



News & Updates from the Cumberland County CASA Program

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Anita Brewster, Program Coordinator
Linda Rosenberry, Administrative Assistant

KAT Members Share Their Talents

The Dickinson College chapter of Kappa Alpha Theta continues to support the CASA Program. Recently they donated 117 hand-decorated cloth bags and 93 hand-painted clay flowerpots to the Cumberland County CASA Program. Some of the bags were selected to be given to the children represented by CASA volunteers, and the remainder were sent on to PA CASA for their use across the state.

The flower pots which were decorated to say "Thank You" were used as favors at the CASA Reunion. The pots were filled with M&M candies into which were "planted" gingerbread CASAs and kids. Those in attendance each received one in appreciation for their dedication to advocating for dependent children.



Evening of Sharing

Fifteen volunteers joined together on November 21 in a CASA Reunion to share their experiences and to support one another. The evening took on a festive atmosphere as everyone brought hors d'oeuvres for the food table. In addition a cake was provided in appreciation for the work CASA volunteers have done over the past 20 months. Danielle Ament, intern from Dickinson College, and Elizabeth Edwards, the director of the newly-begun Lehigh County CASA Program, were also at the event.

As a surprise ending to the evening, the CASA volunteers and Linda Rosenberry presented Anita Brewster with cards, a monetary gift and a schedule of meals some of the volunteers will provide for her and her family during the month of December. Anita will be on maternity leave from December 5 through the end of January, 2003.

Meet the Fifth Corps of CASA Volunteers

Wanda Blumenschein is a life-long native of Cumberland County's neighbor, Perry County. She loves living in the country there and takes all the jokes good-naturedly (and she is sure she has heard them all). Wanda has been married for thirty years, and has 3 grown children and a 5-year old grandson. She has had several part-time jobs over the years, including bank teller, customer service representative for an insurance company, and delivery person for a florist. Her real job is helping her husband Gary for the last 28 years with their plumbing and heating business. They enjoy riding Harley motorcycles on weekends together. Wanda also enjoys reading, cooking, and spending time with her grandson, Brent. Just recently her husband brought home a Jack Russell terrier puppy, which he named Harley. The puppy takes way more work than Wanda cares to say.

Shannon Failor has lived in the Carlisle area since she was 10. Beginning at the age of 16 she went to drug and alcohol rehabilitation for 2 years, and has 12 years of sobriety since. Shannon is the mother of 2 children and has been married almost 5 years. She has been an active volunteer for about 6 years, and received the Volunteer of the Year Award from Governor Ridge, the Exceptional Volunteer Award from Cumberland County, and the Breakthrough Achievement/Outstanding Performance Award from Dale Carnegie for work she did with Communities That Care. Because of a new job as a data security analyst for Highmark Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Shannon had to cut back her volunteer work for awhile, but she is ready now to begin volunteering again, this time as an advocate for children. She is also currently working on an associates degree in social science at HACC.

Swearing-In Ceremony



The Honorable Edward E. Guido, dependency judge, conducted the most recent swearing-in ceremony for CASA volunteers on November 5, in Courtroom 5. Pictured left to right with the judge are Anita Brewster, CASA Coordinator, and Shannon Failor and Wanda Blumenschein, the newest volunteers. When Shannon and Wanda are assigned as advocates for children in foster care, they will receive court orders giving them the authority to, as Judge Guido says, "be the eyes and ears of the court."

HELP WANTED

(and needed!):

While the CASA Program is excited to welcome Wanda Blumenschein and Shannon Failor, we are somewhat concerned about the shrinking number of available trained volunteers who can advocate for the children who are depending on the court system to find them safe, nurturing, and permanent homes. Although 28 volunteers have been trained, for a variety of reasons only 23 remain active at this time.

The staff and volunteers of the CASA Program would love to speak about the work and opportunities of the CASA concept to any civic organizations, churches, or other interested groups. If you would like to schedule a presentation or share a possible resource for such a presentation, please contact the CASA office by phone at 240-6159 or by email at casa@ccpa.net.

Congratulations to -

Anita Brewster, CASA Program Coordinator, and her husband, Jim Nelson, on the birth of their baby girl, Lena Brewster Nelson.

December 5,
2003
7:59 a.m.

6 lb., 14 oz.
20" long



TWENTY- SECOND NATIONAL CASA CONFERENCE

March 29-
April 1

Boston, MA

Celebrate
the Child

At the annual multidisciplinary conference, the many voices of the CASA network, along with other child advocates, will share experiences and ideas that will be helpful to attendees when they return to their own communities. They will learn some of the recent innovative approaches in the areas of substance abuse, sexual abuse, and the court system. The potential impact of welfare reform on our children will also be examined.

The conference is open to anyone with a heart for helping children.

For more information on cost and registration, please contact the CASA office (240-6159).

Questions & Answers

Many people have asked about the role and responsibilities of CASA volunteers. A Question and Answer Session is planned in mid-February to talk about the CASA Program. The CASA office staff, as well as CASA volunteers, will be on hand to field any questions which persons might have who are interested in exploring the possibility of becoming involved with CASA. Some of the topics to be addressed will be what makes a good CASA, how much time volunteering takes, and what training is required to be part of the CASA Program. Details of the evening event will be announced later.

CASA On the Air

On Thanksgiving, ABC27 News aired a short feature on the CASA Program. Deb Pinkerton of the station's newsroom interviewed both an adoptive family and the Cumberland County CASA volunteer, Judie Updike, who advocated for the child. The Cumberland County CASA office is extremely grateful to ABC27 News and Deb Pinkerton for helping us spread the word on the valuable work CASA volunteers are doing. Also, thanks to Carol Sprecher who initiated the contact with the television station when Ms. Pinkerton noticed Carol's CASA pin which she wears regularly.

Dickinson Intern

The CASA office continues to benefit from arrangements made with Dickinson College. Since September, Danielle Ament has worked as an intern in the office and also assisted Anita Brewster during the fall training session. Danielle is a senior at Dickinson College, majoring in English, with a Spanish minor. She will also receive a certificate in law. Danielle has had prior experience interning at family court in Delaware, as well as volunteering both at a home for young adults with disabilities and at a shelter for abused women. Her interests, experiences, and abilities will serve her well in her planned career as a lawyer.

Volunteerism at Its Best

Since January 2002, 15 CASA volunteers have logged over 800 hours of time. By giving an average of about 1 hour per week, these individuals have been able to impact the lives of the 30 children for whom they advocate in substantial and life-changing ways.

*** Note: volunteer hours for the remainder of 2002 are now due in the CASA office.**

SPRING TRAINING

The next training session
for CASA Volunteers will be offered

during April and May of 2003.

Training will be held on six consecutive
Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6 to 9 p.m.

Please contact the CASA Office at 420-6159

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.

Cumberland County COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE Program

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