



Court Appointed Special Advocates of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties



CASA Goes Downtown; *City Slicker Soirée to be Held in Power & Light.*

UPCOMING events

August

- 13 Continuing Ed: Grandparents as Parents
- 14 Conversation w/CASA
- 27 CASA Coffee Shop

September

- 4 Training Classes Begin
- 11 Conversation w/CASA
- 26 City Slicker Soirée

October

- 9 Conversation w/CASA

After five years of hosting the annual Country Cavalcade, CASA Board of Directors believe it's time to freshen up the theme.

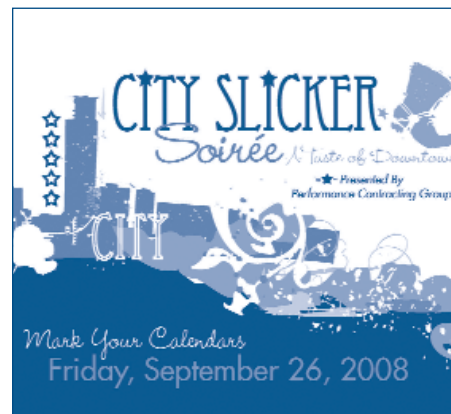
Replacing the Country Cavalcade, the CASA Board is taking the event to Kansas City's metro downtown to the new Power & Light District. The energy and buzz surrounding the new downtown is exactly what CASA wants to create for CASA supporters.

Presented by **Performance Contracting Group**, the City Slicker Soirée is a Taste of Downtown event and will be held on **Friday, September 26th** from 6:30 - 9:30 p.m. at the Big Sky Nightclub. This location is within the top level of the Live Block. A casual evening, the event will be full of energy and entertainment including:

- Cocktails and mingling;
- Dining stations from downtown's newest restaurants;
- Live music;
- Silent and live auctions;
- Raffle items; and even a
- Bull riding opportunity!

All proceeds of the City Slicker Soirée will benefit the programs of CASA of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties. Funds are earmarked to increase the number of CASA volunteers serving abused and neglected children.

As volunteers, friends and supporters of CASA, we hope you are ready to share in this fun, lively and new experience. Plan a date with friends and mark your calendars to join us for this first ever event. Tickets to the City Slicker Soirée are \$130 per person, which includes valet parking. You may reserve tickets by calling Alyssa at the CASA office, 913.715.4035 or send email to alyssa.perbeck@jocogov.org.



CASA is accepting auction donations and numerous sponsorship opportunities are available. Packages range in pricing and benefits. We guarantee you and your guests will have a great time. For more information, please call 913.715.4035 or visit the agency website at casajwc.org.

Mark your calendars. It's time to get all duded up for our CASA kids!

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Program Update: CASA Focused on Future.

FROM THE

president
Judy Frye

Our Summer Campaign is in full swing. Letters have been mailed and something special is enclosed in our appeal this year. If you haven't read the letter from Elora, please do. This is a very real letter from a very real former CASA child. Her message speaks to how our CASA advocates impact the lives of our CASA children and how important our involvement is to them.

I hope Elora's words help to make what CASA advocates do for children more real to all of you. For those of us that have children, they are the most important people in our lives and we strive to be there for them. Sadly, CASA children aren't in that position. Their family situation has let them down. They can't always count on their mothers and fathers to be there for them. This is where our advocates step in and become important in the lives of our children.

As Elora writes in her letter, CASAs never give up on the children for whom they advocate. As a former CASA volunteer myself, I know our advocates show children that they can count on us to be there for them. CASAs make sure that placements are safe, court hearings are attended and judges hear how our CASA children are feeling about their situation. We help with homework, talk with teachers and others involved in their lives, and try to make their childhood as normal as possible. We know that stability for children is important and helps our CASA children to do well in school and succeed as adults. Elora's letter really speaks to this and we are so proud of her.

Please join us in our quest to keep children safe and help them succeed. If you haven't yet done so, I encourage you to send in your gift in support of our Summer Campaign today.

