

News & Updates from the Cumberland County CASA Program

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E.J. McKenna-Hieb, CASA Volunteer Par Excellence

Since the fall of 2003, E.J. McKenna-Hieb has been an integral part of the CASA Program in Cumberland County. Sworn in by Judge Ed Guido nine years ago, E.J. has served as a Court Appointed Special Advocate volunteer for four children consecutively, helping each of them on their paths to a “forever” home. In 2007, E.J. took on an additional volunteer role by agreeing to serve as the “Educational Consultant to the CASA” (EC-CASA) for the CASA Program. She has served countless numbers of children by assisting fellow CASA volunteers as well as Children & Youth caseworkers navigate the cases through the complex educational system.

The concept of the EC-CASA was introduced into the local CASA Program in 2007 after fellow veteran CASA, Sandy Evans, attended a National CASA conference and came back with renewed energy, requesting a meeting to discuss one of the workshops she had attended on educational advocacy. By that time, the CASA Program in Cumberland County was already 8 years old, and Sandy had been an active volunteer for almost as long. When we met with Sandy, we realized that symptomatic of the whole child welfare system, we (as a CASA Program) had also inadvertently put foster children’s educations on the back burner, focusing perhaps too much on the obvious: making sure foster children had roofs over their heads, were getting appropriate mental health treatment, and so on. It was our sheer good fortune that we already had in our midst another experienced CASA volunteer, E.J., who had an extensive background with the Department of Education and special education. Once E.J. entered the discussion on educational advocacy, a new dimension of advocacy was added to what was already in place. The “EC-CASA” concept became a reality when a court order was created to appoint someone like E.J. to assist fellow CASA volunteers understand the educational issues at hand, in order to consider the child’s needs from an academic point of view. After several months, E.J. and Sandy presented the “EC-CASA” concept to a Judges’ Luncheon (which includes all attorneys, court administration and CYS workers involved in the Dependency Court system). E.J.’s expertise in the field of Special Education and the laws pertinent to ensuring that children receive the educational services to which they are entitled has been an invaluable asset, not only to the dependent children in Cumberland County, but also across the state as she has worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the importance of strengthening the educational services available to children.



CASA Volunteers E.J. McKenna-Hieb and Sandy Evans share a moment at the November 2012 Appreciation Brunch.

E.J.’s impact also extended to the PA CASA Board of Directors, where she served 3 terms (9 years), including as Vice President of the Board during her final term. She was a model of consistency and dedication. She attended and participated fully in all meetings for which she had made a commitment, made regular financial contributions and brought great experience and ideas to every discussion. Serving primarily as the government relations representative for PA CASA, E.J. attended countless meetings of the POCC (Protect Our Children Committee), visited the state capitol for meetings with Senate and House members and focused much of her energy on strengthening the CASA network statewide. She worked tirelessly for PA CASA, attending and supporting every fundraising event held during her nine years of service, often serving on sub-committees of the Board. She championed the funding and development of a statewide training conference for staff, Board and volunteers. E.J. assisted in the development of a training curriculum on Educational Advocacy presented to attendees of the PA CASA Statewide conferences and served as a trainer for several sessions of that training. E.J. contributed to many of the major grant writing projects of the Association and was always there to help in any way she could!

See **Departing Insights from E.J.** on inside pages.

Twenty-fourth Class of CASA Volunteers, Spring 2012

Daniel Arauco was born in Chicago, IL to unmarried parents. Abused physically and emotionally while with his parents, from birth he was shuffled between his parents in Chicago and an aunt and uncle in PA. Though he felt a great deal of love from his aunt and uncle, he wanted to live with his father. As a teen, he became involved in adult activities with his father, who was a member of the Mafia. Returning to his aunt and uncle, he graduated from high school and from Valley Forge Christian College. He has become a motivational speaker for troubled teens and is the founder of God Is My Father, Inc. Daniel is married and has two young children.

Sherry Byrne grew up in Nebraska but now lives in Silver Spring Township. She has been involved in the field of developmental disabilities for over 30 years. She worked professionally with people with developmental disabilities for about 16 years before having her daughter, age 16, who has multiple disabilities. She continues to volunteer with different disability and advocacy groups, though currently most of her advocacy is with her daughter. Sherry loves arts and crafts, including paper crafts and crocheting. She also has an interest in genealogy and continues to work on her genealogy and take classes on the subject.

Kate Grasshopper became interested in CASA because she saw many children who were in the system, whose lives were being decided with little or no information about what their story was beyond the case file. As she says, "Being one of those kids when I was in foster care back in the nineties, I knew that if I was ever in a position to help those kids then I would." Now that she is married with kids of her own, her belief that children need champions has increased exponentially. She is extremely excited to begin her CASA career and looks forward to many years volunteering for this amazing program.

