

THE *CASA BRIEF*

A Newsletter for Volunteers, Friends and Supporters of Douglas County CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children

Volume 21, Number 1 - JANUARY-APRIL 2012



DCCF GRANT FUNDS CASA KITCHEN AND TOY STORAGE

Our 2011 grant from the Douglas County Community Foundation financed a dream come true with the creation of a CASA kitchen and toy storage area in our office. Now that the remodeling is complete, CASA children, volunteers and staff have been thrilled to utilize this renovated space for a variety of cooking and craft projects. The new toy storage nook in the kitchen has allowed us to organize blankets, backpacks, toys, journals, stuffed animals, toothbrushes, birthday items and other donations for children.

We now wonder how we ever survived without this important new resource in our office! Our thanks to the DCCF for this generous grant in honor of retired Judge Jean Shepherd. Like most remodeling projects, the CASA kitchen conversion experienced a few delays and went over budget, but we were fortunate to receive several donations to help us complete the project just in time for children to decorate Christmas cookies. Special thanks to First Presbyterian Church and to Berkeley Plaza for pitching in with some extra financial help!

(We still need a couple of counter-height bar stools, dishes and a variety of kitchen utensils and baking supplies so gift cards to Target or Bed, Bath & Beyond have been added to our wish list!)



CASA is central to fulfilling society's most fundamental obligation by making sure a qualified, compassionate adult will fight for and protect a child's right to be safe, to be treated with dignity and respect, and to learn and grow in the security of a loving family.

Support Douglas County CASA with your tax-deductible gift today. www.dccasa.org

I am for the child. Are you?

HELP RESTORE NATIONAL CASA FUNDING!

ACTION ALERT

For 10 years National CASA received \$12 million in funding for the CASA program through the Victims of Child Abuse Act. We have used these vital funds to provide advocacy, training and technical assistance in support of almost 1,000 CASA programs around the country serving 240,000 neglected and abused children each year.

Last year Congress reduced the funding for CASA programs to \$4.5 million. And now, the Administration has proposed **eliminating all funding for this vital program** in FY 2013.

A team of CASA representatives met with 40 congressional representatives in February and learned that **there is a chance to restore full funding for this program** provided enough congressional offices urge appropriators to do the right thing. **But timing is critical.**

You must do two things right now to restore CASA funding:

1. **Immediately** use Email, Facebook and Twitter to pass this alert along to staff, volunteers, board members, and your networks of friends and colleagues.
2. **Immediately** contact your two senators and your one member of the US House of Representatives and **send them the letter below.** (You can cut and paste it into your email)

You can reach your senators and representative from this site:

<http://www.congressmerge.com/onlinedb/>

Enter your zip code (only) and the site will take you directly to the contact information for your two senators and one representative. Click on the "Contact Forms" and it will link you directly to each of the three congressional websites, from which you can submit your

request.

It is imperative that we act quickly.

If you have any questions, contact:
staff@CASAforChildren.org.

Message to send to congressional offices:

Please urge the Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce and Justice to restore appropriated funding of \$12 million for the Court Appointed Special Advocate program for children (CASA). Tell the subcommittee of your support, and include the CASA program on your appropriations programmatic request list.

CASA saves lives—The program has achieved unprecedented success in breaking the cycle of abuse and neglect, and offering our most vulnerable children hope of a safe, loving, permanent home.

CASA saves billions in taxpayer dollars—Every dollar spent on CASA yields \$23 in savings in the foster care and family court systems.

CASA is good policy—It is the model of an outstanding public/private partnership. A nonprofit organization, backed by the Department of Justice, and fueled by 75,000 volunteer child advocates.

The need is urgent—With current resources we only reach 240,000 of the nearly 660,000 children in foster care. The proposed budget cut would devastate our ability to reach even the small fraction we do today.

This is society's obligation—Protecting the rights and safety of abused and neglected children is one of society's most fundamental obligations.

Restoring this funding is neither controversial nor debatable. These children need our help and CASA is the proven solution. Thank you for your attention and support of this critical issue!



