



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF PEORIA COUNTY

July– September 2010

Volume 2, Issue 2

CASA Voice

Words from the Director

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What a wonderful honor to receive the Widmer Wish for 2010. Many thanks for all the great work of our dedicated CASA advocates, committed staff and engaged board in making this possible! This exciting office makeover will provide a productive work environment for volunteers and

staff in building capacity for our organization. Like most small non-profit organizational budgets, CASA of Peoria County's funding is applied to direct services of the children we serve leaving no funds for such amazing furniture.

A BIG THANK YOU to WIDMER Interiors, OTTO BAUM COMPANY, INC., HON and J+J/INVISION for their contributions in the \$20,000 office refurbishing give away!

The timing is perfect to celebrate our 5th year of operation. Watch for more information about our Open House to unveil our new offices in mid August!



Win Stoller, Pam Perrilles, Frank Gutwein



CASA of Peoria Staff
Pam Perrilles, David Berkshier, Melkecia Welch, Eileen Wissell, Becky Weber



Greg Batton, Mike Crompton, Tony Barlett, Lisa Mullins



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David Crimmins, Ashley Morris, Jennie Perrilles



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Kerry Sturm, Eileen Wissell, Lori Birkland



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Thomas Harrington, Chip Hemmer, JoEll Allen



Jason Ward, Herb

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Volunteer Spotlight: Shavon Johnson



My name is Shavon Johnson. I am a Housing Counselor and work for METEC which is a HUD approved Housing Counseling Agency. I have been a CASA Volunteer for little over a year and I was assigned one case with three kids. I am currently advocating for one kid since two of the three have been returned home.

Volunteer Advocacy

Why did you decide to become an advocate?

I became an advocate because I love to help people especially children.

Do you have any advice for other Volunteers?

The advice I have for other advocates would be to really take your case(s) seriously. What you are doing will really impact a child's view on life.

What has been one of your most memorable moments as a CASA Volunteer? (good or bad)

My most memorable moment was when the two girls on my case were able to finally go back home with their parent. After they were returned home for a little while I went to visit them. They were so happy. One of the girls had previously lost so much weight while she was away in foster care. When I saw her she already had started gaining her weight back. It was good to see.

What keeps you motivated on your case?

Knowing that I am making a difference a child's life.

What are your challenges as a CASA?

Not knowing all of the legalities of the case concerning my CASA children.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

I love being a CASA. I enjoy the bonds I'm making with the children. That makes me feel good.



Board Member Spotlight: Tony Bartlett



My name is Tony Bartlett. I work for RSM McGladrey, where I am in the Financial Forensics and Valuation Services group. I have been on the CASA Board for about a year and a half now as the Treasurer. Currently, I co-chair the Fundraising and Finance Committee and I am on the Executive Committee.

What led you to become involved with CASA?

I enjoy reaching out to others in a time of need to lift them up and help them right the course. I believe that reaching out to younger children in a time of need is the key to long-term success of not only themselves, but our communities as well. Our CASA volunteers play an important role in that process.

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

Listening to Pam tell the starfish story (see pg 6) about a person who was on the beach picking up stranded starfish one by one and throwing them back into the ocean so that they wouldn't perish. An onlooker came up to the person and said that because of the mass number of starfish, one must be crazy to think that they could possibly make a difference. The person committed to the task picked up another starfish and threw it into the water and told the onlooker "It sure made a difference to that one!" Like starfish there are numerous children stranded on the sands of life as the result of strong tidal wavelike experiences of abuse or neglect. Knowing that I am playing a part in "throwing some back in the ocean" is the ultimate reward for being a Board member.

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

My first goal is to obtain long-term sustainable funding from our community, and the second goal is to increase the funding that we receive. I would like to see CASA of Peoria County grow such that we can reach out to more children and make an even bigger impact in the community.

What are your challenges as a CASA board member?

