

SUCCESS STORY—COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES

Amelia* is no longer a child, but in reality she never was one. It's difficult to say that she was removed from her home since Amelia and her younger sister really never had a place to call home in the first place. When she entered foster care, Amelia was a 15 year-old who had endured a lifetime of abuse and instability. With each of her mother's new boyfriends came a move to a new home, each progressively worse than the previous, all riddled with the nightmare of violence and substance abuse. Amelia told her volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)—through a program funded by Rappahannock United Way—that with each move her mother would promise a new beginning. Unfortunately each was just another chapter in her mother's book of alcoholism and mental illness.

As Amelia's mother slipped deeper into mental illness, the domestic violence between her mom and the boyfriend became a daily frightening occurrence. Amelia told her CASA that for years she thought she was the cause of the fighting and tried her best to always be good but she never could really be "good enough." As time went on, Amelia became the caretaker of her baby sister and the target of her mother's boyfriend's rage. When she could bear it no more, she told. When the police responded to her home, they found a desperate Amelia hiding under a filthy trailer as her mother ranted around the yard in psychiatric despair. Amelia did not cry as she was taken away to live in a home with strangers—and was separated from her little sister.

Amelia was bright and insightful beyond her years, but she bore the scars of her past. She was distant and distrustful of everyone. Amelia told her CASA that while she knew she was safe in foster care, she didn't like living with people who really didn't know or care about her. Amelia's CASA visited her more often than Amelia wished she would. Who was this pesky woman anyway? Slowly, Amelia began to look forward to her CASA's visits. In fact, these visits were the only consistent thing in Amelia's life. Her CASA was actually interested in Amelia; they went places together, they talked about school, friends, life, and plans for the future. Her CASA took Amelia to court and told the judge about how she felt about her mother, about living in a foster home that was not right for her, and about her plans to go to college. Amelia told her CASA that she was the first person to ever really get to know her. After a year of broken promises and an inability to remedy her situation, Amelia's mother lost her parental rights.



*Amelia is not pictured.

Because you gave to Rappahannock United Way, Amelia's Court Appointed Special Advocate was able to change Amelia's life. Her CASA worked with Social Services to find the right family for Amelia. Amelia now has a family who is not only committed to her, but to maintaining her connection to her sister.

Amelia graduated from high school with honors and received a full-scholarship to attend the Virginia Commonwealth University. She and her CASA meet every month—not because they have to, but because they are connected. Amelia is now 18 years-old with a bright future ahead of her—one that would not have been possible without her CASA, Rappahannock United Way, and supporters like you.

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