

CASA Voice

Words from the Director

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Melkecia Welch

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Recently I heard the line "Powerless Children need Powerful Friends". This statement goes straight to the heart and drives CASA of Peoria County's Vision and Mission. As we struggle to find sustainable funding we are reminded of the positive impact that our CASA volunteers provide for the powerless children in our community.

Did you know?

- Last year CASA of Peoria County volunteers spent in excess of 1,500 hours assisting children. Using \$110/hour that a court appointed Guardian Ad Litem might bill the court generates a revenue savings equivalent of \$165,000 to Peoria County.
- Average cost for a child each month placed outside of the family home is \$5,488. CASA involvement reduces the time a child spends in foster care by an average of 8 months saving taxpayers \$43,911 per child.
- Peoria County is third highest in the state for children in foster care. CASA of Peoria County has a waiting list of volunteers ready to advocate but no funding to train and supervise additional volunteers. The need is great!
- Children assigned a CASA volunteer are 50% less likely to reenter the foster care system. Cases with CASA involvement are more likely to achieve a permanent home for the child.

CASA of Peoria County's Board of Directors has been working hard at our short term and long term goals to sustain and grow CASA of Peoria County. We are beginning to see the fruits of their labor through many contributions from friends, family and community supporters. Continued support is needed!

We extend a "BIG THANK YOU" to our most valuable asset, CASA volunteer advocates! We thank you for your time and commitment to continue our work in being "A Powerful Voice in a Child's Life!"

Fondly,
Pamela Perrilles
Executive Director

Welcome New Advocates!

We would like to welcome to the Peoria CASA team all of our new advocates! It is great to have you aboard.

The Spring Class of 2009 was sworn in on May 4, 2009.

Most of the new advocates have been assigned a case and are off to a great start!



Pictured from left to right : Wendy Harmon, Rosalind Lowry, Shayla Flemming, Rita Graves, Natalie Mason, Anthony Williams, Judge Kim Kelley, Shavon Johnson, Susan Ecroyd, Susan Oldfield, Sherry Gordon, Nicole Painter, Sherry Dooley. Not pictured: Lori Ulrich, and Adam Oldfield who also completed the 2009 Spring training.

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Volunteer Spotlight: Mary Arnold & Sue Kingery



CASA Volunteer Mary Arnold is currently employed at the Riverplex Recreational Facility. She has been married for 36 years and has 3 sons. She has been a CASA Volunteer for 3 1/2 years and was a part of the first class to be trained as CASA Volunteers for Peoria County. Mary is currently active on the initial case she was assigned and shares a case with Sue Kingery which consists of 5 children!

Volunteer Advocacy

Why did you decide to become an advocate? I wanted to make a difference in a child's life. Children shouldn't have to suffer because of adults choices but they do suffer. I feel that a CASA Volunteer can soften that hurt. To know that you are not giving up and are there for your CASA children and them only.

Do you have any advice for other Volunteers? Take good notes, do not get behind, stay with it, and don't get discouraged! Add creativity to your approach as you get to know the children.

What has been one of your most memorable moments as a CASA Volunteer? My CASA partner and I were playing a board game with our CASA child in residential care. Our CASA child looked at us and was so pleased for us to be there. There was a time when we couldn't get five minutes with her and now when we visit she doesn't want us to leave.

What keeps you motivated on your case? The children! Knowing they will obtain permanency and be in a structured and loving home because they have been in the system too long!

What are your challenges as a CASA? 1) Time! That is the most challenging to me, I had to really learn to manage my time between my family, work, ELITE, and CASA . 2) Note taking, thinking I will remember but I don't so taking notes and staying organized with both notes and time. They are both still a challenge for me. However I was blessed with a partner Sue Kingery , who is great at writing our reports.

Is there anything else you would like to share? I feel in the case we have, I know the parents didn't seem to have it all together. The mother was young and had some challenges but her heart was big and she loved her children. If we just can be more of a help to some of our parents so that the families can all stay together. Unfortunately, our five children right now are split up and the parents have lost their rights. One of our children is in residential care with the hopes to be adopted along with her sister who is currently in an adoptive placement. The three other children are also in safe and loving adoptive placements.

