



## The National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association

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**For Immediate Release:**

February 12, 2015

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## Missouri CASA Executive Director Receives Prestigious Carnahan Public Service Award from School of Public Affairs

*Dessem Leads State Association of Court Volunteer Programs That Improve the Lives of  
Thousands of Children*

**(Washington, DC):** The National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association is proud to announce that Missouri CASA Executive Director, Beth Dessem, received the Governor Mel Carnahan Public Service Award for 2015 last night. The award is presented by the University of Missouri's Harry Truman School of Public Affairs.

**“Beth Dessem is an ideal recipient for this award because of her significant public service to children and volunteers throughout the state of Missouri,”** said Tara Perry, Deputy CEO and Chief Operating Officer of National CASA. **“She has been the driving force behind the state’s court appointed advocates for children since she assumed leadership in 2003.”**

Missouri’s state CASA program has evolved into a programmatic and financial resource that has enabled local CASA programs to serve more of Missouri’s abused and neglected children. In 2013 alone, almost 1,350 Missouri CASA volunteers have advocated for more than 3,000 children, roughly double pre-2003 figures. During Dessem’s tenure, the number of CASA programs in Missouri has increased by 50% and more than \$2 million has been secured for local programs and services, making Missouri CASA a national leader.

Nationwide, more than 75,000 CASA volunteers advocate for nearly 240,000 abused and neglected children by speaking up for their best interests in courts and communities. Sanctioned by the courts, CASA-trained volunteers are empowered to offer judges critical information needed to ensure that every child’s rights and needs are being attended to while in foster care. Volunteers remained appointed with children until they are placed in loving permanent homes. For many abused children, a CASA volunteer is the only constant adult presence in their lives.

**“Beth continues to be a leader in child welfare and her work empowers local efforts to move more children from foster care into permanent homes across Missouri,”** Perry continued.

**“We are excited to see her work and the work of Missouri volunteers, afforded the attention and praise they have long-earned.”**

Founded in 1982, the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association works in 49 states to support citizen volunteers appointed by judges. These volunteers advocate for the safety and well-being of children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect.