



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF PEORIA COUNTY

April– June 09

Volume I, Issue I

CASA Voice

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Words from the Director



Greetings to our CASA family! We are happy to launch our quarterly newsletter *The CASA Voice* to keep in touch with you,

our valuable stakeholders!

We are extremely grateful for the ongoing support of our CASA volunteers, community partners and financial benefactors. We are proud of the start-up accomplishments of CASA of Peoria County and look forward to conquering challenges to grow our organization to serve even more deserving children.

As I write this message, I'm reminded of the impact the difficult economy has had on our nation, our local community and our organization. One of the contributing risk factors associated with child abuse and

neglect is stress of unemployment and poverty. These stressors can lead to domestic violence, substance abuse and depression that can be instrumental in a parent's ability to adequately care for a child. In this uncertain time it is even more important to provide CASA services to our community.

While we struggle to have abundant resources, we are constantly seeking to provide quality advocacy services to the most vulnerable children in our backyard. As always, we will continue, with your help, to look for opportunities to make a difference in a child's life!

Fondly,
Pamela Perrilles
Executive Director

**Thank you CASA Volunteers (2008-2009) for all of your effective advocacy!
We appreciate you!**

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Tony Frederking
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Volunteer Spotlight: Kirsten Vivian



CASA Volunteer Kirsten Vivian is currently a CSR/Product Specialist at AF-FINA. She spends her time and energy assisting family members with various tasks. When she's available

she loves to take her granddaughter to school in the mornings and assisting in the CASA office. She has been a CASA Volunteer since August of 2007. She is currently on her 2nd case and has helped 3 children!

Volunteer Advocacy

Why did you decide to become an advocate? I decided to become an advocate because I wanted to get involved in helping children in the foster care system but I didn't think foster parenting was for me. One morning in 2006 I was watching a

morning talk show and a person was talking about CASA and that sparked an interest. I believed CASA sounded like something I could do. I went on the website that was given. I was connected to IL CASA, then the Peoria office, and the rest is history.

Do you have any advice for other Volunteers? Utilize the resources you are given through in-services and the support you are given from Pam and Melkecia. Also keep detailed notes as you go along to help you write better court reports.

What has been one of your most memorable moments as a CASA Volunteer? My most memorable moment was being in the courtroom when the biological mother, of the children on my first case, lost her parental rights.

What keeps you motivated on your case? Knowing that the decisions that are made effect the child's life motivates me to want to gather good and accurate information that is pertinent in helping the judge decide the best fate of the child's future.

What are your challenges as a CASA? Writing a good, detailed, accurate court report that is not full of my own opinions.

Is there anything else you would like share? No.

Board Member Spotlight: Chris Munroe



Tell our readers a little about yourself . Chris Monroe, President of Family Medical Equipment and Supply and CPS. I began on the Steering Committee and as the initial Board

President and have recently rejoined the board in that same capacity as of January, 2009. I have been involved in every capacity of the Board, from beginning each of the fundraising activities to recruiting Pam and more.

What led you to become involved with CASA? My passion is to end abuse. All abuse. I was on the CPOA board for years and felt that the opportunity to start CASA of Peoria County was terribly important.

What do you enjoy about your involvement with CASA and what are the rewards of being a board member? I love several things about CASA. I love the impact that our volunteers make in the lives of the children we serve, first and foremost. Our vol-

unteers should be commended for being the most amazing and selfless people I have ever had the privilege of being around. Also, I enjoy meeting other like-minded people on the Board and helping them feel the passion of helping other people.

What are your future goals for CASA of Peoria County from your view? My main goals for CASA are sustainability and growth. We need to ensure that our organization is around for lifetimes of children who deserve our help and we help as many of those children as is humanly possible.

What are your challenges as a CASA board member? Community Awareness. We have been around far too long to still be so woefully undiscovered. 2009 is the year of Community Awareness of our mission to empower our kids.

How has CASA grown since you've been apart of the board? from an idea to a five year old entity. I would say it has grown in every way imaginable. From its successes as an organization to its budget constraints and challenges, everything has grown...

What other committees have you've served on? I have served on virtually every committee CASA has had to this point. However, I am thrilled with the Board we have currently as I feel we have the best group of energetic and active Board members that we have ever had. Their willingness to jump in and work hard is what drew me back to the Board.

Is there anything else you would like to share? Community Awareness. We must make CASA a well known and respected entity in this community, especially in these dark economic times. The case load of the courts is growing rapidly and we must fill those children's lives with hope and direction.

