



News & Updates from the Cumberland County CASA Program

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CASA Program Expanding in Cumberland County

The Cumberland County CASA Program has just been awarded a \$51,500 grant from the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association. This money will be used to expand advocacy for abused and neglected children throughout the county over the next 2 years.

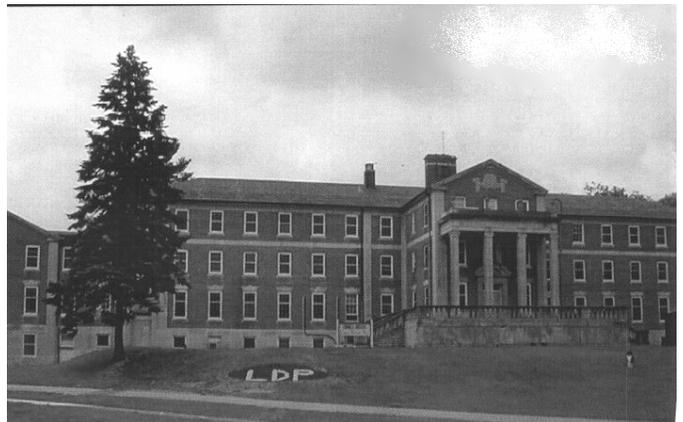
Of the more than 940 CASA and *guardian ad litem* (GAL) programs across the country, only 76 programs received funds this year from a \$6.4 million allocation from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), U.S. Department of Justice, as authorized under the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990.

"Each year we face the nearly impossible task of choosing, among many highly qualified candidates, the relatively few programs that we can recognize with a National CASA grant," says Michael Piraino, CEO of the National CASA Association. "We are especially proud of our 2003 grant recipients, for their exceptional excellence and dedication to helping the abused children within their communities."

This national grant will extend from July 2003 through June 2005 and will enable our local program to create a new part-time Volunteer Coordinator staff position. Currently the Cumberland County CASA Program is staffed by Anita Brewster, the full-time Program Coordinator, and Linda Rosenberry, the part-time administrative assistant. By increasing the number of paid staff, the program anticipates recruiting and training larger numbers of volunteers. Our goal is to be actively advocating for between 75 and 80 children by the summer of 2005, which would almost double the number of children currently being represented by CASA volunteers.

Cornell Abraxas and Children's Aid Society Explain Their Programs

Twenty-six persons, including Judge Guido, the dependency master, court administrator, 10 attorneys, 3 Children & Youth staff and interns, CASA staff, and 5 CASA volunteers, toured the facilities of the Children's Aid Society of Franklin County in Chambersburg and Cornell Abraxas at South Mountain as part of an awareness field trip sponsored by the Cumberland County Court Administrator's Office and the CASA Program on June 11. These 2 facilities are used regularly by Cumberland County Children & Youth Services for dependent children in the county. The Children's Aid Society operates both a shelter and a residential facility in their newly refurbished and enlarged facility. For dependent children, Cornell Abraxas offers a shelter, a residential treatment facility, and a leadership development program. A virtual tour of the Leadership Development Program is available on a CD from the CASA Office.



The Cornell Abraxas Leadership Development Program is housed on a large campus of brick buildings at South Mountain.

Meet the Sixth Corps of CASA Volunteers

Carol Bell retired from teaching in the Big Spring School District in June 2002, and has four children and three grandchildren. She and her husband make their home in Boiling Springs where they have lived for the past 18 years. Carol enjoys all of life's challenges and strives to maintain a balance between family, friends and community. She fills her leisure time with reading, walking and playing golf.

Barbara Wilson was born in the Carlisle Hospital and graduated from Boiling Springs High School. She and her husband lived in various locations throughout the United States for a few years during his commitment to the Navy. When they returned to Pennsylvania, they had one son and then twin sons, also born in the Carlisle Hospital. She and her husband now reside in South Middleton Township, where Barbara is employed as the Township Manager. She recently completed her Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration. Her many interests include gardening, sewing, reading and home improvements.

Peggy Shedden lives in Camp Hill with her husband and considers herself "temporarily retired" from her career as an attorney for the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency. Her interests include traveling, gardening, reading, hiking, and sailing. In fact, she and her husband shared an eight-month adventure, sailing from the Intracoastal Waterway to Florida, across the Okeechobee Waterway north to the Sarasota Bay in Florida, then south to the Keys and across to the Bahamas, returning to Oxford, Maryland in June 2002!

Elaine Stabler is semi-retired and works part-time as the Business Manager of Adoption Services. She and her husband of 35 years have lived in Pennsylvania since 1972. She considers herself to be a compassionate and encouraging person, a mediator, and a facilitator. Besides using these skills with and for people, she directs a church choir and plays piano, golfs, and works out at the Y. She also spends time with her children and grandchildren.

