



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF PEORIA COUNTY

June 2013

Volume V, Number 2

CASA Voice

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From the desk of the Executive Director



Summer is finally upon us! How nice to enjoy the sun and fresh air. The lazy days of summer weekends bring back some great memories of my childhood: The comfort of coming home after a long day of playing outside stays in my mind.

How did you spend your childhood summers? You can spark a warm place in someone's childhood by becoming a CASA Volunteer Advocate. We have a Summer Training Class beginning in August (see page 3 for a full schedule). Come join the CASA team and make a difference in a child's life.

They need you. And so do we.

— *Pamela Perrilles*

Staff & Volunteers Attend State CASA Conference 2013

Champaign, May 17 — Meeting in the Riverplex parking lot, staffers Pam Perrilles, Dominique Alexandre, Terry Pyatt and Michael Zerneck joined up with a cadre of volunteers and car-pooled for the ride to Champaign, site of the annual Illinois CASA Conference. The day-long meeting, comprising plenary sessions and breakouts, focused an array of topics of interest to all of us: Children's mental health, the effects of trauma on children, cyber-bullying and internet safety, social and emotional learning, and LGBTQQA issues. Attending were volunteers **Thomas Bridgman, Cathy Dare, Sue McGrew, Debbie Olsson, and Ruth Abel**, as well as recently appointed CASAs **Heather McKay, Cheryl Stach, and Randy Ray**. The proceedings were kicked off by Anne Klassman, project manager for Voices of Illinois Children, whose presentation "Foster Kids Are Our Kids" emphasized the importance of CASA volunteers

to the families we serve and to the community. Joy Messenger, manager of sexual health education for the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health, explored the ways CASAs can be an ally to LGBTQ youth in foster care and provided an excellent background on sexual and gender identity. "So What's the Big Deal about Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)?" was presented by Caryn Curry, director of prevention, Mental Health Association of Illinois. She gave attendees an overview of SEL, including how developing core competencies in this type of learning helps resolve conflicts and contributes to the prevention of violence.

Elly Pierson, Assistant US Attorney & Illinois Central District Coordinator, *Project Safe Childhood* for the Department of Justice, held a primer on cyber-bullying and internet safety for young people. Among the areas explored were social networking, child pornography, sex-

ting, and the basic steps parents and caregivers should take to assure the internet safety of children. Another session, hosted by Jeannie Higdon and Teri Burrows, centered on the work of the *Butterfly Project*, a joint effort of Children's Home and Aid Children's Foundation, which examines the impact of violence on young children. Rocio Alcantar, supervising attorney for the Immigrant Children's Protection Project of the National Immigrant Justice Center, hosted the final breakout session of the day, "Working with Immigrant Children," a topic of high-interest to those of us with such cases here in Peoria. Mr. Alcantar provided a useful guide to Federal and state immigration law and stressed the vital role child advocates can play when called upon to serve this growing sector of our young population. All agreed at day's end that the conference afforded a rigorous, well-packaged opportunity for continuing education and in-service training.

“And a Rousing Good Time Was Had by All”

CASA of Peoria County’s Annual *Volunteer Appreciation Dinner*

Peoria, May 22 — The prodigious Spring rains and subsequent flooding in East Peoria forced CASA to cancel the April Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, but the weather cooperated this evening for the rescheduled dinner at Barrack’s Cater Inn on Pioneer Parkway in north Peoria.

Courthouse luminaries who honored us with their presence included Chief Judge of the 10th Judicial Circuit **Michael Brandt**, Peoria County State’s Attorney **Jerry Brady**, and Court Administrator **John Flynn**.

CASA of Peoria County Board Members in attendance included **Geoff Turk**, President; **Jan Brown**; **Ron Hanna**; **Dawn Harris Jeffries**; **Bob McCullum**; **Stacy Robins**, and **Mau-reen Schlicksup**.

As guests gathered for the cocktail interlude preceding dinner, they were artfully serenaded by violinist **LJ Alexandre-Strong**, 16-year-old daughter of Advocate Supervisor **Dominique Alexandre**. We should also note that **Ralph Heston** volunteered his decorating skills for the artful table centerpieces, and new volunteer and CASA office intern **Cheryl Stach** baked the absolutely marvelous dessert pastries.

The emcee for the evening was none other than Advocate Supervisor **Terry Pyatt**, who did his usual stand-up job while filling in for Executive Director **Pam Perrilles**. Pam was a bit under the weather but nonetheless in attendance. “I wouldn’t miss this evening for the world,” she said. “This is the night each year in which CASA shows its gratitude to our precious and dedicated volunteers,” she continued. “After all, without them, this organization could not exist.”

A short introductory talk was given by Geoff Turk that highlighted the essential role CASA plays on behalf of abused and neglected children in the community. He then turned the floor over to Chief Judge Michael Brandt.

