

“When a Door Opens...”

Over fifteen years ago, a prospective juror sat at the Newark Courthouse and was deeply moved by a CASA video explaining the mission of the organization. That same juror is CASA of Essex’s very own, Elizabeth Barkley, lovingly known as “Beth.” She had never heard of CASA until then, but she “immediately connected to the tag line ‘You can make a difference in the life of a child.’”

Beth credits her mother, Zeraline Verner, as the driving force behind her desire to help others. She was a pillar of strength, a tireless volunteer in the school system and the community, and her “ability to move an agenda was legendary.” Beth has certainly inherited her mother’s finest attributes!

Beth has long worked in Newark at Essex County College as the Director of Information Technology Operations. Over the span of fourteen years, she has woven the advocacy of foster youth in six cases into her daily life. She credits setting an agenda weekly to devote time to her case children as part of her success as an advocate. “When it’s parsed out in small chunks, it’s very manageable.”

Beth can recall many wonderful moments throughout her time as a CASA volunteer, but her most memorable was the day she ran into a youth that had been reunited with his mother. “It was incredible to see how beautifully the child had grown and [it was wonderful to] learn about how the youth was flourishing.” However, not everything can come up roses, and in these moments, Beth recommends reaching out to a supervisor for guidance. “They can guide you through the situation and help you to get the information you need.”

*Soon to celebrate a milestone, Beth has been married to her husband, Ron, for almost twenty years. They have two sons, one of which will be graduating high school soon. Beth and Ron are also the proud grandparents of two grandchildren. They hope to meet their youngest grandchild in-person soon! Aside from being a dedicated professional, advocate, and matriarch of her family, Beth also enjoys working out and dancing in her spare time. Reading is also at the top of her list, and Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is by far one of her favorites!*

CASA of Essex is most grateful for the serendipitous moment when a tag line opened the door for Beth to become an advocate!