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## VOLUNTEER

# SPOTLIGHT

## MEET CINDY DE SAINT VICTOR

Cindy has been a dedicated CASA volunteer for the past two years, during which she has advocated for five children with compassion and commitment. Before retiring, Cindy was a professor at the University of Toledo, where she taught Developmental Psychology and inspired countless students.

Beyond her vital work with CASA, Cindy brings the same passion to many parts of her life. An avid backpacker and hiker, she has explored trails and wilderness on every continent. Closer to home, she volunteers with Toledo Metroparks and is an enthusiastic gardener with a special interest in native plants. She's a proud member of the Oak Openings Region chapter of WildOnes, where she supports sustainable landscaping efforts. On Sundays, you'll find her gathered with her family and granddaughter to cheer on Formula 1 races and share a good meal.

Thank you, Cindy, for generously giving your time, heart, and expertise to uplift children and families in Lucas County. We're so grateful to have you as part of the CASA team.

### Why I Became a CASA Volunteer

A few years ago, I was called for Grand Jury Duty. A case came before us where an abused ten-year-old boy came to testify. He brought his CASA volunteer with him. I was so impressed and touched by the relationship that I decided to become a CASA volunteer as soon as I retired.

### The Reward of Being a CASA Volunteer

I work with older youth, and while it can be emotionally challenging at times, there is nothing that brings me more joy than seeing them accomplish something meaningful to them and having the chance to tell them how proud I am.

### Essential Traits for CASA Volunteers

Having an open mind, being nonjudgmental, and being resilient.

### The Impact of CASA on My Life

Being a CASA volunteer helps to keep me grounded. It helps to cut through the noise and the superfluous and directs focus to the here and now. It reminds me to show up for life in a meaningful way.

### Why Children Need CASA Volunteers

The child welfare system is a big, scary, and confusing world to be caught up in. Having that one consistent person to be there for them, answering questions, offering guidance, and listening to their concerns and worries is irreplaceable. Caseworkers and other professionals have huge caseloads and attend to everyone involved. The CASA volunteer has the benefit of time, and their only responsibility is to the child.



### Most Impactful Experience

I had a thirteen-year-old CASA child who wanted to speak in court, so I brought him the VOICES form. As we were talking, he sheepishly asked if I could read it to him because he had trouble reading.

We read it together, and I told him you're better than you think you are (he was!), and I'll bet you just haven't found the right book yet. At my next visit, I brought him a book and told him that my son never liked reading until he read this book. I had a copy of the book at home, and I promised I would read it along with him, and we would talk about it at my next visit. We were going to read just 5 pages a day.

At the next visit, once he figured out that I wasn't "trying to play teacher," as he put it, and understood that I really was interested in his thoughts and ideas, he opened up. Not only about the book but about everything.

He even started calling me in between visits to talk about the book. He became a reader. I was so proud of him, and he was proud of himself too.

### To Prospective CASA Volunteers

Becoming a CASA volunteer gives you a chance to speak up and advocate for those who cannot do so for themselves. Many of these children have no voice, no one to express their wishes and concerns to, and most importantly, no one who will listen to them. All it takes is one person they can trust, and a CASA volunteer can be that person. It will make you smile, it will make you cry, and it will challenge you. It's worth it.