

News & Updates from the Cumberland County CASA Program

Cumberland County CASA Program
1 Courthouse Square, Suite 301
Carlisle, PA 17013

Phone: 717.240.6159 or 888.697.0371 ext. 6159

Fax: 717.240.6460

Email: casa@ccpa.net

Website: www.ccpa.net/casa

Anita Brewster, Program Director
Pamela Wysocki, Office Coordinator
Virginia Koser, Outreach Coordinator



Spotlight on CASA Arnie Jenkins



CASA Volunteer Arnie Jenkins

Arnie Jenkins grew up in the Cleveland area and currently lives in Boiling Springs. He is a single parent who raised two sons of whom he is very proud. One of his sons currently lives in Florida and the other resides in Philadelphia.

Shortly after Arnie retired in 2005, he realized that he wanted to get involved in volunteering. He started volunteering with Harrisburg Hospice of Central PA eleven years ago, after having a positive experience working with hospice with his own mother. He currently visits hospice patients once a week and finds that work very rewarding. Arnie also started volunteering with Cumberland Valley Honor Guard four years ago. This program assists with memorial services for veterans. Arnie himself is a veteran, as he spent four years in the Air Force.

Arnie became aware of the CASA program when he saw a CASA advertisement at a restaurant in the form of a placemat. Arnie was sworn in as a CASA volunteer in April 2008, so his 10 year anniversary is quickly approaching! During this time, Arnie has advocated for 7 children in 4 different cases who have had a variety of outcomes. Two children closed out with custody being given to a relative; two were adopted; one aged out of the system; one returned home; and there is one that he is currently still an advocate for. Through his years of CASA experience, Arnie has learned to not have any pre-conceived ideas about the people involved in his cases. He intentionally does not read any information about the child until after he meets with the child in person so that he can have an open mind to get to know the child himself first. Arnie has found his work with CASA to be very rewarding and he enjoys being an advocate very much. When he first became a CASA volunteer, he noted that he wanted to help someone find a more positive path for their life, and he certainly has been able to assist with that and so much more. At a hearing recently, unrelated to Arnie, the CASA concept was being explained to resource families. The eyes of one of the people lit up—she remembered Arnie with regard to two of his former CASA kids from years ago and was delighted to see that a CASA volunteer would be involved in the case at hand. That is just one testament to the impact Arnie has been able to have on his CASA children and their families. When asked what advice he would offer to someone who was considering becoming a CASA volunteer, Arnie says he would want them to know that when you become a CASA volunteer, you get back more than what you put into it.

When Arnie is not busy volunteering in his many capacities, he enjoys sports and reading- particularly mysteries. Thank you, Arnie, for your years of service to CASA and your CASA children!

Spotlight on CASA Cindy Garfinkel

Cindy Garfinkel, originally from Easton, PA, lives in New Cumberland with her husband of 21 years, Brad, and their 14-year-old daughter, Julia. Cindy has been a Child Grief Specialist for Highmark Caring Place, a Center for Grieving Children, Adolescents and their Families, for the past 11 1/2 years. Previously, Cindy worked for 11 years as a case manager and clinical supervisor of a treatment foster care program. She has a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Sociology from Shippensburg University, a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology from Fairleigh Dickinson University and an Elementary School Counseling certification from Messiah College. Cindy is an avid Disney World fan, cat lover, and enjoys spending her free time taking Zumba, reading and traveling with her family.

Cindy has been a CASA volunteer since 2009, and she has advocated for 6 children in 5 different cases. She has also been a part of our CASA trainings by doing presentations on grief and loss and child development. Cindy became a CASA because, in her work as a case manager, she saw what a difference a CASA could make in the outcome of a case. Additionally, it afforded her a way to stay involved in the foster care system, continue to work with a population of children she loves, and to honor the memory of a foster child who had been on her caseload but who had died very tragically at age 16. She continues to be awed at the resiliency of children in the child welfare system and loves being a part of making a difference in their lives.

