

# Pat Goellner



- 7 years
- 4 cases
- 10 kids

Three little girls were alone.

After their parents could not take care of them, their paternal grandmother – who had already raised eight children – took them in. “It was amazing to see how she just loved those little girls, taking them to see their mother and just taking good care of them,” Pat says.

And the grandmother appreciated Pat’s support and advocacy for the girls. Despite a limited budget, the grandmother would insist on taking Pat out to Frisch’s and give her tomatoes from her garden.

In another case, Pat began as the CASA volunteer for a 2-day-old infant. The little girl, now 4, was adopted this past August but it was a long road in between.

“The mother was mentally ill and she tested positive for marijuana and alcohol when she delivered her baby,” Pat recalls. “Lucy immediately moved into a foster home where they made sure she got all the help she needed.”

Tiny at birth, and diagnosed with failure to thrive, Lucy struggled through her first four years. She would act out in preschool, she had to wear braces on her legs because they were not strong enough. She was slow to talk. Pat is proud of how Lucy caught up. Pat, a former preschool teacher, advocated for a variety of interventions and ensured they were implemented.

Beth Turk, the CASA Manager who works with Pat, says that Pat always treats the families with

great respect. “She’s able to make sure the children are safe with very little drama,” Beth says. “She asks the right questions and meets people where they are.”

Beth says “you can’t fool Pat with anything. She’s seen it all.”

And that’s what helped during the four years Pat had to deal with the difficult mother as the process dragged along to release Lucy for adoption. “Lucy would call her mother the ‘downtown lady,’ from when she would visit her at the facility for supervised visitation downtown. “She would just scream at those visits. There was no meaningful relationship there. We had to stop the visits because they were so traumatic,” Pat says.

As the small girl who loves Minnie Mouse got older, Pat says it became more obvious that she had delays like sensory problems. “But she is the cutest little thing,” Pat says. “She has long, dark curly hair and is just so sweet. Except when she’s acting out, like at school. She will continue to need help as she grows up.”

Thanks to Pat’s advocacy, Lucy was adopted by her foster family. “It was a happy, happy day when we celebrated at LaRosa’s,” Pat says. “But it took so long. We had to keep pushing. And it was clear that what we did in court was what made the difference. When ProKids comes into court, you can see how the magistrate just treats us with so much respect. It’s because of that ProKids is able to save so many children.”

For Pat, being a part of saving these children is a privilege.

**86%**  
of  
ProKids  
children  
are adopted  
within 24  
months of  
permanent  
custody  
status  
(when the  
Court  
releases  
them for  
adoption).

Of all  
the  
children  
who die  
from abuse  
or  
neglect,  
77%  
are younger  
than  
4 years old.