Also, do not let any parties to a case ever intimidate you because you are a volunteer! The judge ruled a lot on our case because of our reports to the court. Our reports are very important and so are you!



CASA Volunteer Sue Kingery is the Project Director of the Arts in Education Spring Celebration that occurs each year on the grounds of the Peoria County Courthouse. Sue was sworn in as a CASA volunteer in November of 2005 and is active on the same case she was assigned to in February of 2006. She shares a 5 children case with Mary Arnold.

Volunteer Advocacy

Why did you decide to become an advocate? I have done a lot of volunteer work in the community with the social service agencies and I wanted to be involved in direct, hands-on service to families and children.

Do you have any advice for other Volunteers? It's hard and gut-wrenching when there is a difficult situation in a home. It is not easy to scrutinize biological parents and foster parents when you know that deep down all they want for their children is the same thing we all want for our children, which is to have the best possible life and all that we can give to help them thrive. Most parents that we deal with don't seem to have the tools necessary to provide their children with a safe and healthy environment.

What has been one of your most memorable moments as a CASA Volunteer? Partly because of our factual reporting, 3 of the siblings who were placed together were removed from an unsafe environment at a foster home. It was heart-wrenching because the children had been moved around so much anyway and it was hard to accept that we contributed to another move, even if it was for the better.

Another memorable moment was making a hotline call after visiting one of our CASA children. We had to report what the child told us and what that might mean for her placement.

What keeps you motivated on your case? When you develop a connection with the children and when you walk in for a visit and they remember your name.

What are your challenges as a CASA? Sometimes it's a challenge to make consistent visits. Those visits are important, though, so we can report first-hand about a situation and not just rely on the other workers input in the case.

Is there anything else you would like to share? For all of the bad situations we encounter, we also have some loving, committed foster parents who want nothing more but to give otherwise neglected children a safe and loving home. The dedication of those foster parents makes all the difference in these children's lives.

Board Member Spotlight: David Collins



Tell our readers a little about yourself .

My name is Dave Collins. I am married to Jane. We celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary last month. We live in Dunlap with our children Erica, age 17, and John, age 15.

I am an attorney with Quinn, Johnston, Henderson, Pretorius & Cerulo. My work involves the defense of personal injury and wrongful death lawsuits.

I joined CASA of Peoria County Board of Directors in October, 2006. I co-chaired the Sponsorship Committee of the 2007 Casas for CASA Fundraiser. For the past year and a half, I have served as Chairman of the Court Liaison Committee. I was interim Vice President from March – June, 2009. Last month, I was elected President

for the upcoming (July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010) year.

What led you to become involved with CASA? I have had a very blessed life. I want to use my talents, skills and resources to assist others. Children are among the most vulnerable members of the community. CASA of Peoria County seemed like a good fit for me.

What do you enjoy about your involvement with CASA and what are the rewards of being a board member? We have a dedicated staff that oversees dedicated volunteers. It is gratifying to know that our work as a Board facilitates these efforts. I have enjoyed working with Executive Director Pam Perrilles and the other board members. They are energetic, hardworking people who are committed to improving their community.

What are your future goals for CASA of Peoria County from your view? To find steady and sufficient sources of funding to cover CASA of Peoria County's day to day expenses.

Thereafter, to grow the program by hiring additional staff, to oversee additional volunteers, to assist more children in Peoria County.

What are your challenges as a CASA board member? The downturn in the economy has drastically affected CASA of Peoria County's traditional sources of funding. We must develop new sources of funding that provide CASA of Peoria County with steady and sufficient income.

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

Community awareness of CASA of Peoria County and its mission has increased. This has been accomplished through fundraising events and presentations to community groups by Executive Director Pam Perrilles and various board members.

CASA Board News

CASA Staff would like to send out a hearty welcome to Greg Birkland, Shital Shah, Mike Crumpton, and Paris McConnell who recently joined the CASA board. We are excited to have you a part of the Peoria CASA team!

We also want to extend our gratitude to the board members whose term recently ended. Becky Woods, Jean Polk, Randy Lawson, Solomon Balraj, Becky Haider, Scott Petty, Joseph Currin, Jack Boos, Erin Scherbinske, Glenn Hudson, and Gretchen Wirtz.

