

THE CASA BRIEF

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

Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children

Volume 20, Number 4 - JULY / AUGUST 2011



2011 CASA Playhouse



Douglas County CASA Hosts 20th Annual Playhouse Tour and Benefit

For the past 20 years, local builders, architects, and other caring individuals have donated time and materials to create a child-sized playhouse to serve as the focal point for the annual “Casa for CASA” benefit for Douglas County Court Appointed Special Advocates. A symbolic reminder of children who need safe, permanent homes, the 20th annual CASA playhouse tour began on June 18, affirming an important milestone in the agency’s 20th anniversary year.

While many CASA agencies nationwide have had difficulty sustaining a signature playhouse fundraiser, Douglas County CASA has been fortunate to continue this tradition for 20 years. “The Lawrence community is extremely generous,” says CASA Director Diana Frederick. “Our board members wonder every year if we’ll find a volunteer for such a big project, but someone from the community always steps forward.”

This year, Mike Wedman of Wedman Construction accepted the challenge to design and build a playhouse for the 2011 *Casa for CASA* benefit. With a baby due this summer, Wedman even completed the playhouse ahead of schedule, allowing a “sneak preview” appearance at Art in the Park on May 1. The official CASA playhouse tour, however, is June 18-July 16. On weekends throughout the tour, volunteers will accept \$2 donations for opportunities to win the playhouse, which will be given away during a celebration at the Lawrence Arts Center on July 16. Playhouse tour dates and locations are posted on the CASA website: www.dccasa.org; donations to win the playhouse and attend the party are also accepted online and in the CASA office.

Made of reclaimed materials, the 2011 playhouse features unique French and Dutch doors, cedar trimmed windows, treated deck flooring and more. According to Wedman, the versatile design supports a variety of uses and “will make a great garden shed after the kids are grown!”

2011 Casa for CASA Playhouse Tour: June 18-June 25 - Walmart at 31st and Iowa; June 26-July 4 - HyVee on 6th Street; July 4-15 - The Merc at 9th and Iowa; July 16 - am: Farmer’s Market on New Hampshire St; pm: Lawrence Arts Center. **Tickets (\$2 donation) to win the playhouse are available in the CASA office (1009 New Hampshire, Ste B), on the agency website www.dccasa.org; and at the Customer Service Counter of The Merc.** Volunteers will also accept ticket donations on weekends at the tour sites listed above.

The lucky winner of the 2011 playhouse will be announced at the *Casa for CASA* Celebration on July 16 at the Lawrence Arts Center. The July 16 event will also include the return of unique, custom decorated “casitas” or dollhouses embellished by local groups, artists, and individuals. Twenty “*Casitas for CASA: Little Houses for a Big Cause*” will be on display at local businesses and at the Lawrence Arts Center prior to the celebration and will be available via silent auction at the July party.

Six of the 20 casitas will be decorated by teams of college women who are participating in an international women’s leadership institute hosted at the University of Kansas this summer. These participants in the “Women’s Civic Leadership from the Heartland” include 20 women from Morocco, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Egypt and India. “We are very excited about this meaningful partnership with KU and look forward to the exchange of information and cultures between CASA and these international college students,” says Frederick.

The annual playhouse tour and related activities comprise Douglas County CASA’s single largest fundraiser. Proceeds from playhouse ticket donations, casitas and the July 16 *Casa for CASA* celebration support Douglas County CASA’s services to abused and neglected children. CASA volunteers are currently assigned to 60 children and there are more in need of a CASA volunteer.

For more information about Douglas County CASA and to view photos of past playhouses and casitas, visit our web site at www.dccasa.org. For information about the international women’s leadership institute at KU, contact Mary Banwart, Associate Professor, www.servicelearning.ku.edu/wliindex.shtml.



The CASA Board of Directors invites you to the 20th Annual
CASA 4 CASA
 Playhouse Celebration

Saturday, July 16th, 2011
 6:30 – 9:30 pm
 Lawrence Arts Center

Join us for an evening of friends & fun, featuring
 food, drinks and a fabulous silent auction.
 Including special musical guest **Thundercat!**

Executive Director:
 Diana Frederick
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 Brad Kemp

Board Members:
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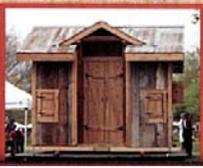
For more information about
 the playhouse or Douglas
 County CASA, please visit:
www.dccasa.org

**Playhouse Design &
 Construction donated
 by Mike Wedman of
 Wedman Construction**

Playhouse winner will be
 announced at 8:30 pm.

