



Court Appointed Special Advocates  
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF PEORIA COUNTY

January– March 2010

Volume I, Issue 4

# CASA Voice

## Words from the Director

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Pamela Perrilles

### Advocate Supervisor

Melkecia Welch

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*"A new year is unfolding – like a blossom with petals curled tightly concealing the beauty within."*  
Author unknown

Greetings CASA Friends,

As the New Year unfolds we charge ahead with thankful hearts to have survived the economic times of 2009, and look forward to sustaining CASA of Peoria County to meet the needs of many abused and neglected children in our community.

Increasing awareness, exploring alternative funding sources and improvements to our website were the top projects from the Board of Directors retreat held in December. CASA was honored to have John Amdall, Director of Research & Technology at Caterpillar, to facilitate our strategic planning session. CASA of Peoria County is privileged to have such a great working board to help sustain and grow our mission. Keep your eyes open for the great things they have planned - you won't be able to miss it!

CASA of Peoria County is fortunate to have found David Berkshier, our new bookkeeper! David is a retired CFO that will be working a few mornings a week. So if you call or stop by please welcome David to our organization.

As you try to stay warm through the cold winter days, remember that spring is just around the corner and CASA of Peoria County's volunteers will be planting seeds of hope to the children they serve and to the community in which we all live and play!

Fondly,  
Pamela Perrilles

## Welcome New Advocates and New Judge

Welcome to the Peoria CASA team all of our new advocates! It is great to have you aboard.

Fall Class of 2009 featured on the right, was sworn in on Dec. 2nd. Most of the new advocates have been assigned a case and are off to a great start!

Honorable Kim Kelley, in the photo on the right, has transitioned to another courtroom and CASA extends a huge thanks for all of his past support the last couple of years.

CASA extends a warm welcome to Honorable Richard McCoy. Judge McCoy has served the Juvenile Abuse and Neglect Court in Tazewell County and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience.



Pictured from left to right in the back row: Rebecca Weber, Jeff Stevens, Christy Collier, Brandi Stanley, Sara Jacobs, Teresa Pflederer, and Robbie Hinkle. Left to right in the front row: Julie Eliathamby, Colleen Jornlin, Judge Kim Kelley, and Evelyn Kenyon.

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## Volunteer Spotlight: Britta Jost



I'm Britta Jost, I'm a machine development engineer for Caterpillar at the Peoria Proving Grounds. I grew up near Green Bay, Wisconsin and went to college at Michigan Tech University. My husband Jeff and I have lived in Mackinaw for 5 years, and I have been an advocate for just over a year and a half. I have had one case in that time, where I advocate for three siblings.

### Volunteer Advocacy

**Why did you decide to become an advocate?** I decided to become an advocate as a way to give back and become a part of the local community. Being a transplant from Wisconsin, I thought that joining an organization such as CASA would help me connect to the area by helping those most vulnerable among us. I thought about programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters and others, but chose CASA because I was confident in my ability to remain impartial and gather facts. The rapport and connection with the children was something I was apprehensive about, but found it to be easier than I thought it would be.

**Do you have any advice for other Volunteers?** I recommend making solid appointments to visit your children monthly. Having these appointments scheduled on my calendar ensures that I stay in contact and on top of developments in the case. You can also schedule calls to the case worker, CASA supervisor, etc so that you don't end up doing everything at the end of the reporting period but rather spread it out. Taking good notes and typing them into your court report document as you have your visits also helps when it comes time to present a report.

**What has been one of your most memorable moments as a CASA Volunteer?** Having the children come up and hug me when they see me arrive for a visit.

**What keeps you motivated on your case?** I am motivated by knowing that I am here to speak for the children and to let them know that their opinions and feelings are important and are valued. Also I am motivated to achieve permanency for the children so that their lives will have stability.

**What are your challenges as a CASA?** My challenges are trying not to get too personally invested in the case, and to realize that I'm doing all I can for these children. Also making time to write my reports and get them into court on time!

**Is there anything else you would like to share?** Being a CASA volunteer is such a worthwhile endeavor! You will get everything out of it that you put into it, through the satisfaction of standing up for children.

## Board Member Spotlight: Jennifer Morris



My name is Jennifer Morris, and I am an attorney with Quinn, Johnston, Henderson, Pretorius & Cerulo. I am married to Robert Pugh, who is also an attorney. We live in Peoria with our two cats, Lennie and Olivia.

I joined CASA of Peoria County Board of Directors in July, 2007. I am currently serving as the Board Secretary, and as chair of the Court Liaison Committee. I have also been a member of the Nominating Committee, and have been involved in CASA's fundraising events.

