

## ***“Give a Child a Voice”***

*A career in education can shed light on the importance of lending a child your voice. Having spent thirty-three years as an elementary school principal, Marguerite DeCarlo has seen her share of difficult situations over the years. It stands to reason she would choose a volunteer role that is an extension of her life’s work.*

*Marguerite has been a CASA for ten years and has lent her expertise on two cases. She has worked with the youth on her current case over the entirety of her advocacy. Thanks to her expertise and dedication, her CASA child received a full scholarship to Seton Hall Prep through the Griffin Bridges Program! She credits this moment as her most gratifying experience with CASA of Essex.*

*Despite such successes as an advocate, Marguerite finds that the most difficult challenge in being a CASA is “maintaining a positive attitude when dealing with... distressing situations in a child’s life when they are part of the foster care system.” She advises other advocates to remember that “[they] are not doing this because it is a ‘fun’ volunteer job... [but instead] because the children need a voice...we can try and give them that.”*

*Currently retired, Marguerite enjoys spending time with her “very close-knit, large Italian family.” She lives with her partner and their cats: General Sherman and Eleanor Roosevelt, the latter is a feral cat that has lived on their deck for seventeen years! Such stoic names! Marguerite also has grown stepchildren, and her mother recently turned 102 years old.*

*Marguerite helps to care for her mother, who still lives alone. But in her spare time, she loves to do yoga, hike, dance Zumba, and read. She enjoys historical fiction, and her favorite book is Towles’ A Gentleman in Moscow. Marguerite is also on the Board of Trustees for PCE and has been a church trustee at her parish in Montclair for the last 4 years.*

*Seeing how the foster care system works has been an enlightening experience for Marguerite. She finds that New Jersey does a good job overall helping foster children thrive. CASA of Essex is incredibly fortunate to have Marguerite advocating for the future of Essex youth.*