We are extremely grateful for all of your contributions and your continual support of CASA of Peoria County!



From left to right: Greg Birkland, Shital Shah, Mike Crumpton. Not featured is Paris McConnell.

Casas for CASA

Thank you to all who supported the Casa for CASA event ! Thanks to Carl Herzog, Cathy Tanner, Virgil Jones, Tom Harrington Jr, and Tim Harrington from the Devonshire Realty group, for their work with creating a playhouse for this event. We would also like to thank John and Susan Arnholt (Horan Construction Inc.), Kevin Moody (Borkholder Lumber), Scott Farris (Norandex), and Glen Fogler (Union Flooring) in their contribution to the creation of a playhouse (pictured on the right). Big thanks to Federal Companies Allied for transporting the playhouses!

We appreciate all volunteers who donated their time to assist in this fun impacted fundraising event. Your efforts of selling and purchasing raffle tickets, show-placing your cars in the exotic car show, donating gifts to be auctioned, participating in the auction, and spreading the word to the community; all helped to bring more funds and awareness to CASA of Peoria County.

Congratulations to the Casas for CASA playhouse winners; Erin Yocun and Traci McGinnis!



Caption of the Yocun children enjoying their playhouse created by Horan Construction Inc.



Everyday Heroes Essay Contest

The Everyday Heroes Essay Contest was designed for children all over Peoria county who already have advocates – or heroes – that support them every day. CASA of Peoria County deemed it fitting to host a celebration in recognition of everyday heroes.

Letters went out to Peoria County schools asking teachers to encourage their students to write short essays or create illustrations of their hero. We received a total of 216 letters and illustrations which were judged by a committee. Selected winners and their heroes were invited as special guests to the third annual Everyday Heroes event at O'Brien Field on May 27, 2009. All participants in the contest received a free ticket to the Peoria Chiefs game and were entered into a drawing making it possible to throw the first pitch, paint the plate, or make announcements during the half inning.

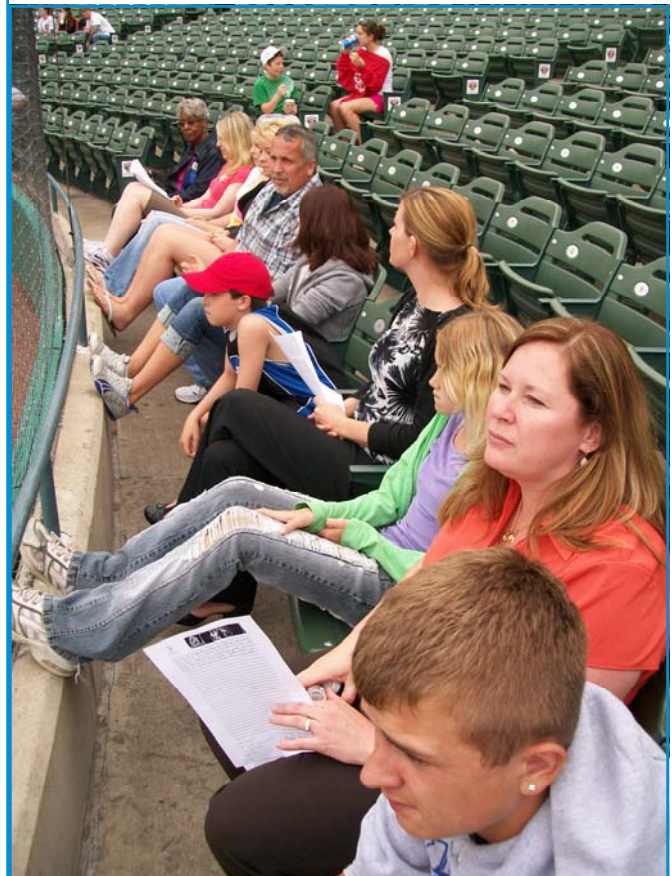
Our goal is to continue to help local children recognize those who have already made a difference in their lives.

A special thanks to all who participated!

Judges: Jennifer Morris, Lisa Mullins, Matt te-Nuyl, Nicole Painter, Natalie Miller, and Jean Polk.

Readers: Lisa Mullins, Jennifer Morris, and Caroline Borden.