### What led you to become involved with CASA?

In 2007, I participated in the Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce Community Leadership School. Being a part of CLS inspired me to want to give back to the community. I was fortunate to meet individuals who knew about CASA and it's mission, and when I was approached about joining the Board of Directors, I jumped at the chance!

### What do you enjoy about your involvement with CASA and what are the rewards of being a board member?

I enjoy working with my fellow CASA Board Members and the fabulous CASA staff. Even more so, I enjoy knowing that my efforts and the hard work of the CASA volunteers are making a difference in the lives of abused and neglected children in the Peoria area.

### What are your future goals for CASA of Peoria County from your view?

My goal is to help

CASA find sustainable funding, and to achieve enough financial stability to be able to expand our program in Peoria as well as the surrounding counties. I would also like to continue to develop a positive and cooperative relationship with the judiciary, attorneys, and agencies involved in the Juvenile Abuse and Neglect court.

**What are your challenges as a CASA board member?** Unfortunately, we are in a time of great financial need. Finding new and steady sources of funding has presented a great challenge to CASA.

### How has CASA grown since you've been apart of the board?

It has been wonderful to see CASA raise its profile within the community over the last several years. Thanks to the efforts of the CASA staff, our Board committees and our community supporters, more and more people find out about CASA every day, and learn about the important role our volunteers play in the lives of children.

I am also pleased to say that I witnessed our CASA-blanca fundraiser take a huge leap forward last year through the efforts of our volunteer co-chairs, Diann Crompton and Dianne Gootee. As our main fundraising event, it was thrilling to see such a large turnout full of new faces and new friends of CASA.

### Is there anything else you would like to share?

I would like to extend a heartfelt "thank you" to our CASA staff and volunteers, who are working hard to make a difference for abused and neglected children in our community!

## Welcome New Board Members

CASA is certainly glad to welcome Valerie Clark and Dr. Nancy Sherman to the Peoria CASA Board! Valerie Clark brings to the team her marketing expertise as in entrepreneur of Clark Marketing, which provides independent marketing services for businesses and advertising agencies. Dr. Nancy Sherman is a professor at Bradley University teaching in the Human Development Counseling Program and also serving as Clinical Coordinator. Dr. Sherman brings with her a plethora of experience working with non-profit organizations. Welcome Aboard!

**Believe Again!**  
by Melkecia Welch



We are at that time of year where goals are reestablished and new goals are being formed. As I reflect on the goals that I set last year, some in which I accomplished and others I failed to

complete due to challenging circumstances. Yet I am inspired to believe again. Believe that the new goals that I establish can be accomplished! Believe that if circumstances beyond my control do arise, I am able to regroup to make sure my goals are completed. In the midst of establishing goals for my personal life I have formed some goals for 2010 in my role as a CASA Advocate Supervisor. One in which involves staying connected with updates of all our CASA children by maintaining contact with all CASA Volunteers monthly.

At the heart of thinking about goals, our CASA children are assigned a goal at every permanency review court hearing. The goal may be (21) return home within five months, (22) return home within a year, (23) return home pending status, (24) substitute care pending courts determination on termination of parental rights, (25) adoption provided that parental rights have been terminated or relinquished, (26) guardianship, (27) independence over fifteen years of age, or (28) cannot be provided for in a home environment. Sometimes cases may have the same goal for six months, a year, or longer depending on the circumstances that occur within the review periods of a case. Whatever goal your case is assigned, as CASA Volunteers let's reestablish our goals in 2010 to see that the best interest of the children we advocate for are reflected in the goal that is assigned to their case. In order for that to happen we may need to spend more time with the children each month through phone calls, in person visits, or observing their interactions in various settings including family visits or school. It

may call for more in-service training or personal studies in the areas that will increase our knowledge and strengthen our advocacy. One may be doing all of these things and if so I encourage you to continue to believe that you are making a difference in the child or children's life in which you are appointed.

As we strengthen our advocacy goals, let's continue to believe for the best! Things may not have turned out the way you would have liked in court for the cases you are appointed. Personal life situations might have affected the level of advocacy you desired to give challenging your time and ability to give to your CASA case. However, as committed CASA's, let's continue to believe that our sincere advocacy will ultimately make a difference in the overall goal that is set for the cases we are appointed.



**Court Calendar**  
**March**

- March 10- 1:15**  
Susie C.
- March 15- 2:45**  
Rosalind L.
- March 16- 1:15**  
Stephanie M.
- March 19- 1:45**  
Shari W.
- March 22- 1:15**  
Britta J.

**Court Calendar**  
**April**

- April 5- 9:00**  
Sue K. & Mary A.
- April 6- 1:45**  
Kirsten V.
- April 15- 1:30**  
Sara J.
- April 26-1:15**  
Alyssa R. Veronica E.
- April 28- 1:15**  
Lisa B.
- April 29-1:00**  
Shayla F.
- April 29-1:15**  
Irene P.

