

News & Updates from the Cumberland County CASA Program

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Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

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Marking Five Years of Advocacy

March of 2006 marked the fifth anniversary of the swearing-in of the first CASA volunteers. To commemorate the occasion those individuals who were instrumental in the development of the Program were recognized during the swearing-in ceremony for the twelfth class of volunteers on March 30. Former County Commissioner Nancy Besch, under whose leadership CASA was begun, spoke of the need for the community to remain vigilant in its efforts to fight child abuse and neglect. Commissioner Bruce Barclay presented Gary Shuey of Children and Youth Services a proclamation declaring April 2006 as Child Abuse Awareness Month in Cumberland County. Dennis Hockensmith, PA CASA Executive Director, challenged the group to consider that every 10 seconds an incidence of child abuse is reported nationally, that every 22 minutes an incidence is reported in Pennsylvania, and that on 5 days of every week, an incidence is reported in Cumberland County. Susan Yeingst symbolically marked the time intervals by striking three chords on her harp. Susan also played thoughtful music to begin the program and during the lighting of candles when those assembled observed a moment of reflection considering what part each could play in combating child abuse. In closing, York County CASA Director Wanda Noll, on whose Program Cumberland County CASA was modeled, affirmed the work of the volunteers, staff and especially Program Coordinator Anita Brewster whose direction and support has made the Program what it is today.

Following the formal ceremony, the Dickinson College and Harrisburg Alumnae chapters of Kappa Alpha Theta provided a reception for all those in attendance.



Members of Kappa Alpha Theta



CASA Sandy Evans, GAL
Jackie Verney, Esq., Wanda Noll, York Co. CASA, and James Flower, Esq., Dependency Master



Judge Ebert and Judge Guido on the bench



Anita Brewster, Cumberland Co. Program Coordinator with Wanda Noll,



PA CASA Director Dennis Hockensmith and CASA EJ McKenna

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FIRST FIVE YEARS OF CASA

- 2000:** Judge Guido organized group of concerned citizens interested in CASA
 - 2-year start-up grant from National CASA
 - Program Coordinator Anita Brewster hired
- 2001:** First CASA volunteers sworn-in
 - Administrative Assistant Linda Rosenberry hired
 - Policies and procedures codified
 - **15 CASA Volunteers appointed to represent 22 children**
- 2002:** First Light of Hope Ceremony held
 - First of many college interns recruited
 - Office relocated and expanded into a larger space
 - **29 CASAs had represented 52 children**
- 2003:** Expansion grant from National CASA
 - Volunteer Coordinator Linda Rosenberry and Administrative Assistant Pam Wysocki hired
 - Saturday training offered in addition to Tuesday and Thursday evening format
 - **36 CASAs had advocated on behalf of 71 children**
- 2004:** Office space reconfigured with work stations, optimizing the office space to accommodate 3 staff, an intern and routine visits from CASAs
 - Website revamped by Dickinson College students
 - **42 CASAs had represented 93 children**
- 2005:** Cumberland County assumed full operating costs of Program
 - Database expanded to 1200 contacts
 - **49 CASAs had represented 116 children**
- [2006:** Newly elected Judge Ebert shares the responsibilities of dependency court]

Meet the Twelfth Corps of CASA Volunteers

Patti Bethel grew up in Mechanicsburg and currently resides in Mercersburg, PA. She is a home-schooling mother of 2 wonderful kids and works from home part-time as a loan assistant. She has taught high school math, has been a fire safety educator, implemented a juvenile fire-setter program, worked in a domestic violence shelter as a children's services provider, provided foster care, and taught Sunday school classes for teen girls. She has been involved with young people as long as she can remember, so serving as a CASA seems the natural next step toward a life dedicated to making this world a safer, kinder place for kids. She enjoys Sudoku puzzles, reading good books, caring for a menagerie of animals on their farm, playing games with her kids, snuggling up to Sunday night on ABC (Gray's Anatomy is the best!) with her teen daughter and generally just hanging out with her family. She loves her husband and is blessed with a wonderful life!



New CASA volunteers (from left to right): Patti Bethel, Vicki Hassinger, Julie Haubert, Ketha Lehman, Mike Pimental, Ginny Reid, Betty Washburn, and Melissa Vayda.

