



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

SOUTH MISSISSIPPI



CASA of South Mississippi
Call to Action

CASA Staff

CASA's **mission** is to advocate for South Mississippi's abused and neglected children by supporting volunteers who promote safety, permanency, and resilience. Our **vision** is a community where all children thrive in safe and nurturing families.



Cynthia Chauvin
Executive Director



Lauren Saucier
Program Director



Lori Curia
Finance Director



Tanisha Lamb
Advocate Supervisor



Linda Perkes
Advocate Supervisor



Ashley Tribble
Advocate Supervisor



Tyree McDonald
Advocate Supervisor



Naomi Strawhorn
Victim Services
Coordinator



Remi III
Courthouse Facility Dog
Canine Companions®

Board of Directors



Myron Labat, Sr.
Board President
Retired Educator,
Administrator & CASA
Advocate



April Parker
Owner
Parker Contracting, LLC



Andy Orzalli
Vice President
Player Services Manager
Silver Slipper Hotel &
Casino



Margaret Payment
Area Director
Mississippi Power



Caitlin Cruthird
Treasurer
Certified Public
Accountant
HORNE



Huey Stockstill, III
Construction Division
Operations Manager
Huey P. Stockstill, LLC



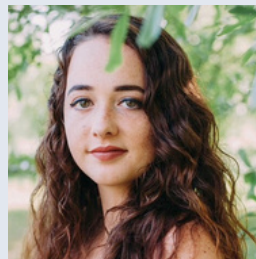
Erin Lee
Secretary
Vice President &
Branch Manager
Hancock Whitney
Bank



Ty Wiltz
Director of Public Works
City of Diamondhead &
Retired Law Enforcement
Officer



David Buckley
Department of
Homeland Security



Haley Wing
International & Drayage
Account Representative
Total Quality Logistics
Former Foster Youth



Padrick Dennis
Vice President
Specialty Contractors &
Associates, Inc



Heather Smith
Pro Bono Counsel
Butler Snow, LLP

What is CASA?



WHAT IS A CASA VOLUNTEER?

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) volunteers are community members who are recruited, trained, & supervised by CASA staff members. All volunteer advocates must pass background checks & are screened for suitability. They are sworn in & appointed by a family court judge, & they advocate for the best interests of their assigned children.

CASA's **mission** is to advocate for South Mississippi's abused & neglected children by supporting volunteers who promote safety, permanency, & resilience. Our **vision** is a community where all children thrive in safe & nurturing families.

HOW IS CASA DIFFERENT THAN CPS?

CASA volunteers are unpaid. They receive training to work alongside others & collect information regarding a child, which includes contacting family members, school teachers, medical providers, & mental health professionals. CASA volunteers provide fact-based court reports & testimony in court hearings. Unlike CPS, CASA volunteers are not legal guardians on cases & are prohibited from providing transportation or supervision services.

HOW DOES CASA HELP?

Each CASA volunteer maintains 1-2 cases at a time in order to ensure that each child has his or her needs met. CASA volunteers make regular in-person visits, attend family team meetings, assist with educational advocacy, acquire documents & records, and make fact-based court recommendations to move a case forward. CASA serves as the eyes and the ears of the court and partners with CPS, community agencies, court attorneys, and more.



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

SOUTH MISSISSIPPI

Our Judges



S. TRENT FAVRE **HANCOCK COUNTY COURT JUDGE**

The Honorable S. Trent Favre serves as Hancock County's first County Court Judge. Appointed by Governor Phil Bryant in late 2017 & elected twice since that time, his role includes youth court matters involving child abuse and neglect, delinquency matters, & a county court docket. In 2020, Judge Favre was presented with the Mississippi Bar's Judicial Excellence Award. Judge Favre serves on the Judicial Leadership Council of National CASA, and the Mississippi Child Welfare and Access to Justice Commission. Judge Favre is from Hancock County & is a graduate of Bay High. He received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Philosophy with a minor in French from Millsaps College & he obtained his Juris Doctorate from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

"The idea of CASA was founded because of judicial leadership. Without the support of our Youth Court Judges, ***our program would not exist.***"

