



Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF PEORIA COUNTY

July 2014

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CASA Voice

The Official Newsletter of CASA of Peoria County

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From the desk of the Executive Director

Grant Awards for 2014-2015

I am proud to announce that CASA of Peoria County been awarded several grants to help sustain and extend our advocacy on behalf of abused and neglected children.

For the second year, the **National CASA Association** has awarded us a **Youth Advocacy Grant** that supports an ongoing educational initiative for children 7-17 yr. This year's grant, funded by the Department of Justice - Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), will enable CASA of Peoria County's cadre of trained volunteers to assess, monitor, and improve the educational performance of school-age children in the system. During the 2013-2014 granting period, CASA of Peoria County was appointed to 31 children between 7-17 years of age.

We proudly continue in 2014-5 as a **partner agency** with the **Heart of Illinois United Way**, whose generous grant enables us to grow by recruiting, training and supervising more volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children.

The Office of the **Attorney General of Illinois** continues to support CASA of Peoria County with a **Violent Crime Victims Assistance Act** grant enabling us to sustain a high level of service to our assigned children who are violent crime victims.

The **City of Peoria Human Resources Commission** has provided us with a **Community Development Block Grant** that supports our advocacy of children residing within the City of Peoria.

Together, these awards support our advocacy of 88 children. A total of 227 children were served during the last fiscal year. To help us meet our goal of serving 325 children during 2014-15, we continue to rely on funds raised from the community through fundraising initiatives like *Sponsor A Child*, *CASAblanca*, *\$1 Million Hole-in-One*, and third-party activities. To all our donors large and small, please accept our heartfelt thanks for supporting our important work!

— Pamela Perrilles

CASA Welcomes May 2014 Volunteer Class

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Please join us in welcoming our largest volunteer class to-date!

From left to right: Phil Cline, Michael Clark, Georgeanne Cassulo, Haley Pschirrer, Susan McCoy, Alberta Fandel, Linda Medley, Cassandra Gregory, Susan Auer, Chidu Singanallur, Verneaka Johnson, Ed Kach, Rebecca Duffield, Pat Cooley, and Paul Gordon. *Not pictured:* Samantha Stringer

Illinois CASA 2014 State Conference Coverage

Speakers Present on Major Issues Confronting Volunteers

Foster parent's perspective, drug abuse, childhood trauma, sexual rights of youth, and supporting people with disabilities, and a talk by the jurist who founded CASA of Southwestern Illinois highlighted at Annual Meeting

Effingham, May 16 — CASA staff, along with volunteers **Tom Bridgman, Gale Grant, Debbie Olsson, and Lois Zarembo** made the 2 1/2-hour journey to this small town east of St. Louis to attend the Illinois CASA annual conference.

The morning general session opened with a talk on the foster parent's perspective by **Tamara Guy**, Illinois Family Organization and project director, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois. As an adoptive parent, Tamara has life experience working with older children with an array of mental health diagnoses, and she has navigated a variety of social service systems throughout Illinois. Staff and volunteers heard a firsthand account of the challenges faced by foster parents, particularly those caring for children with special needs.

Joy Messinger, deputy director, Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health, lead a breakout session focusing on "Healthy Adolescent Relationships." Her workshop delineated how volunteers can work with young people to describe and recognize healthy relationships. Participants gained a deeper understanding of the cycle of domestic violence, learned about red flags that may indicate an abusive relationship, and were supplied with strategies for responding to a youth who reports being in an abusive relationship.

Drug trends in Illinois are continually changing, especially among youth, and this can make it difficult to know what indicators of drug abuse to monitor in the children and families we serve. **Rick Robins**, undersheriff of Montgomery County, explored the effects of currently popular drugs in another morning workshop. Substances such as heroin, ecstasy (MDMA), methamphetamines, cocaine, and prescription pills, were reviewed.

Amy Guy, owner and clinical director, The Wellness Loft, hosted a breakout session on "Complex Trauma in Child Welfare," offering a new perspective on how trauma can adversely impact children's brains and lead to inaccurate mental health diagnoses. She discussed how trauma injures young brains and how to broaden our view of the whole child when working with those who have experienced trauma from abuse and neglect.

Judge Milton S. Wharton, was the compelling luncheon speaker. Judge Wharton is retired from the 20th Judicial Circuit in Illinois. He has a long record of service in civic betterment. Most notably, he is a founder of the CASA of Southwestern Illinois (formerly St. Clair CASA). The judge provided attendees with an impassioned plea for the CASA model, and praise for staff and volunteers who take on the mission's important work. "The struggle for justice and equality begs the assistance of every man, woman, and child. Regardless of our station in life," he said, "we all suffer from every defeat — and benefit from every victory."