Others that help with the event: Dave Collins, Jean Polk, Matt te-Nuyl.



Pictured above are a few CASA Board Members and winners of the Everyday Hero Essay contest. The group sat and waited to be called out to the O'Brien baseball field. The pre-game event started off with board members reading the winning essays and the winners either participated in throwing the first pitch, painting the plate, or making announcements during the half inning of the game.



BIG THANKS to Peoria Chiefs and all of their contributions to help make this event possible.

Take a Deeper Look by Melkecia Welch



Have you ever viewed a picture of an image that had another image hidden within but was unseen at first glance? Usually until a hint is given does one see that there is more to the image than what meets the eye. Most of the children and families we work with have a deeper image that we fail to see at first glance. Yes, we review paperwork summarizing their past and current situations but until we come face to face and communicate with the individuals are we able to go beyond the outer surface.

How do we take a deeper look? We listen to hints given in conversation or lack thereof. We pay attention to actions by reading facial expressions, body language, and their interactions with people or things. We consider how well the individuals interact with others or activities. Is your CASA family talkative about certain issues or avoidant of your questions? We simply ask straightforward open-end questions without beating around the bush (being mindful of their emotional and developmental state).

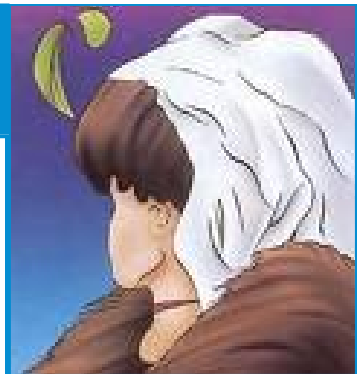
For instance one of your CASA children may have recently misbehaved in school by disrespecting their teacher and fighting with another student. The child is suspended from school twice within a month for behavior outside of their norm. The child is also facing a court hearing which would determine whether he/she would return home to his/her biological parents. Hints that there is something deeper going on is seen in the

child's abnormal behavior.

Reviewing the issues going on in the child may formulate an opinion but until you visit with the child and converse with them asking straightforward open-end questions such as why were you so upset that you had issues at school or how do you feel about the upcoming court hearing. Asking those particular questions will spark a response whether verbal or non-verbal because the question gets straight to the point.

In this case, after talking face to face with the child you learn that the stress of not knowing whether they will return home has weakened their resistance to ward off confrontations. You also learn that aggravation from another student and a false blame placed on the child by the teacher heightens the stress causing the child to lash out physically against the other student and verbally against the teacher.

Depending on the level of rapport you have developed or the way your CASA family communicates will determine if there are some deeper issues going on triggering misbehavior. Be careful not to form a judgmental attitude about the individual grouping them with others that may have experienced similar behavior patterns. Remember each individual responds differently in various situations and before you finish your thoughts on the matter take a deeper look.



Featured above is an all time familiar optical illusion titled *Old Woman / Young Woman*.

The title in itself is a hint to get you to view the image intensely because there is certainly more to this image than what meets the eye.

The image does not change and it is indeed an image of an old and young woman. Yet, the meaning of the image changes based on what you choose to concentrate on and its context to the rest of the image.

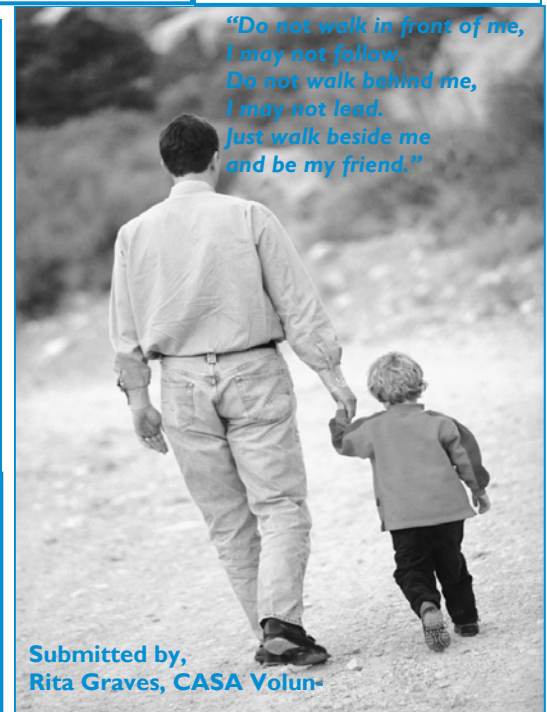
If you don't see the two images at first glance take a deeper look!