Two things Cindy has learned in her time working in the foster care system and being a CASA is that while you may not always get the outcome you'd hoped for with your case, knowing that you did something, even if it was small, to make a positive difference in a child's life makes it worth it. She's also learned never to count on something happening until it actually does. Recently, despite regular collaborative efforts and careful planning, her child's journey hit an unavoidable roadblock to permanency. Thankfully, as a CASA volunteer, Cindy will continue to be a symbol of continuity and an advocate for the best interest of her CASA child as another journey begins in search for her child's "forever home."



CASA Volunteer Cindy Garfinkel

2017 CASA Appreciation Brunch/Building Healthy Relationships Through Play Training

On November 18, 2017, we held our annual CASA Appreciation Brunch at the beautiful Stern Great Room at Dickinson College. The event was again hosted by Kappa Alpha Theta and its Alumnae Association. We had a wonderful turn out for the event, to include attendees such as Judge Guido, Judge Peck, Hearing Officer Lawrence, our CASA volunteers, our interns, some Cumberland County Advisory Council members, several of our upcoming CASA trainees, members from Kappa Alpha Theta at Dickinson College and the KAT Alumnae, and other CASA friends. This year we were pleased to add in a training component to the Appreciation Brunch, which was presented by Cindy Sniscak, LPC, RPT-S (Beech Street Program) and Jessica Merideth, LPC, NCC (Beech Street Therapy Center). Cindy and Jessica helped us to get a better understanding about the importance of play in a child's life and on their development, and that it is important for adults to still play too. They discussed how healthy relationships for children are built through play and how having healthy relationships can help to provide a buffer for any traumatic events that are experienced. They included a lot of great information to help the attendees get a better understanding of the different types of play therapy and also about filial therapy (a family intervention that is designed to strengthen families through the use of play) as well. They noted that when you



Play therapists Jessica Merideth & Cindy Sniscak



KAT Alumnae Gretchen Petri, CASA Volunteer Joy Gross, KAT Alumnae Marianna Wood & Judge Peck being young at heart

play with a child, you get to learn about their inner world and connect with them in a unique way. Cindy and Jessica also helped our attendees practice the art of play by incorporating activities to get everyone up out of their seats and to remind us all how great having fun can be! (Click here to check it out: <https://www.facebook.com/CumberlandCountyCASA/videos/1673566922702664/> or go to ccpa.net/CASA and click on Videos). This informative and fun brunch was just a small token of our appreciation for our CASA volunteers and all those involved in supporting our program. We could not do the work we do without all those who play a role in making our work possible- especially our CASA volunteers, who are the building blocks of CASA!

CASA Café and Kappa Alpha Theta's 35th Anniversary

Dickinson College's Kappa Alpha Theta sorority continues to be a huge supporter of our local Cumberland County CASA Program, as well our state program (PA CASA Association) and the national office in Seattle (National CASA Association) too. For the second year in a row, the Thetas hosted a coffeehouse event called CASA Café, donating their proceeds to the PA CASA Association. The event was held on October 5, 2017 at Dickinson College, and it was again a huge hit! Tammy Shearer, secretary for the PA CASA Board, started the evening off with a welcome to the attendees, and she helped to explain what the CASA program is all about. The evening was filled with live performances by a variety of student acts which included talents displayed by: a *cappella* groups which showcased their incredible musical talents, a moving reading by a young lady who was previously in foster care in California, and wonderful dance performances just to name a few. A picture slide show was viewed during intermission that highlighted the 17 year history shared locally between Cumberland County CASA and Kappa Alpha Theta at Dickinson College.



Thetas Ryan Cohane & Meghan Shippe, CASA Volunteer Pat Carey, and CASA Advisory Council Member Linda Rosenberry

This event was the start of a fun-filled weekend for the Thetas as they celebrated their 35th Anniversary at Dickinson College during their homecoming weekend! And in true Theta form, they continued their support of CASA even during their anniversary celebration. From CASA Café and other activities held that weekend, the Thetas raised over \$1,000 for National CASA and approximately \$1,500 for PA CASA in one weekend! We can't thank the Kappa Alpha Theta ladies enough for their tireless efforts to support our vulnerable children by supporting CASA! Happy Anniversary, Thetas!