Judge Wharton

With so many changes in healthcare in 2014, it can be difficult to know what services are available to the young people we serve. During an afternoon workshop, **Joy**

Messinger, deputy director, Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health, provided an overview of the rights of young people related to sexual and reproductive access to healthcare. Attendees increased their knowledge of minor consent and confidentiality laws in Illinois, which helps to serve better the youth for whom they advocate.



Tamara Guy (pictured above) hosted an afternoon session entitled "Are You Kidding Me?", the gist of which concerned foster and adopted youth's ability to "push every button" on adults in their lives. Attendees learned how to use humor and other creative strategies with children displaying challenging behaviors — in addition to recognizing and responding to our own triggers that the children we serve so often identify and manipulate.

With a wealth of experience and an innovative approach to supporting people with disabilities, **Krescene Beck**, OVC consultant and project manager of "The Alliance", Blue Tower Training, headed a workshop about these individuals in the court system. Ms. Beck explored various tools and techniques for establishing rapport, effectively communicating, and ensuring that adequate accommodations are given to people with disabilities. Attendees were introduced to new ways of looking at their roles in child welfare. She emphasized the importance of finding a deeper sense of empowerment as advocates and celebrating the contribution that each person can make — in the court system and beyond.

National CASA 2014 Conference Coverage

“Our challenge: 400,000 unrepresented children who average 2 years in foster care with 3+ placements.” — National CASA CEO Michael Piraino

“I carried all my possessions from house to house in a garbage bag.”

“You can never judge a child by their case file.” — Ashley Rhodes-Courter

Grapevine, TX , June 10 — A CASA of Peoria County board member, Executive Director, staff — and two advocate volunteers who won National CASA Conference scholarships (*see photo at right*) — joined over 1,000 attendees at the 2014 National CASA Association annual conference in this charming rural community, a bedroom suburb of Dallas. The three-day conference featured inspiring keynote speeches and plenary presentations, musical performances, dozens of workshops, a movie night, and several organized networking opportunities.

Ashley Rhodes-Courter, best-selling author of *Three Little Words*, kicked off Sunday’s general session by recounting memories of her numerous foster-care placements. “I carried all my possessions from house to house in a garbage bag,” she related. Of her CASA, she said, “Several people reached out to me and can be credited not only for my success, but my survival — and one was an unpaid volunteer.”

National CASA CEO **Michael Piraino** gave a wide-ranging talk that highlighted the past year’s accomplishments for CASA and addressed the future direction of the CASA/GAL network. “A new child enters foster care every 2 min-



From left: Staffers Michael Zerneck and Dominique Alexandre, Executive Director Pam Perilles, Board of Directors Vice President Bob McCullum, advocate volunteers (and scholarship winners) Marti Atwater and Kara Grove, and staffer Terry Pyatt enjoy an evening out in nearby Fort Worth, TX.

utes; every 15 minutes, a new CASA volunteer is sworn in,” he reported, and then added grimly, “A child dies from abuse every 5.3 hours” in the US. Clearly, despite CASA’s successes, there is much work to be done.

Among the challenges to children in foster care cited by Piraino is the “chemical strait jacket” into which many such children are placed. “Psychotropic medications are overprescribed in foster youth. Anti-psychotics are not appropriate for children as young as two years old.” He stressed that “foster children are not full of defects — they’re full of potential” and that “foster care is a social condition, not a form of mental illness.”

He also relayed some impressive statistical benchmarks for the CASA/GAL network: There are currently 951 CASA programs nationwide, comprising 73,000 volunteers advocating for 250,000 children.

It is beyond the scope of this newsletter to report on the proceedings of the workshops, so we encourage our volunteers to visit the National CASA website (www.casaforchildren.org) and download PDFs of the presentations that are of interest.

Monday’s general session featured a fascinating talk by **Joyce James**, a nationally known consultant, who shared her personal journey toward understanding the importance of developing a race-equity lens to shape and deepen her understanding of the causes of inequities that exist for youth and family across multiple legal and social-service systems. She recounted the many underlying contributors to inequitable outcomes — including unconscious biases and institutionalized racism — and highlighted for the audience ways to address these challenges and achieve success for all children. She pointed to the courts to lead the way in catalyzing change to reduce foster care’s racial and economic disproportionality.