Randi Lorah grew up in Selinsgrove and now lives in Hampden Township. She is a fulltime employee of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. She and her husband have one son who is a student at the University of Delaware. Randi loves movies, reading, travel and gardening. She feels that bringing a life into the world is an awesome responsibility and she would like to help children whose parents are having a hard time with that responsibility.

Cheryl Marshall has lived in Central Pennsylvania all her life and currently is the Director of Records Management and Accounting Controls for Rite Aid Corporation. She is a mother and grandmother, and loves spending time with her family and friends. She also enjoys gardening, decorating and searching for treasures at flea markets, consignment and antique shops.

Angelika Ott was born and raised in Frankfurt, Germany and moved to the United States almost 10 year ago. McConnellsburg is the town she lives in now, with her 10-year-old daughter, her husband and two dogs. By choice, she is not employed so that she can be there for her family, work on her psychology degree, and do volunteer work. Among many other things, she enjoys decorating, music, gardening, church, and yoga. But most of all, Angelika enjoys spending time with her two daughters and her toddler granddaughter.

Amanda Taylor is a Central PA native who grew up in New Cumberland and has never strayed far. She considers herself a young chef, crafter, and writer who enjoys spending her time "soaking in the beautiful images that fuel [her] passions and the exquisite words that run [her] soul." When asked to list interests she often will respond with "music is my rehab, my stovetop is my relaxation, and volunteering is my contentment and happiness." She started volunteering with the Red Cross and knew that she would never be able to stop because it was such a profound and happy change for her. Since then she has volunteered with both the Association for Retarded Citizens and a mentoring website called icouldbe.org. Amanda has been chosen as an Americorps volunteer. She found CASA through a family friend and instantly fell in love with the organization, knowing that advocating for children was a volunteer role that she would definitely carry with her for the rest of her life.



Front row: Cheryl Marshall, Angelika Ott, Amanda Taylor; second row: Daniel Arauco, Kate Grasshopper, Randi Lorah, Sherry Byrne; and third row: Judge Albert H. Masland, Judge Christylee L. Peck, Judge Edward E. Guido

Twenty-fifth Class of CASA Volunteers, Fall 2012

Jennifer Horning grew up in Boiling Springs and moved back there with her husband and two daughters when she was pregnant with their son. Jenn works at Capital Blue Cross fulltime from home. If she can raise her children to be caring and motivated, to have good morals, and to know that they can accomplish anything, she will have done her job as a mother. Her oldest daughter is in first grade and is a soccer goalie, her second daughter is three, and her son is thirteen months old. Jenn's husband is very supportive of her volunteer journey with CASA. Jenn loves spending time with her family and friends, going for walks, hiking, skiing, bowling, and going to the gym.



Seated: Casey Sheehe, Kelly Smith, Bea Savage. Standing: Tiffany Lohman, Debbie Worley, Jocelynn Washington, and Jenn Horning.

Tiffany Lohman was raised in the rural outskirts of Lewistown. Leaving briefly to start her career, she has since returned and bought an old farmhouse in the same valley where she grew up. Tiffany is a SWAN (State Wide Adoption Network) Legal Services Initiative Paralegal for Mifflin County Children and Youth Services and is employed by Family Design Resources. She had worked in the same capacity for Huntingdon County. Tiffany wants to have even more impact on the lives of children which is why she sought out the CASA Program. She also is an independent contractor with several marketing agencies and has recently started a business with her fiancé. Tiffany has two amazing children, two wonderful step-children, and nieces and nephews that she adores. Her family enjoys the outdoors and having fun together.

Bea Savage was born in Washington DC into a family of seven. When she was a teenager the family moved to Pennsylvania. Bea has a love of animals, especially horses, and after graduating from high school, got her first horse. This started a 35 year career as a professional equestrian. Bea has owned as many as 26 horses at one time, and spends some of her time as a riding instructor and a consultant for people who are having behavior problems with their horses or dogs.

Casey (Kathleen) Sheehe is from the Harrisburg area and serves as District Sales Manager for Avon Products, Inc., being responsible for over 800 sales representatives in Central PA. Casey, in cooperation with Avon, has delivered her one-of-a-kind nationally recognized program titled SELF CONFIDENT WOMEN R.O.C.K.!! Casey has served as a foster parent and volunteered her time at the Sexual Assault Resource and Counseling Center, the Mental Health Association of Lebanon County, and the Camp Hill Prison. As a Eucharist Minister she delivers communion at Hershey Medical Center. Casey, who partnered with her sister Ann, also completed the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer Marathon in Washington, D.C. Her finest achievement is raising her daughter, who is the embodiment of joy!

Kelly Smith lives in Hampden Township with her parents and youngest brother. She was born in Los Angeles and until she was 16, moved multiple times because her father was in the Navy. After earning a degree in Economics at Penn State she completed one year of law school at Penn State Dickinson. She has taught LSAT preparatory classes part time. She also volunteers for Cumberland County Rape Crisis as a crisis counselor. She enjoys teaching and volunteering. Kelly is an avid reader, typically completing 200 books each year. She also enjoys hiking and just recently learned to scuba dive.

