

VOLUNTEER

SPOTLIGHT

MEET TERESA KEARNEY

Teresa has been a CASA volunteer for five years. During that time, she has served seven families, advocating for 15 children. She works part-time at the Promedica Flower Hospital Guild Gift Shop.

Teresa and her husband decided to marry young she was 18 and he was 19 years old. Early in their marriage, they enjoyed change and adventure, moving nine times in the first five years of their marriage. Their children and grandchildren live outside the Toledo area so traveling to see them is something they prioritize. Whether they are driving north or flying south they enjoy and prioritize family time and events. During their free time, they visit the Toledo Zoo and the awesome Metroparks.

Lucas County CASA is blessed to have Teresa on our team. Here is what she told us about her volunteer work.

How has being a CASA volunteer impacted your life? As a CASA volunteer, each child that you advocate for makes a lasting impact on your heart. Whether it is through a smile or a hello, each of them will leave their imprint on your life. And because of that, my life is filled with more joy and gratefulness.

Why did you decide to become a CASA volunteer? My parents were foster parents in another county in Ohio in 1980. It was a wonderful experience for our family during my teen years. Fast forward to 2018, my husband and I were living in another state and our neighbor worked for CASA in our county. When I learned what CASA was I knew it was the opportunity I had been looking for to help children in foster care.

In your opinion, why is it essential for children who are child abuse and neglect victims to have a CASA Volunteer? Unfortunately, victims of child abuse and neglect can begin as newborns. The CASA volunteer is essential because no matter the age they can be the voice for the child. The CASA volunteer can advocate for the child first and foremost without concern for a family member or work relationship being affected.

The CASA volunteers can focus on their role of doing what is best for the child.

In your time as a CASA Volunteer, has there been an experience that impacted you the most? The words of a wise woman at Lucas County Children Services impacted me the most. She stated, "We will never know who hurt this child." It took the focus off the person who caused the trauma and put it on the child who needed healing, who needed a CASA volunteer. During the process, the child healed and grew and most importantly was adopted by a loving family. When the adopting family sends you the family picture including the child who now walks, smiles, and laughs it makes being a CASA volunteer the best.



Meet Teresa's grandchildren. They are adorable!



Teresa and her husband

How did you collaborate and coordinate your investigation efforts with the other professionals on your case? As a CASA volunteer, I first conduct an independent investigation and then write a report. The CASA Staff provided me with the initial information needed to start. Then I gather information from school teachers and staff, therapists, police departments, parole officers, and others. It is important to listen and learn as each professional is doing their responsibility within their field of expertise. My goal is to be respectful and professional to each person involved in the investigation.

Which three qualities or skills should a prospective CASA volunteer possess? As a CASA volunteer, the three qualities I think are important are being able to put aside personal feelings or biases, being trustworthy, and being a willing learner. These qualities allow me to not be influenced or draw conclusions based on feelings but to be able to look at all the components of each child's situation. I can talk with various people and be trustworthy with what I hear or am told. As a CASA volunteer, I enjoy learning whether it is at the annual CASA conference, a book that is recommended by another CASA volunteer, or a "Coffee with CASA" event. All these qualities help me to best serve a CASA child.

If you were speaking with people considering becoming a CASA Volunteer, what would you tell them? As a Lucas County CASA volunteer, you will receive the support and training you need to help the child. I can honestly say, in my opinion, Lucas County CASA is the best in Ohio. It will be tough at times but you will often make a difference for a child that can last a lifetime.