

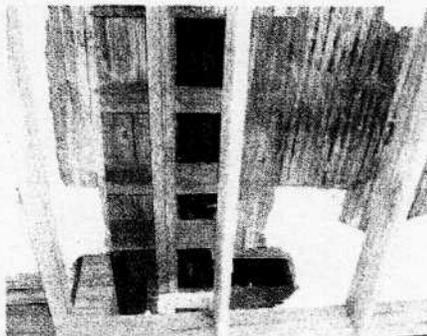
Every child deserves a Safe Home

Athens-Oconee CASA (court appointed special advocates) has been serving children in our community for over 20 years. In 2009, it moved under the umbrella of Children First, Inc to better serve the diverse needs of children and families in our area. (www.childrenfirst-inc.org) The ultimate goal of CASA is to ensure that every child has a safe, permanent home and to end the cycle of abuse or neglect.

I met with Executive Director, Christian Orobello at their new office and visitation home at 693 North Pope Street. The home is currently undergoing complete renovation managed by Bona-Fide Construction (706-548-2754) The goal for the new CASA house is to provide a neutral home setting for kids to engage with their families. The project is due to complete by the first of this year.



Bona-Fide has been doing construction and renovation in our community since 2001 so they were a natural fit for this project. Their ability to address everything from structural design to the practical use of spaces has allowed the house to evolve gracefully. Families need living areas to engage naturally. A kitchen to prepare and share a meal, a family room to do homework in or join in a board game and a back yard to play in have all been taken into consideration. Time spent



together with the presence of a trained volunteer allows for modeling and engaging in a way that is practical. Families do not fit into a one size fits all formula after all!

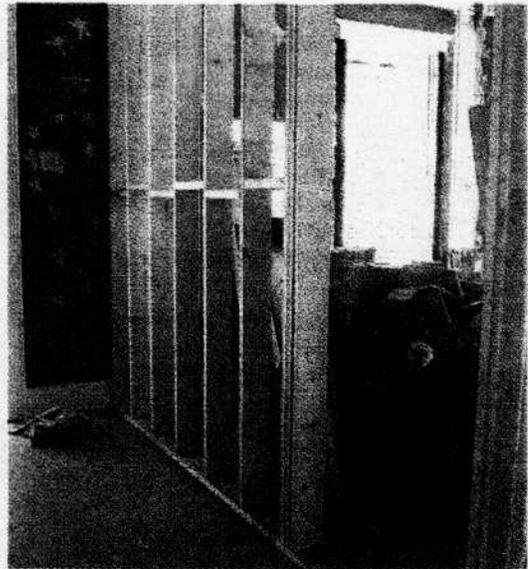
In re working the spaces, designers had to mold the old with the new. Christian relies on his site manager, Nick Patrick, who has masters in historical preservation to ebb and flow with Bona-Fide. Managing the details of the menagerie of professional contractors requires skill. Carpenters to roofer's painters to insulation installers -CASA house is largely worked by the grace and heartfelt believe of craftsmen who are donating their time and energy to this worthy build.

Christian and I walked from room to room examining handsome wood and an ancient fireplace. We admired the strength of the beams and the character of each space. I can imagine children and their families not only enjoying time here, but also recog-



nizing it as a safe place. Here in these golden walls, changes will take place to grow healthy families. Judges realize that where children are involved, we are talking about a person and not a case number who may not have their voice heard. A refuge like CASA allows trained advocates to develop relationships with individual children and give them a voice in the courtroom.

From the drawing board at Bona-Fide to the halls of Pope Street, dreams are in the making. A renovation of brick and mortar, flesh and bone. A build of years of hard work in the hands of child advocates, skilled artisans and families all working for a common goal. Donate your time or gifts to the "Hope on



Popr" project. Contact Children First (706-613-1922) if you have a skill or heart for advocacy. Email Christian christian@childrenfirst-inc.org to learn more about how you can plug in. Athens is rich in history and its reputation for its enduring spirit. This build is one that Athens will be proud of for years to come and we'd love to have your help!

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