The Hon. Jean F. Shepherd
 Volunteer Award will be
 presented at 7:15 pm.

Special thanks to our
 title sponsor: Pediatric
 and Adolescent Medicine



YOU ARE INVITED!!

Please join us at the 20th annual
 Casa 4 Casa Playhouse Celebration
 on July 16, Lawrence Arts Center.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR TITLE SPONSOR:
 PEDIATRIC & ADOLESCENT MEDICINE, P.A.

Festivities include fabulous food
 and beverages,
 Hon. Jean F. Shepherd Volunteer of the Year Awards to
 CASA and CRB honorees; Casita (Dollhouse) Awards;
 a Silent Auction – featuring diverse treasures,
 and 20 unique “casitas”;
 and Live Music by the legendary band **Thundercat**.

Thundercat band members:

Henry "Big Cat" Wertin--vocals, bass guitar
 Ivan "Brave" Hart--lead guitar, vocals
 David "3D" Dunlap--guitar when he feels like it, vocals
 Lew "Thunderstruck" Hanna--drums, vocals

Admission is \$40 per person via the CASA office, on line
 (www.dccasa.org) or at the door on July 16.



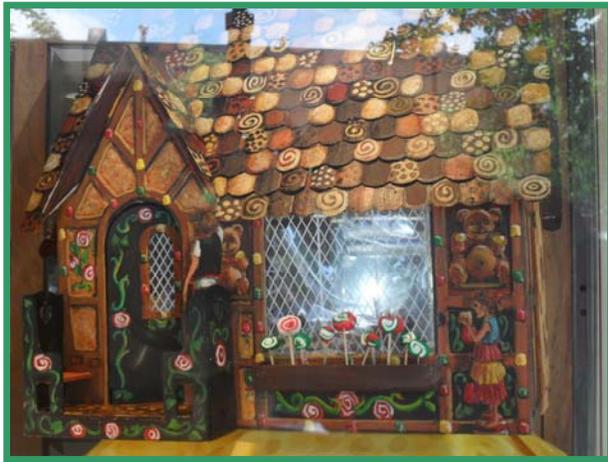
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CASITAS ON PARADE!



Many of the creative dollhouses assembled and decorated with unique themes for our “Casitas for CASA: Little Houses for a Big Cause” – a special feature of the 2011 CASA4CASA festivities - are **now on tour throughout Lawrence!** The 20 casitas will be on display at the Lawrence Arts Center from July 9-16, but can be spotted at the following locations until then:

“**Sticks and Stones**” by Michelle Martin – Spectators, 710 Massachusetts

“**Snoopy as the Flying Ace**” by Mark & Meleah Zumwalt; Don, Diane & Marla Herron – KU Student Union

“**Ye Olde Barber Shoppe & Beauty Salon**” by Kendra Jones & Family and the Owner & Staff of Designers Hair Salon – Designers Hair Salon - 2108 W 27th St Ste D

“**It’s a Dog Thing**” by Helen Seymour – Clinton Parkway Animal Hospital, 4340 Clinton Parkway

“**Beach House**” by Oread Orthodontics – Oread Orthodontics, 1425 Wakarusa Dr.

“**The Tree House**” – by Nikki Rutland and Jayme – Dr. Robert Gollier III, DDS, 346 Maine

“**La Vie Est Douce**” by Jill LaPoint – Au Marche, 931 Massachusetts

“**20 CASA Gallery**” by Christina Gordzica & Carol Armstrong – Treanor Architects, 110 McDonald Dr.

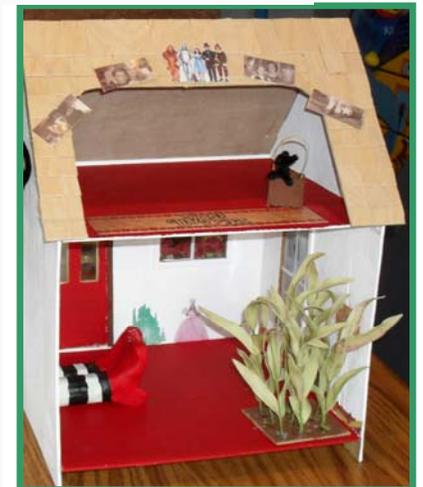
“**Cookies and More Store**” by Julie Alderman – Eileen’s Colossal Cookies, 4931 W. 6th St.