Cynthia Chauvin
Executive Director
CASA of South Mississippi



MICHAEL DICKINSON **HARRISON COUNTY COURT JUDGE**

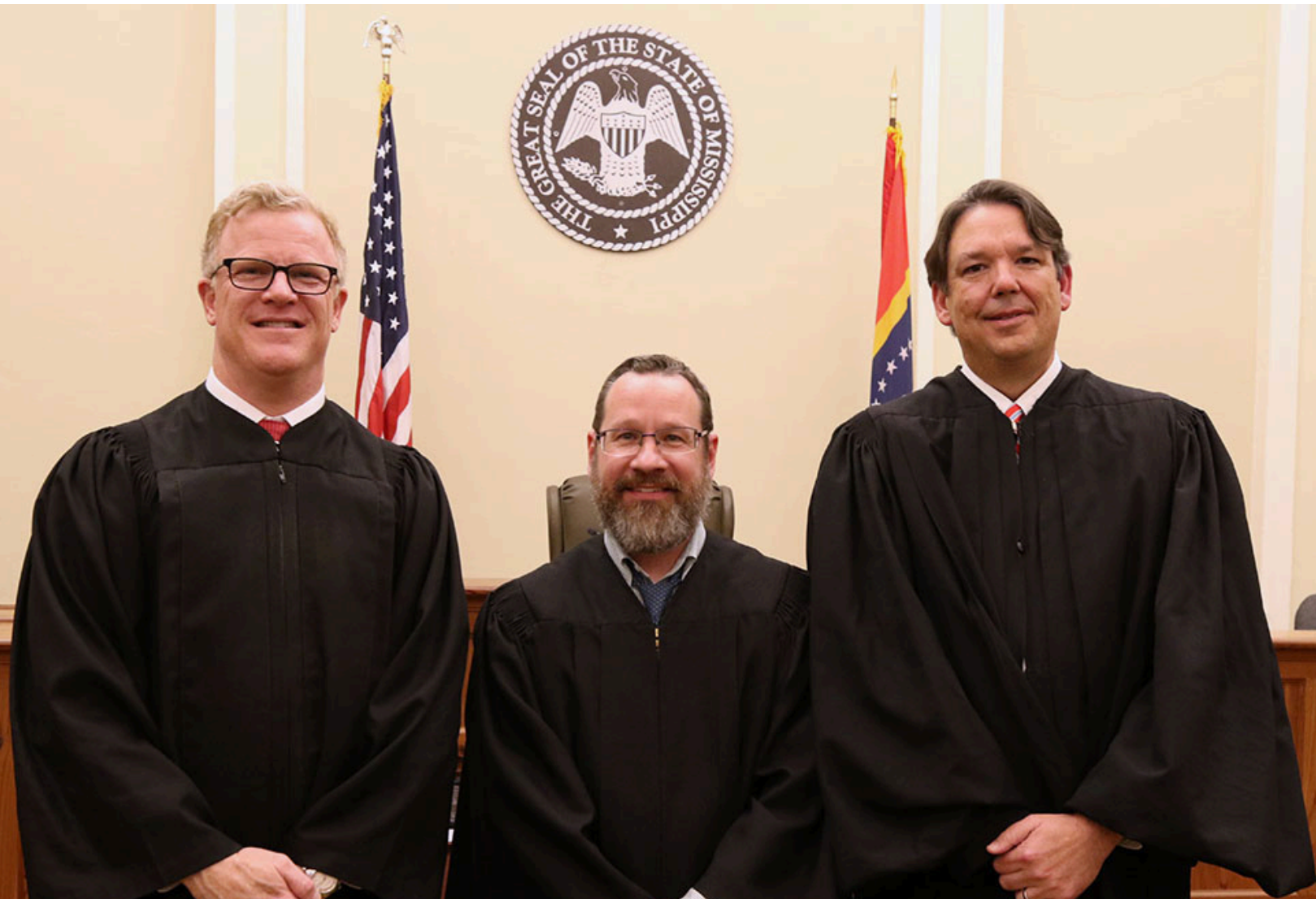
Judge Dickinson is a graduate of Mississippi State University where he earned a Bachelor's of Accountancy and of Mississippi College School of Law where he received his law degree. In 2018, he was elected to serve as a County Court Judge handling all Youth Court matters in Harrison County. He also served in the U.S. Navy on the USS Independence (aircraft carrier) in Japan. Judge Dickinson serves on the Commission on Children's Justice, the Judicial Leadership Council for National CASA and the State Intervention Court Advisory Committee. In 2023, Judge Dickinson was appointed by the Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court to serve as a member of the Mississippi Task Force on Foster Care and Adoption which was created by the Mississippi Legislature in 2023 SB 2384. Additionally, Judge Dickinson was selected as a 2023 recipient of the Angels in Adoption award by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute for his work in the adoption, foster care, & child welfare community.