Jocelynn Washington grew up as a Marine Corps "brat," as her father was a United States Marine Corps Officer for ten years. The family lived in a variety of places, including California and Hawaii. Since 1984, Jocelynn has lived in Carlisle, where her parents were born and raised. She is employed fulltime at Sadler Health Center where she works the dental front office as a receptionist. Her general interest is to help people improve their quality of life. She is the mother of two teenaged daughters and a preschool-aged son. While she has difficulty understanding why a parent would neglect their children, she wants to focus on having a positive effect on parents and children as a CASA volunteer.

Debbie Worley grew up in Harrisburg and now lives in Enola. Debbie is a generous, outgoing person who enjoys helping others. She has previously volunteered with the Highmark Caring Place, a center for children and families who have experienced grief and loss. She has also served on the Youth Aid Panel that devises community service programs for juvenile criminal offenders. The concept of the Youth Aid Panel is to satisfy the community's need for restoration and also persuade the young offenders to stay out of trouble. In her spare time, Debbie enjoys movies and sports events.

Child Abuse Prevention Month in Cumberland County

While child abuse knows no seasons or boundaries, across the nation April is designated as Child Abuse Prevention Month as a way of heightening awareness of this often overlooked, but very real, social injustice. The Cumberland County Commissioners issued a Proclamation on March 29 setting April as a month to not only remember child victims of abuse and neglect, but to work diligently to reduce the occurrence and severity of this problem in Cumberland County. Receiving the Proclamation were Children and Youth Services Director Nikki Gresh and CASA Director Anita Brewster.

Later that evening, seven newly trained CASA volunteers were sworn in in the Old Courthouse by Judge Edward E. Guido, assisted by Judge Albert H. Masland and Judge Christylee L. Peck (see p. 2). These volunteers completed extensive training to help equip them to advocate for the best interests of the children to whom they will be appointed. In addition to the swearing-in ceremony, candles were lit signifying the hope that having a caring adult in a child's life can give.

Recognized that evening for ten years of service as CASA volunteers were Tina (Kless) Graff and Carol Sprecher. Diane Beliveau, Karen Newell, and Linda Wisner were recognized for five years of service. Special music for the evening was provided by The Octals, an all-male *a capella* group from Dickinson College. Kappa Alpha Theta provided a reception for everyone in attendance and alumnae presented flowers to the newly sworn-in volunteers as well as the five and ten year veterans.



Commissioners Gary Eichelberger and Barbara Cross, Children and Youth Services Director Nikki Gresh, CASA Director Anita Brewster and Commissioner Jim Hertzler recognize April as Child Abuse Prevention Month in Cumberland County.



In another public awareness event, on April 26, Victim Services, part of the District Attorney's Office, and other victim service agencies in Cumberland County, sponsored the Victim's Rights Rally in the County Courthouse as a way of recognizing how agencies work together they can positively affect the outcomes for victims of abuse.

Finally, on April 27, Children and Youth Services raised the Children's Memorial flag over Veterans' Square. This flag, sponsored by the Child Welfare League of America, is flown to direct attention to the tragedy of violent child deaths as part of a national initiative to reduce child mortality. The flag is a simple, moving image – a red field depicting blue, paper-doll-like figures of children holding hands. In the center, the white chalk outline of a missing child symbolizes the children lost to violence.

I am for the child™

Departing Insights from E. J. McKenna-Hieb

As I move on—a note of congratulations and good wishes to our newest classes of CASA volunteers! While it is hard to say goodbye after 9 years, it is truly heartening to see how many good people continue to undertake this important mission. You are embarking on a journey that may very well change the course of a child's life. I know. I've seen it happen in my cases and in those of my fellow CASAs. Each one of you has some special background or talents that can help in ways yet untold. As a special educator, educational advocacy became my way of contributing to the CASA mission. I would urge you to expand on your special gifts as you serve the needs of these children.

I like to joke that CASA years are more like dog years, each feeling like 7. At times you will question the value of your work as you encounter frustration or roadblocks to a goal seemingly impossible to reach. However, know that the value of your work is immeasurable to the judge as he or she works to do what is right for the child while satisfying the legal requirements of the juvenile justice system. Sometimes just when you think it will never come together, it all falls into place. I know...I saw it happen over and over again.

As you fulfill your main role as the eyes and ears of the judge, you may be fortunate enough to help your child return home successfully, or be adopted into a loving home, OR you may simply be the one to ease the burden of a teenager's long journey through the child welfare system. All my best wishes as you start your mission—and I truly believe it is a mission—to help rebuild the shattered lives of abused children. I know you will make a difference...you will see it happen...I did!