Spotlight on CASA Intern Elizabeth Smith

Elizabeth Smith has been an intern for the Cumberland County CASA office for the past two years, and she just finished her final semester at the CASA office in December 2017. She grew up in Sparta, New Jersey, with her parents and her younger brother. Elizabeth is currently a senior at Dickinson College and will be graduating in May 2018. She decided to attend Dickinson College because she loved the campus, the small class sizes, and everything that the school offers to its' students. She is an International Business and Management Major with a minor in Philosophy.



CASA Intern Elizabeth Smith

During her freshman year at Dickinson College, Elizabeth decided to explore joining a sorority in order to meet more people, and that is where she learned about and eventually joined the sorority Kappa Alpha Theta. She loves the Thetas' values and also was interested in their relationship with CASA. (Kappa Alpha Theta designated CASA as its national philanthropy over 25 years ago.) She started interning at the CASA office in the fall of her junior year. She has loved working in the CASA office, and she also has enjoyed being able to follow cases through the court system for the past two years.

In addition to her internship with the CASA office, Elizabeth has sat on Theta's executive board for the past two years, and she has played an integral part in organizing various Theta events that have benefitted CASA. She is also a member of the International Business and Management Major's committee, and she is on the management team for the Innovation Competition at Dickinson College, which is essentially a Shark Tank-like show for Dickinson College students.

Elizabeth already has a job lined up for after graduation, and she will be working as a Corporate Trainee with Selective Insurance in Branchville, New Jersey. Elizabeth has been a valuable asset to the CASA office as a source of continuity and instant messenger between the Theta and CASA worlds over the past two years, and we will miss her! Best wishes, Elizabeth, for a bright and happy future!

There's a new CASA basic training curriculum in town!

We are excited to announce that the National CASA Association finished developing a brand new training curriculum for new CASA Volunteers in mid-2017. In August 2017, our Cumberland County staff and Margo Stanton, an active CASA Volunteer and office volunteer, traveled to Lancaster, PA to be trained on the new curriculum, along with other CASA staff in the Eastern region of PA. It will be an entirely new approach to training and we believe the changes are very positive. Case studies are now implemented from the start of training and there will be hands-on practice with writing CASA reports throughout the training. It still incorporates the key concepts of cultural competence, drug and alcohol issues, mental health issues, developmental stages, etc. that the old training manual addressed, but will do so in a more interactive way. It is clear that it will require much more front-loaded preparation from the CASA staff, and it will also require a heavy amount of "homework" from prospective CASA volunteers throughout the training curriculum.

Since the curriculum was brand new and we received training on it very close to when our regularly scheduled fall training would typically start, we decided to replace our fall 2017 training session with a mock training, incorporating CASA staff, in order to be more prepared to provide quality training to our upcoming spring 2018 class. We found it very beneficial to be able to run through all of the material and are convinced that this new curriculum will make our volunteers even more prepared to begin their advocacy journeys. We are very excited for our spring 2018 training class to be able to get started with our new curriculum. (Check out the back page of the newsletter for details on the Spring CASA Training!)



Eastern Pennsylvania CASA representatives at the Lancaster, PA training

Nikki McElwee and Linda Rosenberry join the CASA Advisory Council

We are pleased to announce that two more amazing resources agreed to join our Cumberland County CASA Advisory Council in the latter half of 2017. Our own Linda Rosenberry became an advisory asset after her retirement from Cumberland County CASA Office in July 2017. After being a staff member for over 16 years, we are grateful that she is willing to continue to support the CASA program in this new way. Additionally, Cumberland County Children & Youth Administrator Nikki McElwee also agreed to join our Advisory Council, which continues to demonstrate the collaboration between CYS and CASA in Cumberland County. Nikki has been actively engaged with the CASA Program for many years, serving in many capacities including being a guest speaker for trainings, and we are pleased she has agreed to join us officially.

CASA Program Statistics: March 2001—December 2017

- ◆ 220 CASA volunteers have been sworn-in (25 currently representing children; over 100 continuing in a supportive role)
- ◆ 469 dependent children have been represented, and many have received CASA assisted Educational Advocacy
- ◆ 1,575 CASA Reports have been written since 2001, providing additional information to help the Court make decisions

Out of the 469 children represented by CASA volunteers, those whose cases have closed resulted in: 152 returning home, 185 being adopted, 48 living with a permanent legal custodian or a fit and willing relative, 29 children aging out of the system, 1 child dying of natural causes, and 5 having their cases transferred to other jurisdictions.

