

Sheila Morris – Fairfax CASA Volunteer

“I call her jellybean.”

That’s the nickname CASA Volunteer Sheila Morris uses for the teenage girl that she serves. Now almost 18, the teen first came to the court’s attention when her parents neglected to care for her progressive neurological disease. It’s a challenging case, as the girl also struggles with mental health issues and needs special care.

Sheila is a constant figure in the young girl’s life, following her through multiple foster homes and repeated hospitalizations. “Whenever I appear for a visit in a new place, she asks, ‘How did you know I was here?’ These children have learned not to count on people. To realize that someone is always keeping track of them, that’s not something they take for granted. “

The path towards becoming a CASA volunteer started in 2005, when Sheila saw a notice in the paper for an information session. The program sounded interesting – Sheila studied Early Childhood Education and loves children – but she was raising two boys, working, and did not have time to volunteer. She cut out the notice and placed it in her desk drawer, pulling it out now and then and debating whether the time was right for CASA. In 2010 she decided to take the plunge.

AS a CASA volunteer, Sheila values her ability to keep other team members in the loop. “I often have a piece of information that I assume the others have and then find out they do not.” Just recently, she learned that the girl would not be graduating from high school before her eighteenth birthday. Sheila notified the social worker to ensure that the girl would continue to receive services, even after she aged out of the system.

Another proud achievement? The smile on her teen’s face when she uses her nickname. “She was called Jellybean as a young child. When I call her that now I get to enjoy her wonderful impetuous laugh. Those moments of joy are priceless.”

