

PROFILE

Nancy Whitesides

CHILD ADVOCATE • DOG RESCUER • FITNESS ENTHUSIAST

By Stacy Moser

As Nancy Whitesides walks her rescue pup, London, down the street in East Cobb, she reflects on the volunteer work she has undertaken since 2014, advocating for children who find themselves in Georgia's foster-care system.

Every week, Nancy visits children and their foster families to check on them, attends court hearings to report on their behalf and provides a friendly face as the kids navigate their new surroundings. "I'm honored to do it," she says. "I have a master's degree in counseling and thought it was a good fit for me now that my three sons are older. These foster kids—many of whom were neglected or abused—need somebody to advocate for them."

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"Children are traumatized when they're put in foster care," she explains. "They're not just placed with strangers in a new home, they're faced with different food, a different bed, a different school—it's terrifying. They don't know what the future holds. That's why court-appointed special advocate (CASA) volunteers are so important. We're a consistent face for them. I meet with each child at least once a month until they are placed in a permanent 'forever' home. There are 21,000 children in foster care this year in Georgia and over 11,000 have a CASA volunteer. But there are more than 100 children in Cobb County still waiting for one. We need volunteers!"

Nancy says she's met these children at school during lunch, at the park for a walk or at their home to play a game. "Anyone can do this," she says. "Whether you're a young adult or a senior citizen, the job is to ensure kids are safe, they're protected, that they're placed with adults who can care for them and consistently meet their needs." She laughs, "I've gone to school concerts, graduations and dance recitals. I want that kid to look out in the audience and say, 'Oh! That lady is here again!'"

Stress management for Nancy isn't a problem—she frequently visits

CycleBar East Cobb and **Sculpted Body Fitness Center** for a workout on the Megaformer™. You'll also see her at **Cobb County CASA's** wine-tasting fundraiser on April 20 at the **Marietta Wine Market** from 2-4pm.

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