

THE *CASA BRIEF*

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

**Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children
Volume 20, Number 2 - MARCH / APRIL 2011**

CELEBRATE the PAST ♦ IMAGINE the FUTURE

**CASA's
20th Anniversary**

**CRB's
25th Anniversary**



When: Tuesday, April 26, 4:30 — 6:30 p.m.

Where: Maceli's, 1031 New Hampshire, Lawrence

- ⇒ Brief program begins @ 5:15, heavy appetizers provided
- ⇒ Special music by Jody Johnson, CRB Volunteer
- ⇒ Comments by youth formerly served by CASAs

RSVP by April 15 to 785-832-5172 or dmosher@douglas-county.com

Douglas County CASA volunteers will receive 2 hours of in-service credit for attending this event.

April is National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month



April is National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness month, a time to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect and create strong communities to support children and families.

This month and throughout the year, Douglas County CASA encourages all individuals and

organizations to play a role in making Douglas County a better place for families. By ensuring that parents have the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to care for their children, we can prevent child abuse and neglect by strengthening families and communities.

Research shows that 5 important factors are present in healthy families: 1) Nurturing and attachment; 2) Knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development; 3) Parental resilience; 4) Social connections; 5) Concrete support for parents. Everyone's participation is critical. Focusing on ways to promote the five protective factors, in every interaction with families, is the best thing our community can do to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect. For more information, visit www.ChildWelfare.gov/Preventing. As part of the national Blue Ribbon Campaign to Prevent Child Abuse, CASA will distribute blue ribbons at the April 26 anniversary gathering at Maceli's.

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.

March Madness



As March Madness engulfs the Lawrence community and much of the nation, we invite you to enjoy the artwork from a young girl served by Douglas County CASA. (featured at left). By the way, those aren't basketball players depicted on the court – they're the cheerleaders! The siblings of this young artist participated in the Bill Self basketball camp during summer 2010, thanks to a CASA

Summer Scholarship, funded by CASA and the Ethel & Raymond Rice Foundation.

Birthday Gifts for CASA Kids

Thanks to generous donations from members of the Omega Phi Alpha service sorority at KU, children served by CASA receive a special gift for their birthday. The thoughtful young ladies of Omega Phi Alpha provide a gift bag or gift-wrapped box filled with small gifts and birthday party supplies. We supplement this with certificates for a giant decorated cookie at *Eileen's Colossal Cookies* and an ice cream cone at *J&S Coffee*. We are extremely grateful for this wonderful community support that assures children served by CASA have their special day acknowledged in a fun and meaningful way. The KU Office of the University Registrar also helps provide birthday boxes for several CASA kids throughout the year.

Pictured at right is Crystal Yakel, Service Director of Omega Phi Alpha. Crystal delivers birthday bags and boxes to the CASA office every month on behalf of the young women of Omega Phi Alpha at the University of Kansas



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



Volunteer Spotlight: Katie Becker

Katie Becker Brings Knowledge and a Caring Spirit to her Role as a CASA

By Kitty Ware

"I guess what I love about being a CASA are the connections, the stories you learn about peoples' lives, the resiliency of children and the team that works together to bring hope into their lives."

Katie Becker, a retired school teacher in Lawrence, made a career out of being of service to young people. Today, she continues this work as a CASA, helping at-risk children as they wind their way through the court system, facing an uncertain future.

Katie's interest in being a CASA began ten years prior to her retirement, when she read an article about former CASA Director Elaine Riordan. Katie says, "I thought that was so cool that I filed that thought away until I retired from teaching 6th grade. I've always had a connection with kids and felt that I had gifts to continue to share and that being a CASA would be a great avenue." Upon retirement, Katie followed up her idea of becoming a CASA, though she didn't quite know what to expect. "I didn't really know the process and was surprised when I had to be interviewed. Of course, I wondered immediately if I would make the cut." Once she was interviewed, there was no question that Katie would make a valuable addition to the dedicated volunteers with CASA of Douglas County.

As those who give their time as CASAs know, it is a very rewarding experience. Katie has seen how her efforts and caring spirit can positively impact the life of a child in need.

"What's been most rewarding about being a CASA are the connections you make. You are a detective trying to get a sense of each of the people who are woven into your child's life," Katie says. "My first case was pretty tragic from the aspect of what my child witnessed and what was going to happen to her. She was not quite two years old. She was put into a relative foster home which seemed to be a good placement. I got to know her social worker, the foster family and the mom pretty well. I came in with definite ideas of how I thought the case should be handled and learned quickly to discard my ideas and look for what was going to be best for the child. I felt like a grandmother to her visiting twice a month in Olathe or picking her up in Lawrence and transporting her back. We did projects I would do with a grandchild. I enjoyed my contact with her mom and watching the progress she made to provide a safe home for her child, and finally having her child come home."