Vicki Hassinger was born and raised in Carlisle, PA and currently resides in South Middletown Township. She is employed full time with the PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency in Harrisburg in the Office of Victims Services where she works with crime victims. Vicki is blessed with a wonderful family and loves spending time with her husband, two sons, and their Springer spaniel, Suzy. Vicki lived in several states over the years and ended up settling back in the Carlisle area. She enjoys flower gardening, decorating, reading, walking, traveling and watching her sons play sports. She had the good fortune to grow up in a home with two loving, devoted parents with whom she is still very close. She loves being a mother and knows how important it is for children to grow up in a loving home. It is her hope that through the CASA Program she can make a positive difference in children's lives so they may have the possibility to grow up in a safe, loving and healthy environment and be able to realize their dreams and goals for the future.

Julie Haubert lives on the farm where she grew up, just north of Newville. She has been married for 20 years to a wonderful husband, Rodney. She has a daughter, a son, and a granddaughter. She is a social worker for Cumberland County Aging and Community Services at the Newville Patch Program, where she has worked for over 10 years. She loves to scrapbook and watch NASCAR racing.

Ketha Lehman has lived in the Carlisle area all of her life. She grew up in North Middleton and now lives in South Middleton Township. She currently works as an administrative assistant for her oldest son and his partner for their financial management group located in Harrisburg. She has a 19-year-old son in the U.S. Marine Corps as first responder for Crash, Fire and Rescue based in Cherry Point, NC. Her daughter, a recent graduate from South Middleton School District, will attend IUP for psychology in the fall and her step-son is in 8th grade. Currently only working part-time, she has the opportunity to spend time with her 20-month-old grandson and to provide meals for various functions at their church. She hopes to re-open a restaurant in the near future. Because she believes that **children are our future**, as a CASA volunteer, she feels honored for the opportunity to make a difference for our children.

Michael Pimental grew up in Massachusetts and has lived in Shippensburg for 28 years. Although he is a retired pharmaceutical salesperson, he now works full-time rebuilding his home and is an independent project manager. The things he likes to do include exercising, reading, woodworking, boating and volunteering.

Ginny Reid lives in Mechanicsburg, where she grew up. She is currently self-employed and is attending ITT Technical Institute as a full-time student. Ginny is a business owner, at-home mom, and avid volunteer. Her life has revolved around children, volunteering among other things with Girl Scouts and PTO. She is an artist and musician, who has run her own instrument sales and repair shop. Currently she sells her merchandise on eBay.

Melissa Vayda grew up in Selinsgrove, PA and lives in Carlisle. She currently serves as the Vice President and Chief Academic Officer of Central Penn College. She enjoys drawing and painting, spending time with her son, and being outdoors.

Betty Washburn grew up in Baltimore and now lives in Carlisle. She is a retired teacher and reading specialist from the Shippensburg School District. She also taught three years at Brainerd Indian School in South Dakota where she set up a remedial reading program for the junior-senior high school. Being involved with children is a life-long interest. CASA seemed like a natural outlet for her to share some of the skills she used in her teaching career. She loves music, mountains and PEOPLE.

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 will develop and present their recommendations to the court to aid in establishing a safe, permanent and nurturing home in an expeditious manner.

EsScents Salon Supports CASA



Lisa Erickson-McCarren, owner/operator of EsScents Salon, 415 Lincoln Street in Carlisle, has supported the CASA Program since her salon opened in 1994. As her mission statement says, her goal is to be involved "in environmental and humanitarian causes." The funds she has donated to PA CASA since 2002 have been earmarked for use for volunteer training and support in Cumberland

County. In addition to supporting CASA, she has in the past given to the Domestic Violence shelter, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Leukemia/Lymphoma Society, the Heart Association, Multiple Sclerosis Foundation, Habitat for Humanity, the Brandon Carpenter Trust Fund, American Soldiers serving in Iraq, the Cancer Society and the YWCA Breast Cancer Fund.

Her donations to the CASA Program and other worthy causes are raised through annual Cut-a-Thons. On the day of the Cut-a-Thon, she and her staff of 4 or 5 other beauticians donate all the proceeds from that day's haircuts. Students from the cosmetology department at Carlisle High School sometimes assist by washing clients' hair. A percentage of the profits from the sale of retail products that day also are added to the donation. At the most recent Cut-a-Thon held in March, Lisa herself gave 36 haircuts in one day. Combined with the efforts of the other staff, the donation of time and products amounted to almost \$600 going to support the volunteers of the CASA Program. The busy day is orchestrated through Lisa's salon with the assistance of the Dickinson College Kappa Alpha Theta Chapter. Together they schedule 4 or 5 appointments every 15 minutes over a 7-hour period.

