

News & Updates from the Cumberland County CASA Program

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Spotlight on CASA Volunteer Kathy Kelly



CASA Volunteer
Kathy Kelly

Kathy Kelly has been an active CASA Volunteer for over 5-1/2 years. She lives in the Colonial Park/Linglestown area of Harrisburg with her husband of 40 years, Kevin. Kathy is the proud mother of Ryan, a product engineer, and Erin, a speech-pathologist at Penn State Hershey Medical Center. Ryan is married to Mairead and they are the proud parents of Maeve, Kathy's first grandchild, who was born in July 2019. Erin is engaged to be married to her fiancé, Phil, in November of this year. Kathy has worked at Capital BlueCross for the past 30 years, and she currently serves as their Privacy Officer. However, she plans to begin her retirement in July of this year. Kathy enjoys movies, theatre, travel, and volunteer opportunities that support children, education, and the arts.

Kathy has recently completed her fifth CASA case, advocating on behalf of her sixth CASA child. Kathy believes that the CASA advocacy role fits her well, and she appreciates how being a CASA can impact the life of a vulnerable child. She has found every CASA child to be unique and every case to be different, so she is always adapting, always learning, and always overcoming new challenges as she works to find her strongest voice in advocating for her CASA child. Although she has been involved in many volunteer activities over the years, she says that, for her, being a CASA has been and continues to be the most meaningful.

Girl Scout Troop #10619 Makes a Difference— One Child at a Time

This article was written in conjunction with Julie Rhen, who is one of the Junior Girl Scout Troop leaders of local Troop #10619 that consists of 5th grade girls from our Carlisle community. Julie Karkovack is the other co-leader of the group.

Kids helping kids. Unexpected ways to say you are an important part of this world. That's what Junior Girl Scout Troop #10619 wants to convey to children who might need a smile. The troop is trying to do that while working towards earning the Girl Scout Bronze Award this year, which is the highest honor a Girl Scout Junior can achieve. This school year, the girls brainstormed ways they could make a difference in their community, take on a new challenge, and have some fun too. The troop decided they wanted to help other kids have a happier childhood, checked into how to put that into realistic steps, and came up with the idea of creating care packages for children in the foster care system. Soon after in October 2019, Girl Scout Troop co-leader Julie Rhen helped make a partnership between the troop and the Cumberland County CASA office, and GS Troop #10619 sprang into action! Each month, the CASA office provides the first name of one child who is in the foster care system along with a list of things they like to the troop. All of the children being selected are children who have a CASA Volunteer appointed to advocate on their behalf. The troop then works to create a care bag with items that specific child enjoys (favorite snacks, crafts, books, etc.). The troop is also learning new skills, like crocheting and sewing, to provide handmade items in the care bags such as hats, scarves and pillowcases. The troop hand paints each care bag and includes a card signed by the troop, letting the child know that someone cares about them. Anita Brewster, Cumberland County CASA Program Director, spoke to the troop in November 2019 about the CASA program and how the care bags will benefit the children, so that the girls would get a better understanding about how their thoughtfulness could go towards making a positive impact on the life of another child. It is obvious that Girl Scout Troop #10619 is well on its way to making a difference one child at a time! Thank you, girls, for all that you do and keep up the great work!



CASA Program Director Anita Brewster with the Girl Scout Troop

Cumberland County CASA Program Statistics: March 2001– December 2019

- ◆ 250 CASA volunteers have been sworn-in (35 currently representing 50 children; over 100 continuing in a supportive role)
- ◆ 519 dependent children have been advocated for, and many have received CASA assisted Educational Advocacy
- ◆ 1,800 CASA Reports have been written since 2001, providing additional information to help the Court make decisions

Out of the 519 children represented by CASA volunteers, some of the outcomes have resulted in: 162 children returning home, 50 children living with a permanent legal custodian, 201 children being adopted, 30 children aging out of the system, 1 child dying of natural causes, and 5 children having their cases transferred to other jurisdictions.

