

News & Updates from the Cumberland County CASA Program

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2013 CASA Swearing-in Ceremony and Appreciation Brunch



CASA Supporter
Bob Wicks

Judges Edward E. Guido, Christylee L. Peck and Albert H. Masland were among the many guests celebrating the Annual CASA Swearing-in/Appreciation Brunch. Held this year on November 2, it fell, appropriately, just before the season of Thanksgiving, and served as a way to not only recognize those who have most recently completed the 36-40 hours of CASA training who were sworn in by the judges that Saturday; it also offered the opportunity to thank the countless numbers of individuals who serve children of Cumberland County whose cases are in Dependency Court due to allegations of abuse and/or neglect. This includes veteran CASA volunteers who are actively involved with a child's case, those who are not actively involved at this time but who serve as CASA Supporters, numerous guest speakers who help provide CASA training, court personnel, caseworkers, and service providers to name but a few. To ensure the safety of children, it takes many people and agencies working together—each "An Important Piece of the Puzzle of Dependency Court," the theme of the Brunch.

This year, we were graciously provided a lovely venue at the First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Carlisle. Hosted once again by the Kappa Alpha Theta sisters of Dickinson College, a delicious buffet for the nearly 60 people in attendance was provided, as well as puzzle-shaped cookies as favors for all the guests in attendance. The KAT alumnae of south-central PA also once again supported the Brunch efforts by supplying additional items that helped create a lovely, inviting atmosphere for the guests.

After the nine new volunteers were sworn in (see page 2) and Judge Guido shared remarks with the audience, Judge Peck took the opportunity to express how unusual it is for a judge to choose to continue hearing abuse and neglect cases, particularly when new judges are elected and these cases are typically passed on. Judge Guido squirmed in his seat a bit to the standing ovation he got as Judge Peck noted that he continues to champion children's best interests some 15 years after taking the bench in 1998.

It was Judge Guido and his clerk, Carl Connellan, who initiated getting a CASA Program started in Cumberland County, in 2000.

A joyful event, the group also shared a solemn moment. Sadly, just one year after being recognized at the CASA Appreciation Brunch in 2012 for the 20+ years that Jim Flower served as the Dependency Master, Judge Guido led everyone in remembering Jim's life with a moment of silence. CASA volunteer, Jennifer Galbraith was also remembered (see page 3).



CASA Volunteer Linda Wisner
and Supporter Betty Washburn



CASA Volunteers Dan Doyle, Susan Kalmar,
and Sandy Evans are recognized



Theta sisters arrange
the food table



Judge Guido just after receiving accolades from
Judge Peck for his continued commitment to
dependent children in Cumberland County



Judge Peck (right) congratulates
Tracy Sweeney after the swearing-in

Twenty-seventh Class, Fall 2013

Faith Eck is a 22-year-old student working on an Associate's degree in paralegal studies and a Bachelor's degree in legal studies at Central Penn College in Enola, PA. Originally from Oley, PA, she now lives in Lavelle in Schuylkill County, PA. She currently works weekends at a Turkey Hill gas station in her hometown. Faith's favorite activities include reading, hanging out with friends, playing board games, and going to new places. She is initially a quiet person but once you get to know her, she opens up, especially about books and law. Faith has been working with kids since she was 13 years old and thinks they are the best. Faith lives with her parents, Michael and Cathleen Eck, and has one married sister.



Judge Peck, Tracy Sweeny, Kathy Ramper, Patty Jackson, Connor Line, Natali Rosado, Susan Helsel, Kim Meals, Emily Seitz, Faith Eck, Judge Guido and Geoff Biringler, Interim Dependency Master .

Susan Helsel was born and raised in Harrisburg, PA. The past four years, she has lived in rural Juniata County. Her interests include gardening, reading, and outdoor activities, but photography is her passion. Susan has three grown daughters. Retired from the US Postal Service due to health issues, Susan has since found a rewarding job. For the past four years, she has worked for Raystown Developmental Services in a supervisory position, with adults with IDD (Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities) in their home settings. Children in need have always pulled at Susan's heart strings. When she learned of the CASA program, she knew right away she wanted to be involved; to make a difference one child or family at a time. This decision to volunteer brought her to another - to return to college to pursue a degree in the social services field. Currently Susan is a sophomore at Penn State University, pursuing a degree in Human Development and Family Studies. She is very anxious to immerse herself in a career on behalf of children full time and is looking forward to helping children in need as a CASA volunteer. She hopes to pave a better path for them in life.