“You are not just a volunteer who is thrown into the courtroom arena without preparation; you are a *CASA volunteer*,” began Judge Brandt. “That is — unlike the person who steps up and volunteers to help stack sand bags to stop the tide of a flood — you have training from the CASA program to help do the best job you can for the children in need. Why do you do it?” the Judge continued. “Although I presided in the Juvenile Neglect and Abuse court in pre-CASA years, I do recall a letter received from a young girl who survived — and thrived — through placement in a secure and happy home. She thanked me for being her judge and sent me a school photo in which she was smiling. That’s why we do it. We may not be successful each and every time, but we know the importance of not giving up for the children we serve. I thought CASA was a win-win situation when it began in Peoria, a few years after I was assigned to another court, and I remain a strong supporter. Thank you so much again to all of you CASA volunteers, administrators and staff for your service,” he concluded.

State’s Attorney Jerry Brady followed with similarly eloquent remarks about the importance of volunteerism in our society in overcoming the effects of child abuse and neglect. “Oftentimes we hear it said that the true measure of a society is what it does for the protection of its young

and old,” said Mr. Brady. “Sadly in our society, child abuse and neglect statistics are staggering. Every year in the United States up to 10 million children are exposed to domestic violence and sadly only three million cases are reported. Every day in the US *four children* die of abuse and over three-quarters of those children are under the age of four. According to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, 79.4% of the perpetrators of child abuse and/or neglect are parents.”

Mr. Brady concluded his talk by thanking the volunteers. “You reinforce what Hubert H. Humphrey once said, ‘Each child is an adventure into a better life — an opportunity to change the old pattern and make it new.’ I thank you for your effort to change the old pattern so that the children of Peoria County can start anew.” (See **full text**, page 7.)

Volunteers **Kara Grove** and **Britta Jost** then shared with the 60-plus guests some of the insights they gathered at the National CASA Conference this past April in Anaheim. Before presenting Certificates of Appreciation to the volunteers, supervisors **Dominique Alexandre** and **Michael Zerneck** showed a remarkable video *Sponsor a Child*, created and produced by Nigel Turk, Geoff’s son, while he was attending Dunlap High School. A gorgeous and reflective video montage, the piece was set to “Rain” by the band Breaking Benjamin. Among the honorees, in addition to Britta Jost and Kara Grove, were volunteers **Ruth Abel**, **Mary Arnold**, **Thomas Bridgman**, **Debbie Olsson**, **Nancy Overcash**, **Jean Polk**, **Irene Pritzker**, **Jean Sykes**, **Rodnert Thimote**, and Michael Zerneck.

Announcing**CASA of Peoria County's****Next Training Class****August 10 — 20, 2013****Detweiller Center****809 W Detweiller (West of Knoxville)****Class Schedule**

Saturday Aug 10 9:00 am — 5:00 pm

Monday Aug 12 5:30 pm — 8:30 pm

Tuesday Aug 13 5:30 pm — 8:30 pm

Wed Aug 14 5:30 pm — 8:30 pm

Thursday Aug 15 5:30 pm — 8:30 pm

Saturday Aug 17 9:00 am — 5:00 pm

Tuesday Aug 20 5:30 pm — 8:30 pm

*(Note: Meals will be provided for all classes.)***Swearing-In Ceremony**

Juvenile Abuse & Neglect Courtroom

Peoria County Courthouse

Room 424 (Fourth Floor)

324 Main Street (use Jefferson St. entrance)

Hon. Mark Gilles

Date to be determined

*For more information, or to apply to be a volunteer, please contact***Michael Zerneck****Advocate Supervisor****mzerneck@peoriacounty.org****309-669-2939**

Peoria CASA Awarded Local Youth Advocacy Grant by National CASA Association

Peoria, June 3 — Pam Perrilles, Executive Director, is proud to announce that the National CASA Association has awarded a Youth Advocacy Grant to Peoria CASA from funds supplied by the Department of Justice — Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

The \$40,000 grant award began on June 1, 2013, and runs through May 31 of next year.



National CASA Association

CASA will use the award to fund a bold new initiative that focuses on assessing — and improving — the academic performance of children ages 7-17.

Headed by Advocate Supervisor Michael Zerneck, a task force of CASA volunteers who are educators is being established to brainstorm how to best formulate an assessment tool to assist volunteers with children of school age we serve.

The tool will also direct our volunteers to practical community resources to fulfill the needs identified during the assessment. The goal is to not only monitor academic performance but to help our children with school- and education-related issues.

If you are an active or retired educator and wish to assist with developing and implementing this initiative, please contact Michael at the CASA office.

News and Notes

Free Community Swim Lessons

The YMCA is offering two separate swim-lesson days. Tell your families about these days — in addition to escaping the heat, it can be fun and educational for the whole family!

- Saturday, June 22 & July 27
- Registration begins at 9:00 a.m.
- Must have an adult present to register
- FREE to the public (maximum 50 participants)
- Need not be a Member

Please call 692-7631 ext. 232 — leave your name and number.

