

# News & Updates from the Cumberland County CASA Program

Cumberland County CASA Program  
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# CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
**FOR CHILDREN**

VOL. 9 No. 2

Winter 2008-2009

## Treasuring CASA Volunteers

"We Treasure Our Volunteers" was the theme of the Annual CASA Appreciation Brunch held at Dickinson College on November 15. About 40 people—CASA volunteers, staff, Kappa Alpha Theta women, and other guests, enjoyed the sumptuous meal which was provided by the Dickinson College Thetas contributing their meal points to purchase the food. Alumnae Thetas also were on hand to help with the event. The four newly trained CASA volunteers, Linda Carr, Catherine Fought, Gerardine St. Jean, and MJ Gatten were sworn-in by Judge M.L. Ebert, Jr., after which active volunteers were also recognized. The program concluded with a very lively and informative presentation by Megan Johnston, CASSP (Child and Adolescent Service System Program) Coordinator, speaking on the issue of identifying and coordinating needed services for children, particularly in the areas of education and mental and emotional health. Her presentation was followed by a very interactive question and answer session, which engaged everyone present.



CASA volunteers Carol Sprecher, Shirley Simmeth, Arnie Jenkins, and Dave Bennett enjoying brunch.



Speaker Megan Johnston, Cumberland County CASSP Coordinator



## Kappa Alpha Theta and CASA

The Kappa Alpha Theta women of the Dickinson College continue to support the CASA Program in creative ways. At the Appreciation Brunch they presented about 30 fleece pillowcases which they had made to complement the fleece blankets they made and donated in 2007. During the week prior to the Brunch, they had hosted a Cookin' for CASA food stand on the college campus, raising over \$420 for CASA volunteer training and retention. A benefit concert is scheduled for March 3 with American Idol winner David Cook. Currently, the CASA Office has 3 Thetas as interns, hopefully helping the office to run more smoothly and efficiently.

### >>> New Mailing Address <<<

Please note that, while the Cumberland County CASA Program has not moved, it does have a new mailing address. All correspondence should now be addressed to:

**Cumberland County CASA Program**  
16 West High Street, Suite 303  
Carlisle, PA 17013

All other contact information remains the same.

## Meet the Seventeenth Corps of CASA Volunteers



New volunteers (l to r): Linda Carr, Catherine Fought, Gerri St. Jean, & MJ Gatten

**Linda Carr** grew up in the small community of Cleversburg, outside of Shippensburg, PA. Currently she resides outside of Newville, where she has lived for over 14 years. Linda is an online student with Central Pennsylvania College, majoring in Criminal Justice, with an anticipated graduation date of 2010. Linda is the proud mother of six biological children and two step-children, ranging in age from 4 to 31. Her career goals were put on hold in order to raise her children, and she is now excited to be starting a new chapter in her life. In her spare time Linda enjoys having fun with her family, helping others, singing, and writing poetry. She considers being a mother one of the toughest jobs around, but also one of the most rewarding.

**Catherine Fought** grew up in Harrisburg and now lives in the Carlisle area. She is employed full-time as a financial analyst. She is a member of St. John's Episcopal Church, Cumberland County Young Professionals and is a former board member of the Junior League of Harrisburg. Catherine enjoys gardening, reading, entertaining, and traveling.

**Mary Jane (MJ) Gatten** was born and raised in Chambersburg, PA and now resides in Camp Hill with her husband Ken, to whom she has been married for 38 years. She is a grandmother of three boys and three girls, including newborn twins. Although currently not employed, she is working towards an Associates of Arts Degree in Counseling, hoping to complete it in August 2010. She has worked with children in just about every capacity – having been a nanny, babysitter, and caregiver to the mentally challenged. She has also provided a temporary home for neglected and abused children. She enjoys decorating, cooking, and going to yard sales. The greatest thing in her life is knowing Jesus as her Lord and Savior. He is the real reason for her desire to be a CASA volunteer.

**Gerardine St. Jean** is from Florida, but now lives in Harrisburg. She has been full-time employed as a senior level manager with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania since 2000. Since 2005, she has been certified by the Human Resources Certification Institute as a Professional in Human Resources. She has also held trainer and facilitator certifications since 2000 and provides training to managers, supervisors, and their employees in leadership courses. Gerri is a member of the Society for Human Resources Management and a volunteer at Neighborhood Dispute Settlement. Gerri earned her Doctoral Degree in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from George Mason University, her Master's Degree in Industrial and Labor Relations from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Stetson University. She enjoys spending her free time with her family and friends.

### CASA Training, Spring 2009

To explore becoming an advocate for children, contact the Cumberland County CASA Program at 240-6159, [casa@ccpa.net](mailto:casa@ccpa.net) or [www.ccpa.net/casa](http://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.

Pre-service training is being held Tuesdays and Thursdays, **February 19—March 24**, 6 to 9 pm in Carlisle. Fall training is planned for 5 consecutive Saturdays 9 to 3:30, dates yet to be determined.

### Eighth Annual Light of Hope and Spring Swearing-in Ceremony

Old Courthouse on the Square in Carlisle, PA

March 31, 2009, 6 to 8 pm

Featured speaker Wendy Sledd,  
Mrs. Pennsylvania Galaxy 2009

The public is invited.

For more information, contact  
717.240.6159 or [casa@ccpa.net](mailto:casa@ccpa.net)



### 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](http://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](mailto:casa@ccpa.net).