Patricia Jackson (Patty) has resided in Chambersburg with her family for the past 21 years. She and her husband Ken have five children – her three daughters, his son, and an adopted daughter. Their family has done some more growing as they also have eight grandchildren in Georgia, Texas, and in Chambersburg. A couple of times each year they go on trips to visit family. Patty and her husband were also foster parents for around eighteen years, providing homes mostly for teenagers. Two years ago they decided to take care of disabled adults. Patty also supervises visits through Salvation Army for parents that are having a difficult time. She says there is no greater joy than to see the children be able to visit the absent parent, even if it is only one hour a week. Patty also enjoys practicing yoga as a great way of relaxing and de-stressing. She is looking forward to being a CASA volunteer, knowing from her experience with foster children in the system, that the children always need someone to be looking out for their best interests.

Connor Line grew up in the Shippensburg area and currently resides in Newville with his fiancée Emily. Connor is a first year law student at the Penn State Dickinson School of Law in Carlisle. Connor graduated in May 2013 from Millersville University with a Bachelor of Arts in History. While Connor was attending Millersville he worked in downtown Lancaster as a pharmacy technician and served as the Millersville University student representative to the Millersville Borough Council. In his free time, Connor enjoys traveling with his fiancée, cooking, and eating delicious foods, and working in the yard. He is very excited to be able to volunteer in, and give back to, his community through the CASA Program.

Kim Meals grew up in Newville, PA, and currently lives in the Plainfield/Carlisle area. She is employed fulltime at Capital Blue Cross in the legal department. Kim considers herself a kind and caring person. She has been married to her wonderful husband for twenty-four years and they have two children who are currently in college. In her spare time, Kim likes to ride bike and read.

Kathy Ramper was born and raised in Olean, NY. Currently she lives in Harrisburg, PA where she has been employed with the Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association for the past thirteen years as the Executive Director. In that position she has advocated for, helped change legislation for, listened to, and stood by resource families because she believes every child deserves a safe and happy home. Kathy is married to Barry Ramper and has one daughter who resides in Virginia. Kathy and her husband are animal lovers and currently have 3 dogs and 2 cats. They are partial to German Shepherds. Kathy enjoys spending time with her family, walking the dogs, and visiting the beach. She is looking forward to the opportunity to become more involved in making a difference in a child's life by volunteering with CASA.

Natali Rosado was born in Adams County where she has lived most of her life except for a few years living in Puerto Rico. Natali is currently working in a Sheriff's office, pursuing her education in psychology and raising a beautiful two-year-old daughter. She has seen how the system fails our children and hopes to be able to help a child live the life they deserve. Natali was raised by two great parents and has seen them struggle to make her life and that of her brother better. She is who she is because of them. In her spare time Natali enjoys watching movies, swimming, and spending time with friends and family.

Emily Seitz grew up in Carlisle, PA and currently lives in Newville. Emily is employed at Philhaven as a mental health professional, after graduating in May 2013 from Millersville University with her Master's degree in social work. She is friendly, hard-working, and passionate about helping those in need. Emily has a fiancé, Connor, and a cat named Peaches. Her parents and younger sister live nearby, and she is very close to them. Emily enjoys traveling, trying new foods, and being with family and friends. She is excited to be entering into a new volunteer role at CASA, and to be part of such a dedicated, crucial organization.

Tracy Duff-Sweeny, a native of Norfolk, VA, is a mother of four and a self-employed seven-year veteran of food service sales to the U.S. military. Although she keeps busy as a wife, mom, and entrepreneur, Tracy's deep-rooted desire to help others motivates her to find the time to give back to others. Tracy has realized her desire for servant leadership by participating in causes such as Norfolk Emergency Shelter Team (NEST) serving the local homeless; being one of eleven team members raising over \$65,000 for the Leukemia Lymphoma Foundation; and many similar grassroots initiatives within her community and neighborhood. Tracy is the daughter of Millison and Charla Duff and is one of three children with an older sister and younger brother. In her free time, Tracy likes to exercise and enjoy family and neighborhood events.

Remembering CASA Jennifer Galbraith



Jennifer Galbraith
20th Class, March 2010

Our hearts grieve the loss of one of our fine CASA volunteers. On August 27, 2013, Jennifer Galbraith passed away, leaving behind her husband and son. Jen was sworn in as a CASA volunteer in 2010 and filled a niche so needed in the CASA world—she had a special place in her heart for teenagers. She effectively advocated for 2 young people in two separate cases, and always saw their difficult plights through optimistic and hopeful lenses. Our hearts go out to her loved ones and the many friends left behind.

