



News & Updates from the Cumberland County CASA Program

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CASA Appreciation Dinner

It was delightful to see twenty-two CASA volunteers at an Appreciation Dinner on April 22, hosted by the Alumnae Chapter of Harrisburg and the Dickinson College Chapter of Kappa Alpha Theta. Dickinson School of Law graciously allowed the use of Trickett Hall for the event. To begin the evening, Judge Guido interacted with the CASAs and answered some questions which they had for him. Pam Wysocki, administrative assistant, who began working in the CASA Office in December 2003 was introduced, as well as Patti McCann, who served an internship with the CASA Office for the Spring semester. The two most recent classes of volunteers were also introduced. In addition to good food, the evening provided opportunities to meet volunteers, to network and brainstorm on problem-solving, and to catch up with old friends. That evening the two chapters of KAT presented the CASA Program with backpacks and bags for all the children the volunteers represent.



Kappa Alpha Theta bags for children



From the 1st Class: Debbie Zimmerman, Judy Castrina, Wendy Tibbetts, Shelly Brown, and Phil Nusbaum



8th Class: Maggie Fitzpatrick, Terry Freeman, Abbey Newburger, and Diane Bowers



From the 5th Class: Carol Bell and Elaine Stabler



From the 3rd Class: Carol Sprecher, Ann Raley, Judy Khan, and Tina Kless



From the 2nd Class: Walda Ansel and Sandy Evans

Meet the Eighth Corps of CASA Volunteers

Diane Bowers is a Licensed Dietitian, a Certified Massage Therapist, and a Certified Hypnotherapist. She has worked in traditional health care and corporate management for almost 30 years. She has a private practice in Holistic Health and she avidly researches and teaches many holistic and alternative therapies for health and well-being.

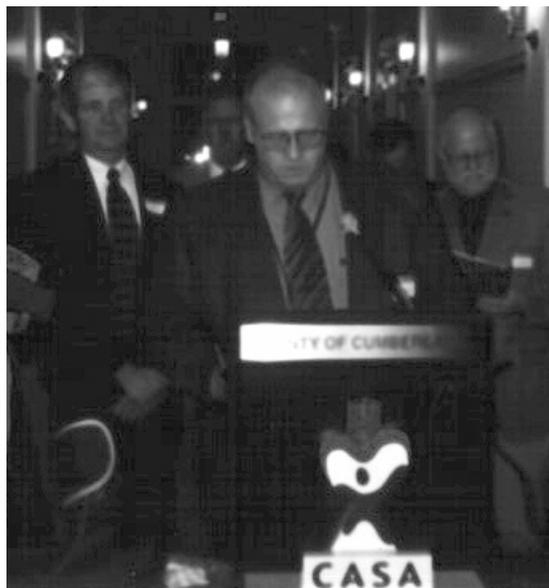
Maggie Fitzpatrick is a poverty law advocate working with Mediation Ministries. Maggie makes her home in Mechanicsburg with her 3 year old poodle.

Terry Freeman is a longtime resident of central Pennsylvania, with mother Camilla and brother Brian living nearby. He is the owner of Freeman Real Estate in Camp Hill, specializing in appraisals. Terry enjoys readings, golfing, traveling short and long distances, and exploring unknown things in general.

Abigail Newburger was born in Illinois, but has lived in Pennsylvania for almost 40 years. Working with young children in a Head Start program, she has been a teacher, a home visitor and currently she is an early childhood education consultant. She lives on a small farm with her daughter, two goats and 12 cats. She has two other children. Abigail earned two master's degrees in education and has spent a good deal of time in the last two years as a political advocate for children. She now looks forward to making a difference for individual children as a CASA volunteer.

A Light of Hope for Children

The CASA Program offers hope to children who are neglected and/or abused. As a symbol of that hope, the third annual Light of Hope Ceremony was held April 1 at the Old Courthouse in Carlisle in conjunction with Judge Edward Guido swearing in the most recently trained volunteers. The *a capella* singing of The Syrens from Dickinson College and the cello music by Grace Henry, a student from Carlisle High School, provided a backdrop for both a festive celebration of new volunteers as well as the solemn reminder of the ever-present issue of child abuse and neglect. Bruce Barclay, County Commissioner, proclaimed April to be Child Abuse Prevention Month in Cumberland County, with Gary Shuey, director of Children and Youth Services, displaying the Child Abuse Prevention flag which was later flown over the Courthouse Square. In addition, Representative Will Gabig focused on the problem of child abuse, "Buck" Swisher spoke on behalf of Congressman Todd Platts, and Dennis Hockensmith, Executive Director of PA CASA, concluded the Candlelighting Ceremony with a reading as the candles were lit.