THANK YOU!!
Recent Donations Support the
CASA Mission in Douglas County



Every donation truly makes a difference and we are especially grateful for so many generous contributions in late 2011 and early 2012. Whether these donations arrive in the mail, online, or in person, every contribution helps support CASA efforts on behalf of abused and neglected children. **Our thanks to all of our generous supporters!**

Pictured above is Grant Thorne, Vice President and Banking Center Manager of **Bank of America** presenting a generous check to CASA Director Diana Frederick. Grant delivered a grant for CASA!

At right is Susan Ralston, presenting a donation from **Trinity Episcopal Church's** annual Ploughman's Lunch. Our CASA program is very grateful to be a beneficiary of this annual event.

Birthdays Benefit CASA!



Philanthropy starts young in Lawrence, Kansas, as Caroline Patton and Campbell Persinger recently demonstrated. At left, Caroline Patton presents \$300 to Diana Frederick at CASA in honor of her 12th birthday. In lieu of gifts, she asked friends and family to make donations to Douglas County CASA.

Pictured at right, Campbell Persinger reveals journals, backpacks, toys and other items donated by friends and family in honor of her 9th birthday. Needless to say, we are extremely honored to receive these meaningful birthday tributes and we extend our appreciation to *everyone* who donated to CASA on behalf of Caroline and Campbell.



KAPPA ALPHA THETA'S 9TH ANNUAL

MAY DAY SUNDAYES



BENEFITING DOUGLAS COUNTY CASA

SUNDAY, APRIL 29TH

12:00-2:00 P.M.

WATSON PARK (6TH & TENNESSEE)

RAIN-OUT LOCATION: ABE & JAKE'S (8 EAST SIXTH STREET)

\$5 TICKET INCLUDES: ICE CREAM, COKE PRODUCT, AND HOT DOG!

CHILDREN SERVED IN 2011

In 2011, Douglas County CASA volunteers served 89 abused and neglected children from birth to age 18. Gender: 43 girls and 46 boys / Birth to age 5: 32 / Ages 6-11: 21 / Ages 12-15: 17 / Ages 16-17: 9 / Ages 18 and above: 3 / Volunteers gave more than 4,800 hours as advocates for children and drove more than 29,000 miles. There are 38 children waiting for a CASA volunteer in Douglas County.



April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Look for our "Pinwheels for Prevention" on display at a public location in April! For information and resources regarding child abuse prevention and awareness, visit www.pinwheelsforprevention.org or www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/preventionmonth/

OUR WISH LIST ...

- ☉ Monetary donations for the CASA Kids Clothing Fund or the Shepherd Shoe Fund
- ☉ Vacuum cleaner (bagless would be great!)
- ☉ 2 counter-height barstools for the CASA kitchen
- ☉ Kleenex
- ☉ Pizza cutter, paper towels, spatula, spoons, knives, cooling rack, dishes (plates & bowls), dish towels, glasses, a mixer and more!
- ☉ Gift cards to Walmart, Target, Kohl's, JC Penney, and Best Buy.

Gift cards from \$10 to \$50 allow us to purchase important clothing, self-care, and wish list items for babies, toddlers, children and teens served by Douglas County CASA.

Gift cards to Target, Walmart, and Bed, Bath and Beyond can also help us purchase items for the brand new CASA kitchen!



Don't forget to use your Lawrence GiveBack card to benefit CASA! Your help is needed so CASA can continue to benefit from this great program. Cards are available in the CASA office or at participating merchants. For a complete list and details, visit www.lawrencegiveback.com.



Make a Difference in the Lives that Follow – Consider a Planned Gift to Douglas County CASA



Volunteer Spotlight: Erin Hatton-Landwehr

When We Help Children in Need, Everybody Wins

By Kitty Ware

“Witnessing my child’s resilience through school changes, placement changes and numerous interventions has been inspiring.”

Everyone knows that it's very helpful to have a lawyer in your corner. This is especially true for a child in a vulnerable situation. Erin Hatton-Landwehr serves as a CASA in Douglas County and, as a lawyer herself, understands well these types of difficulties and challenges. Erin became motivated to help children in tough circumstances explaining, "As an attorney, I was aware of some of the issues that children face when immersed in the judicial system as well as the need for judges to hear the voices of the children." She has been a CASA volunteer since January 2010.