Court Adds Second Guardian *ad litem*

Attorney Jackie Verney has represented children as Guardian *ad litem* (GAL) in Cumberland County for many years, looking out for the best interests of thousands of children as they navigate the Dependency Court system. With an active caseload at times approaching 200 children, she has provided legal counsel, often working closely with CASA volun-



Cindy Villanella, new Guardian *ad litem* (left), and Lindsay Baird, solicitor for Children and Youth Services, at the 2013 CASA Appreciation Brunch

teers. Recently a second Guardian *ad litem* was brought in to share the workload. Attorney Cindy Villanella has assumed about half of the caseload. She was already familiar with Dependency Court, having served as a parent attorney and having substituted for Jackie when needed. In addition to these two attorneys, some children in Cumberland County's Dependency Court are appointed representation by Attorneys Lucy Johnston-Walsh and Tim Smith who supervise the work of interns from the Children's Advocacy Clinic of Penn State University Dickinson School of Law.

Montgomery Service Leader Grant

Margot Cardamone, one of Cumberland County CASA's interns, is spearheading a project to expand the volunteer base of CASA by recruiting volunteers living in the western portion of Cumberland County. Through Montgomery Service Leaders at Dickinson College, Margot applied for and received a grant to help us achieve this goal.

Currently, the majority of CASA volunteers live on the eastern side of Cumberland County or in other counties, but many of the children we serve, while dependent in Cumberland County, live in western Cumberland County or Franklin County. By attracting volunteers from the western half of Cumberland County, primarily the Shippensburg area, our volunteers could spend more time working with their kids, rather than traveling from place to place. It is beneficial for children who are assigned a CASA volunteer to interact regularly with their CASA volunteer so that the children can receive the best advocacy.

The grant amount awarded for Margot's project will be used to fund informational events in western Cumberland County and also will be directed towards an outreach and marketing campaign. We will be working with students at Shippensburg University who know the town well and can help develop events that will attract the most potential volunteers.

If interested in assisting Margot with this expansion project, please contact the CASA Office (240-6159 or casa@ccpa.net).

Cumberland County Loses Valuable Dependency Master



Jim Flower at the Cumberland County CASA Program's Fifth Anniversary with CASA volunteer Sandy Evans, Attorney Jackie Verney, and former York County CASA Director Wanda Noll.

Jim Flower, well-loved, long time Dependency Master, passed away on October 12, 2013. In addition to ably serving the Cumberland County Court and many, various community groups and agencies, Jim also avidly supported the CASA Program by serving on the Advisory Council, helping with volunteer training, and attending almost every function of the Program. Everything Jim did, he did with grace and excellence. He is truly missed, not only by

his family which includes his wife and two adult children, but by all those who knew him.

New Dependency Masters Appointed

Filling the shoes of Jim Flower as Dependency Master is a big challenge. In early July, Attorney Geoff Biringer became the interim Dependency Master. As the three Dependency Judges said, "Geoff stepped into the breach and did an exemplary job under very difficult circumstances." After his resignation in mid-November, the Courts appointed Attorney Kate Cramer Lawrence as the fulltime, primary Dependency Master, with Attorney Sean Shultz in a part time back-up position. Kate has an extensive background in family law, serving for many years in the Children's Advocacy Clinic of Penn State University Dickinson School of Law. Most recently she was the managing attorney of the Law Offices of Women in Need, which assists victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in Franklin and Fulton Counties. As a law student, Kate trained to be a CASA volunteer and has been supportive of the CASA Program since first moving to Cumberland County in 2005. Sean also brings much experience to the position of Dependency Master, as he served for many years as an attorney representing parents in Dependency Court.



Attorney Kate Cramer Lawrence and CASA volunteer Linda Wiser

Program Stats March 2001-December 2013:

- 177 CASA volunteers have been trained (41 assigned to represent children; about 95 continue in a supportive role)
- 362 dependent children have been represented, 23 of whom received Court appointed educational advocacy since 2007
- 1,108 CASA Reports have been written since 2001, providing additional information to help the Court make decisions

Of the children represented by CASA volunteers whose cases have closed since the CASA Program began, 112 returned home, 143 were adopted, and 28 went to live with a permanent legal custodian or a fit and willing relative. Seventeen children aged out of the system, 1 child died of natural causes and 5 had their cases transferred to other jurisdictions.



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Watch for more information on Kappa Alpha Theta's delicious gourmet fundraiser for PA CASA this spring.

CASA Volunteer Training

Upcoming training dates:
February 13—March 25, 2014

To explore becoming an advocate for child victims of abuse and/or neglect in Cumberland County, **contact the CASA Office, 240-6159 or casa@ccpa.net**. More information can also be found at **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.

Training is held over 5 weeks in Carlisle on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6 to 9 pm in the late winter and on Saturdays from 9 am to 3:30 pm in the fall.

Find us on Facebook 

**Cumberland County
CASA Program**

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 in an expeditious manner.



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.