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## Essex County volunteer honored for her work on behalf of children in foster care

**SEATTLE, WASHINGTON | March 20, 2018** – Kathleen Cook, an Andover resident and volunteer with CASA of Essex County, was recently honored with a 2018 Award of Excellence at the annual conference of The [National Court Appointed Special Advocates \(CASA\) Association](#). Together with its state and local member programs, National CASA supports and promotes court-appointed volunteer advocacy so every child who has experienced abuse or neglect in the United States can be safe and thrive in a permanent home.

Cook received the award for serving more than 30 children over the past 20 years as court-appointed special advocate. Six years after being appointed to a case involving two sisters, she remains in contact with them as they now attend college. In addition to her advocacy, she also has worked to recruit and mentor volunteers, and raise funds.

“Making sure these children are a high priority on everyone’s list is my focus and seeing them safe and in happy environments is my greatest satisfaction,” said Cook. “As much as I appreciate this award, the greatest reward I have been given is the opportunity to help these children navigate in a difficult world. When I see a child’s life improve because of my work, it makes it all worthwhile.”

Cook was recognized for establishing close, trusting relationships with the children for whom she advocates and for doggedly pursuing what is best for them. She regularly goes above and beyond to help the children she serves and has been active in establishing a statewide CASA organization in Massachusetts. She is known as “the heart of CASA of Essex County.”

“I was shopping at Target and was approached by a sales associate,” Cook recalled. “He said ‘Kathleen, it’s me, Dan. I’ll never forget that birthday cake you made for my 12th birthday. It was the first time anyone made a cake for me.’”

National CASA is a network of nearly 1,000 programs that recruit, train and support volunteers to advocate in courtrooms and communities for the best interests of children who have been abused and neglected. These volunteers see their assigned children regularly, staying with them until they are placed in a loving, permanent home. They provide judges the critical information they need to make decisions in the best interest of each child. For many abused children, their CASA volunteer is the only constant adult presence in their lives. More information about National CASA Association is available at [www.casaforchildren.org](http://www.casaforchildren.org).

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