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## **The Kentucky CASA Network Recognizes Award Winners During Advocacy at the Core: 2025 Kentucky CASA Conference**



The Kentucky CASA Network announced the winners of the Awards of Excellence during the volunteer appreciation dinner of the 2025 Kentucky CASA Conference on November 17, 2025, in Covington. The award recipients are as follows:

**Statewide Partner of the Year – Commissioner Jonathan Shell, Kentucky Department of Agriculture**

**Board Member of the Year – Ryan Toombs, CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY**

**Judge of the Year – The Honorable Terri Schoborg, Kenton Family Court, 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, Div. 2**

**Staff Member of the Year – Liz Hansen, CASA of the Northern Bluegrass Region**

**KCN Spotlight Award – CASA of the Gateway Region**

**Bob Babbage CASA Volunteer of the Year – Paula Cooper, CASA of the Wilderness Trail**

**CASA All-Star Awards:**

**Legacy of Service – Sandy Rogers, CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY**

**Determined Driver – Cynthia Phillips, CASA of Lexington**

**Lifelong Learner – Karen Proctor, CASA of West Kentucky**

**Community Connector – Jim Gearhart, CASA of West Kentucky; Martha Steil, CASA by the Lakes**

**Unsung Hero – Bill Renda, CASA of the River Region**

**Notable Newcomer – Katie Welch Beyl, CASA of the Heartland**

“We commend these award recipients for their work to advance the CASA mission in the Commonwealth,” said Andrea Bruns, State Director/CEO of the KCN. “They exemplify the unwavering commitment and compassion that define CASA’s mission to stand with children navigating the child welfare system. Their dedication strengthens Kentucky’s communities and inspires all of us to continue advocating fiercely for every child’s right to safety, stability, and hope.”

The 2025 Awards of Excellence were presented during the 2025 Kentucky CASA Conference, which took place November 17-18. Keynote speakers included Kentucky Supreme Court Justice Pamela R. Goodwine, Gaelin Elmore, and Shimaine Holley. The conference also featured a judges panel with family court judges from across the state, and 25 breakout sessions over the two days. The KCN is grateful to ARH Foundation, Kosair for Kids, Aetna Better Health of Kentucky, CasaManager, AT&T, Kentucky Bar Foundation, WellCare of Kentucky, Nielsen Training & Consulting, and United Healthcare Community Plan of KY for sponsoring this year’s conference.

### **About the Kentucky CASA Network**

The Kentucky CASA Network is the state association for Court Appointed Special Advocates, as recognized in the Kentucky Revised Statutes, with a mission to support the development, growth, and continuation of local CASA programs in Kentucky. CASA programs recruit and train volunteers to advocate on behalf of children who have come into the court system as a result of dependency, neglect, or abuse. In 2024, nearly 1,400 CASA volunteers served 3,376 children. Kentucky currently has a network of local CASA programs that cover 99 counties. For more information, please visit [www.kentuckycasanetwork.org](http://www.kentuckycasanetwork.org).