Our Judges



SEAN COURTNEY **STONE COUNTY REFEREE**

Judge Sean A. Courtney was appointed by the Chancery Court of Stone County to serve as Youth Court Referee in 2016. Prior to that, Sean had served as a Guardian Ad Litem in Stone, and many other counties, for approximately ten years. He also serves as the Municipal Judge for the City of Wiggins and represents the Stone County Economic Development Partnership and the Stone County School District. As a referee, he adjudicates cases involving child abuse and neglect, as well as juvenile delinquency. Sean served as a governor on the Mississippi Judicial College Board of Governors from 2013-2020. Judge Courtney is an Air Force Brat who graduated from Biloxi High School before attending Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and then the University of Southern Mississippi, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in History, and ultimately received a Juris Doctorate from the University of Mississippi in May 2000. He is a former Rotary Club president, Deacon at First Baptist Church of Wiggins, and currently sits on the Board of Directors for the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College Foundation and the United Way of South Mississippi.



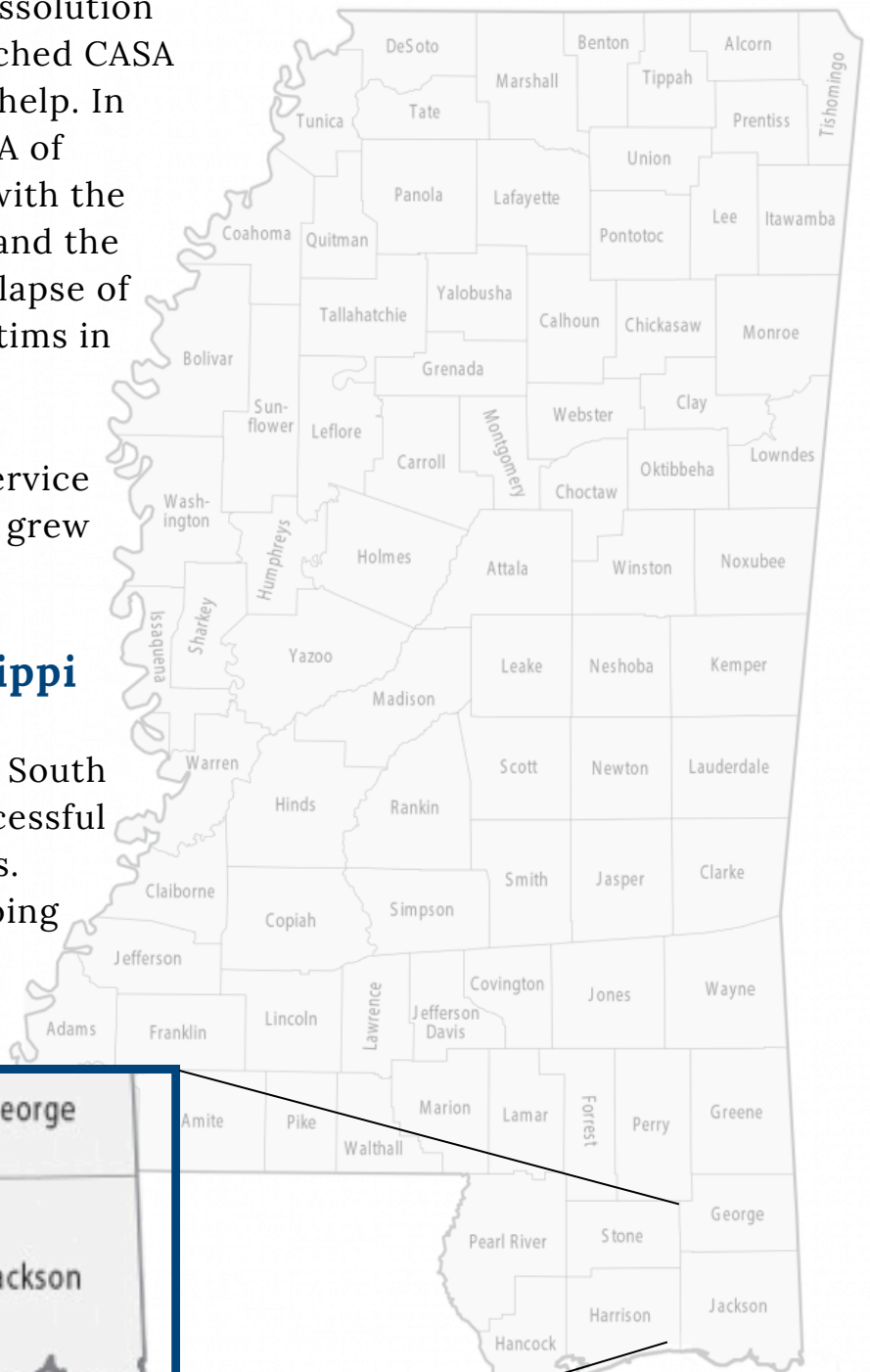
Expanded Service Area

In the Fall of 2023, CASA of Harrison & Stone Counties initiated the dissolution of their organization & approached CASA of Hancock County to request help. In response to their request, CASA of Hancock County coordinated with the courts of both counties to expand the program & prevent the loss or lapse of advocacy services for child victims in Harrison & Stone Counties.

With an expanded mission & service area, CASA of Hancock County grew into a new name:

CASA of South Mississippi

In Dec 2023-Jan 2024, CASA of South Mississippi conducted the successful transfer of volunteer advocates. CASA is committed to the ongoing training & support of these volunteers.



CASA: HOW TO HELP



1 Become a CASA Volunteer