**In-Service Opportunities**

- February 23, Introduction to Child Welfare, Putting Families Back Together, 9:00-12:00pm:** @ DCFS 2001 NE Jefferson, Contact Elizabeth Richmond 671-7719 to register.
- March 4, CASA Time:** at 5:00pm Location to be announced.
- March 11, Risk Factors for Juveniles Becoming Involved in the Juvenile Justice System:** Speaker: Steve Kossman, Director of Probation and Court Services,6:30-8pm at Crittenton Center, 442 West John Gwynn Jr. Ave Peoria Peoria County
- April 1, CASA Time:** at 5:00 Location to be announced.
- April 8, Signs and Symptoms of Substance Abuse in Youth:** Speaker, Cathee Gray, Youth and Community Services-White Oaks. 6:30-8pm at Crittenton Center, 442 West John Gwynn Jr. Avenue, Peoria
- April 16, Hands Around the Courthouse, Save the Date!** Location 324 Main St. (the courtyard of the Peoria County courthouse) at 12:00 noon.

## News from Last Quarter

### CASA GINGERBREAD HOUSE CONTEST

The Bradley Fellows put on a very special event for CASA last year- a gingerbread house building contest! This contest was a fun way to include Bradley University and Peoria communities in CASA's mission. Various organizations participated with a record number of 35 houses entered! Fellows were very excited to have new participants in the 2009 event including a local temple's children's group and a High School group all the way from Canton, Illinois!

The houses were displayed on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009 in a holiday decorated room at Bradley University. The houses were decked out using a variety of candies, cookies, and frosting. Some groups got very creative, making mocks of the houses they lived in and some tried to create the highest tower of graham crackers ever! It was an exciting time for Bradley students and the community alike.

A variety of people including Bradley faculty and staff came out to see the masterpieces that were created. Special thanks must go out to the Lewis J. Burger Center for Leadership and Public Service at Bradley for putting on this event and storing all of the houses. The center smelled so sweet for an entire month!

The event was a huge success last year and it is only paving the way for bigger events to come. A total of 782 dollars were raised in support of CASA of Peoria County!

Katlyn Mueller



### Drake Photo 2nd Annual Halloween Charity Event

Drake Photo teamed up with CASA for the second time during their Halloween Charity Event. Beautiful photographs were taken of children in their Halloween costumes raising a total of 720 dollars to benefit CASA of Peoria County!



[www.DRAKEphotoOnline.com](http://www.DRAKEphotoOnline.com)  
309.839.1978

## Fourth Quarter 2009 Contributors

John Amdall \* Ameren UE \* John & Julie Balkema \* Soloman Balraj \* Stephen & Patti Bash \* Martin & Terry Best \* Greg & Lori Birkland \* Ruth Bittner \* Caroline Borden \* Robert Bowen \* Bradley Fellows \* Virnette House Browning \* Busey Bank \* CEFUCU \* Central Illinois Bank \* Christy Collier \* Mike & Diann Crompton \* Dave & Jane Collins \* Cumerford-Hurd Funeral Home \* Maureen DeArmond \* Colleen DeFord \* DrakePhoto \* Enercon Engineering Inc.\* Essential Wellness Pharmacy \* Michael Evans \* Family Medical Equipment & Supply \* Fritch Heating & Cooling Inc. \* Jeff & Stacy Gehrig \* Abraham Ghantous \* Michael & Dianne Gootee \* Sheena Gordon \* Floyd & Roselyn Ham \* Thomas Harrington III \* Roger Hawk \* Ron & Melinda Henderson \* Carmen Hines \* Kathleen Horchler \* J. P. Companies \* Jay H. Janssen \* Robert & Suzanne Jennetten \* Suzanne John \* Brad Joseph \* Kelleher's \* Robert & Carrie Kelly \* Kramer Chiropractic \* Kenneth & Teri Lynch \* Jim Maloof \* Jim & Gina McConnoughey \* Mark & Paris McConnell \* Amy Benecke McLaren \* Tobie McMahon \* Tom & Sheryl Menold \* Steven & Diana Meyer \* Mid-Illinois Companies \* Mike Miller Auto Park \* Michael & Harriet Moon \* Dearl & Paula Morris \* Dearl & Judy Morris \* Tommy & Jessie Morss \* Morton Community Bank \* Sean & Lisa Mullins \* National CASA Grant \* Mike Neisler \* Northminster Presbyterian Church \* Oberlander Electric \* Par-a-dice Gaming Corporation \* Mary Pille \* Sam & Jean Polk \* Rob & Jennifer Pugh \* Quinn, Johnston, Henderson & Pretorius \* Scott Reid & Marion Willemsen-Reid \* Gerald & Liz Rickert \* Robin Robins \* Jeffrey & Stacy Robins \* Catherine Rupert \* Shital Shah \* Skender Medical Consulting, Inc. \* Sorce Enterprise, Inc. \* Melanie Spurgeon \* John Stenson \* Amy Stewart \* Pat & Lark Sullivan \* Pete & Gretchen Taylor \* Ralph & Jill Tosi \* Frank & Donna Totton \* TWO25/Peoria's Best Pizza \* VCVA Grant \* Michael & Becky Weber \* WEEK-TV \* Thomas Williams Jr. \* Michael & Arlene Witte \* Erich & Mary Ragna Yetter \* Michael & Janice Turtora Zagardo.