2019 CASA Appreciation Brunch and Swearing-In Ceremony: Changing a Child's Story

On November 9, 2019, Cumberland County CASA held its annual Appreciation Brunch and Swearing-In Ceremony. The event was held at Dickinson College and was again hosted by Kappa Alpha Theta and its Alumnae Association. There was a great turn out for the event to include attendees such as Judge Guido, Judge Masland, Hearing Officer Lawrence, new incoming Judges Matt Smith and Carrie Hyams, Guardian ad Litem Tammi Blackburn, many of our CASA volunteers, some Cumberland County Advisory Council members, members from Kappa Alpha Theta at Dickinson College, and other CASA friends. We were pleased to have Judge Guido and Hearing Officer Lawrence swear-in our 38th training class members to become official CASA Volunteers!



Judge Guido and Judge Masland talking with incoming Judges Hyams and Smith

Our theme this year was to recognize that we all can play a part in helping to change a child's story. Sometimes even something that may seem insignificant at the time can



Fall 2019 CASA Volunteers being sworn in

have a lasting implication for a child. In keeping with the story theme at the brunch, the Thetas made book marks for everyone in attendance as a thank you for their role in helping to change a child's story. This brunch was just a small token of our appreciation for our CASA volunteers and all those involved in supporting our program. We are so grateful to have so many people connected to CASA who truly care about children and who want to help make a positive impact on the life of a child. We could not do the work we do without all those who play a role in making our work possible!

Family Fun for CASA!

On August 24, 2019, the PA CASA Association held a mini-golf/family fun day fundraising event on Harrisburg's City Island. Attendees got to enjoy a round of mini-golf on the waterfront, play a variety of carnival-style games, and also attend a Senator's baseball game. The weather was beautiful and a great time was had by all. Thank you to our own Cumberland County CASAs who helped with the event: Joy Gross, Judy Beskid, Sarah Pearce, Dan Doyle, Peter Adams, Pat Carey, and Sandra Goodling!



Just some of the many wonderful helpers for the family fun day event



On October 2, 2019, Dickinson College's Kappa Alpha Theta sorority hosted its first ever Carnival for CASA event to benefit the National and PA CASA Associations. The Thetas created an afternoon of fun activities for attendees to enjoy, including face painting, pumpkin painting, tug of war, ring toss, a fall photo spot, and snacks and treats a-plenty to list some of the fun. The Thetas raised over \$1,500 for the CASA Association through this event! In prior years, Thetas have also hosted many other events such as coffeehouses, concerts, and fashion shows to name a few. The Thetas are always creatively working to come up with new ways and ideas to support CASA. As always, we thank you for your continued support for CASA!



To the left: Fun with pumpkin painting

To the right: The Thetas had some fun too!

A Special Kappa Alpha Theta Milestone

On January 27, 2020, our National CASA partner of 30 years, Kappa Alpha Theta, will celebrate its 150th anniversary! Founded in 1870, Theta now has more than 250,000 members, 144 chapters on college campuses, and more than 200 alumnae groups in communities across the United States and Canada.

Thetas all across the country are involved in all aspects of our CASA mission- as volunteers, program staff, fundraisers, board members, and champions.

This past summer, the Theta Foundation fulfilled its 2016 \$1 million pledge to support National CASA/GAL's performance measurement initiative. National CASA is pleased to award the women of Kappa Alpha Theta the Children's Champion Award at this year's CASA/GAL conference, which will be held in June 2020. And locally, we have partnered with the Dickinson College chapter of Kappa Alpha Theta for almost 20 years, and we are so grateful for their ongoing support. Thank you Kappa Alpha Theta for your 30 years of service to CASA!



The Dickinson College Chapter of Kappa Alpha Theta - October 2019

Thirty-Eighth Class of CASA Volunteers– Fall 2019

Kimberly Clash grew up in Carlisle where she currently resides with her husband, Bruce. Kim and Bruce met on a blind date and lived in Maryland in the early part of their marriage. They chose to return to Carlisle in 1999 to be closer to family members and to raise their daughters in the close-knit community of Carlisle. Kim is currently employed full-time as a quality nurse for a health insurance company, where she works to improve quality of care and outcomes for West Virginia Medicaid members. She has Bachelor Degrees in Nursing and Business. She previously worked as an elementary school nurse for seven years in the Carlisle Area School District. Kim has spent much of her spare time for the last 20 years involved in her children's school and church activities. Her three daughters thrived in Carlisle and now, at ages 19, 22 and 23, continue to make their parents proud. Kim describes herself as compassionate, organized, and a good listener. She enjoys reading, spending time with family and friends, playing cards and board games, and playing with her one-year-old Labrador puppy, Maizy. Kim is looking forward to becoming a CASA Volunteer and working to help at-risk children have a brighter future.



