



# Bringing the gifts of heart and hope to our kids

*by Kate Duvall, Piedmont CASA President*

Every day of the year, our Volunteers and Coaches share their hearts with CASA kids, but the holidays are a time when they give even more. They know that for children in the foster care system the joy and magic of the season can be hard to find. It might be their first holiday without their mom or dad. Or they miss their siblings. Or they simply feel like an awkward guest in someone else's family.

## **It can be particularly difficult for older youth**

One of the young men we serve in our Bridges to Success program has reached some significant milestones this year. He has a new job and is now in independent living, but instead of sharing the good news with his family he will be spending the holidays alone. His Bridges Coach is carving out extra time to make sure he has festive fare in the pantry, holiday gifts, and excursions to look forward to. A young woman is facing her third Christmas without any family – which is why her Bridges Coach drove three hours to celebrate the holiday with her, a few days early but together. Another young woman was able to spend the first Thanksgiving in three years with her mom, thanks to the advocacy of her CASA Volunteer.

## **Material gifts are important, too**

Even though material gifts pale in comparison to what our children really want, they are an important way to show that people care. For over 20 years, the folks at Emerson Automation Solutions have been making sure that our kids get this message. Every December, we go to their offices and fill our vehicles with beautifully wrapped presents for each boy and girl. Fulfilling their wish lists is another way to give our kids a voice – to show them that we are listening and paying attention to what interests them.

## **It's true - kids with CASAs are more hopeful**

A recent study shows that children and youth with CASA Volunteers are more hopeful - and hope is its own special kind of magic. When kids have hope, outcomes improve and they have more academic success, enhanced well-being, increased self-control, and positive social relationships.

Every time you donate to Piedmont CASA, you are adding heart and hope to the lives of CASA kids, because you are giving them the life-changing advocacy of CASA Volunteers and Bridges to Success Coaches. Thank you.

*Kate Duvall*

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