“**Whimsical Hansel & Gretel Cottage**” by Nancy Marshall & Melinda Huston – Kizer-Cummings Jewelry, 833 Massachusetts. **Pictured above.**

“**Pirate House**” by Laura Ramberg – Scotch Cleaners, 1029 New Hampshire

“**The Wizard of Oz**” by Omega Phi Alpha Service Sorority at KU, J&S Coffee, 4821 W. 6th St, Suite E. **Interior view pictured at right.**

When the casitas are on display at the Lawrence Arts Center from July 9-16, the public may vote for their favorite dollhouse in the “People’s Choice Awards.” Other casita awards will be determined by a panel of judges; the casita awards will be presented at the CASA4CASA celebration at the LAC on July 16 and the dollhouses will be available via silent auction at this event. 2011 Casita Judges include Charles Branson, Margey Frederick, Colleen Gregoire, Chad Kraus, Denton Nichols, Steve Padget, Gina Pacumbaba-Watson, Susan Tate, and Gail Vick.



Another treat: Six of the casitas are being created by **20 international college women** who are in Lawrence this summer as part of the “Women’s Civic Leadership from the Heartland” institute at the University of Kansas. Their casitas will be decorated with the themes of their home countries: Egypt, Morocco, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Sudan. CASA Director Diana Frederick gave a CASA presentation to their group on June 20 at KU and the young women are very passionate about supporting this important cause.





Volunteer Spotlight: Sue Midyett

Devotion to Children Drew Sue Midyett to Douglas County CASA

By Kitty Ware

"I have truly enjoyed working with the kids through my work as a CASA"

Teachers spend their professional lives making a positive difference in the lives of children. It seems that for many of them, this noble calling carries over to their avocations. Such was the case for Sue Midyett, a retired school teacher in Lawrence. Sue explains how she got the "call" to serve as a CASA: "One day Barbara Kelly, a retired teacher who was quite a bit older than I was, called. She happened to ask how many hours I had volunteered in the last year. I had not done any volunteering that year. I thought that if Barbara could spend hours volunteering I had better get my act together."

Fortunately for CASA of Douglas County, Sue was aware of the organization and the good work it does for children and families. Sue says, "I had heard about CASA and had friends that were volunteers so decided I would see for myself! I taught kindergarten and first grade in Lawrence for many years and loved almost every minute of it. I have truly enjoyed working with the kids through my work as a CASA." Since 2004, Sue has been using her skills and caring spirit to help children during what can be a stressful and tumultuous period in their lives.

Those who volunteer as CASAs often remark on how it can be a rewarding experience. Sue treasures some very special memories as a CASA. "My most rewarding times have been in two cases. In one case, the two girls were adopted by their foster grandmother into what I believed to be a great situation for them. In the other case, the two boys were returned to their mother after she had made great strides in turning her life around and the boys' behaviors had improved greatly." No doubt Sue's guiding hand and extensive experience working with children played a role in these happy outcomes.

Volunteers such as Sue experience some difficult situations as well. Sue says, "The most challenging part of being a CASA, from my point of view, comes from working with the families when they are first beginning to come back together and trying to figure out if things are really going to work out. One is always hoping and praying that the decisions that one is relaying in the court reports are in the best interest of the children."

Sue has a busy, fulfilling life outside of her work as a CASA. "I have 5 grown children who have given me 12 wonderful grandchildren." she says. "Ten boys and two girls. I have certainly enjoyed being a part of their growing up! My husband of 48 years and I live out in the country near Oskaloosa. We have lots of land and six dogs. I enjoy sewing, knitting, quilting, my grandchildren and having dinner with friends."

Volunteering as a CASA can be most rewarding for people who want to lend a guiding hand to children in difficult circumstances, and CASA of Douglas County provides support to those who wish to serve. Sue says, "If you have a desire to volunteer and enjoy being with children of any age and help them transition to a better situation, I highly recommend CASA. The CASA supervisors are awesome people with whom to work."

CASA of Douglas County certainly appreciates volunteers like Sue 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, Sue!



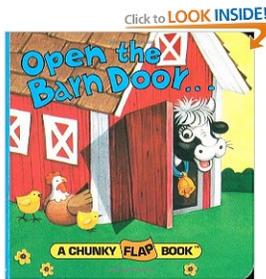
CASA volunteers are everyday citizens judges appoint to advocate for the safety and well-being of children who have been removed from their homes due to parental abuse and neglect. They stand up for these children and change their lives. CASA volunteers throughout the nation have helped more than two million children find safe, permanent homes. In 2010, Douglas County CASA volunteers served 77 abused and neglected children.