The economy. Sustainable funding has been difficult to obtain at times due to the recent events with our economy. Though we have had some close calls, we have been able to overcome this challenge and we continue to look for new and creative ways to obtain sustainable funding.

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

Despite many agencies being shut down due to lack of funding in the past year, we have continued to weather the storm and side effects of a national financial crisis, and I think that speaks volumes for everyone involved from our volunteers to our staff and to the Board members.

What other committees have you've served on?

None.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

I would like to thank all of our staff and volunteers for all of the work that they do. Sometimes, this can be a tough gig, but you have to keep in mind, the work you are doing today with one particular child will pay off in the long term. Who knows? Maybe the work you are doing now is shaping and molding a future President of the United States. You could be providing hope to a child who will go on to find a cure for cancer. Or your example could be influencing those that know you to get involved and do something else to help others. Your contributions are making a better tomorrow for everyone and I thank you all for that.

*Powerless Children,
Need Powerful Friends!*



**Court Calendar
July**

- July 1- 1:15**
Greg B.
- July 6-1:45**
Gwen H.
- July 13-2:00**
Evelyn K.
- July 14-2:15**
Wendy H.
- July 19-2:00**
Jean P.
- July 21-8:45**
Wendy H.
- July 21-1:15**
Nancy P.
- July 21-2:15**
Sherry D.
- July 26-9:00**
Sue & Linda

**Court Calendar
August**

- August 2-9:00**
Mike W.
- August 2-1:30**
Becky W.
- August 12-1:15**
Wendy H.
- August 30-9:00**
Sue & Mary

**Court Calendar
September**

- September 1-9:00**
Susie C.
- September 13-1:15**
Rosalind L.
- September 20-9:00**
Britta J.
- September 28-1:15**
Kirsten V.
- September 28-2:15**
Carmen H.

In-Service Opportunities

July 1st, 5:00 pm- until end of discussion. CASA Time: CASA Volunteer Stacy Borho is hosting a showing of the movie *Precious*.
August 5, CASA Time: at 5:00 pm location to be announced. Special guest speaker: Elizabeth McCombs, *Youth Program Manager* for Goodwill Industries of Central Illinois, Inc.
September 2, CASA Time: at 5:00 location to be announced.

Save the Date CASAblanca 2010

Featured below are local *Dancing With the Stars* participants at CASAblanca 2009.



CASAblanca Planning Underway for November 6th at Paradise Hotel & Casino. A huge thanks to Gina Morss and Daniel Smallwood who are the 2010 CASAblanca Co-Chairs! Our gala is CASA's major fundraiser and enables us to train and support our CASA volunteers.



TAKEOVER NIGHT



That's right, **CASA for children** is taking over **BUFFALO WILD WINGS®** in East Peoria!

Hang out with us while enjoying great Sauce-spun Wings®, Slammers™, Big Mouth Wraps™, Flatbreads, and more!

From **5pm-9pm**, 10% of all food sales will be donated to local fundraising efforts for Peoria County's Court Appointed Special Advocates.

SEE YOU THERE!



WEDNESDAY, JULY 7

TAKEOVER NIGHT



That's right, **CASA for children** is taking over **BUFFALO WILD WINGS®** in Peoria!

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SEE YOU THERE!



WEDS, JULY 21

The Sky is the Limit!

by Melkecia Welch



Reaching beyond visible limitations towards the things that appear impossible, has become a motto for me! Now that we are half way through the year one must look back to see if the goals established at the start of the year have been reached, are in progress, or have been hindered. If the goals have been accomplished take a moment to clap, lift up your hands, and shout YES! Way to go! If your goals are in progress or have been hindered take a moment to review them, see what has been done, what hasn't been done, or what could have been done differently. If you are on target hang in there and keep on going! If the goals you've set have been hindered let's explore ways to refocus and regroup!

