in our community. Currently serving as Chairman Elect, Glen has served on the Programs Committee and Finance Committee. Glen is also actively involved as a member of the Build Families. Protect Children Capital Campaign Committee.

What drew you to volunteering your time with Advocates? What is your “why”? My wife, Jennifer, and I both feel strongly about helping children reach their full potential. Unfortunately, there are children in our community who have been victims of abuse and neglect. Many of these children do not have family or loved ones to care for them. I volunteer my time because Advocates helps children achieve their full potential – especially those who have undergone trauma or who have experienced family turmoil.

What is your hope for the future of Advocates? The mission of Advocates has evolved over the years to include areas such as strengthening families, supporting positive parenting, and providing a boost to young adults as they start on their own into the world. My hope is that Advocates will continue to grow and adapt to meet the changing needs of our children.



NEW BUILDING UPDATE

We are excited to share we will be moving into our new building at 827 Joe Frank Harris Parkway at the beginning of September.

Be on the lookout for invitations to our Open House very soon!

CONSIDERING BECOMING A CASA? THIS IS YOUR SIGN.

Court Appointed Special Advocate® (CASA) volunteers are appointed by juvenile court to advocate for children's best interests. This best-interest advocacy makes a life-changing difference for children and youth who have experienced abuse or neglect, many of whom are in foster care. We will train you to change a child's story!

FALL TRAINING CLASSES START SEPT. 7



**Do you
want to
learn
more?**



If you've recently found yourself in Gordon County, you probably noticed how a once sleepy corner of northwest Georgia is now a bustling community of residential and industrial growth. While this is an exciting time for Gordon, it is also a critical time for child welfare in the county. Recognizing the need for expanded services for children in foster care and homeless youth,

Advocates is growing our presence and program offerings in Gordon.



Spring Swearing-in Ceremony for the New Gordon County CASA Volunteers

GROWING IN GORDON

Advocate's RISE Independent Housing Program and Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Program have been addressing the needs of youth experiencing homelessness in Gordon for several years, but as youth homelessness continues to grow, so do our plans for meeting the needs of these vulnerable youth.

RISE is expanding our presence in Gordon by partnering with more landlords to provide apartment rentals, strengthening our relationships with hotels for emergency placements, and adding additional RISE Case Managers to staff a new RISE office in Gordon county soon.

Since Spring of 2021, our CASA of Northwest Georgia program has expanded to serve Gordon children in foster care. By recruiting and training Gordon County Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers to advocate for the best interest of children who have been abused or neglected, we are ensuring a voice

for children in the courts in Gordon County. Through the gracious partnership of the Gordon County Judicial Services, we've recently been able to obtain office space for our CASA program directly in the Gordon County Courthouse.

We are excited to see Gordon County continue to prosper and are committed to sharing our vision that "Every family in our community is building a life where they are safe, thriving, and loved."



CASA of Northwest Georgia Presentation to the Gordon County Commission



CHICK-FIL-A/BIG PEACH RUNNING DUCK DASH 5K & HALF MARATHON

On May 13th, runners took their places for an awesome day of running during the 19th Annual Big Peach/ Chick-fil-a Duck Dash 5K and 2nd Annual Cartersville Half Marathon. We would like to thank our friends at Chick-fil-A, Big Peach Running Company and Wire2Wire Running for another outstanding race. While the Duck Derby was retired this spring, we are already planning for our 20th Duck Dash and Half Marathon next year. We hope you will lace up your running shoes next spring and get ready to Duck Dash!





ADEN: RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

While some high school graduates were planning summer parties and trips to the beach, our RISE Independent Living Program graduate was managing a pizza restaurant in Calhoun, ensuring all of her FAFSA financial aid forms were completed, and making plans to start college this fall. RISE stands for Resilience, Independence, Success, and Empowerment. Aden is the embodiment of these traits and, as Catherine Davis, her RISE Case Manager shares, "I am so proud of how much Aden has accomplished since she joined our program. Many teenagers may not have risen to the challenge of living on their own but Aden has taken advantage of all our program offers."

The road to graduation was filled with challenges, but this incredible young woman has overcome each obstacle with grace and grit. As a rising high school senior facing homelessness, Aden was connected to RISE through her school social worker. By choosing to participate in the RISE program, Aden was able to secure stable housing, learn the life skills needed to live independently, and make plans for her future.

There is a less than 3% chance a young adult experiencing homelessness will ever finish college but through the support Aden has received from RISE and the donors who make this program possible, the future is bright for Aden. This August, we will be moving Aden from her RISE apartment into her new home at Kennesaw State University (KSU). Studying computer science at KSU, Aden will be able to live and learn in a special KSU community built for college students who have overcome similar obstacles on the path to college. We are very proud of all Aden has accomplished and we know she will soar as a KSU Owl!





Annual Iron Order MC Ride for Kids



CASA at BBO, Boogie and Blues in Calhoun



Gerdau Charity Clay Shoot

4 YEARS ALL AROUND ADVOCATES



United Way Golf Tournament at Barnsley



Sequoyah Tennis Association Tournament



Duck Derby 2023: Quacky's Last Ride



P.O. Box 446
CARTERSVILLE, GA 30120
WWW.ADVOCCHILD.ORG

BUILD FAMILIES. PROTECT CHILDREN.

IT'S BACK TO SCHOOL TIME FOR ADVOCATE'S KIDS

Do you remember how exciting it was to have a new pair of shoes or how proud you felt with a shiny new lunchbox on the first day of school?

The kids we serve through our Advocates for Children programs are just like any other child starting a new school year. Your gift to Advocates Back to School Drive will help students with clothing, bookbags, tutoring and supplies needed for a successful academic year.

**WILL YOU HELP US MAKE
THIS SCHOOL YEAR A SUCCESS?**

**SCAN TO
DONATE**