As a CASA, Katie has also seen how the many different people in a child's life can play roles in shaping his or her future. She explains that with her third CASA case, "I established great connections with the foster family and appreciated how welcoming they were to me and how much they made my CASA child's life terrific. They ended up being her guardians. I guess what I love about being a CASA are the connections, the stories you learn about peoples' lives, the resiliency of children and the team that works together to bring hope into their lives."

Of course, the work involves some challenges and difficult circumstances. Katie notes, "First, understanding the system and how to navigate through it can be difficult whether it be the court system,



social workers, therapists or foster parents. I had a foster parent in my last case who saw no value in a CASA worker other than one more person with whom she had to deal. I felt very frustrated and it took a lot longer to be a part of the girls' lives."

Overcoming challenges, though, is facilitated by the experienced CASA staff. Katie is very appreciative of the great work they do. "I loved Sammie Conder who interviewed me and the super people in the CASA office. Carolyn Johnson was assigned as my supervisor and we had an instant connection." Her warm welcome, the training she received and the support throughout her work as a CASA all speak volumes of the dedication shown every day by CASA staff.

Though retired, Katie stays rather busy. She says, "I do a lot of substitute teaching. I also work part time at the store Bayleaf, and teach a Sunday school class for 4th through 6th graders. I love to work out, read, cook and do craft projects. Whenever I can I travel to visit family or sights. My husband is also retired and we have a menagerie of pets. They really run the house and we are their valets attending to their every whim." Now that's dedication! Katie has three adult children, two sons and a daughter. All her activities, travel and family time keep her well occupied, but she makes time for her CASA cases, an invaluable contribution to the children involved and the community at large. CASAs like Katie make it possible for the organization to fulfill its mission: to help ensure that children of Douglas County grow up in safe, permanent and loving homes. CASA of Douglas County is fortunate to have Katie as a volunteer, utilizing her skills and caring spirit to do such important, life-changing work. Thanks, Katie!

OUR WISH LIST ...

- ☺ **Easter baskets for CASA kids**
- ☺ **Stuffed animals** (brand new, please)
- ☺ **Kleenex (boxes and small individual packages)**
- ☺ **Diaper bags**
- ☺ **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**.
- ☺ **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!



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

APRIL IS NATIONAL VOLUNTEER MONTH

We Love and Appreciate our Fabulous Douglas County CASA Volunteers!!!

“Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart.” – Elizabeth Andrew



NEW VOLUNTEERS JOIN CASA FAMILY

We extend a warm welcome to 7 new CASA volunteers who joined our program in February. **Pictured from left to right are Susan Parson, Britt Lageman, Catherine Butel-Ortega, Jordinn Long, Anna Paradis, Kassie Edwards and Karen Warner.**

This dedicated group braved ice, snow, rain, sleet and heavy fog during seven evening and weekend training sessions – proving that nothing will stop them from serving as devoted advocates to children who are waiting for the caring support of a CASA volunteer.



Annual In-Service Requirements for CASA Volunteers Change in 2011

The National CASA Association requires 12 hours of annual in-service credit for CASA volunteers, but the Kansas CASA Association has only required 4 hours annually. In order to bridge this gap with the national requirement, many CASA agencies in Kansas already require volunteers to complete 6-12 hours each year. Starting in 2011, Douglas County CASA will shift our annual in-service requirement from 4 to 6 hours – ***but please don't panic!! We promise to make it easy for you,*** providing plenty of new and enjoyable in-service activities. You can earn credit by attending the April 26 anniversary celebration, reading the CASA newsletter, watching DVDs or reading articles and books in the CASA library, attending workshops, and much more. A complete list of in-service activities (with many new *quick and easy* options) will be mailed to all volunteers soon, along with a complete list of books and DVDs in the growing CASA resource library.

In-Service Dates to Remember:

- 4/13 – 6:30-8:00 – pm - Book discussion of *Half-Broke Horses* at CASA office.
- 4/26 – 4:30-6:30 pm - Douglas County CASA 20th Anniversary Celebration at Maceli's. Program will include children and youth formerly served by CASA volunteers.

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*)

Staff: Diana Frederick, *Executive Director*; Sherry Catt, *Volunteer Supervisor*; Elizabeth Day, *Volunteer Supervisor*; Carolyn Johnson, *Volunteer Supervisor*; Diane Mosher, *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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