Those who volunteer as CASAs often remark on how it can be a rewarding, inspiring experience. Erin notes that the children assigned to CASAs "find themselves in a very unsure place, and some of them have never had consistent adults in their lives. Over time, as you show your child you care and are reliable, your child begins to trust in you. Despite his or her struggles, your child bonds with you, and you are able to begin to positively impact his life." She continues, "Witnessing my child’s resilience through school changes, placement changes and numerous interventions has been inspiring."

Erin knows well how the legal system can be frustrating at times. "I think the most challenging aspect of the life of a volunteer is dealing with the legal system," she says. "As an attorney, I am already aware that the legal system can be unwieldy and full of delays. But, when you are close to your CASA child personally and sometimes have strong opinions about what the best course of action is, it can be frustrating to wait for the legal system to act. And, sometimes professionals in the case make decisions with which you do not agree. Despite the frustrations, I value the opportunity to be the voice of the child because I believe the CASA’s opinion is heard and appreciated."

Erin is buoyed in her volunteer work by her support CASA, her husband Brock. Despite their busy schedules -- between them, they have four children ages 5 and 16, and Erin is an antique dealer, too -- they make time to make a positive difference in the lives of children in need.

Erin provides an eloquent explanation of how her work as a CASA is uniquely rewarding, saying, "I feel like I have learned as much or more from being a CASA than I have imparted. Being inside a 'child in need of care' case can be frustrating, but I have seen many people doing their best: my CASA child trying to improve; parents building their skills; professionals reaching out with genuine care and concern; and judges making hard decisions to do what they believe is right. I would definitely recommend being a CASA to other people. It will expand your understanding of people in different walks of life and with different challenges. It will inspire you to make a positive impact on others in your everyday life. It will open your eyes to appreciate the positive aspects of your life. And, while reaping all of these benefits, you get to help someone who will become a lifelong friend."

CASA of Douglas County certainly appreciates volunteers like Erin who are instrumental in carrying out the organization's mission: to help ensure that children of Douglas County grow up in safe, permanent and loving homes. Thanks, Erin!



“I value the opportunity to be the voice of the child because I believe the CASA’s opinion is heard and appreciated.”

The Advocate

A special section for our Douglas County CASA Volunteers



Eight New Volunteers Complete February Training Class

We are pleased to welcome eight new volunteers to Douglas County CASA. Our newest recruits are pictured at left and include (bottom row) Andrew and Basha Borden; (second row) Dani Weiter, Carly McPeak, and Rita Rials; (top row) Janet George, Casey Cornwell, and Tyler Holmes. With 38 children waiting for a CASA volunteer, our need for dedicated advocates is great. These volunteers completed more than 30 hours of training and court observations as part of their certification requirements. We are also grateful to our guest speakers during the February training sessions: Honorable Peggy Kittel, Jan Sheldon, Juanita Carlson, Erin Hatton-Landwehr, Sue Richardson, Joan Valburg, Lis Niswonger, and Clarissa Howley.

Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in. ~Author Unknown



APRIL IS NATIONAL VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION MONTH

Our Douglas County CASA volunteers are the BEST! Special thanks to our dedicated advocates, ambassadors, board members, newsletter feature writers, office helpers and more! Volunteers are the heart of CASA and your efforts make an incredible difference for many children. We greatly appreciate all that you do! In 2011, our advocates volunteered more than 4,829 hours on casework for children and drove more than 29,000 miles!! Our Board of Directors, program attorney, training speakers, special event volunteers and office helpers volunteered more than 2,800 additional hours!

Please join us for a special Volunteer Appreciation Celebration on Thursday, April 19, 5:30 pm at The Smith Center. Our celebration during National Volunteer Week will include food, fun, music, "Pinwheels for Prevention", and much more. Judge Kittel and Judge Shepherd will join us to present the Honorable Jean F. Shepherd Volunteer of the Year awards to CASA and CRB honorees. An hour of in-service credit will be awarded if you attend!

**Official invitations coming soon but RSVP any time:
832-5172 or bmccarty@douglas-county.com**



CASA Resource Reminders



We are pleased to provide a variety of important resources to meet special needs of children and youth served by CASA. As you advocate for your child or sibling group, don't forget to check with your volunteer supervisor or contact our office to access this special support.

♥ **CASA Clothing and Emergency Fund** – Funds available for children's clothing and other special needs.

