

# Every child needs an advocate who puts them first

BY BETSY SMITH  
PAXTON MEDIA GROUP

Children who live in an environment in which their basic needs are not met; who are victims of neglect or who suffer verbal, physical or sexual abuse often find their lives upended when they are removed from the situation and put in some type of out-of-home-care (OOHC). Powerless and vulnerable, these children need someone advocating on their behalf. A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer does just that.

CASA volunteers are appointed through the family court system and serve on behalf of children, monitoring all that is happening with them, she explained. Findings and recommendations are reported by advocates to the judge in charge of their child's case.

Liv Hansen serves as manager of community engagement and volunteer recruitment for the nine-county CASA of the Northern Bluegrass Region. She frequently appears at meetings, county fairs, expos and other events, trying to get CASA in the public eye and seeking volunteers.

"Rather than focusing on past circumstances, CASA volunteers prioritize the child's present needs and future well-being—helping ensure they have the support necessary to cope, heal, and thrive," said Hansen.

"In addition to spending time with the child, volunteers gather information by connecting with parents, relatives, social workers, attorneys, teachers, medical providers, therapists (non-confidential updates unless needed for safety), and others involved



in the child's life to understand how the child is doing."

Each advocate has a Court Order of Appointment allowing receipt of confidential information associated with their specific child or children, who are named in the order.

In addition to collecting information, CASA volunteers build a relationship with the child or children (usually siblings or multiple children in in the same home) to whom they are assigned, letting them know they have someone they can trust, someone who puts their best interest above all other considerations.

As of Feb. 1, 2026, there were

8,699 children in the state living in OOHC, according to the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services. This includes 2,639 children in the foster care system as well as children placed in residential homes, living with relatives or fictive kin or in Department for Community Based Services foster homes.

There are far more children in need than there are volunteers. "...Due to the limited number of volunteers, not every child in need is able to be served. As a result, judges must thoughtfully determine which children and cases would benefit most from CASA advocacy," Hansen said.

Becoming an advocate is a rewarding commitment for anyone who has a heart for helping children. While it is a significant commitment, Hansen said there are people in all walks of life who volunteer.

"We currently have volunteers who run their own small businesses, who are employed full-time, part-time, as well as retirees and full-time or part-time students."

Volunteers must be at least 21 years old, and there is a 30-hour training to complete. The training "is the most intense, non-flexible commitment during their advocacy," Hansen stated.

"CASA training focuses on the volunteer role, how to effectively engage with families and professionals, and the issues most commonly seen in our cases." In addition to the initial training, 12 hours of annual continuing education is required.

Once training is completed, every volunteer gets paired with a CASA supervisor and sworn in. Hansen explained cases are assigned by judges and, in turn, supervisors assign cases to volunteers.

Judges rely on advocates to be their eyes and ears, and they take their recommendations seriously.

"These recommendations may relate to placement, services that could benefit the child or family, or assessments for parents or caregivers. Volunteers may also provide input on visitation and whether additional supports—such as therapy or medical services—would help ensure the child's safety, stability, and well-being," Hansen explained.

Advocates provide written reports to the judge overseeing their case, but it's also important for advocates

to attend hearings in person. If possible, advocates' schedules are sometimes accommodated to allow them to be present in the courtroom.

The time commitment for a CASA volunteer varies according to the needs of the case and whether or not a hearing is imminent, but on average Hansen said volunteers worked on behalf of a case from 10 to 15 hours per month.

Classes for advocates take place year round and volunteers can usually begin training within four to six weeks. In person classes are generally offered in the CASA office in Crestview Hills, but Hansen said if enough people express interest trainers could travel to the counties in the region to conduct training.

The class meets once a week for eight weeks for three and a half hours (sometimes less) and requires one to three hours of prep work for each, Hansen said.

There is also "a revised curriculum that is offered virtually, when there is enough interest." The online class runs once a week for six weeks with each class lasting two and a half to three hours. Six to ten hours of independent curriculum work prior to each session is expected. Zoom Class time is used for debriefing, local information and case application," Hansen explained.

To learn more about what CASA volunteers do or to fill out an application to become an advocate visit <https://casanorthernbluegrass.org/>. Questions may also be directed to Hansen at [lhansen@casanorthernbluegrass.org](mailto:lhansen@casanorthernbluegrass.org).

# Amending soil for 2026 garden preparation

The rules on amending soil have changed over the years. Part of the change relates to the fact that good soil is hard to come by in new developments where enormous earth-moving equipment is used to level trees and land. This equipment not only removes valuable topsoil, but it also compacts the subsoil and kills many of the living organisms that make up a healthy soil system. The less we disturb the soil the better, but for many the reality is bleak so some sort of amendment is necessary in order to improve tilth, drainage and nutrition for our plants.

Typically, we want to avoid amending the soil for trees and other woody

plants. We do not want to create a false environment where root systems eventually grow beyond their original planting hole. The key here, however, is to dig a large hole so the soil is loosened allowing for easier root growth, drainage and oxygen penetration. When it comes to annual beds and vegetable gardens

it is an entirely different story. Amend all you want to the great benefit of annual plants that give their best in one season, whether it is bloom or fruit.

Soil condition can mean many things and the primary concerns when assessing soil condition should include texture, structure, fertility, pH, drainage, erosion probability and how wet

the soil is at the time of working and planting. All of these factors are inter-related to a certain extent. Fertility, for example, may be high but if the pH is too alkaline or too acid for certain plants then some nutrients become bound to the soil and are unavailable to the plant. For a vegetable garden we want to maintain a neutral to slightly acid pH (6-6.5) to ensure maximum availability of nutrients to the plants. Check the soil pH preferences for other woody garden plants.

