

## **Best Wishes to Ava Lipscomb, CASA Director at Bartow County CASA, Upon Her Retirement**



Ava, front and center, with our 2011 Georgia CASA Leadership Academy graduates

On January 31<sup>st</sup>, Ava Lipscomb will be stepping back as the Bartow County CASA Director. Ava has been a trusted colleague and friend to so many of us in the CASA network and we wanted to take this opportunity to share the impact Ava has had on our network and the larger child welfare system. We will miss her dearly but hope that she will continue to be a mentor and resource to each one of us.

Nineteen years ago, two local Bartow County child abuse prevention leaders led efforts to bring CASA

to their local community. From the onset, it was clear that they needed a strong, trusted and effective leader for their emerging CASA program. We feel fortunate that Ava Lipscomb took this leap of faith, sharing a belief that we all have an advocate within us. The then-Advocates for Children (sponsoring agency) Director Patty Eager described her greatest contribution to Bartow County CASA: “Hire the best director, and the rest is history.”

Prior to CASA, Ava served as a DFCS case manager and supervisor. Throughout her career, Ava mentored and guided new DFCS case managers and leaders, CASA directors and staff, the Georgia CASA team, local stakeholders, and even the judges. Both respected and trusted for her expertise in child welfare, Ava set high expectations for all those who surrounded her. For many years, Ava served as CASA’s resident social work expert, representing CASA on a state level in family engagement, victim advocacy, and specialized advocacy.

Ava was one of the first and only CASA directors to start a CASA program and lead it to its pinnacle of providing a volunteer advocate for every dependent child before the court. During peak caseloads in our foster care system, the Bartow County CASA program advocated for more than 300 children annually. With more than 300 volunteers trained throughout the community, Ava could likely tell you a personal story about each and every one of them, as well as for the children whom they’ve impacted.

Ava taught the CASA network about reaching significant milestones in volunteer advocacy, stewarding funder relationships, mastering grant management, touching the hearts of your audience, building and supporting a team and modeling that even in the midst of the greatest losses, advocacy must carry on and efforts continued in their memory, persevering when others might give up, fighting for the underdog, and ultimately showing up for your peers, colleagues, and friends.

With purpose and perspective, Bartow County CASA has served as a model in Georgia and beyond for its partnership with and support of its sponsoring agency. Additionally, the relationship with the court, and support of all of the judges, is one that has been emulated, fueled by Ava’s leadership and commitment to a responsive system for children and families. Bartow County Juvenile Court Judge T. Neal Brunt stated that, “Through her hard work and determination, Ava Lipscomb created and led one of the best CASA programs in the State of Georgia. She has directly and indirectly helped thousands of parents and children in Bartow County to have better lives. Her knowledge and advice has been a great help to me since I became the Juvenile Court Judge. She will be sorely missed by me and everyone who works with the families and children in our court.”

We show our respect and gratitude for Ava’s years of service to her community and the CASA network; we are eternally grateful for the foundation she created and the wisdom she imparted.