Please accept our apologies if your name is misspelled or was omitted. Please contact the CASA office at (309) 669-2939 so that we may correct our records. Thank you!



## News from Last Quarter Continued

### Fourth Annual CASAblanca 2009 Dancing with the (Local) Stars

CASAblanca 2009 was a huge success! A big thanks to co-chairs Diann Crompton and Dianne Gootee, who did a remarkable job organizing the event! Many hands played a part in the event's success and CASA board and staff were extremely grateful for everyone's contribution.

A heartfelt thank you to our generous sponsors: G&D Integrated, Paradise Hotel Casino, Body Fitness, Robert Bowen, Tommy Williams and Kohl's A-Team (East Peoria)

Special thank you to all volunteers that helped make the night run smoothly: Silent Auction Committee (Christy Collier, Ernie Mahan, Michelle Elam), Decoration committee ( Pam Borden, Barbara Fox, Cathy Rupert & Tiffany Ferlmann), Program design ( Kelly McCarty), and (Angela Wilhelms, Matt te-Nuyl, & Junior Women's Club) who assisted where needed.

Thanks to all of the in-kind donators: Keith Welch of Anointed Photography, Jan Wright of Art & Society, Devonshire Group, Ducky's Formal Wear, Edward Hine Company, Jim Barnett, Joan's Trophy & Plaque Company, Peoria Latin Vibe, Regent Communications, Greg Nettles of Squarecrow Creative, Leon Hendricks of Tenacious Productions, & the forty-one Silent Auction Donators.

Again we thank everyone for supporting CASA of Peoria County! Whether you attended the event, gave money, bought silent auction items, or helped spread the word about CASAblanca, your gifts have helped support the mission of CASA which is to advocate for abused and neglected children in Peoria County through the services of specially trained community volunteers! THANK YOU!

#### 2009 CASAblanca Sponsors



Special thanks to all the dance instructors and "local stars" participants who did a superb job! We also would like to thank the judges: Greg Batton, Kim Siebel, and Erich Yetter.

Featured above Abraham Ghantous and Dr. Sheena Gordon were the Dancing with the Local Stars contest winners!

Featured on the right and partnered from left to right are all of the 2009 dance performers: Eموke Bury & \*Kyle Ham\*, Barbara Vangunten & \*Pat Sullivan\*, \*Gina Morss\* & Hassan Wehbe, \*Jeff Robins\* & Denisse Wehbe, \*Dr. Marion Willemsen-Reid\* & Dave Vangunten, \*Dr. Sheena Gordon\* & Abraham Ghantous.

\* by the name above indicates the "Local Star" participants.



CASAblanca  
2009  
was a huge  
success!

### Leaving a Loving Legacy:

**Planned Giving through your will:** You can create a legacy of hope for vulnerable children through a planned gift to CASA of Peoria County.

Bequests Through Your Will

A bequest to the CASA of Peoria County is one of the most effective and simplest ways to make a lasting impact on the lives of vulnerable children. You may specify a specific amount or a percentage you wish to give. If you would like to make such a gift to the CASA of Peoria County, you may include language similar to the following:

"I, [name], of [city, state, ZIP], give, devise and bequeath to CASA of Peoria County a nonprofit public benefit corporation having its principal office at 324 main Street, Room 215, Peoria, IL 61602, [written amount or percentage of the estate or description of property] to be used for the furtherance of its charitable purposes in the discretion and at the direction of its Board of Trustees for its unrestricted use and purpose."

If you are considering making a gift by bequest, please meet with your attorney to discuss the ramifications and, if appropriate, to update your will. Please let us know if you have included CASA of Peoria County in your estate planning.

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.casaforchildren.org](http://www.casaforchildren.org)  
[www.casapeoria.org](http://www.casapeoria.org)

### 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 **Special** events
- 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!

### Our Mission

The mission of CASA of Peoria County is to advocate for abused and neglected children in Peoria County through the services of specially trained community volunteers