♥ **Shepherd Shoe Fund** – Established in honor of Judge Shepherd's retirement, this fund provides financial assistance for "extracurricular" footwear: sports, dance, prom, marching band, and more!

♥ **Summer Scholarships** – Funded by the Ethel and Raymond Rice Foundation, we provide financial assistance for CASA children and other at-risk youth to attend summer camps and activities. **2012 Summer Scholarship information is coming soon! Watch your email for updates. Special thanks to the Rice Foundation for a generous donation of \$7,500 toward the 2012 CASA Summer Scholarship fund!**

♥ **My Stuff Bags** – You will receive a backpack or diaper bag filled with blankets, books, toys, journals, and other age-appropriate items for you to share with your child after you are sworn in to a new case.

♥ **Birthday Bags** – Thanks to help from the Omega Phi Alpha service sorority at KU, the KU Office of the University Registrar, and donations from other caring individuals, we provide a gift bag filled with goodies for every CASA child's special day. We also include coupons for decorated cookies from Eileen's Colossal Cookies and free ice cream coupons redeemable at J&S Coffee. Coming soon: gift certificates for books from Altrusa International!

♥ **Holiday Gifts** - Christmas stockings and Easter baskets provided by our CASA Ambassadors. Easter baskets available at the end of March!

♥ **Adoption Gifts** – A special necklace for girls or a keychain for boys with sterling silver house emblem and "Forever" engraved. Other age-appropriate items are also provided.

♥ **Activity Bags** – Funded by a previous DCCF grant, we have activity bags with games and activities for every age group, birth through high school. Check out a bag to take with you when you visit your CASA child! We also have a variety of board games, craft kits, and children's books you can borrow from our office!

♥ **Office Activities** – Don't forget to reserve the new CASA kitchen for baking and craft projects with your CASA kids! Activities available in the Jean Shepherd Room include an X-box, Wii, movies, games, books, toys, crafts and more!

♥ **Gift cards** – Be sure to check with the CASA office to see what gift cards we have available. The selection varies but often includes Walmart, Target, McDonald's, Jason's Deli, Hollywood Theatres, Orange Leaf, and more.



Our thanks to the many generous individuals, foundations and groups in the community who provide donations to make these resources possible!

Staff Transition – Passing the baton!

We wish **Elizabeth Day** the best of luck in her new job as a WRAP worker in Eudora Elementary School, and we are delighted to welcome former CASA volunteer **Susan Allen** as the new Volunteer Supervisor on our staff. Special thanks to **Sammie Conder** for providing help and respite as our Interim Volunteer Supervisor during this transition. **In our next issue: Look for a special Staff Spotlight feature on our new Volunteer Supervisor, Susan Allen!** Susan will start her new duties in the CASA office on Tuesday, April 3.



Douglas County CASA, Inc.

Board of Directors: Tasha Aldrich, Jenny Brown, Hatem Chahine (*Secretary*), Shelly Goscha, Greg Gardner, Eric Hiebert, Tami Keasling, Brad Kemp (*Past President*), David Martin (*Treasurer*), Brian Seymour (*President*), Helen Seymour (*Vice President*), Amy Shumaker, Britny Wood.
Ex officio: Jill LaPoint (*CASA Ambassadors*); Grace Krause (*Kappa Alpha Theta*).

Staff: Diana Frederick, *Executive Director*; Susan Allen, *Volunteer Supervisor*; Sherry Catt, *Volunteer Supervisor*; Carolyn Johnson, *Volunteer Supervisor*; Brooksie McCarty, *Administrative Assistant*

Contact Information: Douglas County CASA, Inc., 1009 New Hampshire, Suite B, Lawrence, KS 66044; Phone: 785-832-5172; Fax: 785-856-1279; E-mail: casa@douglas-county.com;
Web site: www.dccasa.org. For newsletter questions or suggestions, please contact Diana Frederick at dfrederick@douglas-county.com.

Our Mission:

We provide comprehensive advocacy for abused and neglected children in need of care and under the protection of the court system. Our trained volunteers investigate, facilitate, monitor and mentor. Through compassion and commitment, they are dedicated to be the child's voice through their journey to a safe, loving permanent home.



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