## Mrs. Pennsylvania Galaxy 2009



As a survivor of child abuse, Wendy Sledd, the reigning Mrs. Pennsylvania Galaxy, has been designated as the spokesperson for the PA CASA Program statewide. Although Wendy is a trained CASA volunteer and living in Cumberland County (while her husband is stationed at the Army War College in

Carlisle), she is not able to make the 2-year commitment needed to be an active child advocate. However, the Cumberland County CASA Program has reaped great benefit from her presence, as she has, among other things, spoken to the Rotary Club, the Exchange Club, and the Association of American University Women. Wendy is also scheduled to be the speaker at the Annual Light of Hope/Swearing-in Ceremony on March 31 at the Old Courthouse in Carlisle.

Wendy has had an award-winning career as a broadcaster, interviewing former President Bill Clinton, Secretary of State Madeline Albright, and Joint Chief of Staff General John Shalikashveeli, among others; has appeared on Good Morning, America and the Today Show; and has had her news stories aired on CNN and the BBC. Currently she is pouring her energy into advocating for several charitable organizations. In addition to her work for CASA, Wendy has raised more than \$1 million for the March of Dimes and has lobbied on Capitol Hill for the American Cancer Society as a two-time cancer (cervical) survivor.

Wendy is strong in her Christian beliefs and credits God for her opportunity to serve as a role model. She and her husband Keith have one daughter and one granddaughter. You can learn more about Wendy by visiting her website at <http://mrspennsylvaniagalaxy.tripod.com>

### Thanks to Neill Funeral Home

The CASA Program recently received a Grief Management Library from the Neill Funeral Home in Camp Hill, through their employee, Brandi Thrush, who had just finished her active case as a CASA volunteer. This library of DVDs and books will be used as a resource for volunteers dealing with children who have experienced grief and loss. The Funeral Home also donated a food basket which was given to a family with a dependent child represented by a CASA volunteer.

### Program Statistics as of December 2008:

- 96 CASA volunteers have been trained (40 are active; 35 are CASA Supporters)
- 209 dependent children have been represented
- 438 CASA reports have been written, providing additional information to help the Court make decisions

Of the children whose cases have closed since the CASA Program was begun in 2000, 54 returned home, 48 were adopted, and 11 went to live with a permanent legal custodian or fit and willing relative. Six children aged out of the system and 2 had their cases transferred to other jurisdictions.

## CASA Family Grows

A Holiday Open House was held on December 12 for volunteers and personnel of the County and Courts who work closely with the CASA Program. Those in attendance were privileged to be introduced to Program Coordinator Anita Brewster's new 18-month-old daughter Maya, recently adopted from Guatemala. Maya joins sister Lena, shown here proudly hugging her new sister.



## Volunteers Volunteer

The CASA Program could not exist without our wonderful volunteers, but occasionally we have volunteers who go beyond their primary role of advocating for children. Over the past 6 months CASA volunteers and supporters have pitched in to help the Cumberland County CASA Program as well as the PA CASA Association by arranging and attending speaking engagements; manning booths at the National Night Out in August, the Carlisle Regional Medical Center Health Fair in September, and the Bon-Ton Day of Caring in November; and assisting with the PA CASA Benefit Concert in November. In addition volunteers helped facilitate training and mentored the new volunteers in October. Thank yous go to volunteers Dave Bennett, Pat Carey, Sandy Evans, EJ McKenna-Hieb, Shirley Simmeth, Carol Sprecher, Bob Wicks and supporters Carol Bell, Clare Garfield, Wendy Sledd and Christy Winnie for all their help over the past months.

## Volunteer Contact with Children

One of the standards set by the National CASA Association for all 900+ programs across the U.S. is that a procedure is in place to track whether each CASA volunteer has contact with his or her appointed children on at least a monthly basis. A waiver to this requirement may be issued if there are circumstances that prohibit monthly visits. Locally this duty falls to the Volunteer Coordinator to keep a record of contact between volunteers and their children. This standard is meant to ensure that, as advocates, the most obvious focal point—the children—is kept foremost in the volunteers' work.

### Make Sense of Your "Cences"

Submitted by CASA Volunteer Pat Carey

Adoles"cence": What I faced in my teens—a time of uncertainty, anxiety, constant change and an unclear future.  
Obsoles"cence": What I face as I turn 70—a time of uncertainty, anxiety, constant change and an unclear future.  
But wait. There is help. CASA to the rescue! Since becoming a CASA volunteer 3 years ago, my worries about septuagenarian obsolescence are over. I've sharpened my skills in thinking, reasoning and writing. I've learned to navigate the often tricky and confusing waters of local, state and federal agencies. I've had to amend, defer and prioritize goals. I've developed tactful responses when I long to shout, "Just do it my way!" And best of all, I've brought substantial change into the lives of the children in my case. I demanded a goal change when every other agency said impossible. In the subsequent hearing, the judge decided in favor of the Guardian *ad litem's* petition (prompted by the CASA). Because of my intervention and stubborn insistence, the children will have a future more hopeful than they could have without my involvement. I'm a CASA and I've changed the lives of my children for the better.

**That makes sense to me.**



& KAO present

# Rock the CASA

Student Senate Funded

# David Cook

with special guest Ryan Star

For more information:  
theta@dickinson.edu  
mob@dickinson.edu

Tuesday, March 3, 2009  
Anita Tuvin Schlechter Auditorium

A Portion of the Proceeds  
to Benefit Pennsylvania



Court  
Appointed  
Special  
Advocates

**Donations Welcome!**

doors open @ 7pm | show starts @ 8pm

Dickinson Student Tickets: \$10

General Public Tickets: \$15

4 ticket max. purchase per person

Tickets available: Mon to Fri | 11am - 1pm

Dickinson College ID: Feb 2 | Public: Feb 9

HUB Lower Level