Support for CASA from Cumberland County Sheriff's office

The Cumberland County Sheriff's office recently participated in the "Goatees for a Cause" program to raise funds to support local programs and organizations. Sheriff Ron Anderson, Sgt. Ron Kerr, Sgt. Jason Vioral, Cpl. Noah Cline, Deputy Brian Largent, Deputy Dave Foose, Deputy Alex Young, Chaplain John Pentz, Security Officer Dave Knight, and Security Officer Dave Thrush participated in the program. In December 2017, the Sheriff's office donated part of their funds to the PA CASA Association. These types of generous donations allow the CASA program to further support its CASA Volunteers, who give so graciously of their time and talent, by sending them to additional trainings, equipping them with tools needed to enhance their advocacy work, and hosting small events.

Thank you Cumberland County Sheriff's office for your support of CASA!



Left to right:
Virginia Koser, Chief Deputy
Jody Smith, Sgt. Jason Vioral,
Cpl. Noah Cline, Anita Brewster,
Security Officer David Knight,
and Pam Wysocki

Update from Jenn DeBalko, Executive Director, PA CASA Association:

2017 was an exciting year for the PA CASA Association! There were three regional meetings held and also two regional trainings held regarding the new training curriculum. There is also for the first time a PA CASA presence in the western half of Pennsylvania through the [newly created] Western Region Program Operations Liaison position. Progress continues to be made regarding opening up new CASA programs in Pennsylvania, and it is hopeful that three other counties will have CASA programs up and running in 2018. Currently, there are 20 out of 67 counties in Pennsylvania who have CASA programs.

The PA CASA Association is also working to build a statewide presence by being involved in various committees including the Child Welfare Council and the Children's Justice Act Task Force.

And the PA CASA Association is pleased to announce that for the first time in 3 years, a statewide meeting will be held in State College in May 2018 in order to help continue the collaboration between the PA CASA programs.



Cumberland County CASA Program
One Courthouse Square, Suite 301
Carlisle, PA 17013

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED
Time Sensitive Material for Immediate Delivery

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.

Find us on Facebook

Cumberland County CASA Program

Be the Voice for an abused &/or neglected child

**Upcoming Training Dates:
Mondays and Thursdays from 6-9pm
February 5-March 26, 2018**

Contact the CASA Office to explore becoming an advocate for child victims of abuse and/or neglect at 717-240-6159 or casa@ccpa.net. For more information, see www.ccpa.net/casa.

Volunteer advocates must—

- be 21 years of age or older,
- be able to successfully pass criminal checks,
- complete 50 hours of training, and
- be willing to make at least a 2-year commitment.

Training is held in Carlisle – in the spring and in the fall.

Upcoming Events:

- ◆ February 5, 2018- Our next round of training for new CASA volunteers begins!
- ◆ April 5, 2018- Kappa Alpha Theta will host Cupcake Wars again- with all proceeds benefiting CASA! Ask us for more details!
- ◆ April 11, 2018- Our Annual Light of Hope/ Swearing-in Ceremony will be held at the Old Courthouse. Please come to this special event!

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.

Cumberland County CASA Advisory Council

Lindsay Baird, Esq.
Jennifer Bray
Anita Brewster
Joyce Bylander
Melissa Calvanelli
Carl Connellan
Jenn DeBalko
Lisa Erickson-McCarren

Marlene Fuller
Joseph Gaskin
Lisa M. Grayson, Esq.
Lucy Johnston-Walsh, Esq.
Robert Kline, Esq.
Kathy Kohlhaas
Dr. Stephen Krebs, M.D.
Kate Cramer Lawrence, Esq.

Nikki McElwee
Laura Neal, Esq.
Wanda Noll
Darlene Orr
Laura Patterson
Gretchen Petri
Linda Rosenberry
Tammy Shearer

Karen Shirey
Erin Smeigh
Cindy Sniscak
Kim Sweger
Monica Swidler
Lisa Verdekal
Jacqueline Verney, Esq.
Cindy Villanella, Esq.