Quarterly Court Calendar April

April 8- 9:00am
Sue & Mary
April 8- 9:30am
Irene & Donnette – term. trial
April 9- 1:15pm
Greg B.
April 13- 1:15 pm-
Britta J.
April 15- 11:30pm
Kelly P.
April 20- 9:00am
Staff
3:00pm- Jean P.
April 22- 9:00am
Mike W.
April 30-1:15pm-
Rochelle H.

Keeping the Fire by Melkecia Welch



I have been told that passion is like fire. Passion can blaze with such intensity and fervor, but if it is not maintained passion can fizzle out like fire has a tendency to do. How do we keep the fire of volunteering burning when so many challenges, changes, and contentions are going on in the world? Three ways in which we can keep the fire

going is to protect, feed, and spread our passion!

Protecting Passion

When a fire is blazing you may want to keep it shielded to keep outside influences from dousing the fire. Having a passion for a particular area such as CASA usually comes from a heart felt desire to either fulfill a need or see a need met. You guard your fire of volunteering by remaining committed. Anything you are passionate about you love and anything you love you protect. Protect your time. Set a schedule, give your time, and keep your

word if at all possible. Challenges will come to get you off focus, but guard your passion with diligence by keeping your passion ever before you. Post an emblem that represents what you are passionate about in a place where you can visually see it each day. It can be an emblem or a declaration that reminds you to stay protective of your passion.

Feed Your Passion

Adding more logs or fuel to a fire helps to keep it blazing. You've (Cont. on page 4)

Quarterly Court Calendar

May 4- 1:45pm-
Alyssa & Veronica
May 5- 3:00pm
Stephanie M.
May 6- 1:15pm Irene & Donnette
May 12- 1:30pm-
Nate K.
May 15- 1:15pm
Shari W.
May 19- 1:45pm-
Kirsten V.

In-Service Opportunities for the Quarter

April 9, 2009 Mental/Health of Children- 6:30-8:00pm- YSNP Workshop at Peoria Library.
April 9, 2009 Knowing Your Visitation Rights as a Father 6-7pm
FACC at Riverplex contact Michael Winters 589-4866 for more info.
April 16, 2009 Celebration of Children Community Baby Showers 9am-12pm register with Michelle Spanbauer, CFS 682-4621.
April 18, 2009 New CASA Volunteer Training Begins it ends April 29th.
April 21, 2009 Step-Up: Interventions for Families with Teens Who Are Violent in the Home 9:30am-3:00pm for registration contact The Center for Prevention of Abuse 691-0551.
April 30, 2009 Summer Activity Fair-learn about summer activities for children at Valeska Hinton 5-7pm.
May 7, 2009 CASA Time Peoria County Courthouse 5-6pm.
June 4, 2009 CASA Time Peoria County Courthouse 12-1pm
June TBA- Dr. Edward Ward-mental health behaviors.

Mark your Calendar! Upcoming Events!

April 30, 2009 2nd Annual Hands Around the Courthouse 8:00-8:30am—YSNP at Peoria County Courthouse.
May 9, 2009- June 13 Casa's for CASA on display at Shoppes of Grande Prairie. Fund-raising Event.
May 13, 2009 CASA Everyday Heroes Essay Contest event at Peoria Chiefs Baseball Stadium


Quarterly Court Calendar June

June 1- 2:00pm
Aimee D.
June 9- 2:00pm
Ernie M.
June 10- 1:15pm
Nancy P.
1:45 pm- Lisa B.
June 11- 1:15pm
Tasha G.
June 22- 1:45pm-
Staff
June 26- 1:15pm
Melodie Floro

HIT IT HOME FOR EVERYDAY HEROES
WEDNESDAY, MAY 13TH 2009
O'BRIEN FIELD
ENTERTAINMENT BEGINS: 5:30
WINNING ESSAYS WILL BE READ BEFORE THE GAME
PRICE:
EVERY CHILD THAT ENTERS WILL RECEIVE A FREE TICKET
PARENTS CAN PURCHASE TICKETS FOR \$5.00
BEFORE OR AT THE DOOR WITH VOUCHER
RAFFLE WINNERS WILL THROW THE FIRST PITCH, PAINT THE PLATE
AND BE ANNOUNCING AT THE GAME!