In 2024, CASA is committed to recruiting **35 new volunteers** who are screened, trained, & supported by our CASA staff. Volunteering begins with sending an email to lauren@casasouthms.org to express interest and join an informational session to learn more.

3 Support Our Program Financially

Become a CASA Anchor--an individual who believes in CASA's mission & contributes monthly as a sustaining donor for as little as \$10/month. Scan the QR code below to donate as a CASA Anchor:



2 Connect Us to Your Organization

Connect us to your community organization, club, or church to let a CASA staff member come and present in order to raise awareness about the needs of children from your community.

4 Report Child Abuse or Neglect

In accordance with Section 43-21-353 of the Mississippi Code of 1972, "any other person having reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a neglected child or an abused child" shall make a CPS report as soon as possible.

The number to make a report is

1-800-222-8000

or you may file an online report here:

reportabuse.mdcpss.ms.gov

Advocates

Hancock County

Adam, Margaret (9)
Alexander, MaryBeth*
Altsman, Diane (7)
Bailey, Sarah (10)
Bair, Anne*
Baughman, Jackie (7)
Berry, Julie (2)
Bloom, Cheryl (8)
Bourgeois, Brooke (2)
Brdecka, Brittni (2)
Brdecka, John (1)
Cannon, Julie (14)
Chargois, Victoria (2)
Coleman, Joan (4)
Cuevas, Janine (8)
DeBardeleben, Evelyn (1)
DeHaan, Laura-Michel (3)
Demarest, Judy (10)
Dollar, Beverly (8)
Dubisson, Heather (1)
Dudenhefer, Carol (7)
Ehrich, Alan (2)

Ehrich, Trudy (2)
Ferry, Jude (2)
Fulwiler, John (6)
Fulwiler, Madeleine (6)
Grapusa, Christine (7)
Gray, Christi (1)
Haberman, Victoira (3)
Hamil, Cynthia*
Hebert, Amanda (2)
Herring, Rhonda (6)
Hess, Allison (3)
Hilliard, Larry (1)
Hilliard, Terry (1)
Jackson, Jessica (1)
Jackson, Lorenzo (1)
Joyce, Susan (6)
Ladner, Katelyn (2)
Lawler, Robinette (9)
Legeuax, Lisa (1)
Manko, Rodney (3)
Maronge, Charlotte (3)
McKenzie, Nancy (8)
Melby-Codling, Chris (9)

