

THE VILLAGE



November 2023



BLUE RIDGE CASA Newsletter



397

Children in Need of a CASA

49

Active Advocates

270

Donors

Thank you!

We couldn't do it without you.



Honorable Chad Logan, Sherri Mckinney-Frantz, and Melissa O'Neil at the Shenandoah County Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Find out what our staff is thankful for on..... *Page 5*

Hear about the opportunities to give and how you can help..... *Page 7*



A Note from Sherri...

As the leaves fall and the air turns crisp, we find ourselves in November, a month of reflection and gratitude. At Blue Ridge CASA, it's a time to celebrate our incredible volunteers and the remarkable children whose lives we touch.

We are deeply grateful for your commitment to making a difference in the lives of children in the foster care system. Together, we can pave the way for every child to flourish in a secure and nurturing environment, unlocking their boundless potential.

Wishing you a November filled with warmth, gratitude, and the knowledge that your efforts truly matter.

Thank you for joining us for our ribbon-cutting ceremony in Shenandoah County!



New Faces!

New Board Member

Nate is the Executive Director of Open Doors, Inc. in Harrisonburg. When asked why he wanted to serve on the Board, Nate said, "I am honored for this opportunity to serve alongside the great team at Blue Ridge CASA, advancing the mission of advocating for children in our communities. I understand the importance of childhood experiences and their role in one's future. CASAs are a beacon of hope in unfortunate times. I look forward to supporting the incredible staff and dedicated advocates while expanding our impact in the valley."

Nate Riddle



Meghan Sevier

Meghan is an Augusta County native with a passion for education and working with children. After graduating from James Madison University in 2009 with a Master's degree in Elementary Education, Meghan's role as a military spouse provided her the opportunity to live and teach throughout the US. Before joining us at Blue Ridge CASA, Meghan worked as a social media and influencer manager in Virginia Beach. Upon her husband's retirement from the Navy, Meghan and her family have returned home to the Valley where she is looking forward to continuing her passion for supporting and advocating for children in her new role.

ADVOCATE SPOTLIGHT

Tell us about yourself:

Brooklyn is a Law Student at Washington & Lee. She is originally from South Carolina. Collin grew up on Ipswich, MA. Fate brought them together at a church in Las Vegas.

Why did you want to be a CASA?:

Brooklyn knew she wanted to be a CASA because she wanted to make sure children that are experiencing abuse are heard and validated when they are not in the healthiest environment. Collin's parents were foster parents when he was an adult. It made him realize how fortunate he was and he wants to help children be as fortunate.

Is your WHY different now that you are a CASA?

The children they have been assigned to have changed why they do this work. Brooklyn and Collin know their community needs this help and they feel like they are the boots on the ground.

What advice would you give to new advocates?

Ask as many hypothetical questions as you can. There are so many things to learn and there's a lot of gray area.

What is the most difficult part of being a CASA?

There is an emotional weight on you after every visit. It's difficult to not be able to help [with resources] in all the ways you want to help.

Tell us something most people don't know about you.

Most people don't know that we play music together.



Collin & Brooklyn Hills

Favorite Self Care:
Hiking

1. Plan Ahead
2. Wear Appropriate Clothing
3. Footwear Matters
4. Pack Essentials
5. Tell Someone your plans
6. Stay on Marked Paths
7. Leave no trace

We Asked CASA Staff...



Sherri McKinney-Frantz,
CEO

What are you thankful for?

I'm thankful for family and new beginnings.

Do you have any family traditions for the holiday that you would like to share?

When my daughter was a toddler we started the "penny trail". On Christmas Eve I would use pennies to make a trail from her bed to the Christmas Tree. That's how she'd know her gifts had arrived. She's 28 and I still do it.



Angela Crawford
Director of Operations

What are you thankful for?

Healthy family and friends.

Do you have any family traditions for the holiday that you would like to share?

My great grandmother was French-Canadian. Her famous "dressing" was made with ground beef, sausage, potatoes, breadcrumbs and Bells Seasoning. Three years ago I made it for my husband's family and now they request it every year. I love that her tradition has spread beyond our family.



Kelly Peters
Director of Programs

What are you thankful for?

Health, happiness and hugs

Do you have any family traditions for the holiday that you would like to share?

We always go to the farm and get our Christmas tree. My dad was a Christmas tree farmer so we are lucky to have a private farm experience and get to spend time with him in his element!

Chelsey Hughes
Development Manager

What are you thankful for?

I am thankful for my beautiful and sweet son. He is the light in my life that brings so much joy to me every day!



Ali Gallagher
Outreach & Training Manager

What are you thankful for?

For getting to experience new places this year. My favorite was Charleston SC.



