

# News & Updates from the Cumberland County CASA Program

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## CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
**FOR CHILDREN**

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### CASA Appreciation Brunch & Swearing-in Ceremony

About 50 people gathered for the annual CASA Appreciation Brunch on November 17 at The Depot on the campus of Dickinson College in Carlisle. The CASA Program took the opportunity to acknowledge the ongoing support of both the Dickinson College chapter and the Harrisburg Area Alumnae chapter of Kappa Alpha Theta over the past six years. Dennis Hockensmith, Executive Director of PA CASA, was on hand to present the Dickinson College chapter with a PA CASA Voice Award for its support of the PA CASA Association and the Cumberland County CASA Program. Blair Kauffmann, CASA Chair for Kappa Alpha Theta, received the award on the chapter's behalf. Although the membership of the college chapter is always changing as the women move through their college careers, the commitment to support CASA, both locally and on the state level, has never wavered. This ongoing relationship was highlighted through a short powerpoint presentation.

During the Brunch, Blair Kauffmann made a presentation of seventeen colorful, handmade fleece blankets to the Cumberland County CASA Program. These blankets were created by the Thetas for distribution to the youngest children represented by CASA volunteers.

In addition to recognizing Kappa Alpha Theta, the purpose of the Brunch was to also express thanks to the experienced CASA volunteers and the newly trained CASA volunteers for their commitment to making a difference in the lives of children. The fifteenth class of volunteers (see p. 2 for their biographies) was sworn-in by Judge M.L. Ebert, Jr. These eleven new volunteers bring the number to 85 of volunteers trained since the inception of the CASA Program in Cumberland County in 2000. Judge Edward Guido, who initiated the County's CASA program, was also on hand for the day's activities.



### Cookin' for CASA

The Theta women of Dickinson College continued their support of CASA by selling hamburgers and hotdogs on the college campus on November 30. The money raised through the event, held from 10 pm to 1 am is to be earmarked for volunteer training and retention events.



## Meet the Fifteenth Corps of CASA Volunteers

**Melinda Anglin** spent much of her life in Montgomery County, MD, where she was born and raised and taught school for 30 years. Today she lives in Waynesboro, PA, where she is a community activist and volunteer. She loves teaching both children and adults, and enjoys producing community artworks. Melinda is fond of antiques, architecture, and interior design and is enchanted by New England.

**Dave Bennett** was born in Torrington, CT and after high school joined the US Air Force. After graduating from college, he served in the US Army from which he retired in 1993. Dave then was employed by the Commonwealth of PA as a parole agent and retired a second time in 2002. He met his first wife in 1974. They had two daughters and one son. His wife died from cancer in 1997, and Dave met his current wife in 2000. They have been married since 2005. At this time, Dave volunteers for the American Red Cross, West Shore YMCA, Justice and Mercy, and several animal rescues in the area. He is a member of Congregation Beth Tikvah, a Senior Demolay, and a member of the Mason, Scottish Rite, and Shire. Dave enjoys collecting trains, riding his motorcycle and going on day trips with his wife.

**Thom Bowes** grew up mostly in Carlisle and now lives in Mechanicsburg. He is a human service worker employed fulltime with HAP, Inc., working with people who have mental disabilities. Thom is married with no children, but has 1 cat. He likes martial arts, reading, playing on his computer, and taking hikes.

**Nichole Cosenza** grew up in southern Maine and now lives in Mechanicsburg. She is both a part time self-employed business owner and a fulltime student, working on a degree in psychology. Nichole enjoys writing, making and building things, and her family. She has always loved working with children, and being a CASA is something she has wanted to do for a long time.

**Meghan Fluharty** recently settled in Harrisburg, coming originally from Sparta, NJ. She is interested in sharing her spare time with others. She plays soccer on Sundays and works two jobs in between going to school at night. Meghan found that there was still a void in her life that she is hoping CASA can fill. By dedicating her time to helping to better the life of a child, she feels she will be doing something to better the community as a whole.

**Samara Gomez** is a native of Vallejo, CA, now residing in Harrisburg. She is fulltime employed working in the legal division of the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency. Samara enjoys reading, shopping and spending time with friends. In the near future, she hopes to open a center dedicated to enhancing the lives of women.

**Betty Manning** grew up in Harrisburg, and currently lives in Mechanicsburg. She retired in August, 2006, and enjoys her retirement, using her time helping others in her caring and gentle way. Betty has 2 grown children who are married and have blessed her with 5 grandchildren. Her family means a lot to her, as does her cat, Miss Laura. Betty enjoys working for her Lord, reading, doing things with her friends, shopping, walking, and spending time with her family.

**Terri Mazzei** was born Theresa Ann Rappo and grew up in the small Italian community of Bristol Borough, PA. She moved to North Middleton Township in May 2005 due to her husband's job. Terri is employed by the Carlisle Regional Medical Center as a part-time Certified Nurse's Assistant, working mainly on Joint Camp and the Medical/Surgical/Telemetry floor. The first 25 years of her adult life, she worked in accounting. When she was laid off after 9/11, she left accounting and never looked back. She became a Certified Nurse's Assistant in 2001 and has been enjoying helping people ever since. Her passion is to share her knowledge on nutrition and help people find true healing and health through mind, body and soul. Terri believes that all people need to be "hugged" and have a warm feeling of being welcomed, wanted, and cared for.

**Shirley Simmeth** was an Army "brat" who lived in many places during her growing up years. Currently she resides in Carlisle, where she enjoys being a mother to her 10-year-old son who keeps her very busy. She is an outgoing, outspoken person who enjoys the simple things in life such as family and friends.

