**Month in the Life of a CASA - Natalie**

By Meridith Coady, CASA for 3½ years

Natalie is a bubbly, silly, fun 2-year-old who wears her dark hair in pigtails and looks just like “Boo” from the “Monsters Inc.” movies. I was lucky enough to become her CASA when she was 8 months old. She came into foster care because her biological mother used drugs while she was pregnant and her biological father was incarcerated. She was placed in a loving foster home shortly after birth and was thriving, along with another unrelated child who had been placed in the same home. Though doing well, Natalie was receiving multiple therapies and interventions to address developmental delays due to her in-utero drug exposure.

Earlier this month, I visited Natalie in her foster home. Santa brought her a play kitchen for Christmas, so we pretended to make breakfast together. Her favorite book is based on the “Frozen” movies, so she sat on my lap while I read it to her and we worked together on naming the various shapes in the book. The other child placed in the home, also a toddler, enjoys playing with a large wooden puzzle. The three of us played with it together and I had a chance to observe the interaction between the two children. We finished the visit with a dance party to her favorite music: classic rock and roll.

Later in the month, Natalie had an out-of-home occupational therapy appointment and I met her and her caregivers at the therapy site. It was a group session set up with activity stations and the kids rotated through various tasks. I was able to speak to the occupational therapist working with Natalie and confirm her diagnoses and treatment goals. I was also able to observe how Natalie responded to adults and other children, as well as her progress toward her therapy goals.

At the end of the month, I called the social worker and summarized my interactions with Natalie and her caregivers. I also called my advocacy supervisor and kept her up to date on Natalie’s case. Natalie’s permanent plan is adoption, so we are hoping to celebrate that soon!