



The Tale Twister

Cullman Lions Club

February 4, 2019

Program

Vice-President Javon Daniel introduced our speaker, tonight, Ms. Candace Lingo, who is the Case Manager of CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) Program for Cullman County. The Program's mission is to support and promote court-appointed volunteer advocacy so every abused or neglected child in Cullman County can be safe, have a permanent home, and have the opportunity to thrive.



Vice-President Lion Javon Daniel and President Lion Mike Ponder, flanking tonight's speaker, Ms. Candace Lingo.

CASA volunteers act as the voice to children and teens who otherwise would have none; they make recommendations as to the best interests of these children. Candace recruits, trains, counsels, and supports our County's CASA volunteers, as well as, provides oversight and management of all its cases. This Program was started in Seattle in 1977, but it is now nation-wide. Every year more than three-million children are reported abused or neglected in this Country; drug abuse by the parents is the greatest contributor to this problem. Despite the States' attempts to help, many of these

kids become trapped in the court and welfare maze and can spend their childhood moving from one temporary shelter to another. At this time Cullman has 34 active CASA cases. Cullman County has over 200 children in foster; CASA can help speed their placement into foster care, returned to home, or adoption, spending less time in the legal system. It usually takes more than a year to fully close a case, although a few have been resolved within a month.

Although they make a report to the court and are an officer of the court, CASA volunteers do not work for DHR or the child's attorney. What they do is as follows:

- Review documents and records, and interview the children, family members, and professionals in their lives.
- Provide written reports at court hearings. Appear in court: Advocate for the child's best interests and provide testimony when necessary.
- Help the child understand the court proceedings. Seek solutions among individuals and organizations involved in the children's lives.
- Meet at least once a month with the child, ensuring that the children and their family are receiving appropriate services and advocate for those that are not immediately available. Bring concerns about the child's health, education, mental health, etc. to the appropriate professionals.
- Check to see that plans are being followed and mandated review hearings are being held.



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- Update the court on developments with agencies and family members. Ensure that appropriate motions are filed on behalf of the child, so the court knows about any changes in the child's situation. Recommendations include sending the child back to their home, to foster care, or to adoption.

Requirements to be a CASA volunteer are:

- Be at least 21 years old
- Be willing to complete necessary background checks, provide references and participate in an interview
- Complete a minimum of 30 hours of pre-service training
- Be available for court appearances, with advance notice
- Be willing to commit to the program until your first case is closed

From 2013-2018 CASA has served around 300 children and has 26 volunteers at this point. Ms. Lingo is doing a great job, and quoting Nelson Mandela, "Our children are our greatest treasure. They are our future. Those who abuse them tear at the fabric of our society and weaken our nation."

Other Business

Lion Bill Ruehl's 99-year-old mother has been hospitalized. Lion Lummie Speakman fell on his basement stairs and injured his shoulder, broke his collar bone, and went to Birmingham for further tests.

Danny Frasier, sponsored by Lion Dave Gratz, was approved for membership in our Club by the Board of Directors.

The annual Empty Bowls dinner will be held at 1st United Methodist Church, Monday February 18th. A Club roster will be at each entrance. The Club will cover the admission of attending Lions; spouses and guests are the responsibility of the Lion.

Upcoming Programs and Events



Tyler Newman

Heather Gable

Feb 11: Mr. Tyler Newman and Ms. Heather Gable of the Cullman County Youth Advocate Program.

Feb 18: No meeting. Support the "Empty Bowls" dinner across street at the First Methodist Church.

Mar 9: Fish and Ham Dinner at the Cullman Middle School cafeteria.

Tale Twister Input

If you need something special or to report a correction in the *Tale Twister*, see Lions Carey Thompson or Don Smith at the meetings. Lion Carey can be reached at 256-739-0580 (H) or 256-426-3207 (C). Lion Don can be reached at 256-737-7433 (H) or 256-426-7722 (C).