

Meet Kari Joyner, Piedmont CASA's new Recruitment & Training Coordinator

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

Kari Joyner is many things: Morning person. Runner of marathons and half marathons. Learner of languages. Seeker of new challenges and personal growth. These attributes should pay dividends in her role as recruitment and training coordinator for Piedmont CASA. It's a new position, created as the nonprofit extends its footprint in Virginia's 16th Judicial District. CASA is committed to training additional volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children, not only in Charlottesville and Albemarle County, as it has been for decades, but also in Greene, Fluvanna, and Madison counties.



It's a big challenge that Kari, an experienced K-12 educator and librarian, welcomes. "The best coaches always try to learn something new," she says. "I'm itching to grow a little bit."

A native of Keysville, VA, and a graduate of Longwood University, Kari taught US history and worked as a librarian at Randolph-Henry High School in Charlotte County. There she sponsored several student clubs, in addition to a running group for fellow educators. Fluent in German, she's currently teaching herself Spanish. She followed her partner, a US Navy veteran and aerospace engineer employed by the National Ground Intelligence Center, to Charlottesville.

Advocating for children was not a new concept for Kari — she was aware that *Guardians ad Litem* are attorneys who defend children in court — but she wasn't familiar with the CASA program. "We didn't have one locally," she says. "I believe all children who need one should have access to a CASA."

Recruiting new advocates to serve abused and neglected children has long been a challenge. Kari reports, with a chuckle, that she came to her job interview armed with a list of recruitment ideas. These range from organizing Coffee with CASA information sessions for prospective advocates at local coffee shops to working with school superintendents to schedule beginning-of-school-year presentations by Piedmont CASA. These sessions could educate teachers about what CASAs do; after all, teachers are frequently credited with identifying students who are being abused or neglected in their homes. The sessions could also encourage them to consider becoming CASA Advocates. Kari mentions asking school superintendents to award license recertification points to teachers who are

CASA Advocates. "I'm trying to find incentives where I can," she says.

"Kari wowed us during her interviews with her energy, enthusiasm, and creative ideas," says Piedmont CASA President and CEO Kate Duvall. "Her teaching and coaching experience will serve her well in this role. I am excited to work with Kari as we build on the solid recruiting and training foundation built by the PCASA team so that we can keep up with the needs of the communities we serve."

For Kari, there's plenty to learn, and her new colleagues are helping bring her up to speed. "I've worked with plenty of supportive folks before, but I can already report that this is the most collaborative workplace I've ever been a part of." She's been immersed in webinars, she's attended court with CASA supervisors, and she's set to attend the upcoming advocate training sessions. "I had no idea that our advocates and Bridges to Success coaches would follow their CASA kids all over the state," she says. "We have kids who are placed as far away as Roanoke and Norfolk."

There's no doubt that Kari is off to a fast start. "I think I've already asked every single staff member at least one question. It's obvious that everyone has a lot of balls in the air, so if I can help with balancing everything, hopefully I can lighten the load for everybody."



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

February 2025 Edition