Drainage and erosion, of course, relate directly to soil structure and texture. The greater the tilth the better drainage; the better the drainage, the greater chance your garden will be ready to work in the spring. Do not work your soil if it is soggy-wet, you are effectively compacting the soil

if you do so.

Nutrient rich soil that is alive with microorganisms is all the fertilizer you need for your vegetable plants. Treat the soil well and you will be rewarded. Composted organic matter and composted manure (from a vegetarian animal: cow, horse, chicken, etc.) should be staples added to vegetable gardens twice a season, every year. Consider using 2-4 inches of compost when preparing and planting the garden; then adding another inch or two as a side dressing or mulch halfway through the season. This is one case where more is better, no need to worry about using too much compost.

Compost is an excellent soil conditioner, fertilizer and mulch. I think the most important part of its usefulness is how it is nature's slow-release

fertilizer. We have all become so accustomed to using synthetic liquid and granular fertilizers we have forgotten how to feed the soil naturally: it is compost. Fertilizer for container plants is a good practice but the vegetable garden can do with more permanent improvement. As nature's slow-release fertilizer, compost feeds microorganisms in the soil as it feeds our plants. No burst of energy, just a

constant source of nutrients for the soil and for the plant without disturbing other parts of the ecosystem. Synthetic fertilizers high in nitrogen are known to kill earthworms, microorganisms and ultimately drain the soil of fertility. It has even been shown that too much nitrogen fertilizer can reduce the amount of vitamin C in some green vegetables.



JENEEN WICHE

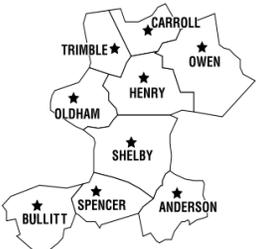
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**Real Estate:** Mostly brick ranch home on 1.5 acres in prime location. The home boasts 3 large bedrooms, 3 full baths, a finished walkout basement, 2 car garage, large family room, living room, dining room, kitchen, and deck overlooking the acreage.



**Separate Building Lot:** 1.5-acre lot, mostly wooded, secluded for privacy. This lot is in a prime location just minutes from I-71 and downtown LaGrange.

**Public Inspection:** Sunday, March 8th. 2-4pm

**TERMS:** A 10% Buyer's Premium will be added to the final bid to determine the final sales price. The winning bidder shall put down 10% of the total sales price (bid price plus the Buyer's Premium) as a deposit with the balance due in 30 days or before the auction date. The real estate is sold as is. The property shall transfer with a special warranty deed.

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## LEGAL NOTICE

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY  
UNIFIED COURT OF JUSTICE  
OWEN CIRCUIT COURT  
CIVIL ACTION # 25-CI-00009

PERRY PARK RESORT OWNERS ASSN. INC. PLAINTIFF  
VS. NOTICE OF SALE  
DENNIS W. ROBERTS, ETAL. DEFENDANTS

By virtue of a Judgment and Order of Sale rendered in the Owen Circuit Court on the 10th day of February, 2026, I will sell at public auction to the highest and best bidder on the front steps of the Owen County Courthouse, 100 North Thomas Street, Owenton, Kentucky at the hour of 10:00, a.m. on Saturday, March 14, 2026, the following described property:

A small parcel or lot lying near the town of Perry Park in Owen County, Kentucky and more particularly described as follows:  
Being Lot 53, Perry Park Subdivision, Unit 101, as shown on the amended plat of said subdivision of record in Plat Cabinet 1, Slide 36 in the Owen County Clerk's Office. Reference to said plat is made in aid of this description.

Being the same property conveyed to Dennis W Roberts by deed of James Roberts and Linda Roberts, husband and wife, dated November 14, 2007 and recorded in Deed Book 223, page 592 in the Owen County Clerk's Office.

There is a manufactured home located on this real property but that home is not included in this sale.

Property Address: 22 Heather Hill Road, Perry Park, KY 40363  
PIDN: 011-61-00-053.00

The amount of money to be raised and for which this sale is being made is the sum of \$20,600.00 adjudged due to plaintiff on its lien on the property, together with interest thereon at the rate of 6% per annum, from February 10, 2026, until paid.

The real estate shall be sold on the terms of 10% cash at the time of the sale, with the balance payable within 30 days, except that the deposit shall be waived if plaintiff is the successful bidder. Any purchaser, other than the plaintiff shall be required to execute bond, with surety thereon acceptable to the Master Commissioner, to secure the unpaid balance of the purchase price, and said bond shall bear interest at the rate of 6% per annum from the date of the sale until paid, and shall have the same force and effect as a judgment and shall remain and be a lien on the property until paid. The purchaser shall have the privilege of paying all or part of the balance of the purchase price prior to the 30 day period.

When the purchase price is paid in full, title will be conveyed to the purchaser by commissioner's deed.

The aforesaid real property shall be sold free and clear of any and all liens and claims except the following:

- All State and County real estate taxes payable on the property for 2026 and thereafter;
- Easements, restrictions and stipulations of record;
- Assessments for public improvements levied against the property;
- Any facts which an inspection and accurate survey of the property may disclose.

For further information, see the Judgment, Order and pleadings of record in the Office of the Circuit Clerk of Owen County.  
/s/ Mark R. Cobb  
MARK R. COBB  
MASTER COMMISSIONER  
OWEN CIRCUIT COURT

For advertising please call 502-633-2527 for more information or to place an ad.