Meghan Sevier
Program Assistant

What are you thankful for?

My family

Do you have any family traditions for the holiday that you would like to share?

We put up our Christmas tree on Thanksgiving as soon as the leftovers are put away.



Bev Evert
Advocate Manager

What are you thankful for?

My family, friends and peace in our part of the world! Wish it were everywhere!!

Do you have any family traditions for the holiday that you would like to share?

We have a big family meal. My daughter, Laura makes a squash pie and her grandmother Sherry's Ice Box Cake! We start elf on the shelf in December and I go all out looking up ideas and buying props.



Emily Castle
Advocate Manager

What are you thankful for?

My dog, Monk. He brings so much joy to my life!

Do you have any family traditions for the holiday that you would like to share?

I like watching the Macy's Day Parade on Thanksgiving morning.



Tonya Dunlap
Advocate Manager

What are you thankful for?

My family

Do you have any family traditions for the holiday that you would like to share?

We go to a big friendsgiving every year. It's so much fun and a chance to try foods not always traditional to the Thanksgiving holiday.



Bonnie Theimer
Grants Manager

What are you thankful for?

The gift of life

Do you have any family traditions for the holiday that you would like to share?

We pack the kids in the car on Christmas Eve and drive around to admire all the Christmas lights while drinking hot chocolate.



Opportunities to Give

EOY Giving:

<https://blueridgecasa.networkforgood.com/projects/197658-eoy-fy24>

Our goal is to raise \$35,000 by January 1, 2024. With the generosity of the E.C. Wareheim Foundation, your donation today will be doubled up to \$10,000. Help us ensure children in the Valley can grow up in a safe, permanent, and loving home filled with hope.



Round Up

<https://www.walmart.com/nonprofits/9302f1f0-268c-4091-824f-9baeceb6622c/profile>

On Walmart App: Dashboard ➔ Giving & Impact

Giving Tuesday:

Tuesday, November 28th

**We will be participating again this year!
Follow our progress on social media!**





SELF CARE *INSPIRED BY:* Collin & Brooklyn Hills

Hiking can be a fantastic form of self-care for several reasons. Here are some of the key benefits:

1. **Physical Exercise:** Hiking is a form of cardiovascular exercise that engages various muscle groups. It improves your cardiovascular health, strengthens your muscles, and helps maintain a healthy weight. Physical activity releases endorphins, which are natural mood lifters, contributing to an overall sense of well-being.
2. **Connection with Nature:** Spending time in nature has been linked to reduced stress levels and increased feelings of happiness. The sights, sounds, and smells of the outdoors can have a calming effect on the mind and provide a welcome break from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.
3. **Mindfulness and Stress Reduction:** Hiking often involves being present in the moment, paying attention to your surroundings, and being mindful of your movements. This mindfulness can help reduce stress and anxiety, allowing you to focus on the present and let go of worries about the past or future.
4. **Solitude or Socializing:** Hiking can be a solo activity, providing an opportunity for solitude and reflection. Alternatively, it can be a social activity, allowing you to connect with others. Both solitude and socializing can be beneficial for mental well-being, depending on individual preferences.
5. **Sunlight and Vitamin D:** Exposure to natural sunlight during a hike can boost your vitamin D levels. Vitamin D is essential for bone health and has been associated with mood regulation. Sunlight exposure also helps regulate your circadian rhythm, contributing to better sleep.
6. **Escape from Technology:** Hiking provides a chance to disconnect from screens and technology. The break from constant connectivity can be rejuvenating, allowing you to focus on the present moment and reduce the mental fatigue associated with constant digital stimulation.
7. **Increased Creativity:** Being in nature has been linked to enhanced creativity and problem-solving skills. The open spaces, fresh air, and novel stimuli can stimulate your mind in ways that may not occur in more urban or indoor environments.
8. **Sense of Accomplishment:** Reaching the summit of a trail or completing a challenging hike can give you a sense of accomplishment. Setting and achieving goals, no matter how small, can contribute to a positive self-image and boost self-esteem.

Incorporating hiking into your self-care routine can be a holistic approach to promoting both physical and mental well-being. It allows you to take care of your body, clear your mind, and reconnect with nature—all of which contribute to a more balanced and resilient sense of self.

U P C O M I N G E V E N T S

You're Invited

to participate in Blue Ridge CASA's Peer Circle Support Group

Purpose: This will be a venue for CASA's to come together and discuss the highs and lows of serving one of the most vulnerable populations.

Details: Meeting dates and locations will alternate each month

Tuesday, December 12, 2023 – 6:00-7:30 PM @ the Staunton Office - 119 W. Frederick St.

