



ADVOCATES

Protecting Children. Empowering Youth. Uplifting Families.

Living Her Dream Danielle's Journey Comes Full Circle

November is Youth Hope Month, shining a light on youth homelessness nationwide and here at home. Rather than wait until November, we begin now by sharing the story of one young woman who beat the odds and is now giving back to the same community that once supported her.

Danielle's journey is one of resilience, hope, and transformation. Today, she serves as a Case Manager with Advocates for Children, working in the very program that once gave her stability and direction. "Being on the other side of where I was feels amazing. I was able to take the resources from the program and fly," Danielle said. "Now, those same resources that helped me get to where I am today, I can give to the clients I encounter."

As the eldest of twelve children, Danielle shouldered heavy responsibilities early in life. When her family connected with Advocates through the Family Resource Center, she found a lifeline. Her turning point came when she entered the Youth Independent Housing (YIH) program. More than a safe place to live, YIH gave her the tools and encouragement to dream beyond survival. Danielle secured employment, learned to manage her own home, purchased her first car, and began planning for her future.

Her case manager, Kendall Lewis, recalls, "I feel fortunate to have had Danielle as one of my first clients when I was new to case management

YOUTH INDEPENDENT HOUSING PROGRAM:

**96% of clients are housed
within 60s days**

**84% of program graduates
keep housing in their own
name after 90 days.**



... Danielle's story continued

and the Advocates team. She was young and learning how to navigate resources, while I was learning how to guide clients through those same systems."

With support from Advocates, Danielle pursued her education, interned with the Public Defender's Office in Atlanta, and volunteered in her community. Today, her optimism and determination inspire others to believe that brighter days are possible.

Join us in giving more youth like Danielle the chance to build a future filled with hope.

Giving link: <https://advocacy.org/donate/>

Leading with Heart Rachel's National Recognition

We are proud to celebrate our President and CEO, Rachel Castillo, who was awarded the 2025 Executive Leadership Award from the National Safe Place Network (NSPN).

The leadership award from NSPN honors leaders dedicated to serving youth experiencing homelessness and creating safe, supportive spaces. Rachel's vision and passion have shaped programs across Northwest Georgia, giving vulnerable youth stability and opportunity.

Reflecting on the recognition, Rachel shared, "This honor is truly humbling. My passion is making sure every young person has a safe place to turn into crisis. The real honor is working with an incredible team, especially Christina Bach and the Newman House team, who built a strong Safe Place network across 11 counties, giving countless youth hope and safety."

Adding to the significance of the award, Rachel's nomination came from longtime colleague Rhonda Hall, retired Sr. Director of Residential Services, whom Rachel called "one of the most caring women I've ever served alongside."

Safe Place is a national program that helps youth in crisis find immediate support. In our region, kids can go to restaurants, gas stations, libraries, or fire stations showing the yellow and black Safe Place sign to find immediate help. To become a safe place location contact us at christina@advocacy.org



Sponsor Spotlight

GERDAU STEEL



What happens when global innovation meets local compassion?

You get Gerdau's impact on our community. A global leader in transforming recycled metal into high-quality steel, Gerdau's Cartersville facility has been investing in something just as vital for over 20 years, our children.

Their long-standing sponsorship of Advocates for Children has fueled our mission to support kids and families in crisis. From the annual clay shoot to the Allen Silkwood Charity Golf Tournament, organized by former board member Darnice Moss, Gerdau has raised awareness and critical funds that touch countless lives across Northwest Georgia. They've also stepped in countless times, whether repairing our children's home or even helping launch ducks at our Duck Derby.

"We believe the services Advocates provide to kids and families are crucial for a healthy society. We have always viewed Advocates as our go-to charity that we support, and it probably will never change." shared Jerry Maxwell, Controller at Gerdau Steel and a dedicated Advocates Board Member.

This partnership is not possible without the unwavering support and commitment from, Rodrigo Canova, Vice President & General Manager, whose leadership inspires his team to stay engaged and give back to the families in our community.



Meet The Walker Family

On a day when she had reached her breaking point, a young mother, Crystal Walker, walked through our doors with her four children, daughters ages 14, 12, and 6, and a 9-year-old son. After enduring significant trauma and stress, Crystal and her children felt overwhelmed and desperate for support. What they needed was more than immediate resources, they needed stability, guidance, and compassion.

That's where our Family Resource Center (FRC) stepped in. The FRC provides families with essentials like clothing, food, and supplies while helping them move toward lasting stability. For the Walkers, that meant rental assistance to avoid eviction and support with their basic needs. Family Navigator Niki Stodghill has walked alongside them, connecting the family with local nonprofits, churches, and government agencies to ensure ongoing care and support.

In just a few months, the Walkers began to regain their footing. Their journey is not over, but with Advocates standing beside them in the year ahead, they now have something priceless, hope for a brighter and more stable future, with their children safe at home.

Names changed for privacy

Dear Advocates for Children,

I want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart. The past two years have been the most difficult of my life. I was left trying to hold myself together in a world that felt like it was crumbling. I lost friends, family, and almost lost myself. I'm still here. I'm still trying. And I'm learning to hope again. And I just want to say, from the most honest place in me, thank you. For seeing me. For helping. And for giving me a reason to keep going.

With all my heart,

Crystal

Excerpted from a letter shared by Crystal, a mother served by our Family Resource Center.



Today, there are 283 families across our region being supported through our Family Resource Center. Your generosity has made it possible for families like the Walkers to not only survive but begin to thrive.

To learn more about our Family Resource Center or to support our Wishlist, visit: advocacy.org/family-resource-center/

graze[®] & raise'25

November 8 2025
Cartersville Country Club

FEATURING

Live Entertainment
Live Auction
Competitive Karaoke
....and a mission-driven celebration!

Enjoy a memorable evening of great food, fun, and generosity at Cartersville Country Club with Advocates for Children.

We are pleased to recognize Sean and LeAnne Ely of Ely Corporation as the Honorary Chairs for the 2025 Graze & Raise.

Their leadership, philanthropy, and dedication to children's causes are integral to this year's effort. Under their honorary stewardship, sponsors and guests alike will help carry forward the mission of ensuring that families in crisis have access to the resources and care they urgently need.

"LeAnne and I believe true leadership goes beyond building strong companies, it's about strengthening families and the community we call home. Supporting Advocates for Children allows us to invest in brighter futures for kids who need a voice, and that's the legacy we're most proud to build." said Sean Ely, Owner, Ely Corporation.

Presented By:



Purchase Tickets

\$175 Single
\$300 Couple





Celebrating Our CASA Team's Big Win!

Advocates CASA of Northwest Georgia has been honored with the 2025 Innovative Program Award of Excellence from Georgia CASA. This award celebrates the creativity and dedication our team brings to serving foster children while inspiring new advocates and stronger community connections.

CASA volunteers are appointed by juvenile courts to be a child's voice, supporting families and guiding judges toward safe, stable homes. This year, 16 new advocates joined our program, amplifying children's voices in Bartow and Gordon counties through creative outreach like yard signs, coffee sleeves, and local festivals.

As we mark 25 years of service in Bartow and continue growing in Gordon, this recognition is a powerful reminder of how compassion and creativity change lives.

"We couldn't be prouder of our CASA staff, volunteers, and supporters who made this award possible. This honor belongs to everyone who believes in the potential of every child," said Emily Ciavorro, Director.

Become a CASA today! Contact Alicia at alicia@advochild.org



Advocates for Children

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