



# ADVOCATES

*Protecting Children. Empowering Youth. Uplifting Families.*

## Advocates for Children Expands Cobb County Services with New Marietta Office

*In an exciting step forward, Advocates for Children has expanded its footprint in Cobb County with a new, more centrally located office in Marietta. The launch was celebrated with a ribbon-cutting and open house, drawing enthusiastic support from community leaders, partners, and neighbors.*

The new location houses a Family Resource Center, in-home parenting education services, and a Safe Place program for runaway and homeless youth. Relocating from Kennesaw to a larger space along a public transit line makes services more accessible to families who need them most.

This move also creates greater opportunities to collaborate with other service providers through Cobb Collaborative and strengthens partnerships with both the Marietta and Cobb County School Districts and the Cobb Department of Family & Children Services.

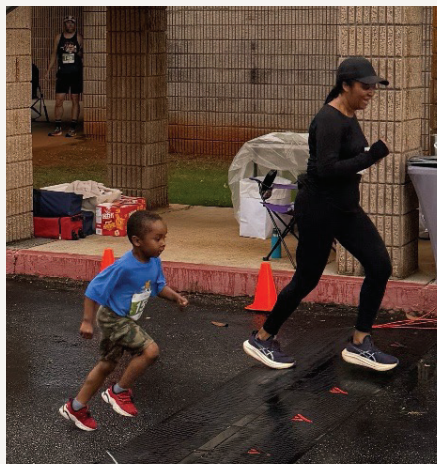
Several key funding partners have made this growth possible, including the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation, Cobb EMC, Cobb Community Foundation, CaxMax, Publix Super Market Charities, Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, and Mt. Pisgah Seventh Day Adventist Church.

With this expansion, Advocates for Children strengthens its mission to ensure the safety, stability and well-being of children and families in the region. The organization looks forward to deepening its impact in Cobb County and continuing to be a trusted resource for children, youth and families in need.



Leaders from Advocates for Children and the community commemorate the opening of the new Advocates Cobb County office. Left to right: Nikki Stodghill, Kataya Brown, Pastor John Lampley, Rachel Castillo, Cami Kreider, Councilman Joseph Goldstein, and Cherri Frost.

**"Welcome to our new Family Resource Center—where support is always here, smiles come standard, and everyone leaves feeling a little more seen, heard, and cared for."** *Kataya Brown, Program Manager*



## Pinwheel Pursuit race highlights important mission

What happens when communities come together to support a meaningful cause? More than \$60,000 was raised at the 20th annual Chick Fil A/Big Peach Running Co. Pinwheel Pursuit 5K (formerly the Duck Dash) and the fourth annual Cartersville Half Marathon. Clients will benefit as Advocates for Children pursues cultivating communities where all children are safe, thriving and loved.

More than 500 runners from across Metro Atlanta and neighboring states joined Advocates in Cartersville for what has become a favorite springtime tradition. "Advocates are grateful for generous sponsors and community members," according to President/CEO Rachel Castillo. "Whether you ran, walked or volunteered, you made a difference. Key event sponsors, including Big Peach Running Co, Chick-Fil-A, Pritchard Injury Firm, Millwood Plumbing and many more made race day successful."

This year's race was filled with heartwarming moments: A determined 4-year-old completed his very first 5K and race finishers were rewarded with Chick-fil-A biscuits. Events like this are about more than the milestone it's about community, connection, and the belief that every child deserves to be safe and the belief that every child deserves hope, opportunity, and a caring community behind them. What truly sets this race apart is the spirit of encouragement and unity that carries every runner across the finish line.



## A photo finish

High school sweethearts Jesse Adams and Aubrey Wright brought the sun to a rainy race morning. Moments after crossing the finish line together, Jesse got down on one knee and asked Aubrey to marry him.

"I wasn't nervous the entire time I was there until I got on one knee. I had a planned speech, but it all blew out the window and my brain stopped working," said as he smiled.

Aubrey said, "It was the best surprise and the perfect way for him to propose."

The couple have been together for five years after meeting at Allatoona High School in Acworth. Aubrey still resides in the Acworth area while Jesse is in Savannah pursuing an Army career.





# Love pours in as Newman House Prepares to Open



## **VIRDA CATALANO**

*has served as the Director of Residential Children's Home at Advocates for Children since January 28, 2025. She finds deep fulfillment in witnessing*

*the growth and transformation of the youth supported by Advocates for Children. Virda has spent her life helping children and youth in Georgia as an Early Childhood Education Instructor at Chattahoochee Tech Technical College and as Assistant Director at Quality Care for Children.*

A generous community blessed the future residents and Advocates team with thoughtful housewarming gifts, donations, and words of encouragement during the recent public tour of Newman House. As area leaders and community members arrived with gift cards, bedding, towels, games, and food, they were welcomed with a tour and staff-led explanations of the unique facility and life-changing programs.