Often time's goals are hindered by creative blocks, personal crisis, lack of motivation or a combination of all three. In other words the inability to formulate new ways to think or do things creatively, unexpected personal events that throw your goals for a loop, and boring methods of doing things zaps your motivation. Combinations of these things sometimes feel like one is on a hamster's wheel going no where fast. I've often heard that doing the same thing over and over to no avail is called insanity. I've been in this position before and it certainly feels pretty insane. So I ask how can one avoid this kind of insanity. One must explore other avenues and ways to achieve desired results.

Many times CASA's, CASA Staff, and the CASA Board reach a point where things are getting pretty stale and minimum to no progress is occurring. At that point we must head back to the drawing board to formulate some new ideas that will produce change. Let's visit ways in which new thoughts have derived.

CASA Volunteers brainstorm at our monthly CASATime gatherings which take place the first Thursday of every month from 5:00 to 6:00 pm at various food locations in the community. During these times CASA's are able to pose questions to the group which stimulates some feedback from those present. I've seen how the good feedback shared during CASATime has been effectively put to use on CASA cases.

Other times CASA Volunteers have conversations with CASA staff who suggest new ways to approach dilemmas that arise in their case. There are times when a staffing is needed with other parties involved on their CASA family's case to explore questions, problems, or beneficial resources that can help their CASA family. Suggestions for a Volunteer who is experiencing a creative block would be to change up your routine when you meet with your CASA child. Instead of asking questions on your next visit just spend the visit doing activities

such as scrap booking or playing catch with a ball (being mindful of the child's age).

Another example is of a case experiencing a sudden change in the placement of your CASA child outside of the county. A way to deal with the limitation of being able to travel to see your CASA child as often as you did prior to the change, would be to establish new ways of communicating. Design a schedule of how often and when you will be able to make visits. Be honest with the child about your proposed schedule of in person contacts. Arrange times that you are able to talk on the phone with the child. Participate in a staffing by phone if meetings arise concerning your case. There are ways to still be effective in advocating even when things suddenly change.

Whether it is dealing with creative fun things to do with the children within the guidelines of the CASA's duties, or addressing a communication barrier between the CASA, caseworker, children, or families the results of brainstorming leads to the discovery of new doors and opportunities that may not have been explored before.



There are no limitations to changing what isn't working. There are several models to follow, ways to do things, and answers to be explored!

CASA Staff and Board face challenges with meeting their goals as well. Whether it is a hindrance in obtaining the monthly data from the CASA volunteers, obtaining grants that would help fund the organization, or formulating stable monies from organized fundraisers to help sustain the CASA program these limitations arise affecting the establish goals.

The great benefit the CASA Staff and Board have is the many CASA organizations all over this country that have experienced all of these areas whether it was difficulty in obtaining monthly CASA Volunteer participation, obtaining resourceful grants, or weathering the seasons of America's economy. CASA Staff has the privilege of bouncing questions and ideas off of other staff in Illinois through email.

There has been awesome feedback using this source of communication. Also, National CASA's website (www.casaforchildren.org) has a wealth of information on its site to assist volunteers, staff, and the board! Examples, ideas, stories, trainings etc. can be found on the website to help all refocus, regroup, and maintain the goals one has set for their CASA program this year.

One thing I have come to experience for myself is that there is nothing new under the sun! There are no limitations to changing what isn't working. There are several models to follow, ways to do things, and answers to be explored! As much as we are drawn to believe that no one have experienced a particular situation that you are facing, know that there are others who are facing like challenges or have overcome a situation very similar to what you are facing. The challenge is finding out how they overcame and how you can implement that idea into your plan of action. I encourage you to be open to new ideas, be open to change, and continue to press on because the sky is the limit!

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
www.casapeoria.org

Starfish Story adapted from *The Star Thrower* by Loren Eiseley

One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked, "What are you doing?" The youth replied, "Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they'll die." "Son," the man said, "don't you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can't make a difference!" After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said..." I made a difference for that one."

This inspirational story is one that says in the face of what seems logically impossible, all have an individual choice to believe that they can make a difference in the life of another.



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.