**Rebecca Tran**, who grew up in northern Virginia, currently lives in Chambersburg and is on leave from law school. While on leave, she taught in the Baltimore City Public School system. Through her experience there, her interests in child welfare and the court system were greatly heightened. Rebecca hopes to one day return to law school and use her experiences, especially with CASA, to develop a career in child law. Her other general interests include reading and cooking.

**Becky Wolfe** was born in St. Augustine, Florida and spent most of her impressionable years in Jacksonville. Currently she lives in Carlisle, where she is the part time Associate Pastor for Outreach at the Carlisle Church of the Nazarene. Becky is attending Williamson Bible Institute part time, working toward ordination in the Nazarene Church. She is also a taxi for her kids. Becky strives to be a loving servant, mom, and wife who enjoys her children, gardening, and being a team player as a parent with her husband. She hopes to help others to a wholeness of mind, body and spirit. Becky enjoys her work with the church and knows she is right where she needs to be. Her love for God and his willingness to work with her creates a longing for service through gratitude, which is her source of energy for everyday living.



Seated (l to r): Melinda Anglin, Betty Manning, Nichole Cosenza, Rebecca Tran;  
Standing (l to r): Samara Gomez, Thom Bowes, Rebekah Wolfe, Meghan Fluharty,  
Terri Mazzei, Dave Bennett, and Shirley Simmeth.



### National Night Out

The CASA Program participated in National Night Out on August 7 on the Dickinson College campus in Carlisle. This event was sponsored by the Pennsylvania Community Crime Prevention Program and is meant to strengthen neighborhood spirit and law enforcement relations by highlighting the availability of social and anti-crime programs that promote making the community a safer place to live, work and raise a family. CASA volunteer Pat Carey cheerfully assisted Pam Wysocki during the 95 degree evening which resulted in many new contacts for the CASA Program.

### "Virtual" Volunteer Coordinator

The CASA Office has undergone a transition in the way day-to-day operations are handled. In June, Linda Rosenberry, the Volunteer Coordinator, moved to Findlay, Ohio. Since then, she has been able to maintain her work long distance via virtual private network set up through the County. She also works in the Carlisle office for at least a week each month. Some of the technical and logistical glitches are still being ironed out, but generally this arrangement has been working well.

### Program Statistics as of December 2007:

- 85 CASA volunteers have been trained (41 are actively assigned or waiting for a case; 23 are CASA Supporters)
- 328 CASA reports have been written, providing additional information to help the Court make decisions
- 164 dependent children have been or are being represented. Of these children who have found permanence since the CASA Program was begun in 2000:
  - 47 returned home
  - 40 were adopted
  - 9 went to live with a permanent legal custodian or a fit and willing relative
  - 4 aged out of the system
  - 2 were transferred to another jurisdiction

(A number of CASA volunteers were unable, for a variety of reasons, to continue advocating for their assigned children through the end of their dependency.)

### Educational Consultant

Many children in the child welfare system have difficulty accessing the services they require to best meet their educational needs. "In 2006, National CASA partnered with Casey Family Program and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) to conduct a national survey of the CASA/GAL network . . . to identify current barriers or challenges to addressing the educational needs of children and youth in foster care and—ultimately—to inform the improvement of practice, policy and procedure." (National CASA Association Update, July 2007, p. 1). A number of our CASA volunteers have recognized this educational void in the children to whom they have been appointed. Often the multiple moves and temporary placements these children experience have created this gap in services. One of the roadblocks for CASA volunteers in advocating for these services for their children was simply being able to understand the maze of special education for children in foster care. Because navigating the educational system can demand a deeper understanding of the system than many volunteers possess, the CASA Program has begun to assign Educational Consultant CASA volunteers for some of the children already represented by a CASA volunteer. The sole responsibility of an EC-CASA is to assist the primary CASA volunteer in understanding and advocating for what will give their assigned children the help they need to reach their potential educationally. By having the EC-CASA appointed by the Court, he or she has the ability to access records and attend meetings dealing directly with the education of the children.

### Cumberland County Continues Its Support of PA CASA

Cumberland County CASA is happy to have been able to partner with PA CASA recently to promote the CASA organization in Pennsylvania. Staff and volunteers attended the Legislative Day held at the Capitol Building on October 23. A few weeks later, at a PA CASA benefit piano concert by Dr. Siemer, CASA Volunteer Michael Pimental spoke to the audience at Market Street Presbyterian Church in Harrisburg about his experience as a CASA volunteer and the opportunities a CASA volunteer has to make a difference in the lives of children. EJ McKenna-Hieb, also an active Cumberland County CASA volunteer, has been serving on the Board of PA CASA and has been working diligently to assist PA CASA Executive Director, Dennis Hockensmith, in seeking additional grants and state funds.



Standing on the Capitol steps are Volunteer Linda Cecconello, Anita Brewster, Volunteer EJ McKenna-Hieb, Volunteer Betsy Schorpp, and Pam Wysocki. Not pictured: Volunteer Dana Gleason.

## CASA Training Spring 2008

To explore becoming an advocate for children with the Cumberland County CASA Program, contact the CASA Office 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.

The next pre-service training will be held in Carlisle on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, 6 to 9 pm, from **February 21 through March 27**, with the swearing-in ceremony being held in conjunction with the Annual Light of Hope Celebration on April 1. Fall trainings are held on 5 consecutive Saturdays in October and November.

**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).

## 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



Be watching for special events!  
April 2008  
Child Abuse Awareness Month

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Cumberland County CASA Program  
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