Annual Swearing-in Ceremony and Appreciation Brunch

The annual Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Swearing-in and Appreciation Brunch took place November 3rd in the reception hall of St. John's Episcopal Church on the square in Carlisle. This was the first time the Brunch was held at St. John's Episcopal Church, and it proved to be a delightful venue which provided a warm atmosphere to swear in the newest CASA volunteers. All three judges who hear dependency cases attended, as did County Commissioner Barbara Cross. Father Mark Scheneman welcomed everyone, including CASA volunteers and staff, guest presenters from training, Kappa Alpha Theta women, and families of the newest class of trainees. The Theta women from the Dickinson College Epsilon Lambda Chapter and the South Central Pennsylvania Kappa Alpha Theta Alumnae Association provided the decorations and food for the event, and also presented each volunteer with a "S'more" favor (see photo on left) recognizing their valuable service to children.



Jim Flower, the Dependency Hearing Officer for 20 years, was recognized for being one of the many people who work tirelessly in overseeing the welfare of children in Cumberland County. This year's event also spotlighted CASA volunteer, E.J. McKenna-Hieb. She and her husband, Dr. Louis Hieb, will be relocating to Massachusetts. Both have served countless citizens of Cumberland County in their respective advocacy positions. Their physical presence will be missed—but they will only be a phone call away!



CASA Volunteer E.J. McKenna-Hieb posing with Judge Guido and Hearing Officer Jim Flower

Theta Women Continue Their Support of CASA



As the national philanthropy of Kappa Alpha Theta, CASA, both in Cumberland County and on the state level, enjoys ongoing support from the local Dickinson College chapter. This past spring, \$1,758.72 was donated to the PA CASA Association. The Theta women sponsored a fashion show on April 17 with merchandise supplied by local clothing and jewelry retailers. Modeled by college students, the attire was available for purchase the same evening.

The sorority also held a bake sale and basket raffle during Homecoming weekend in support of volunteers in Cumberland County. The basket contained everything needed to enjoy a quiet movie night at home with someone you love, including a heart decorated quilt, made and donated to them by CASA volunteer Joy Gross. Nearly \$600 was realized through their efforts.

Plans are being made to hold another event to benefit PA CASA in the spring of 2013.

Family Development Credentialing Program (FDC)

Pam Wysocki, CASA Office Coordinator, recently completed the FDC Program which is a professional development course and credentialing program for frontline family workers to learn and practice skills of strength-based family support with families. This training will enrich her ability in coaching CASA volunteers to work with families with young children, teen parents, people with disabilities, and many other groups.

The 90-hour training included interactive classroom instruction and portfolio advisement based on the Empowerment Skills for Family Workers curriculum. Research conducted on the outcomes of FDC training revealed that workers also use family development skills in their professional and personal lives, acquired enhanced skills in helping families develop their own goals of self-reliance, and increase the ability of families to meet their goals. With successful completion of the FDC Course, an approved portfolio, and passing a standardized exam, Pam earned the nationally recognized and respected FDC Credential.

Program Statistics as of December 30, 2012:

- 163 CASA volunteers have been trained (33 are assigned to represent children and over 80 continue in a supportive role)
- 335 dependent children have been represented, 20 of whom received Court appointed educational advocacy since 2007
- 967 CASA Reports have been written, providing additional information to help the Court make decisions

Of the children represented by CASA volunteers whose cases have closed since the CASA Program began, 107 returned home, 139 were adopted, and 26 went to live with a permanent legal custodian or a fit and willing relative. Twelve children aged out of the system, 1 child died of natural causes and 2 had their cases transferred to other jurisdictions.

CASA Volunteer Training

To explore becoming an advocate for child victims of abuse and/or neglect in Cumberland County, **contact the CASA Office, 240-6159 or casa@ccpa.net**. More information can also be found at www.ccpa.net/casa.

Volunteer advocates must—

- be 21 years of age or older,
- be able to successfully pass criminal checks,
- complete 36-40 hours of training, and
- be willing to make at least a 2-year commitment.

Training is held over 5 weeks in Carlisle on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6 to 9 pm in the spring and on Saturdays from 9 am to 4 pm in the fall.

Spring training dates: February 14—March 21

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**Cumberland County
CASA Program**

OUR MISSION. . .

The mission of the Cumberland County Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program is to assist the court in determining what is in the best interest of abused and/or neglected children whose cases are in the court system. Through objective investigation and observation with the focus on the child assigned, trained CASA volunteers develop and present their recommendations to the court to aid in establishing a safe, permanent and nurturing home in an expeditious manner.



News and Updates from the Cumberland County CASA Program is published semiannually. Back issues are available upon request or at www.ccpa.net/casa. To be added to or removed from the mailing list, contact the CASA Office at (717) 240-6159 or casa@ccpa.net.