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

CASA Summer Scholarships Make a Difference!

Thanks to grant support from the Ethel and Raymond Rice Foundation and funds from our CASA program, dozens of at-risk children and youth from our community are attending a variety of camps and activities this summer. These activities include photography, science, music, football, basketball, baseball, volleyball, tae kwon do, and more. With rising camp and activity fees and limited resources, children served by CASA, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and other at-risk youth from the community would not be able to participate in these activities without this special scholarship support.



OUR WISH LIST ...

- ☺ Kleenex (boxes and small individual packages)
- ☺ Monetary donations for the CASA Kids Clothing Fund or the Shepherd Shoe Fund
- ☺ Monetary or in-kind donations (e.g., movie and bowling passes) for the CASA Child/Volunteer Activity Fund.
- ☺ Restaurant certificates
- ☺ Children's books (new) for 0-2 years; 2-4 years; 4-6 years. "Chunky" books with textures, shapes, and bright colors are especially needed.

☺ Gift cards to Walmart, Target, Kohl's, JC Penney, and Best Buy. These gift cards allow us to purchase important clothing, self-care, and wish list items for babies, toddlers, children and teens served by Douglas County CASA.

THANK YOU! YOUR DONATIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A special THANK YOU is extended to all of our wonderful CASA friends who have shared financial and in-kind donations to support Douglas County CASA's services to abused and neglected children. We are very grateful for your generous support!

And ... special THANKS to our CASA Ambassadors who are providing special adoption gifts and graduation gifts for our CASA children and teens.



THANK YOU to those of you who are using your GiveBack card to benefit CASA! What is the Lawrence Give Back Card? It's a plastic magnetic striped card that you keep in your wallet. **It makes an Automatic Charitable Donation** when you make any purchase with a Give Back merchant. Simply present your Give Back Card with your purchase and a % of your sale will go to the charity you've registered on your Card. Cards are available in the CASA office or at participating merchants. For a complete list and details, visit www.lawrencegiveback.com.

The Advocate

A special section for our Douglas County CASA Volunteers

July In-Service Opportunity:

Child Support and Paternity Issues for CINC Cases

Douglas County CASA volunteers have the opportunity to join Citizen Review Board (CRB) volunteers for an interesting and informative in-service workshop this month. CRB Director Heather Krase-Minnick has invited CASA volunteers to participate in a special session on July 14, from noon to 1:15, in the basement jury assembly room of the Judicial and Law Enforcement Center. The guest speaker will be Gayla Waymire, Child Support Enforcement Attorney for SRS. Waymire will address child support and paternity issues as they relate to both CINC and JO cases. She will explain what gives SRS the authority to file a case to determine paternity, how paternity issues and child support affect CINC cases – including issues such as reintegration, termination of parental rights and other permanency goals.

Other questions regarding child support and CINC cases are welcome, so please feel free to convey your queries to Elizabeth in the CASA office. Lunch will be provided during this in-service so please RSVP to Elizabeth Day by July 8, 832-5172 or via email: eday@douglas-county.com.



Not Just Another Birthday

Charlie McNeely, FosterClub All-Star

Summary: A young woman who grew up in the foster care system reflects on the process of leaving care when she turned 18.

My only lesson or training on transitioning out of foster care when I turned 18 was the fact that I had no choice but to face the harsh realities of becoming an adult. There were no classes, no workshops, not even handouts. My only warning was an approaching birthday that reminded me that soon enough I would learn for myself what this "transitioning" thing was all about.

Obviously, the way I transitioned out of the foster care system was not ideal. By the time I was 18 I had to basically have my life planned. I did not have the luxury of testing the waters or finding out who I was—I had not had opportunities that allowed me to know what I wanted to be when I grew up. I felt that there was no room to make unnecessary errors or freedom to change my mind. Most kids who did not grow up in the foster care system are given that time to bump their head a few times, make mistakes and have someone to go to when they are in need. Many young adults transitioning out of the foster care system do not have this luxury.

I remember being on my own at 18 facing a lot of adversity. In my first apartment, I didn't even know the procedure of paying rent. Simple things like this were usually learned the hard way, often creating embarrassing situations. I thought I just gave my landlord straight cash and didn't know I should be getting a receipt or stub for my rent every month. Some of the situations were more serious than simply being embarrassing. There were months that I could not come up with rent money and was faced with threats of being evicted.

