

Students help Raise Awareness for CASA Glynn

By SARAH LUNDGREN The Brunswick News

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When a group of college students first tried to connect with the Court Appointed Special Advocates of Glynn County, Cary Greenfield was hesitant to agree.

As the executive director for CASA adult volunteers, who are non-lawyer advocates for youth in the civil court system because of their family situations, there were a lot of "ifs" she wasn't sure about.

Greenfield was approached in September by College of Coastal Georgia Professor Kimberly Mannahan, who was hoping to set up a group of her female students with CASA as part of a service learning project in her Introduction to Human Services class.

"My first reaction was, truthfully, hesitation. Given that the national and state guidelines are that CASAs must be ages 21 and older, I wasn't sure how it would work," Greenfield said. "After meeting with Professor Mannahan and her amazing young ladies, I was more thankful than ever to have been wrong. And, boy was I wrong. These girls have worked tirelessly to bring awareness to this community about the work of CASA Glynn."

Since September, students Brooke Baskin, Stephanie Coffey, Priti Rijal, Miranda Quinones and Amanda McMahan have impressed Greenfield beyond belief. She says they have become a vital part of recruitment and raising community awareness.

"This group of students has invigorated our staff, board, advocates and community to keep up the daunting task of speaking in the best interest of the more than 200 abused and neglected children in foster care here in Glynn County," Greenfield said.

Student Baskin had participated in service learning projects with the college before, but working with CASA was a new experience.

Because the six-week training required to work directly with children in the CASA program would be too lengthy for the college students' schedules, Baskin and the others weren't able to interact face-to-face with them, but that didn't curb their enthusiasm.

"We assured them that we were aware we didn't have time to complete the six-week course in order to have contact with the children, but that we still wanted to help them in any way we could, whether that be fundraising or advertisement or raising awareness," Baskin said.

"I didn't want other people to not find out till their mid-20s, like I did, about an organization in our community that helps over 200 kids who are in foster care. That is a lot of kids for such a small community."

The more the students worked with the organization's staff, the more both appreciated each other. Baskin says her group did everything from fundraising bake sales to revamping CASA's pamphlets and literature. They raised awareness, created a raffle and are planning the Chick-fil-A Spirit Night today.

"Spirit Night is about raising awareness in Glynn County about child abuse and neglect in our own community, as well as how (others) can help to be a part of the solution for each child through becoming a CASA," director Greenfield said.

"This, along with the financial benefit from those who come out to Chick-fil-A for dinner, plays a huge role in our recruitment of volunteers to speak in the best interest of abused and neglected children in Glynn County."