Information for Potential Family Court Attorneys

My name is Anika Hickman; and I am a Guardian ad Litem for Jackson County CASA. CASA represents the best interests of children in foster care in the county, along with the Office of the Guardian ad Litem and a few private Guardians ad Litem.

Currently, Jackson County has approximately 2,346 children in foster care. Approximately 41% are African American, 47% are Caucasian, less than 1% identify as American Indian/Native American or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 2% identify as multiple races, and the race of 9% of children in foster care is unknown.

With such a large percentage of children of color involved in the foster care system, it is appropriate and necessary to provide parents of color with representation that is also diverse. Having diverse representation helps to alleviate the discomfort of parents and children and increases cultural sensitivity.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of diversity among the attorneys that regularly appear in Family Court.

- Attorney for the Juvenile Officer: 2
- Office of the Guardian ad Litem: 0
- Jackson County CASA: 2
- Public Defenders: 2
- Pro Bono Attorneys in Major Law Firms: 0
  (These law firms are: Shook, Hardy and Bacon, Lathrop & Gage, Polsinelli, Stinson Leonard, Husch Blackwell).

The Oath that all Missouri attorneys take prior to admission to the bar tasks us with practicing law to the best of our knowledge and ability. This practice takes into consideration the defenseless and oppressed. Children who have been abused and/or neglected certainly meet this definition. I urge any and all attorneys of diverse backgrounds to consider taking a pro bono Family Court case when schedules permit.

If you are interested in learning more about opportunities in juvenile court, please contact me at: ahickman@jacksoncountycasa-mo.org