"Our residents will be going on their annual beach summer vacation sponsored by Iron Order Motor Club and will return to discover the joys of living in a beautiful new 14-suite facility," said Rachel Castillo, President/CEO. "While they are gone, the Advocates staff will carefully move their personal belongings into their new suites. They'll return to homelike private bedrooms with full baths, microwaves, refrigerators, study areas, and closet space—all their own. This will be their home away from home."

The Outreach Center will open first, providing homeless and runaway youth with showers, meals, clothing, computer access, and a caseworker to help plan next steps. "Last year, 64 children and youth were diverted from homelessness," Rachel shared. "Newman House allows us to do even more."

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# Single Father finds support in building a stable home for his children

A difficult year-long journey has ended with stability for Diego and his two young children, thanks to the dedication of the Advocates Family Resource Center Team. This family's story is one of many that reflect the power of professional case management and compassionate community support.

In November 2023, Diego was referred by Department of Family & Children Services (DFCS) after his children's mother left. He was suddenly alone—caring for Elena (4), who has multiple disabilities, and Mateo (3)—while struggling to keep a job and pay mounting bills. With no childcare, limited English, and no support network, Diego faced eviction and the threat of losing his children to foster care.

Elena's needs felt overwhelming, and navigating systems alone proved nearly impossible. Unfortunately, 18% of Cobb County foster care cases last year were due to inadequate housing—often affecting families like Diego's, who fall through the cracks due to lack of resources for DFCS caseworkers. Advocates for Children is helping bridge that gap.

When Program Manager Kataya Brown met Diego, the family was days from eviction. Advocates covered rent and utilities, giving him the breathing room to afford a babysitter and return to work. Over the next year, Kataya helped him access daycare, food, and financial aid, walking alongside him through each step of recovery.

Today, the family is thriving. The children are safe, smiling, and no longer at risk of foster care or homelessness. DFCS has closed the case, and while Diego occasionally visits for diapers, he no longer needs formal help.

What he needed most was a chance—and someone to believe in him. Now, he tucks his children in each night under a safe roof, grateful for the support that helped him keep his family together.

## *A letter from Diego*

*Hello my name is Diego, and I would like to introduce you to Elena and Mateo. We are a family that has benefited from Advocates for Children, and we are grateful for the support that has benefited us greatly. They have given us excellent attention, always responding to our needs in all aspects of support and I want to thank this institution because they have always been aware of us, calling us to ask about any needs we may have now. I am grateful to all the staff, hoping that they continue helping more families. Thank you, Kataya Brown and Advocates for Children!*





# CORPORATE PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

*Team work makes the dream work!*



## **Citizens of Georgia Power come together at golf tournament to support programs**

The Citizens of Georgia Power, a volunteer organization made up of Georgia Power employees, retirees and their spouses, generously hosted a golf tournament in April at the Cartersville Country Club to benefit Advocates for Children. Thank you for your dedication and community spirit!



## **Aiming high for a cause: Gerdau rallies at clay shoot to support children**

Gerdau employees and partners gathered at Garland Mountain in Waleska, Georgia, in May for a clay shoot supporting Advocates for Children. The event raised funds to benefit children in need, made possible by Gerdau's ongoing support as a trusted partner dedicated to uplifting countless lives.



## **Enterprise Mobility employees lend a hand and heart at Advocates for Children**

Enterprise Mobility, parent company of Enterprise, National, and Alamo rentals, showed support for Advocates for Children in April by volunteering at the Family Resource Center. Employees generously gave time to organize clothing donations and took part in a tour to learn more about Advocates' programs before volunteering.



## **Southeast Chick-fil-A team spruces up our main campus to welcome families**

During April, Chick-fil-A Facilities Managers from the Southeast Region refreshed our campus with outdoor projects—potting flowers, spreading pine straw, trimming trees, and installing lattice. They also refreshed the playground by redistributing rubber mulch, making it safer and more inviting for children.

## EXPANDING SAFE HAVENS:

### Tackling Youth Homelessness in Northwest Georgia

*Georgia faces a serious homeless youth crisis, with over 3,300 homeless and runaway youth each year and a state ranking of 37th in child well-being. In response, Advocates has expanded the Safe Place programming. Advocates operates in nine Northwest Georgia counties, working to make help easily accessible and raise awareness about the vulnerability of homeless youth.*

Across our community, Safe Place sites are easily recognized by their yellow-and-black signs. These trusted locations—including Table on Delk, Hilton Inn, Churches, YMCA branches, and QuikTrip gas stations—serve as immediate entry points to safety for youth in crisis.

When a young person, ages 6 to 17, walks into a Safe Place site, they are quickly connected to a caring, trained adult who listens without judgment, ensures their immediate safety, and contacts our team at Advocates for Children. Our staff responds 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, providing transportation, a safe 21-day shelter, case management, and access to mental health services. Each situation is handled with compassion and care, with the goal of family reunification, stable housing, or other long-term solutions.

*To become a Safe Place, call Advocates for Children at 770.387.1143 or [christina@AdvoChild.org](mailto:christina@AdvoChild.org).*



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for Children**

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