Second Annual Light of Hope

Nearly 70 persons attended the swearing-in ceremony for newly trained CASA volunteers and the Second Annual Light of Hope candlelighting ceremony held at Cumberland County's Old Courthouse on the evening of May 22. After opening remarks by the Honorable Edward E. Guido, Ms. Wendy Hoverter, director of Social Services with Cumberland County Children and Youth Services, spoke of the enhanced performance of both the CASA Program and Children and Youth Services that has resulted from their partnering together. Ms. Anita Brewster, CASA Program Coordinator, then introduced Wanda Blumenschein of the fifth corps of volunteers who had completed her training in November 2002, as well as the four newest CASA volunteers who had completed their training on May 20. Barb Wilson presented Ms. Brewster with a bouquet of flowers, expressing the volunteers' gratitude for the excellent training she had provided for them.

After the judge administered the oath of office, all in attendance moved outside to the steps of the Old Courthouse where they lit candles as an act of public awareness of the presence of neglect and abuse of children, even in Cumberland County. At the beginning of the swearing-in ceremony and during the candlelighting, french horn music was provided by John Crutcher, a home-schooled senior of Carlisle, who is a member of the Harrisburg Youth Symphony and a friend of newly sworn-in CASA volunteer, Elaine Stabler. A reception in the hallway of the Old Courthouse concluded the evening.



The Honorable Edward E. Guido, dependency judge, shares the flame of his candle with the circle of volunteers around him, including Carol Sprecher, on the left and the four newly sworn-in volunteers, Peggy Shedden, Elaine Stabler, Carol Bell, and Barbara Wilson, as a photographer from The Sentinel newspaper captures the moment.

Getting the Word Out

Judge Guido, CASA staff and volunteers continue to promote the CASA Program through a variety of avenues in the search for qualified volunteer trainees. In February, a Question and Answer Reception was presented, where volunteers shared their experiences in a panel discussion. The next week, the judge, staff and volunteers participated in a PA CASA Reception at the Capitol rotunda in Harrisburg to heighten awareness of the program statewide. In May, staff and volunteers set up displays at the South Middleton Senior Expo and the Cumberland County Office of Aging Senior Health & Wellness/Safety Camp. From each of these organized events, as well as informal contacts, potential volunteers continue to be identified. The Sentinel and The Patriot News also have provided key coverage for our program, and continue to be effective sources of publicity for us. Any group interested in learning more about how they can be involved with the CASA Program is welcome to contact the CASA office to request more information or to schedule a presentation.



Deb Pinkerton of ABC27 News, the honorary chair of the PA CASA Reception held on February 25, pauses for a moment to pose with Judge Guido and his clerk, Carl Connellan.

One CASA's Experience —

My young charge was returning home soon, and would be changing schools. I had spent a day at the new school, learning the classroom routine, seeing what he would need to adjust to. I had discussed "my" child's needs, what he was doing currently, and things I thought might be problems. When I returned to the school for an IEP meeting, the teacher said, "I'm so glad you're here. I know that you really know this boy." He understood that my CASA duties allowed me to see and process things differently than the caseworker and mental health worker. I had had opportunity to personally observe my child in different and varied settings.

The CASA program is a special gift to our children. Its value cannot be overstated.

- Submitted by Walda Ansel
CASA Volunteer since July 2001

(After this was written, Walda's CASA child returned home and is no longer dependent.)

Since the inception of the Cumberland County CASA Program in 2001 —

55 children have had CASA volunteers
11 of them have returned home
10 of them have been adopted
150+ dependent children remain without
a CASA volunteer to represent them

Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

Barbara Pitt of the Harrisburg Alumnae Chapter of Kappa Alpha Theta again organized and hosted an Appreciation Dinner for CASA volunteers, held this year at Dickinson College on March 21. Those in attendance, along with Judge Guido and his clerk, Carl Connellan, enjoyed a delicious lasagna dinner and a time of sharing and encouragement for the volunteer work that CASA accomplishes. The volunteers were each presented with a Volunteer Recognition pin as a way of saying thanks for opening their hearts to others.

Faulkner Honda Harrisburg Criterium to Benefit PA CASA

A CASA volunteer opportunity—in a completely different context—will happen on July 12, in downtown Harrisburg. The Faulkner Honda Harrisburg Criterium is a bicycling race that will be the Pennsylvania Criterium Championship Race for 2003. Cyclists from all over, including many "world-class" riders, will come to Harrisburg to compete for various titles in both men's and women's categories.

This year the race will benefit the PA CASA Association for the first of what is expected to be many years to come. PA CASA, in turn, benefits all local CASA programs in the state. If you or someone you know would be interested in participating in the race, or in volunteering to help the day of the race, please contact either the Cumberland County CASA Program or PA CASA at 114 Walnut St., Harrisburg, PA 17101 (717-233-3118).

Training opportunities

CASA Training for New Volunteers will be held during October and November of 2003 on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6 to 9 pm for six weeks.

If you or someone you know would be interested in exploring the possibility of becoming an advocate for dependent children in Cumberland County, please contact the CASA office at 240-6159 or email casa@ccpa.net for more information. Applications will be mailed upon request.

In-service Training is being offered to all CASA volunteers. For more information or to suggest topics to be addressed, contact Anita Brewster or Linda Rosenberg.

Training currently available:

Psychopharmacology Workshop (June 26)

Books & CDs:

- * A Question of Balance: Decision Making for CASA/GAL Volunteers
- * A Child's Journey through Placement
- * Recognizing & Reporting Child Abuse

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

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.

OUR MISSION . . .

Cumberland County COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE Program

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