Last fall, CASA began a multi-faceted plan to serve more children in our Child in Need of Care (CINC) program. This is due to a mandate from the National CASA Association that we devote additional resources to this program. By 2009, our goal is for CINC children to comprise 80% of the children served by CASA volunteers. To achieve this, our plan necessitated a restructure of our staffing and volunteer resources. Most significantly, all newly trained volunteers were assigned to the program. In addition, new procedures were put in place with CINC judges from both Wyandotte and Johnson Counties to expedite orders for CASA assignments. We are happy to share that our plan is paying off. Currently, the CINC program comprises 78% of those served by a CASA volunteer. Since January, CASA volunteers have served a total of 366 kids.

In comparison to 2007, CASA is on track to again increase the number of children served. At the mid-point of 2008, a 9% increase has been achieved. Diversity of children served is changing as well. The number of Caucasian children has declined sharply, while African-American and Hispanic numbers have doubled.

Most importantly, program outcomes continue to show positive impact of CASA services for children. Currently, 100% of kids served have been kept safe from additional occurrence of abuse or neglect, and 95% have experienced stability in their volunteer advocate.

CASA OFFERS SECURE AUTOMATED GIVING; E-NEWSLETTER

CASA has made it easier for donors to give by offering secure online giving opportunities. By visiting casajwc.org, individuals may give a one-time online donation, or choose to make recurring contributions by enrolling in an automated giving plan. Donations can be automatically deducted from a bank account or charged to a credit card on a regular, timed basis. As a convenience, giving plans may be set up and modified on a donor's own schedule. Individuals choosing to contribute \$500 per year for five years are recognized as members of the Hope Society.

CASA's online presence also encouraged the development of a reader-friendly and interactive e-newsletter. The *CASA Clips* keeps friends and volunteers informed and connected to the agency. Full of interesting and useful information, the *CASA Clips* features articles on upcoming events, community and business partnerships, education opportunities, program updates, and success stories. In addition, nearly every article provides a link for the reader to seek more information or contact an agency staff member. Distributed monthly, the electronic format also helps to conserve resources. More and more people are reading online. If you'd like to sign up, please visit the agency website at www.casajwc.org.



V O I C E

Love for Derek: A Story

Derek was 10 weeks old when I met him. He had been placed in foster care severely undernourished. Derek's mother was young, single, hearing impaired, and living with her elderly grandparents. The report indicated that she was unable to prepare Derek's formula, and was not able to hear him when he cried.

Derek's mother had significant family support, and was accompanied to court by her grandmother, mother and stepfather, aunt, and a pastor. During a home visit, I observed the living situation; everyone expressed love for both Derek and his mother. I inquired about Derek's father, who I learned had not yet met the baby, and had physically abused the child's mother while pregnant. I also learned that he was married, and had a record of childhood sexual abuse.

Although the family had love for Derek, it was obvious there were significant hurdles to overcome. Derek's mother lacked education beyond the 7th grade, and her hearing impairment impacted her ability to communicate. She lacked

social skills, and also essential life skills such as driving, money management, job skills, hygiene, and self-advocacy.

To assess her ability to care for Derek, supervised visits occurred weekly. Derek's mom was consistent about attending, but was unable to demonstrate independence in caring for him. She required significant support and guidance. We explored parenting classes, and also arranged a full psychological assessment including an IQ test. The results revealed a diagnosis of mental retardation. Although strengths also emerged, it was determined that Derek's mom would not benefit from standard parenting classes. I began to explore alternatives with The Whole Person, which offers mentoring, sign language training, life skills, disabilities services, and job coaching. I provided the referral information and encouraged mom to seek support as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, I continued to engage in periodic visits between Derek and his mom. Fortunately, Derek's health had

dramatically improved. Within months, he was within normal weight targets and meeting all developmental milestones. Throughout the months, however, a number of transitions occurred in Derek's mom's life, including the death of her grandfather as well as entering into a new relationship.

Unfortunately, Derek's mom has not complied with the referral to The Whole Person. Rather than making progress towards her son returning home, her life situation and living environment has spiraled into exceeding degrees of chaos and instability, with new evidence of sexual abuse within the family.

Currently, a termination hearing is scheduled and I'm more resolved than ever that adoption is the best outcome for Derek. He remains with the same foster family, which is a pre-adoptive home for him. He is now 10 months old and in a loving, safe, and nurturing environment with a couple who look forward to officially making him a permanent member of their family.

National CASA Association Launches Display of Support; *The Forgotten Children Campaign.*



One of the 4,250 life-size cutouts placed in front of the Washington Monument.

