



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Court Appointed Special Advocates of Cherokee County, a Program of The Children's Haven, Receives *Innovative Program Award of Excellence* from Georgia CASA

CANTON, Ga. – Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Cherokee County, a program of The Children's Haven, received the 2019 *Innovative Program Award of Excellence* from Georgia CASA for innovative practices in volunteer recruitment, retention and appreciation. The CASA program received the award at the Georgia CASA State Conference held in Atlanta on Saturday, Aug. 3, 2019.

"We are proud to recognize The Children's Haven, home of CASA of Cherokee County, as the recipient of the 2019 *Innovative Program Award of Excellence* for their deliberate and creative volunteer recruitment and engagement efforts that have resulted in dramatic increases in the number of volunteers serving children," said Jennifer King, Georgia CASA Executive Director.

With a recent growth grant from Georgia CASA, CASA of Cherokee County launched intensive volunteer recruitment and engagement efforts. The program leveraged volunteer and board member connections to diversify awareness and recruitment efforts. Target groups were identified while board members, volunteers and staff developed attainable recruitment activities and goals. The campaign was a success with a 30% increase in volunteers resulting in 131 active CASA volunteers.

After building up the volunteer base, CASA of Cherokee County turned its focus to volunteer engagement and commitment. CASA of Cherokee County incorporated various immersion activities, including tours of local group homes and service providers in addition to intimate conversations between CASA volunteers and community leaders. CASA of Cherokee County also hosted relevant in-service trainings to ensure volunteers are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to best serve children in foster care, and C2C (CASA 2 CASA) Connections engages volunteers in roundtable discussions on a regular basis. CASA volunteers were invited to become further involved in the organization by participating with program and event committees.

"The Children's Haven is proud of the advocacy CASA of Cherokee County provides children in our community so they are happy, healthy and have they support they need at home," said Marcie Smith, Executive Director of The Children's Haven. "Thanks to the commitment of our dedicated volunteers, about 70% of Cherokee County's children in foster care in 2018 had an assigned CASA volunteer, making Cherokee the county with the second-most assigned CASAs in the state."

CASA of Cherokee County incorporates various efforts to show gratitude throughout the year with cards to celebrate volunteer birthdays and anniversaries of service, games with prizes, an annual chili cook-off with the juvenile court judges, and an annual volunteer appreciation and recognition event. Seventy percent of active volunteers have been with the program for two years or more.

"Our organization could not complete the work of serving children in Cherokee County without our caring and dedicated volunteers and The Children's Haven staff," said Lewis Cline, Board Chair of The Children's Haven. "This recognition by Georgia CASA is a testament to our staff as they strive to recruit

the best volunteers and engage with them regularly to further the goals of long-term retention and serving more children.”

“The children of Cherokee County are so fortunate to have such a strong and wonderful CASA program,” said Cherokee County Juvenile Court Judge Jennifer L. Davis. “Our CASAs truly care about the individual needs of the children and families we serve. We are proud to work with such professional, dedicated volunteers who put in countless hours of their personal time advocating for our children in the foster care system.”

CASA is a nationwide and statewide organization built of community volunteers who provide compassionate, one-on-one attention to children experiencing foster care. CASAs provide these kids with hope for a brighter childhood and future that comes from growing up in a healthy, supportive, permanent family and a successful transition to adulthood with supportive connections, educational achievements, and life skills.

“The CASA program ensures a child’s voice is heard and that everyone involved knows what is working and what is lacking,” said Cherokee County Juvenile Court Judge John Sumner. “I cannot imagine our collaborative without CASA, whether it’s assisting in relative searches, placement support, child well-being issues of medical, psychological and educational needs, or just making sure the judges have the information they need.”

In 2018, The Children’s Haven supported more than 130 CASA volunteers who gave 10,580 hours of time to foster children and their families. For more information about CASA of Cherokee County, visit CASACHerokee.org or call 770-345-3274. For more information about The Children’s Haven, visit CherokeeChildrensHaven.org or call 770-345-3274.

About Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Cherokee County

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Cherokee County, a program of The Children’s Haven, provides focused child advocacy so that no child lingers in the foster care system and every child ultimately has the opportunity to learn and grow in the security of a loving family. CASA volunteers work closely with their assigned foster child(ren) to provide compassionate, individualized attention so they are equipped to speak up for the best interests of the child(ren) in court. For more information about CASA of Cherokee County, visit CASACHerokee.org or call 770-345-3274.

About The Children’s Haven

The Children’s Haven supports children in Cherokee County who are impacted by abuse and neglect to ensure they all have the opportunity to thrive in a safe and permanent family. The organization offers three main programs to help the county’s foster children and their families – Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Cherokee County, WellStar Family Visitation Center and Prevent Child Abuse (PCA) Cherokee. The Children’s Haven empowers volunteers to serve the county’s foster children and their families with the goal of strengthening the individuals and ultimately the community where they live. For more information about The Children’s Haven, visit CherokeeChildrensHaven.org or call 770-345-3274.

###

Contact:

Marcie Smith
Executive Director of The Children’s Haven
marcie@cherokeechildrenshaven.org
770-345-3274