College was another foreign world. I scrambled the months before I turned 18 to complete my FAFSA, turn in my transcripts, apply to colleges and for scholarships. But no one ever prepped me about what to do once I got to college. How do I get my stuff to campus? What do I need for my dorm room? I did not know that I needed a co-signer for certain documents such as loans and apartments. This process was all new to me, and I was thrown in to manage it on my own, simply because I had passed the 18-years-old threshold.

Once I turned 18, I was no longer the responsibility of the court in my state, so their services to me ended. On the day of my birthday, my health insurance ended. I haven't had health insurance since. Since I am in school, I do get a 20 percent discount at my university's health insurance, but I still can't afford the proper health care I need.

Not only was it difficult to gather the resources and learn how to manage the things I needed for housing, education and health care, but it was also difficult to function socially. I wasn't sure of what relationships would continue once I was out the system. I spent a lot of days by myself, afraid of meeting new people because, aside from my siblings and a few close friends, the majority of my relationships were mediated or assigned by the courts. As far as healthy adult relationships, unfortunately they were non-existent. When I exited the system, the adults exited out of my life; their work was done. I had some harsh realities to face during my time of transitioning out of care.

To expect any 18-year-old to handle the transition to adulthood completely on their own is too much to ask. But factor in the significant trials and tribulations that a young person from foster care has faced, and it becomes clear why so many foster youth do not go to college or launch successful careers. It is not because they don't want to have a better quality of life, but they are ill-equipped and unprepared. Often, they have lived in a system that won't allow them to practice or take age-appropriate risks. The supportive adults in their lives go away when they are emancipated from the system. These factors can discourage a foster youth from following through on their goals and dreams.

Today, many foster youth have more services available to them than I did, and that is so awesome. My hope is that new opportunities and policies, such as those outlined in the Fostering Connections to Success and Increased Adoptions Act, will benefit the 700 young people who will transition out of the system tomorrow, along with the 25,000 who will age-out this year. It is also my hope that the courts, along with other stakeholders in the foster care system, will work together with youth to ensure resources are in place—including connections with supportive adults—well before a youth hits their transition birthday.

Editor's Note: Twenty-four-year-old Charlie McNeely spent 15 years in Oregon's foster care system, entering the foster care system at age 3 and aged out at 18. She was in more than 10 placements. Charlie is now determined to effect change for foster youth by being a positive and active volunteer in her community. She is currently a senior at Portland State University, majoring in both community health education and school health education, with a minor in psychology. Charlie served as a 2010 All-Star intern with FosterClub, the national network for young people in foster care.

About FosterClub: The FosterClub All-Star Program provides leadership and service opportunities to young people ages 18–24 who have spent their formative years in foster care. For these young adults, who have beaten the odds and thrived in spite of difficult circumstances, the All-Star internship is an opportunity to communicate their unique perspectives and share their resilient spirits with their younger peers still struggling through foster care. In addition to participating in dozens of youth events across the country over the summer, the FosterClub All-Stars advocate for system improvement and promote public awareness nationally throughout the year. For more information, visit www.fosterclub.org.

Reprinted from the Judge's Page Newsletter, National CASA, July 2011.

Kansas Independence – Resources for Finding a Brighter Future

www.kansasindependence.org

More than 2,000 youth 16 years of age and older receive foster care services in Kansas. The transition to independent living can present many challenges. The Kansas Independence website provides resources and information to help youth navigate this transition.

For more information on Independent Living/Self-Sufficiency Services, visit the Kansas SRS website:

<http://www.srs.ks.gov/agency/cfs/Pages/IndependentLivingProgram.aspx>

Coming soon: National CASA Develops Specialized Curriculum for Advocacy for Older Youth

Douglas County CASA, Inc.

Board of Directors: Mary Boatright (*Past President*), Jenny Brown, Hatem Chahine, Shelly Goscha, Eric Hiebert, Brad Kemp (*President*), Eve Kemple (*Vice President*), David Martin, Karen Oberzan, Ruthi Rapp (*Secretary*), Brian Seymour (*Treasurer*), Helen Seymour, Britny Wood, Jill Nowak (*Kappa Alpha Theta*)

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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.



Douglas County CASA, Inc.
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Lawrence, KS 66044