Meyer, Marcella (2)
Montjoy, Betsy (3)
Mumme, Susan (9)
Murana, Kimberly (1)
Murphy, Candy (2)
Murray, Joseph (7)
Nichols, Lylie (8)
Ortiz, Tish*
Reaver, Anne (1)
Reilly, Kim (5)
Richardson, Joy (9)
Riviere, George (5)
Riviere, Robin (6)
Salaun, Linda (5)
Searles, Judith (6)
Shiyu, Carol (10)
Taylor, Griselda (1)
Taylore, Marilene (5)
Tent, Stefani (2)
Van Stelle, Christy (7)
Vogel, Michael (6)
Wallace, Susan (2)
Walker, Sharon*
Warran, Alisha (6)
Young, Anne (1)

(#) denotes years of service

*New Advocates in 2024



Advocates

Harrison County

Allen, Andria (5)
Benefield, Debbie (6)
Bignoli, Joan (3)
Bodden, Katina (1)
Bonck, Patrick (11)
Chambers, Linda (4)
Charron, Moncheri (1)
Conner, Tasha (2)
Davis, Betty (2)
Foles, Rhonda*
Fowler, Bria (2)
Fulton, Denise (4)
Gingerella, April (2)
Godbolt, Loretta (1)
Hodge, Sharon (2)
Hubbard, Christine (1)
Kaiser, Elizabeth (2)

Keeney, Sharon (6)
Langham, Hannah (2)
Langham, Mark (2)
Lewis, Anita (10)
LeRoy, Amy (2)
Matthews, Donna (3)
McGuire, Trace (1)
Mitchell, Gerolyn (3)
Moore, Diane (4)
Murphy, Candy (2)
Parkman, Nikesha (1)
Peranich, Linda (6)
Relaford, Jenee (3)
Richards, Joane (1)
Saldana, Maria (1)
Shaw, Cindy (12)
Shirk, Linda (2)
Simpkins, Amber (1)

Smith, Diana (1)
Smith, Melinda (1)
Thomas, Kaycee (2)
White, Linda (4)
Wilder, Ruthie (13)
Williams, Erin (1)
Williams, Glaudette (2)
Williams, Jenny (4)

Stone County

Cater, Kiersten (3)
Cobb, Cynthia (2)
Fitzpatrick, Emily (2)
Gilbert, Teri*
Heyer, Rebekah (1)
Loose, Allison (2)
Roberts, Stephanie (1)



Introducing **Alek Dickerson**

Carol Shiyou was sworn in as a CASA volunteer on February 20, 2014. Carol's Advocate Supervisor Lauren Saucier said, "Our first home visit brought us face to face with an 11-year-old girl who, despite having a rocky road through middle school, was also bright, bubbly, smart, and very outgoing." Carol recalls, "I was told this would be an easy case to get my feet wet. Little did I know that I would be advocating for this young lady **for the next nine years**, & that she would become such an important part of my life."

Alek said, "When God knew I needed a mother, he put Mrs. Carol in my life. She is truly a woman I admire & look up to, & she means so much to me. She has been with me through all my ups and downs & has supported me so much, both mentally and emotionally. I wouldn't ask for anybody else because nobody else is like Mrs. Carol."



L to R: Alek, daughter Dakota, & CASA Volunteer Carol Shiyou

Always proud of Alek, Carol says, "Alek had her own drive and always had goals in mind. Her determination & resiliency was apparent in all the work she did. I may have been a voice for her in the court system, but Alek had her own big, brave voice & was not afraid to ask for what she wanted or get what she needed. She was a leader in every role in her life, a talented singer, and set out to be as independent as possible."

In July 2023, Alek was released from CPS custody & now lives with her family & daughter on the Gulf Coast. She earned an associate degree & is deciding her next steps on going back to school, working, & being a full-time mom.

"Alek may be out of custody, but she will always have me in her corner," says Carol.

Child Wellbeing Projects



Photo Credit: Lisa Tilley

Remi the Courthouse Facility Dog

Remi is Mississippi's *only* Courthouse Facility Dog. Canine Companions® intentionally bred, professionally trained, & certified her as a facility dog after extensive training with her handler Naomi Strawhorn. **Facility dogs** like Remi are screened for their ability to support clients in a high-stress environment. Remi has written permission to work in a variety of professional settings including court proceedings, CPS conferences, inter-agency meetings, & multidisciplinary training events.