PEORIA CHIEFS
VS
QUAD CITIES

FREE HOT DOG & PEANUTS
THROUGH THE 7TH INNING



SEC 01
ROW 01
SEAT 01



5 Secrets for Great Report Writing

1. Begin work on your court report with plenty of time before court. This will allow time for you to clarify any questionable information, submit the report to your supervisor for editing and ultimately get the report to the court three weeks before the hearing.
2. Make the report child-centered.
3. Be accurate. This means reporting objectively and factually—presenting exact information free from errors, misstatements and personal judgments.
4. Use the fewest number of words possible to describe an action or occurrence. Avoid using unnecessary words for technical jargon. Don't give the judge information he or she does not need to know.
5. Make sure that your report is in a chronological format and includes your CASA child's wishes before submission to your supervisor.

CASA Program Description

A CASA volunteer is a highly trained advocate that is; an *information gatherer*, obtaining all relevant facts about the child and the case; an *advocate* to ensure that those facts are brought before the court through reports presented to the court with copies to case parties, and a *facilitator*, to ensure that all fulfill their legal obligations to the child in a timely manner. A CASA volunteer is assigned to one case at a time and serves on that case until it closes.

The system, including judges, struggles every day to protect these children because of lack of information. CASA of Peoria County can help to ease the burden by providing valuable new information. In fact, preliminary findings suggest that children who have been assigned CASA volunteers tend to spend less time in court. We ask you to join our community to provide resources to grow CASA of Peoria County to meet the need of the growing new and pending child abuse and neglect population in Peoria County.

CASA of Peoria County will greatly enhance the services provided to abused and neglected children in protective custody. Unfortunately, due to resource constraints, a Guardian Ad Litem or caseworker will be responsible for hundreds or dozens of cases respectively. The CASA advocate provides crucial background that neither the caseworker nor the Guardian Ad Litem has the time or resources to provide.

If you would like more information on CASA, there are two websites that can be accessed that provides a great deal of information. Those addresses are www.nationalcasa.org and www.casapeoria.org. Please feel free to contact CASA of Peoria County office if you have any questions or concerns.

Contact CASA of Peoria County

324 Main St, Rm 215
Peoria, IL 61602

Phone: 309-669-2939
Fax: 309-672-6957

We're on the Web!
www.nationalcasa.org
www.casapeoria.org

“There are plenty of resources and organized groups available that will help feed the passion inside of you.”

Keeping the Fire continued...

stated your passion or have an emblem of what you are passionate about to remind yourself to guard your passion. Now it is time to continuously feed your passion by surrounding yourself with like passions and engaging in activities that develop your passion.

You ask, how or what do I engage in that will feed my passion? Engage in in-service opportunities that strengthen or improve your skills thereby increasing your passion. You may also want to take some time to find books at your local bookstores, libraries, or even read articles via the internet pertaining to your passion. There are plenty of resources and organized groups

available that will help feed the passion inside of you. For example, I was reading a book titled *Listen to Your Life* by author and life coach Valorie Burton. As I was reading, I began to smile and get excited knowing the author and I share a similar passion to encourage others to find their path in life. My confidence is growing, as I continue to read this book, because I have an example of a like passion at work.

Spreading Your Passion

Fire that is fed begins to spread and consume anything it touches. Now that you are committed to keeping your passion before you and you are feeding it with new thoughts or ways that keep it growing, it is time that you spread

your passion. Share your passion for CASA with your surroundings. Talk about the difference CASA makes in Peoria County. Talk about the difference you make in a CASA family's life or how being a CASA has made a difference in your life and watch how the fire inside you continuously burn.

What better time than now do the needs of our children and families need a passionate advocate helping to see that their needs are being met. So let's keep the fire burning by continuing to protect, feed, and spread our passion for CASA volunteering.



Bring A Voice to a Child

Yes, I would like to support a CASA Child for one year @ \$100 per month.

I would like to make a one time gift.

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 Other \$ _____

I am interested in learning more about CASA.

I would like to give of my time. Please contact me about being involved:

- Board Member
- CASA volunteer
- Other volunteer
- Help with **CASAblanca** event
- Help with **Casa's for CASA** event
- Other: _____

Name: _____ Phone # _____

Address: _____ City: _____, IL Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

The best time to reach me is during _____ day or _____ evening.

Method of Payment: Visa _____ MasterCard _____ Check # _____

Account Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Name as it appears on card: _____ Signature: _____

Make checks payable to: CASA of Peoria County
Return to: 324 Main Street, Room 215
 Peoria, Illinois 61602

Make A Difference!