Mustaches for Kids Blue Ridge (M4K)

Growing Season: November 1 - December 1

"Changing the way men perceive charity, service, and what it means to give back to our community.
...And we're doing it one 'stache at a time.

Mustaches for Kids is a community of mustache "growers" who raise money once a year for Blue Ridge CASA. For 30 days, the growers work tirelessly to grow and display their beautiful mustaches. They, of course, will be asked, "What's with the stache?" That is their opportunity to talk about Blue Ridge CASA and the children we serve.

m4kblueridge.org

Currently raised **\$6,500**

We have a \$7,500 match that will be unlocked once we get to \$7,500!

Stache Bash Lexington: Devil's Backbone Outpost, November 29 @ 6:30

Stache Bash Staunton: Redbeard Brewing Company, December 1 @ 5:30

Everyone is welcome!

We will be giving out swag and Awards which include: Most Donations, Most Donors, Best Stache, and the I Tried Award

www.m4kblueridge.org

Peer Circle

Be Supported...

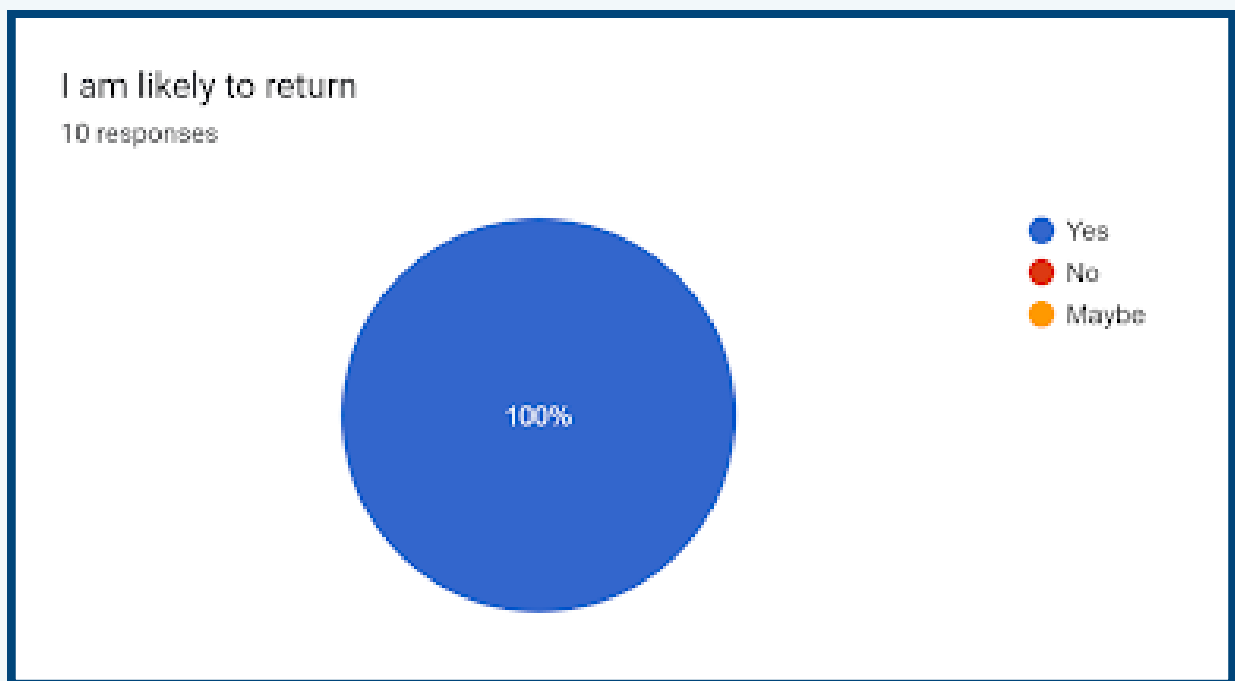


Our first peer group meeting was a success! Advocates were able to gather and process the good and challenging parts of being a CASA advocate for a vulnerable population. They were able to encourage one another and offer insight into each other's cases. Participants completed an anonymous survey to provide feedback on the group. One person said "I like being able to share stories about experiences and how they were handled. I also like to get other's opinions about things." Another person commented: "Very good/useful discussion".

Our hope for this new program is that it will be a place of encouragement for our volunteers and that each participant will feel more connected to other volunteers and to the BRCASA organization. We have made the decision to count the Peer Circle meetings as part of our Continuing Education or CEUs. Our next meeting will be in person on December 12, 2023, at 6:00 PM. We hope you can join us!

--Emily Castle

Peer Circle Survey Results





Get Involved



VOLUNTEER



DONATE



Thank you!

We couldn't do it without you.