Trust-Based Relational Intervention®

Trust-Based Relational Intervention® is an attachment-based, trauma-informed intervention that is designed to meet the complex needs of vulnerable children. Children who have had difficult experiences have often developed difficult behaviors as a result. Over the past four years, CASA has been hosting TBRI trainings that empower caregivers and systems to provide trauma-responsive care. This year, CASA of South Mississippi holds the distinction of being inducted as a TBRI® Ambassador Organization, which provides unique access to ongoing support and training for the entire state of Mississippi.



This project is supported by the John T. and Lois R. "Sonny" Velkas Child Welfare Endowed Fund, a Fund of the Gulf Coast Community Foundation.

Individual Monthly Donors

Change a Child's Story™
for as little as

\$10 a Month

The definition of an **anchor** is “a reliable or principal support--a mainstay.” The coastal Mississippi community has rallied around CASA to support the most vulnerable children in extraordinary ways.



In 2023, CASA's Board of Directors launched the Anchors Campaign, which empowered individuals from the community to contribute in a meaningful and sustainable way. For ten dollars a month--**the price of a cup of specialty coffee**--our supporters can make a lifelong difference in the lives of the children that we serve.

Not everyone has the ability to become a CASA, but **everyone can help somehow**. CASA Anchors believe in the CASA mission & vision, and they have committed to supporting the program through their monthly contributions.

Jackie Baughman
Cheryl Bloom
Travis Bloom
John & Brittnei Brdecka
David Buckley
Cynthia Chauvin
Lori Curia
Ms. Micky Evans
Harry Fisher
John & Madeleine Fulwiler

Natalie Guess
Cynthia Guidry
Lainie Therese Guidry
Mamie Hillery
Glenn Hood
Lisa Judice
Myron Labat, Sr.
Rhonda Labat
Heather Smith
April Parker

Joy Peacock
Cathy Pitalo
Cheryl Ramseyer
Jo Ann Reed
Jack & Glenda Schornick
Carol Shiyou
Huey Stockstill, III
Rocky Stockstill
Katherine Troendle
Ty Wiltz

Patrick O'Connor and Margaret McMullan
Church of the King
Community Bank

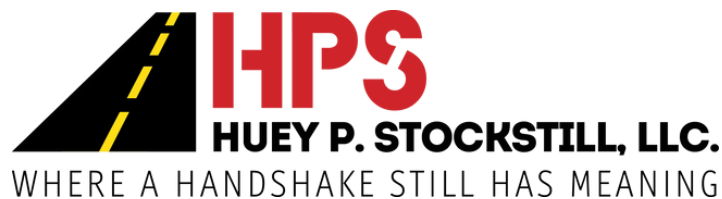
GTM Building Supply
International Venture Markets LLC
Mississippi Power
Rushing & Guice PLLC



Scan the QR Code
above to join the
CASA Anchor team

Corporate Mission Partners

Mission Partners provide a deeper level of year-round support through an annual contribution.



IN-KIND DONORS

Special thanks to these partners for donating time & services:

Dr. West and Pet Haven Veterinary Hospital
Edrington Landscaping

How You Can Help

DONATE, VOLUNTEER, MAKE A DIFFERENCE



VOLUNTEER

Interested in becoming a CASA Advocate?
Join an informational session and learn more
about becoming an advocate.

The CASA Volunteer Pre-Service training
curriculum is facilitated throughout the year
& consists of (30) thirty hours of training,
court observation, & background screening.

INVITE CASA TO SPEAK TO YOUR ORGANIZATION

Connect us to your community organization,
club, or church to let a CASA staff member
come and present in order to raise awareness
about the needs of children from your
community. Contact Cynthia via email:
cynthia@casasouthms.org

DONATE

CASA is a 501c3 charitable organization and
relies on community support. Your gift is tax
deductible and helps abused and neglected
children have a voice.

**Donations can be made by cash, check, our
website, PayPal, or Venmo:**

www.casasouthms.org

paypal.me/CASAHancockCountyMS

venmo.com/u/CASASouthMS



venmo



The funding for this
publication was provided by:

HisWay, Inc.



Bay St. Louis Office

644 Dunbar Ave.
Bay St. Louis, MS 39520
Office: 228-344-0419

Gulfport Office

11975 Seaway Rd., A140
Gulfport, MS 39503
Fax: 228-344-3209

