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Ellie's story

Updated: Jun 28

When Ellie entered foster care at 13, her Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer helped her thrive.

CASA



15-year-old Ellie* never had a chance to be a kid.

Her mother battled mental health conditions and her father was absent, forcing Ellie to become her younger siblings' primary caregiver when she was still a kid herself. For years, Ellie's childhood needs were buried under the weight of adult responsibilities. She often missed school and extracurricular activities to take care of her siblings, and any attempts at self-advocacy were unaddressed by her mother.

Ellie entered the foster care system with her siblings at age 13 due to physical abuse in the home. She desperately needed a caring, consistent adult by her side.

The judge appointed a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer to her case. Every week Ellie's CASA volunteer visited her, took the time to learn what she needed to heal and thrive, and

advocated for her best interests in monthly court reports to the judge. For the first time in her life, Ellie's voice was heard.

"The most important way I supported Ellie was really just to listen to her," said Ellie's CASA volunteer. "To actually listen to what she was telling me and what's important for her and her needs. She also knew that my role wasn't another adult to tell her what to do—my role was to be her voice and her advocate."

Ellie's CASA volunteer helped her excel in school, enroll in driver's education, secure jobs, and manage money. She advocated for Ellie to attend mental health counseling and participate in extracurricular activities to grow her support networks. Above all, she became Ellie's "person"—a trusted friend who always believed in her and had her back.

With a CASA volunteer by her side, Ellie:



Excelled in school



Learned professional development skills & secured jobs



Learned money management skills



Received counseling & grew support networks

"The most selfishly rewarding part for me was becoming her friend. To become the person that Ellie feels comfortable confiding in—good and bad things—that was truly special," her CASA volunteer said.

On their weekly visits, the pair liked to challenge each other to step outside of their comfort zones. Ellie (a lover of all things baking) would often ask her CASA volunteer to try out new recipes.

"She's a great baker and has taught me a lot about baking! She's stronger than she thinks and has far more potential than she thinks she does," said Ellie's CASA volunteer.

With every apple tart and cake they baked, they grew together.

Ellie and her siblings spent two years in foster care before reunifying with their mother. During those chaotic two years, Ellie's



The sweet reward of one baking challenge proposed by Ellie.

CASA volunteer was there to give her hope, teach her important life skills, and ensure that her voice was heard.

Ellie is a brave, hard-working young woman who has a bright future ahead of her—one that might not have been possible without the caring support of her CASA volunteer to help change her story. Learn how you can become a CASA volunteer today!

**Name has been changed to protect confidentiality. Image is not of actual CASA child or volunteer.*