CASATime Update

In January, CASA volunteers met with Advocate Supervisors at Strong Law (see photo, above) to participate in a roundtable discussion about some key topics, including the new [Assessment of Student Progress](#), for use by all volunteers with children of school age (i.e., ages 7-17). The three-page questionnaire is meant to be completed twice yearly by the volunteer, based on school records and interviews with teachers, administrators, and primary caretakers. The tool was developed by a committee of local CASA volunteers who are also educators, under a grant from National CASA. The completed form can either be attached to the court report or serve as the basis for commentary about the child's academic progress in the report. [If you don't have a copy of the template, or are unsure about how to use it, please contact your Advocate Supervisor.](#)

Announcing CASA of Peoria County's Summer 2014 Training Class

August 16 –26, 2014

**Advanced Medical Transport
1718 N Sterling, West Peoria**

Class Schedule

Saturday Aug 16	9:00 am — 5:00 pm
Tuesday Aug 19	5:30 pm — 8:30 pm
Wednesday Aug 20	5:30 pm — 8:30 pm
Thursday Aug 21	5:30 pm — 8:30 pm
Saturday Aug 23	9:00 am — 5:00 pm
Monday Aug 25	9:00 am — 5:00 pm
Tuesday Aug 26	5:30 pm — 8:30 pm

(Note: Meals will be provided for all classes.)

Swearing-In Ceremony

Date & Time to be Determined

Hon. David Dubicki

Juvenile Abuse & Neglect Courtroom

Peoria County Courthouse

324 Main St (Jefferson St. entrance)

Room 424 (Fourth Floor)

For more information, or to apply to be a volunteer, please contact

Michael Zerneck

Advocate Supervisor

mzerneck@peoriacounty.org

309-669-2939

Speak up for a child!

Nine Hole, Par 3 Challenge & \$1 Million Hole-in-One Shootout

September 17, 2014

Registration: 2:30 to 3:15 p.m.

Shotgun Start: 3:30 p.m.

\$1 Million Shootout: Approximately 6:30 p.m.



Country Club of Peoria

4700 Grandview Drive, Peoria Heights



CONNOR CO.

Presenting Sponsor

Support a great cause, enjoy a day of golf—and earn the opportunity to win \$1 million!

Details & Prizes

NINE HOLE, PAR 3 CHALLENGE

- Country Club of Peoria is converting the entire course to Par 3 play
- Field limited to first 25 teams comprised of four golfers per team
- \$250 per golfer

HOLE-IN-ONE SHOOTOUT

- Top 5 teams with lowest scores from front nine and back nine (10 teams total) will select one individual from their team to compete in the shootout
- \$1 million grand prize awarded to the first finalist who sinks a hole-in-one

EXTRAS!

- Free hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar at the club house (Plus, invite guests to join you at the hole-in-one party for only \$30/person)
- Putting contest as you come off the course
- Raffle and other prizes awarded at the event

For more information or to become a sponsor, contact:

Jeff Doeden at 309-453-3633 or JeffDoed@hotmail.com

www.casapeoria.org



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates FOR CHILDREN

A fundraiser to benefit CASA of Peoria County



PARADICE
HOTEL-CASINO
EAST PEORIA, ILLINOIS
Putting Sponsor



Golf Glove Sponsor



DIFFERENT WORKS
Deluxe Sponsor

SAVE THE DATE FOR

CASAblanca

an evening of *Dancing with the Stars*

A fundraiser to benefit CASA of Peoria County



Saturday, November 1st, 2014 at 6:00 p.m.
at the Par-A-Dice Hotel Ballroom

21 Blackjack Boulevard, East Peoria

This is your opportunity to make a difference in
the life of an abused or neglected child.

For more information, please call the CASA office
at (309) 669-2939.

Or visit our website at www.casapeoria.org.
Check out the videos from last year's event!



CASA

™ Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF PEORIA COUNTY

Thanks to our Volunteer Training
Meal Sponsors ...



*Haddad's Downtown
Peoria*



**Adams Street Cafe & Catering
107 SW Adams St.**

... and to our Training Facility
at Advanced Medical Transport!
1718 N Sterling
Peoria, IL 61604



**Advanced
Medical Transport**
of Central Illinois

Save Lives. It's what we do.

Leave 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 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 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 Directors 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.

CASA of Peoria County
324 Main St. Room 215
Peoria, IL
61602
(309)669-2939

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

CASA of Peoria County gratefully acknowledges



City of Peoria
Community
Development
Block Grant



Member of the
National CASA
Association



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: ____/____/____ Sec. code: _____

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

THANK YOU.
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.