Low-Cost (or No Cost) Summer Parent Trainings

SkillSprout (www.skillsprout.com) is offering free Parent Trainings at two Peoria-area locations. The programs are free for parents who have a child currently enrolled in Jumpstart or Accelerate Summer Programs; and \$15.00/session for self-pay parents.

All classes are from 1:00 p.m. — 2:00 p.m.

“Dealing with Sensory-Processing Problems” (includes Make It/Take It Activity): Monday July 8 (128 Washington Square, Washington, IL)

“Decreasing Problematic Behaviors:” Wednesday, July 17 (8500 N. Knoxville Ave., Peoria, IL)

“Setting up a Language-Rich Environment:” Monday, July 22 (128 Washington Square)

“Using Visual Aids at Home:” Monday, June 24, 128 Washington Square, Washington; Wednesday, July 3, 8500 N. Knoxville Ave.

Court Calendar

July

7-1: Ingrid
 7-1: Marianne
 7-2: Cathy
 7-2: Sarah
 7-9: Ernie
 7-9: Dominique
 7-12: Courtney
 7-15: Derek
 7-16: Joe H.
 7-17: Kim
 7-18: Laurie
 7-18: Tammy
 7-22: Colin
 7-29: Jeff
 7-31: Jeff & Cheryl

September

9-4: Cheryl
 9-4: Chuck
 9-5: Debbie O.
 9-9: David
 9-11: Deb D.
 9-16: John
 9-23: Justin
 9-23: Kara
 9-23: Thomas
 9-27: Dominique

August

8-1: Mary & Sue
 8-1: Michael & Terry
 8-7: Barbra
 8-12: Jean P.
 8-13: Wendy & Nicole
 8-14: Tony & Kathy
 8-16: Marti
 8-20: Terry
 8-22: Michael M.
 8-22: Heather
 8-22: Sherry

INFORMATIONAL & RECRUITMENT MEETING

CASA of Peoria County is holding a recruitment and informational meeting for prospective volunteers and people interested in learning more about what we do.

When: Monday, July 15, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Where: Two25, Mark Twain Hotel, 225 NW Adams

Light snacks will be provided.

Please ask your friends and acquaintances who are interested in CASA to attend, or to call the office: 309-669-2939. And note that we are especially in need of male and minority volunteers. Our next training class will be held from August 10th to 20th (see schedule on page 3 of this issue).

SAVE THE DATE FOR

CASAblanca

an evening of *Dancing with the Stars*

A fundraiser to benefit CASA of Peoria County

Saturday, November 2nd, 2013 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.



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF PEORIA COUNTY

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.

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 gives Special Thanks to:



Caterpillar Foundation



ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE

VIOLENT CRIME VICTIM ASSISTANCE GRANT



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: _____

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!

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.

Thanks to our Volunteer Training Meal Sponsors



Full Text of Jerry Brady's Speech at Appreciation Dinner

A famous poet once said, "No duty is more urgent than that of returning thanks." Appreciation for others is a wonderful thing. It makes what is excellent in others touch us as well. I wish to thank — on behalf of the State's Attorney's Office — all you wonderful dedicated volunteers who, in simple terms, make the lives of children better.

Ronald Reagan once said, "The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children." That quote parallels the mission of CASA, which is to advocate for abused and neglected children through the services of specially trained community volunteers.

Oftentimes, we hear it said that the true measure of a society is what it does for the protection of the young and old. Sadly for our society, child abuse and neglect statistics are staggering. Every year in the US up to 10 million children are exposed to domestic violence, of which only 3 million are reported. Every Day in the US four children die from abuse and over three-quarters of those children are under age four. Sta-

tistics also show that the perpetrators of child abuse and/or neglect are most often the children's own parents. According to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, 79.4% of the perpetrators of child abuse and/or neglect are parents. The Governor of Georgia recently stated, "Violence among children is like a disease that can infect individuals, families, and communities. And just like a disease, violence spreads. We know that children who grow up suffering from abuse often become abusers themselves.

And so, thanks to the dedicated volunteers like each of you. There is hope for the future.



Forest E. Witcraft wisely said, "A hundred years from now it will not matter what kind of house you lived in, what

kind of car you drove, what your bank account balance was, but what will matter is that you are important and made a difference in the life of a child.

George W. Bush said, "A volunteer is a person who can see what others cannot see; who can feel what most others do not feel. Often, such gifted person do not think of themselves as volunteers but as citizens — citizens in the truest sense, partners in civilization.

Children are our future: As an unknown author wrote, "If you want to touch the past, touch a rock. If you want to touch the present, touch a flower. If you want to touch the future, touch a child."

From The Knights of Pythagoras: "No person stands so straight as when he stoops to help a child."

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "When you cease to make a contribution, you begin to die."

Thanks to the volunteers like you. You reinforce what Hubert H. Humphrey once said, "Each child is an adventure into a better life — an opportunity to change the old pattern and make it new."

I thank you for your effort to change the old pattern so that the children of Peoria County can start anew. Again, my thanks for your volunteer efforts.