Wisdom Corner

"I think a good message to all CASA volunteers is to take time for yourself. It is easy to get caught up in CASA activities. Although most of the volunteers do not seek reward from their efforts, take time to be kind to yourself. There is nothing wrong with feeling proud of the work you do - its an important job to give these children a voice. Treat yourself to quiet time, ice cream, music, etc. You will be able to focus better and do a worthy job with your CASA child/ children."

Latan E. Mahan, CASA Volunteer

"Powerless Children need Powerful Friends!"
Author Unknown.



*"Do not walk in front of me,
I may not follow.
Do not walk behind me,
I may not lead.
Just walk beside me
and be my friend."*

Submitted by,
Rita Graves, CASA Volun-

Court Calendar
August

August 5- 1:00pm
Mike W.
August 18- 1:15pm
Carmen H.
August 19- 9:30am
Nancy P.
August 21- 1:00pm
Staff

Court Calendar
September

September 9- 1:30pm Kelly P.
September 16- 1:00pm Nate K.
September 23- 1:15pm Susie C..
September 23- 9:30am Nate K.
September 28- 1:15pm Britta J.
September 29- 1:30pm Stephanie M.

In-Service Opportunities for the Quarter

August 6th @ 12-1pm- CASA Time! Peoria County Courthouse.
August 7th @ 2pm & 7pm- "Strong Connections" theatre troupe at the Spalding Pastoral Center in Peoria contact Carol with Catholic Charities 636-7909.
August 13th @ 6:30-8pm- Adolescent Sexual health- Carrie Neff- Andrews speaker @ Crittenton Center hosted by YSNP.
September 3rd @ 5:30-6:30pm- CASA Time! Peoria County Courthouse.
September 10th 6:30-8:30- Pre-teens and Cyber-bullying-Jeanne Anders speaker @ Crittenton Center hosted by YSNP.



STAND UP FOR AN ABUSED CHILD

2009 Illinois CASA

State Conference

October 9th - 10th, 2009

Hamburger University

Oak Brook, IL

For Conference Registration

and

Online Payment Information

go to

www.illinoiscasa.org

SAVE THE DATE

September 26th 3-5pm Wine tasting event, see flyer bottom left.
October 9-10th IL CASA State Conference. See info top right.
November 7th CASAblanca "Dancing with the Stars" see info bottom right.

CASAblanca Planning Underway for November 7th at the Peoria Country Club

The need for CASA advocates is greater now than ever. Our gala is CASA's major fundraiser and enables us to train and support our CASA volunteers. This dedicated committee is just beginning their work and welcomes passionate party planners and amazing auction item advocates. Additionally, if you know anyone that wants to help our youth, but doesn't have the time to be an advocate, this is a great place to make a difference. **Our next meeting is 7:30 a.m., Friday, August 7th @ The Crompton Home 145 Fleur De Lis Drive, East Peoria.** Please contact our co-chairs for additional info:

Diann & Mike Crompton 370-3522 decrompton@hotmail.com

Diann & Mike Gootee 360-7689 Goot1@comcast.net

Featured below are local *Dancing With the Stars* participants at CASAblanca 2008.

SAT SEPT 26TH 2009 3:00-5:00PM

Join CASA of Peoria County and Water Street Wines, Cafe & Coffees for wine tasting and Hors D'oeuvres!

"Powerless children need powerful friends"

Come Wine with us!

CASA
CONFIDENTIAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN
CASA OF PEORIA COUNTY

Water Street Wines, Cafe & Coffees

Special Shout Out to Angela Wilhelms!

Thanks for all of the many hats you wore at CASA! We will certainly miss you in the office but want to wish you the best on your road to becoming an awesome elementary teacher!
CASA of Peoria County Staff & Board

Third Annual CASAblanca 2008
Dancing With the Stars

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.nationalcasa.org
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

