

Day in the Life and Volunteer of the Month

April Speak Up!

Day in the Life: Alex King

My name is Alex King and I have been a CASA volunteer since March 2016. I work for Real Property Management Baton Rouge. I enjoy reading, hanging out outside, running, playing with my dogs and spending time with my husband. I first heard about CASA when I was living in India working at a children's home. My husband and I want to become foster parents when we're ready to start having children, but we are not quite ready yet. Once I went to an informational meeting, I knew that it was something I had to get involved in.

I am currently on my third case in one year. My very first case was a spunky seven year old girl named Billie. Billie came into care after her father overdosed and her mother was unresponsive due to alcohol and anxiety. I first met Billie when she was in a foster home. The first thing that she told me was that "this was all a big mistake and misunderstanding." Billie was the type of child that her attorney described as "wise beyond her years." Billie's parents were able to do the work that was required of them to bring Billie home quickly. Billie was so fun and it was a joy to advocate for her. During this time, I was able to go to her karate practice and to her 8th birthday party. The court closed her case after 6 months. It was so rewarding to see her back with her parents and doing so well.

My current case is with a sassy three year old girl named Mariah. Mariah came into care when she was only a few months old as she was born with drugs in her system. Her father is unknown. Parental rights were terminated in August after Mariah's mother was unable to comply with the court's requests. I took the case in November and we are currently in the adoption phase. We are hopeful that Mariah will be adopted by June of this year. Mariah is placed with a loving family that she is very attached to. The family is related to the biological mother and Mariah has been able to maintain strong family ties to her siblings. I have really enjoyed visiting with Mariah and advocating for this case to be closed as quickly as possible. Often times, the foster mom will call me to help get things accomplished and it is very rewarding to know that I have a role in making sure Mariah is adopted.

I have learned so much in a short period of time about the foster care system and have seen firsthand how important our advocacy efforts are as volunteers. I have become an unofficial "recruiter" for CASA as I have become so passionate about the work that is being done. I have found that it can be challenging to navigate all facets of the system, including tracking down needed information from different sources. However, I have found that the rewards of connecting with each child and seeing them find permanence far outweigh the challenges. I feel that it is a true privilege to be a CASA volunteer and thankful for Capital Area CASA and the many children that are advocated for.

Names changed for confidentiality purposes.

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Volunteer of the Month: Gretchen Wroten

Congratulations to Gretchen Wroten, Volunteer of the Month for April 2017! Ms. Wroten completed training in June 2015 and accepted her first case a month later. Her case involved a child, James, who entered care in April 2015. At three months old, James had three fractured ribs. The mother, Ms. Williams had no explanation for the injuries. During the time the child was in custody, the mother failed to work her case plan. Ms. Williams listed Mr. Barker as the father and a DNA test proved he was the child's father. Mr. Barker worked his case plan to gain custody of James. Ms. Wroten worked very hard on the father's behalf and in March 2016, the court granted custody to Mr. Barker. Thanks to Gretchen and her hard work, James went home to his family. To date, Gretchen still has contact with Mr. Barker and James is doing very well.

Ms. Wroten's second case involved a newborn who was born addicted to heroin and came into care in March 2016. While at court for her first case, Gretchen noticed a sweet little boy there. She immediately stated, "If he stays in care, can you assign me to his case?" Two weeks later, I called Ms. Wroten presenting the sweet little boy's case to her and she quickly agreed to be his CASA volunteer. From the time of first seeing the child in court, Gretchen has actively stayed involved.

Mrs. Wroten started working on her case immediately. She met with the case manager, the child, and the foster parents. She attended all court hearings and her court reports were turned in on time. In this case, the parents have been absent and have had no contact with the child since birth. Ms. Wroten spoke with all parties of the case and worked diligently so that this child can reach permanence.

It is with great respect and admiration that I congratulate Ms. Gretchen Wroten as Volunteer of the Month for April 2017. Ms. Wroten is caring, consistent, and dedicated. She has a calm personality, but when it comes to her CASA child, she will walk through fire. She is by far one of the best volunteers. Whenever I need her to do anything, she never complains and she gets it done. Thanks Ms. Wroten for your acts of kindness and the extreme dedication to your CASA kids. Ms. Wroten is a committed advocate for her CASA child and she doesn't give up.

Congratulations Mrs. Gretchen on the remarkable job you are doing for CASA.

Proud Advocate Supervisor,
Sheila L. Gross

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