

SPRING 2026



From the Desk of Executive Director

Jackie Horton

From everyday moments ~ attending school meetings and checking in with caregivers ~ to life-changing milestones like reunification and permanency, this is the steady, meaningful work happening behind the scenes.

At CASA, our volunteers are the heart of everything we do. As the only volunteer program that empowers everyday citizens to serve as officers of the court, CASA ensures that children who have experienced abuse and neglect are not overlooked. Appointed by a judge, volunteers serve one child or sibling group at a time, providing consistent, one-on-one advocacy focused solely on the child's best interests.

At First Circuit CASA, our path ahead is focused on strengthening that advocacy. We are investing in the spaces where this work begins—enhancing our building and training center to expand volunteer education opportunities. We also continue taking learning into the community, with visits to St. Joseph's Indian School, Our Home, Abbott House, and Aurora Plains Academy, with more planned across our nine-county service area.

Because when we grow stronger, so does every child we stand beside. Thank you for being part of a community working to Change a Child's Story. ❤️

In gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jackie Horton".

Executive Director



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CASA Selected by SDSU to Strengthen Advocacy for Children

First Circuit CASA was honored to be selected by South Dakota State University to participate in a research study focused on organizational communication and the impact of CASA programs.



The project included brief Zoom interviews with CASA leadership and a short, anonymous volunteer survey, designed to better understand how CASA programs communicate, support volunteers, and strengthen advocacy for children.

What If That Behavior Isn't What You Think It Is?

Children who have experienced trauma often respond in ways that can be misunderstood... **What looks like defiance or withdrawal is often a reaction to past harm.** A trauma-informed approach asks, "What happened to this child?" instead of "What's wrong?" and responds with patience, consistency, and understanding.

In schools and communities, small actions matter. **Clear routines, calm environments, and consistent follow-through help children feel safe.** Giving youth a voice, working together across systems, and respecting their background and experiences builds trust and connection. Even one stable, caring adult can make a lasting difference. HOW? Help to reduce stress, strengthen resilience, and help the child begin to feel safe enough to grow and succeed.



By the Numbers

Behind every story is a child whose life is changing. From January through March, CASA volunteers stood beside children in foster care - showing up in courtrooms, classrooms, and **everyday moments that matter most.**

Because of their advocacy, children experienced greater stability, stronger connections, and progress toward safe, permanent homes. This work doesn't happen by chance. It happens because trained volunteers commit to one child, one case, and one outcome - making sure no child is overlooked in an often-overburdened system.

These are more than numbers. Every number represents a child who had someone in their corner. And that changes everything.

January 1 – March 31
2026