For too many Americans, children in foster care are all but forgotten. The National CASA Association intends to change that with the Forgotten Children Campaign. Launched in May, the campaign was created to raise awareness of foster children and to aid in the national recruitment of much needed CASA volunteer advocates.

Psychologist Dr. Phil McGraw, and his wife Robin, have a long-standing interest in improving the lives of foster children, and putting family first. On May 28th, National CASA CEO Michael Piraino joined the McGraws on a special episode of the Dr. Phil show. During the show, the McGraws announced their participation as spokespersons for the Campaign, and issued a challenge to all viewers to help.

The Forgotten Children Campaign launched the week of May 19th with a dramatic display of 4,250 life-size cutouts of children placed in the shadows of the Washington Monument. The life-size cutouts represented the children who entered the foster care system in that week alone. Nationally, more than 500,000 children are living in foster care, including over 1,100 kids here in Johnson and Wyandotte Counties. The goal of

the Forgotten Children Campaign is to raise enough funds to help provide a volunteer advocate for an additional 75,000 abused and neglected children nationwide. Title sponsors of the event include the Dr. Phil Foundation and the Freddie Mac Foundation. To learn more about the Forgotten Children Campaign, visit www.nationalcasa.org.

Young Author Delivers Keynote at Promise of Hope.

MARKETING update!

CASA of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties has been working together with Jackson County CASA to improve collaborative marketing and recruitment efforts. The two agencies have recently completed:

- A new collaborative overview brochure designed by **Kuhn & Wittenborn**
- A partnership with **Time Warner Cable** in the implementation of a year-long public service announcement campaign
- A radio and online advertising campaign highlighting the joint website www.casakc.org
- The development of a men's recruitment and social outreach group

As you can see, our agencies are working hard to build program awareness; increasing volunteers and funds across Kansas City!

Watch for our upcoming PSAs!

On Tuesday, April 8th, CASA of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties greeted guests at the 5th Annual Promise of Hope Luncheon. The event shed light on the needs of abused and neglected children, as well as worked to increase awareness of CASA's program within the community. Scheduled in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month, guests had the opportunity to light a candle in representation of an abused or neglected child living in Johnson or Wyandotte Counties.

Ashley Rhodes-Courter, a former CASA child and author of *Three Little Words*, delivered a poignant keynote message in which she encouraged guests to participate in the lives of youth. Having spent nine years in foster care, her story described feelings of loneliness, fear and mistrust. Now 22, and a national advocate for children, Ashley shared that a community can collectively make a difference in allowing children to inherit a better and brighter future. She spoke directly to the CASA program, the impact it had on her life, and encouraged attendees to get involved. Nearly 10 years since her adoption day, Ashley spoke of the relationship she still fosters with her CASA volunteer today.

CASA volunteer Mike Brazda also spoke to guests offering his belief on why CASA is an important organization. He shared how



Ashley Rhodes-Courter speaks to CASA volunteers during a breakout session at the Promise of Hope.

his volunteer service has impacted his life, as well as those of the youth he's been privileged to serve. Mike challenged guests to take action - inspiring many to join him as a CASA volunteer.

NBC Action News Anchor Christa Dubill emceed the program and the event included a performance by Holy Spirit Concert Chorale. A video also touched guests as they shared in the experiences of child victims and the role CASA plays in providing them a voice.

The event raised \$36,000 in gifts and pledges for CASA children. Proceeds of the event will benefit the programs of CASA and bring child victims of abuse and neglect an advocate to speak for their best interest.

CASA Volunteers, Spouses Hold In-Home CASA Connections Party.



Shelle and Dan Jensen, along with Julie and Glen Miles, hosted a CASA Connections Party on Sunday, June 1st at the Miles' home in Leawood. The reception event was customized by the hosts and was created as a way to help raise financial support and awareness of CASA among family, friends and neighbors. Also invited to the party were other active CASA volunteers. A social gathering, the party included drinks, hors d'oeuvres and a light-hearted game. A brief discussion about CASA also took place.

The Connections Party is a new activity for CASA and additional home-parties will be held. If you are interested in hosting a customized CASA Connections Party in your home, please contact Nina Kimbrough-Smith at 913.715.4042 or nina.kimbrough-smith@jocogov.org.