Fall 2019 Training Class (left to right): Cheryl Hale, Lynn Hoffman, Kimberly Clash, Les Poolman, and Patricia Patrick

Cheryl Hale grew up and lived in Maine until she completed college. She and her husband then moved to Louisiana, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and finally to Pennsylvania as they pursued their educations. They have lived in the Carlisle area for 25 years. Cheryl was employed in nursing for 38 years, and left employment 5 years ago to care for her parents. Her husband is a professor at Shippensburg University. Their son and his wife live in Virginia with their 3 girls; their daughter and her husband live in Pittsburgh with their 2 daughters. Being able to be a regular presence and support in the lives of her children and grandchildren is a true blessing to Cheryl. Cheryl has served as a volunteer with Samaritan Fellowship for 10 years. Her other volunteer activities range from leading missions teams in disaster response for her church to being a tutor for "Homework Club" at Safe Harbour. Cheryl thinks of herself as a "citizen and volunteer"; she tries to find ways that she can use her time and abilities to impact the lives of others and the community. She enjoys developing new skills, from putting on a metal roof to managing a website. She believes that the CASA role will be her most significant, stressful, and heart-rending challenge yet.

Lynn Hoffman grew up in Mt. Joy, PA and moved to Carlisle in 1981 after completing his education. He then practiced as a primary care pediatrician for 37 1/2 years with Carlisle Pediatric Associates until he retired in December 2018. He and his wife, Nancy, a Carlisle native, have been married for 45 years. They have three adult children, Kelly (West Point, NY), Sara (Carlisle), and Tyler (Brussels, Belgium). Lynn believes that his personal traits of gentleness, compassion, patience, and persistence will serve him well as a CASA volunteer. Beyond his longstanding interest in the physical and emotional well-being of children, he is also deeply committed to his family, to his church, and to the knowledge of God through the Bible. He enjoys stamp collecting and is a passionate baseball fan (particularly with the Phillies). Since retiring, he has become a volunteer at New Hope Ministries in Mechanicsburg and traveled to North Macedonia on a medical missions trip in October. Lynn is looking forward to becoming a CASA Volunteer so that he can continue to advocate for the best interest of children.

Patricia Patrick is a life-long resident of South Central Pennsylvania. She currently lives in Shippensburg and commutes to Penn State University – University Park Campus, where she teaches accounting students how to investigate financial fraud. Patricia is a veteran of the United States Air Force and a career public servant. Patricia learned about CASA by contacting a local agency called RSVP of the Capital Region, to learn about volunteer opportunities for seniors in the community. She was looking for meaningful work to keep herself busy during her approaching retirement and thought CASA sounded like the perfect opportunity. Now that she has completed the 8-week training course, Patricia is eager to put her skills to work. She hopes to use the knowledge she has acquired throughout her life to support a teenager who is navigating the challenges of dependency.

Les Poolman was born and grew up in West London, England. He lived in the same general area for the first 26 years of his life. He then took a leave of absence from his teaching position at a boarding school in England to study in graduate school and coach soccer for a year at West Virginia University. He ended up not returning to England after that year of study, but instead continued his studies at West Virginia University toward the completion of a doctoral degree, which he completed a couple of years later. After that, he embarked on a career of coaching (soccer and tennis) and being the Director of Athletics at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts and then at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA. He and his wife, Kim, have been married for forty years. They have two sons, Andrew and David, who each now have two children. Les and his wife are fortunate to be an important part of their lives. Les and his wife continue to reside in Carlisle and they are both retired. He has been passionate about sports throughout his entire life and continues to officiate soccer games in his retirement. His other interests include travel, golf, reading and enjoying a positive sense of humor. He is very excited to embark on his time as a CASA volunteer. He looks forward to providing support and representing the best interests of any child to whom he is appointed.



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**Upcoming Training Dates:
Beginning of March through the end of April 2020**

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.

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

- 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.

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.