



Williamson County CASA is proud to nominate Emily Jenkins for Franklin Tomorrow's 2021 Volunteer Spirit Award. The mission of Williamson County CASA is to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children. The vision is to ensure that each CASA child is in a safe and permanent home. A CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) is a trained citizen who is appointed by a judge to advocate for a child in Juvenile Court. CASA volunteers are trained to collect information and present recommendations to help the judge make sound decisions regarding the child's future.

Emily has advocated for abused and neglected children at Williamson County CASA for 5 years and has made a profound impact on the children and families she serves in our community. Emily not only provides a supportive, responsive relationship with each child she serves, she also makes tremendous efforts to equip the children's parents with any available resources that might help them become that responsive adult for their children. Emily wants these families to thrive independent of a CASA. Her tenacity, drive, and selfless commitment to enhance the lives of each child, family member, and every individual in the child's life is inspirational. Beyond her exceptional work in her role as a CASA volunteer, Emily demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to the organization by being an invaluable resource for staff; mentoring new CASAs; as well as serving on Tennessee CASA's Board of Directors.

Emily has served 21 families at WCCASA and formed relationships with more than 32 children. Her efforts have resulted in permanent placements for these children; typically, in the form of reunification, which is always the preferred option if possible. When reunifications are not possible, she is determined to identify a family member or individual the children already know, to help ease the difficulty of the transition. She carefully observes each child's individual needs and moves efficiently to provide key information, recommendations, and direction. Emily's efforts and advocacy help children achieve permanency faster than if CASA was not involved.

Emily goes above and beyond to achieve the best interest of the children that she serves, whether through reunification or sometimes adoption. Emily had a case where two small children came into custody who were both born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome. The mother and both fathers suffered from substance abuse. Emily assisted the Department of Children's Services in locating and communicating with both fathers. She also supported the mother in finding resources for sobriety. As hard as the mother tried to get sober, she was not able to get well enough to create a healthy environment for her children. Emily helped her through making the extremely difficult decision to give custody of her children over to the state, because she knew she could never care for them the way they needed. The children have since been adopted and are thriving. Due to Emily's care and attention to every detail for all parties involved, the children are now in a safe and permanent home.

Emily worked another case with three young children in which the parents have substance abuse issues. Emily has advocated to ensure that all of the children have what they need, but has also ensured that the parents have access to resources to obtain sobriety. The parents have worked closely with Emily and were able to receive the treatment they need. The children are currently on a Trial Home Visit. The parents stated that the support and encouragement from Emily helped them in their sobriety.

Her knowledge and experience as an attorney make her an invaluable resource for staff and other advocates who call on her for guidance. She also has extensive knowledge about Individualized Education Plans which over 70% of our children have or need. Emily's knowledge of the law and personal experience help to ensure that the educational needs of the children we serve are met. If Emily doesn't know the answer, she will find it! She is an encyclopedia of resources.

Our CASA program utilizes a peer mentoring program, in which experienced CASAs help train new CASAs. Emily has consistently served as a mentor when we have new training classes. She has mentored 3 new CASAs this year and continues to be their 'go-to' for advice and recommendations.

Her drive and passion for CASA's mission has led to serving as Vice President on the Tennessee CASA Board of Directors. In this role, she is responsible for board development, and working to organize and manage the committees of the board. Emily was also featured in Tennessee CASA's Be For The Child video. Go to www.beforethechild.org and see the video. In addition, Emily was most recently featured on Williamson County CASA's 2021 Voices for Children virtual event in which she spoke about her role in one of her cases with a foster mom. Click [here](#) to view the video. Their story starts at 9-minute mark.

Since January 2021, Emily has dedicated over 200 hours to serving Williamson County CASA children and families. Her skills, knowledge, willingness to help others, and dedication to our organization and community make her an excellent Franklin Tomorrow Volunteer Spirit Award nominee.