CASA Volunteer Honored for Service.



Kim Nelson with United Way of Wy Co. President Wendall Maddox and Cindy Cash.

Congratulations to *Kim Nelson*, a Wyandotte County CASA Volunteer, for recently being named a 2008 United Way Volunteer Honoree. The award recognizes individual volunteers for their willingness to help their neighbor, or those in need or at risk in their own community.

Kim has been a volunteer advocate since 2005 and has spent all of her three years advocating for the best interests of two boys.

When asked about her volunteer experience, Kim shared, "Rather than being an extra person, I've become a stable part of these children's lives. I know they count on me

and I believe the stability CASA offers allows children to continue living, growing and learning. Kids are worth every minute of time we can give them. I'm proud to share my time and hope they enjoy spending it with me."

To celebrate the achievement, Kim was honored during the 31st Annual Volunteer Recognition event hosted by the United Way of Wyandotte County.

Congratulations Kim and thank you for your dedication to CASA and our kids!

CASA Implements "In Good Company" Club.

This spring, CASA developed the "In Good Company" Club an opportunity for companies to support the program activities of CASA. The membership club actively participates - both financially and in volunteer efforts - to support the fight against child abuse in Johnson & Wyandotte Counties.

Members of the "In Good Company" Club bring positive change to the life of one child while also receiving numerous marketing benefits throughout the year. Current members include: *Long, Luder & Gordon; Olathe Medical Center; Performance Contracting Group; Shook, Hardy & Bacon; and The Johnson County Bar Foundation.* Each of their corporate gifts empower one abused or neglected child with a year-long match to a volunteer advocate. This advocate will be the child's voice in court and trusted friend, helping to find a safe, nurturing and permanent home for the child.

Want to join the club? Find out more at www.casajwc.org. You may also contact Alyssa Perbeck at 913.715.4035 or send email to alyssa.perbeck@jocogov.org.



VOLUNTEER voices!

In May, a *Volunteer Satisfaction Survey* was developed in order to evaluate the experience of CASA volunteers. The survey requested feedback on pre-service training sessions, the level of support and supervision, and their opinions on the impact of CASA.

A total of 190 CASA advocates were given the opportunity to participate. Fifty-five percent (55%), or 104 volunteers, responded.

Here are some results worth noting:

- 99% agreed that pre-service training was adequate.
- 98% find their program coordinator helpful.
- 98% agreed the work of volunteers influences decisions made.
- 93% said their recommendations provide important information to the judge.
- 100% believe CASA makes a positive difference for children.

Comments received were also helpful. A couple of volunteers had this to say:

"The format (of the initial training) was some of the best I have had. I left feeling quite confident in my role. As a professional, I have been through many trainings and I found CASA's to be exceptional."

"I believe CASA often provides information that can be obtained from no other source; information that is critical if the judge is to make the most informed decisions on behalf of the children."

*Thank you volunteers
for your feedback!*

VOICIA

Volunteer Spotlight

Sandi Fried

Sandi calls herself a "professional volunteer". She's been married to her husband Ed for 23 years and has four kids - Maggie, Josh, Gabbie, and Eli.



How long have you been a CASA volunteer? In what program?

I've been a CASA volunteer since the Spring of 2007. I volunteer in the Child In Need of Care (CINC) program.

What brought you to CASA?

I've known about CASA for years. My mom worked to develop the program here in Kansas City from the very beginning. I like advocating for people, especially children. I have been on boards; however, I felt like they were just discussions and I wanted to be actively involved.

What has been your most memorable CASA experience?

I've sent mail to my CASA kids when out of town. The 14 year-old I advocate for, once said to me, "I have saved all the cards and postcards

you've sent me." It was then I knew she really cared, and it was a nice alternative to the teenage attitude she often shows.

What words of wisdom do you try to live by?

Treat all people with the same respect and care, and kindness will come back to you. Everyone deserves respect. If you think the best of people, they'll show that side to you.

What three words would people use to describe you?

Passionate, optimistic and empathetic.

Of anyone, whom would you most like to have dinner with? Why?

I would like to time travel and have dinner with lots of people and watch the world evolve. From biblical people, to emperors and Kings, to explorers

and Presidents, to newsmakers of our own time - I can't pinpoint one. I'd also love to have dinner with family members who have passed away, those I knew and those I didn't.

