

Rory Macgregor joins Piedmont CASA as Bridges Coach

*by Cathy Eberly, retired CASA Supervisor
and current CASA Volunteer*



One might imagine that Rory Macgregor would have had his fill of contact with young people before he decided to join Piedmont CASA as our newest *Bridges to Success* coach. Not so. Through jobs as a teacher, counselor, and children's mental health case manager, he's consistently sought more and better opportunities to, as he puts it, "interact directly with young people on a regular basis to effect positive change."

As a Bridges Coach, Rory is getting to do just that. He works closely with a small group of teenagers in foster care — often alongside their CASA Volunteers — to help them prepare for adulthood. He visits the youth regularly, links them with services, and offers them his steady, consistent support until they either "age out" of foster care at 18 or choose to continue receiving support — while attending school and working — until age 21.

So far, the Bridges program seems a perfect fit for the soft-spoken Scot. Before starting a new life in the United States in 2016 with his American wife, Kate, Rory spent a year teaching fifth graders in a remote village in the Scottish highlands. "The challenges those children face is so different from the challenges children face here," he says, noting the increased impact of social media and 24/7 communication on today's youth.

Since moving to Albemarle County, Rory's stints as an in-home counselor for Compass Counseling and a mental health case manager for children at Region Ten Community Services Board have introduced him to children and families who have experienced trauma, along with poverty, discrimination, and mental health challenges. They've also taught him the importance of trauma-informed care. "In these jobs, I worked alongside therapeutic mentors who worked directly with the youth, and I realized I wanted to do that, too."

Rory's local experiences had yet another advantage. They also introduced him to Piedmont CASA and the work of outstanding volunteers such as Samantha Van Dyke, who was court-appointed to advocate for a child on Rory's caseload. "I have very fond memories of working with Samantha," he recalls. "And I heard a lot of positive things about Piedmont CASA along the way."

Since joining the CASA staff in July, Rory has been further impressed. "Not an awful lot surprises me," he says, "but I have been amazed by the insight and understanding the CASA children demonstrate

about their situations. They're willing to open up, go to school each day, settle into foster homes. They're inherently resilient, and that's hugely inspiring."

In addition to growing his own caseload, Rory looks forward to learning more about the juvenile court system and the foster care timeline — both topics important to his work as a coach. When not in the office, he and Kate, along with their five-year-old daughter and three-year-old dog, plan to continue taking advantage of everything the Charlottesville area has to offer. "We really enjoy the great outdoors," he says, citing Ivy Creek and Preddy Creek parks as special favorites. "This is a beautiful area."



Cathy Eberly served as a Piedmont CASA Supervisor for 4 years, retiring in 2021. She is currently a Piedmont CASA Volunteer.

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