Commissioner Bruce Barclay, Judge Edward Guido, CYS Director Gary Shuey, and PA CASA Executive Director Dennis Hockensmith participate in the Light of Hope Ceremony.



Following the Ceremony, the Dickinson College chapter of Kappa Alpha Theta hosted a reception for the more than 70 persons in attendance.

A large, painted wooden candle stand in the form of the new National CASA logo was presented at the Light of Hope Ceremony. This impressive piece was created by James B. Small, Cabinet-maker of Shippensburg and painted by Cory Murray, of Walnut Bottom. The new logo is designed to express the hope and caring for children that is at the core of the CASA Program.

National CASA Conference

The Cumberland County CASA Program was fortunate this year that the 23rd annual National CASA Conference was held in Washington, D.C. June 6-8. This enabled 2 volunteers, Tina Kless and E.J. McKenna, and all the staff to join over 2000 people from around the nation who gathered for the event. In all more than 30 persons from PA CASA organizations attended. The compelling speakers and informative workshops gave everyone renewed energy and vision to help meet the needs of dependent children. Taking advantage of the Conference being held in the nation's capital, National CASA organized a day to meet with members of Congress. Anita Brewster and Linda Rosenberry met with representatives of Senators Rick Santorum and Arlen Specter, as well as Congressmen Todd Platts and Bill Shuster.

Next year, the 24th annual National CASA Conference will be held in Atlanta GA, April 16-19, 2005.



A group of CASA staff and volunteers met with legal counsel of Senator Arlen Specter to talk about his role in supporting the work of NCASA.A.

Self Assessment/Quality Assurance

The CASA staff completed an extensive self-assessment at the end of June as part of a nationwide effort to ensure that all CASA Programs are providing the best service available to the children for whom they advocate. This is the goal of the standards that are established by National CASA. In looking at everything from the mission statement to record keeping, we provided National CASA with copious documentation supporting our self-evaluation. Although we have not yet received our "report card," we are confident that we will be found to be more than 85% compliant (the minimum required for membership in NCASAA). If there are any areas where we are weak, we will take seriously our need to improve in those areas. Cumberland County CASA Program is committed to making sure that our volunteers and staff are doing the best they can to meet the needs of children in dependency.

Resource Development Initiative

PA CASA was one of four state organizations recently awarded a special grant from National CASA. Pennsylvania is seen as a state with great growth potential for CASA. As a tool to increase the effectiveness of the 14 CASA Programs across the state, PA CASA is implementing a Resource Development Initiative. All Programs need to serve more children, to recruit quality volunteers, to have sufficient staff trained to supervise the volunteers, and to have the budget to address these needs. Cumberland County CASA's Resource Development Team is comprised of Program Coordinator Anita Brewster, Volunteer Coordinator Linda Rosenberry, and volunteers Ann Raley and Patti McCann. A two-day training held in Reading focused on Public Perception and Relations, Marketing Research and Tools, and Developing an Action Plan for Marketing the CASA Program. The goal is to create a plan by the end of the year which will enable the Program to better utilize the resources already in place and to plan for future expansion.

CASA: A Voice for Children

The Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care released a report on May 18, 2004, with various recommendations for reforming federal financing of the child welfare service and court oversight of cases. One of the report's recommendations is for Congress to appropriate the \$5 million for CASA that it had authorized in 2000 in the Strengthening Abuse and Neglect Courts Act (SANCA). The Commission also states that "CASA is a proven means of strengthening the voice of children in dependency courts. We urge states and private organizations, many of whom have already provided substantial support to their local CASA programs to join Congress as partners in this important effort to expand the program to underserved jurisdictions." The Pew Commission was launched in May 2003 to develop recommendations to improve outcomes for children in the foster care system—particularly to expedite the movement of children from foster care into safe, permanent, nurturing families. The report and summary are available online at pewfostercare.org.

Recently one of the CASA volunteers received this email from a lawyer involved in her case:

"I honestly believe you have made a huge difference in this little girl's life and she will probably never realize it. You are a perfect example of the CASA program working like it is envisioned to work. You have filled gaps in the system and will truly bring much needed information to the Court. Thank you for your dedication to this little girl and her family."

CASA Statistics

Since the inception of the Cumberland County CASA Program in September 2000:

- * 40 volunteers have been trained
- 25 are currently advocating for children
- * 85 children have been represented
- 59 currently have CASA volunteers

Training Opportunities

CASA Training for New Volunteers will be held this Fall on 5 consecutive Saturdays, October 16 through November 13, from 9 am to 3:30 pm. Spring training will occur over 5 weeks on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, 6-9:30 pm. The dates for the Spring have not yet been set.

Please contact the CASA office at 240-6159 or email casa@ccpa.net for more information.

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.

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.