What are your hobbies? What do you like to do in your free time?

Driving my kids around! I do that more than anything else. I love to read fiction books. The type where the characters are so defined that you feel like you're living with them.

Where is the farthest place you have traveled from Kansas City?

I traveled to Japan and China before I had kids. Their cultures are so different yet it works perfectly for them. I visited Israel more recently. Israel is an oasis in the desert. The land is modern yet also from biblical days.

Impact KC Funds Metro Training; First Joint Session to be Held in September.



Impact KC members present a check to CASA during a grant awards reception.

In February 2008, CASA of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties and Jackson County CASA together received a \$25,000 collaborative grant from Impact KC. The grant's purpose is to implement a metropolitan recruitment and training program to benefit the two CASA agencies. The end result will offer potential CASA volunteers from across the metro greater access to initial, pre-service training sessions.

The joint project is already well underway. In March, the agencies contracted with an Educational Consultant to observe and evaluate both agencies' current training programs. This evaluation is complete. Areas for collaboration have been identified, and a recommended joint training schedule was recently presented. This fall, the first metro-wide volunteer training session will be held. CASA is optimistic about the project and believes the collaboration will further enhance the quality of the advocate education program.

A portion of the grant funding was provided to develop a recruitment strategy focused on reaching male volunteers. Part of the plan has been enacted as the two agencies have recently established a men's social outreach group. Members network with one another, as well as work together to encourage other men to get involved in the program. This spring, the group participated in a focus group in which many outreach methods were uncovered. One of which to develop specific materials for men, including a brochure and informational video.

The project continues and we'd like to thank Impact KC for making this effort possible.

CASA's Family of Donors

2008 Year-to-Date

BENEFACTOR

Arvin Gottlieb Charitable Foundation
Hall Family Foundation
Health Care Foundation of Greater KC
Human Service Fund: *Johnson County Government and the Cities of DeSoto, Fairway, Gardner, Leawood, Lenexa, Merriam, Mission, Mission Hills, Mission Woods, Olathe, Overland Park, Prairie Village, Roeland Park, Shawnee, Spring Hill, and Westwood*
Impact KC
Johnson County Board of Commissioners
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INFORMATION & RESOURCES

for volunteers

BORDERS BOOKS AVAILABLE!

Borders Books at 91st & Metcalf recently sponsored a book drive for CASA children. Customers generously purchased over 1,000 books for all ages, from baby books to mature readers! Popular titles include:

- The Very Hungry Caterpillar
- Curious George
- Charlotte's Web
- The Borrowers Series
- Ann of Green Gables
- Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants
- Treasure Island
- Boxcar Children Series
- Indiana Jones Series

Several books are also available in Spanish.

CASA volunteers are encouraged to come to the CASA office to select books to take to their CASA children. Many of our children have not been read to on a consistent basis, so reading is a popular activity for volunteers to do with their CASA children. Now, thanks to Borders Books, more CASA children will receive their own books and experience the pleasure of reading.

VOLUNTEER RESOURCE CLOSET

Thanks to the Optimist Club of Shawnee Mission, CASA has a new resource closet available to our volunteers! Visit the CASA office and you'll find toiletries, toys and games, puzzles, school supplies, and other speciality items for your CASA children. Please help us distribute these items to children who are in need of them.

NEW PODCAST OPPORTUNITY

National CASA has rolled-out a weekly podcast series available for listening and download at www.casenet.org. A podcast is a recorded conversation, dialogue or speech that is put on a website, allowing you to listen from your own computer. Current topics include:

- Kinship Care
- Early Childhood Development
- Working with Youth Involved in Both Foster Care & Juvenile Court Systems
- Attachment Theory

Volunteers may listen to the podcasts, write a summary and submit it for 30 minutes of CASA Continuing Education credits.

wish LIST

- Recordable DVDs and Digital Video Tapes
- Recordable CDs with Jewel Cases
- A 12-15 Cup Capacity Coffee Maker
- Gift Certificates from Local Bookstores, Restaurants, and Movie Theaters
- An Assortment of Greeting Cards - Thank You, Sympathy, Get Well, Thinking of You

Are you getting the CASA clips?
Sign up at www.casajwc.org to receive
CASA's new monthly e-newsletter.



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