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# Janice Greenawalt

*Illinois CASA Mission Moment*



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LAKE COUNTY CASA

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## Court Appointed Special Advocate

Greetings! My name is Janice Greenawalt and I have been a Court Appointed Special Advocate for CASA Lake County since 2007. That is the year my oldest child graduated high school, and as the nest began to empty, I felt compelled to use some of the resources I had uncovered to help support other children through the physical, mental, emotional and social challenges of childhood. When I saw a request for CASA volunteers, 5-6 lines buried in the middle of our community paper, I did some quick research, and the rest is history. I could appreciate the difficulties negotiating the distinctive needs of children. When thinking about the encounters navigating the distinctive needs of a child, and then compounding those with constrictions from multiple governmental systems - judicial, educational, social welfare - I felt I had found an advocacy organization that fed my passion. Although the initial 40 hours of training is comprehensive, nothing and no one can predict a system-impacted child's journey. In order to stay the course to safe and appropriate permanency (which is almost always longer than we would like), a CASA has to wear a thick skin, be persistent (sometimes relentlessly!) and remain child focused. The ongoing trainings offered by CASA Lake County have been invaluable, ranging from the technical and scientific, to book club settings discussing memoirs and current events. As a CASA, you relish the smallest of moments: when you find out the teen you have been working with but never seems to acknowledge your presence has memorized your phone number, or when you visit a changed placement, and the 6-year-old child greets you with a smile and asks how you knew where to find him. Since a CASA bows out when the court determines permanency has been achieved, CASAs often do not know how a child's story truly ends; knowing that giving a voice in the neediest hours stands as the definition of CASA success. That, and having my own adult children take on various roles for CASA organizations, has kept this advocate energized and fulfilled.