Lisa came to Carlisle as a teenager when her father retired from the military and located here. She earned a degree in nursing, and then decided to pursue her dream of becoming a hairdresser. After training in that field, she returned to Carlisle, first working for another salon before opening her business adjacent to her home. Lisa became aware of the CASA Program when Dickinson College students who happened to be Kappa Alpha Theta sorority women approached her to help them raise money for the CASA Program, which is their fraternity's national philanthropy. In addition, one of her regular customers is also a dedicated CASA volunteer, EJ McKenna-Hieb, who has shared with her the value of the work of the CASA Program.

Spreading the Word

CASA volunteers and staff have been working diligently to get the word out about the CASA Program. The year began with CASA placemat distribution to local restaurants. In March, a program was provided at Bosler Library; in April, CASA made a presentation to the Carlisle Area Newcomers Club; and in May they spoke to a number of college classes at Shippensburg University and shared the CASA mission at the South Middleton Senior Expo/Health Fair. In June Cumberland County CASA helped man a PA CASA booth at Jubilee Day in Mechanicsburg which attracted over two dozen new inquiries from persons interested in becoming part of the Program; volunteer Barb Wilson told her CASA experience in an interview which aired on WHP-21 News; and staff and volunteers assisted at PA CASA's children's festival in Harrisburg. Special thanks goes to volunteers Patricia Gasant, Dotty Brlansky, Pat Carey, Abbey Newburger, Dana Gleason, Tina Kless, Brandi Thrush, Ginny Reid, Kathy Drye, Carol Bell, and Barb Wilson. Through their efforts and the efforts of others almost 100 people have requested information on how to become involved in helping children through the CASA Program. Any group interested in a presentation about the CASA Program should contact the office at 240-6159.

Placemat Placement

Since the beginning of 2006, thirteen area restaurants have partnered with the Cumberland County CASA Program to raise awareness of the Program by using informational CASA placemats. This awareness campaign generated television news coverage through George Lettis of WGAL-8 and Joce Sterman of WPMT Fox 43, as well as a newspaper article in The Carlisle Sentinel. As a result, the number of inquiries from potential volunteers more than tripled in the first month after the placemats were distributed. Mike Pimental was one of those who responded to a placemat he found at Select Family Restaurant in Shippensburg. He was recently sworn-in and is already advocating for 4 children. The CASA Program would like to recognize the following restaurants for their help in this project: Select Family Restaurant and Blackhorse Tavern in Shippensburg, Sisters Sweetery in Newville, Carlisle Downtown Café and Rustic Tavern in Carlisle, Holly Inn in Mount Holly Springs, Anile's and JC's Country Time Café in Boiling Springs, JoJo Pizzeria and Restaurant in Mechanicsburg, Mechanicsburg Diner and Brother's Family Dining on Route 15, Dingledein Bakery in New Cumberland, and Summerdale Diner near Enola. The entire project was underwritten by grants received by PA CASA from various foundations, including The Bon-Ton Stores Foundation and BJ's Charitable Foundation.

Investigative Training

Detective Earl Bock, of the Cumberland County Criminal Investigation Division of the District Attorney's office, presented a training session for CASA volunteers on March 28. He explained best practices and tips for successfully carrying out a CASA's fact-finding role to the 21 volunteers in attendance. This very informative presentation was part of the 12 hours of in-service training that CASA volunteers are required to complete each year.

Building Strong Families Conference

Families Surviving Loss

Thursday, October 12, 2006

8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Messiah College, Grantham, PA

Information/registration form available at <http://www.messiah.edu/departments/family/resources/BSF/index.html>.



Program Statistics as of June 2006:

- 62 volunteers trained (44 remain active)
- 140 dependent children have been represented
- 233 reports provided additional information to help the Court make decisions

CASA Training Fall 2006

To explore becoming an advocate for children with the CASA Program, please contact the CASA Office at 240-6159, casa@ccpa.net or www.ccpa.net/casa.

Volunteers must—

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

The next training will be held in Carlisle on 5 consecutive Saturdays, September 30—October 28, 2006 from 9:00 am to 3:30 pm.

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.



Come meet and talk with CASA volunteers and staff in an informal setting at Casa Mani Caffé. Refreshments will be available.

**Friday, September 8
from 4:30 to 7:30 pm**

**56 West High Street
Carlisle, PA 17013**

Raising public awareness of the CASA Program and of how ordinary citizens can become CASA Volunteers.