

THE POWERFUL VOICE!

News for champions of CASA children

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New CASA Logo

Our new logo for CASA and volunteer Guardian ad Litem (GAL) member programs was unveiled in November 2003. A key reason for this change is that the CASA/GAL network needed to be brought together under a single identity—not all our organizations could use the former logo because many have names other than CASA.

The new logo needed to be uplifting and speak to the fact that we work with children. It was tested with over 1,000 potential new volunteers and donors. Participants reported an overwhelming preference for our new design. They noted the new logo was clearer and easier to read, better communicated our mission of caring for children, and was unique compared to logos of other organizations. We hope you agree.

National CASA is doing all it can to make this change easy for its member programs. Both the former and new CASA logos will co-exist through April 2005. This transition period will allow programs to spend down old logo materials and merchandise, thereby minimizing costs of making the switch. We are excited about what the new logo will do to further our efforts to attract more volunteers and donors to our cause.



Educational Outcomes for Foster Children

An emerging issue requiring private financial support is finding ways to help CASA children succeed in school. A large portion of the half million children in foster care struggle to stay at grade level in reading and math. More importantly, over 50% do not graduate from high school. In addition to their many other challenges, low academic performance contributes to the most serious long-term consequences as these children become adults.

Completing high school—and beyond—is essential for self-sufficiency and independent living. But the expectations of people involved in these children's lives is lower, and the challenges are greater. The following are public policy goals that National CASA is working on in collaboration with other child welfare agencies:

- Raise expectations for scholastic achievement
- Provide curriculum and training in educational advocacy to foster parents and CASA volunteers
- Improve educational stability
- Improve communication between child welfare and education systems

Working with Congress and with other organizations, National CASA hopes to improve educational outcomes and opportunities for the children we serve.

A National Impact on the Future of Children



—Marcia Sink
President Elect National CASA
Executive Director CASA of
New Hampshire

“...A powerful voice in the life of a child.”
“...A safe, permanent home.” “Speak up for a child.” “Be the difference; be a CASA volunteer.” To many of us working in the CASA network, these phrases form a familiar mantra. We hear them day after day and use them year after year while spreading the important word about Court Appointed Special Advocates.

As we recruit potential volunteers, educate the public on child abuse issues, and promote our mission to potential funders, we use these phrases...a lot. Yet even though they threaten to become commonplace in our vernacular, they never become meaningless. Every day another child's file—the tragic representation of his or her life—is entrusted to us, bundled with hopeful promise and silent pleas for rescue.

All of us who vigorously advocate for victimized children know beyond a shadow of a doubt the difference CASA volunteers make in the lives of tens of thousands of children every day across America. We know that the lives of many of the children we serve truly hang in the balance. They have been abused and abandoned—physically and emotionally. Their stories are incredibly sad and their young lives damaged in ways many of us can't

imagine. But these children are also filled with courage and hope exceeding any reasonable expectation. They inspire and compel us to serve more children and to serve them better.

Our work is intense and our vision of what remains to be done sometimes overwhelming. Yet we know that together we can, and do, make a difference. We are part of a legion of individuals who get up every day excited about what is going to be accomplished for so many of these children.

Those of us who support volunteers in performing their challenging work at the state and local levels are in turn served by an outstanding support team at the National CASA Association. These professionals provide training and link our regional efforts into a dynamic and systematic whole. They parlay our smaller projects into countrywide initiatives. National CASA staff outline and uphold exemplary standards and practices for local programs. They create nationwide volunteer recruitment campaigns and provide funds for the creation and expansion of CASA programs throughout the country.

In 2000, the CASA network collectively surpassed the million mark in our cumulative services to children. What an astounding milestone! We yearn to be obsolete; but while there are children in this country who are violated and abused, CASA will continue to dedicate its resources to bringing them relief and hope. Thank you for playing your role in making all of this possible. ■

The “Circle of Hope” Club A Way To Help Children Each Month

What is the “Circle of Hope”?

The Circle of Hope is the National CASA Association's monthly giving program. Monthly giving is a convenient way for donors to give to charity. The concept is not entirely new. Donating through your workplace campaign by payroll deduction has been possible for a number of years. However this program is unique because it allows you to set up a monthly gift directly with National CASA, which can come from your checking account, savings account, or credit card. This cuts down on our administrative costs, so nearly all of your gift goes directly to helping children find safe, permanent homes.

Why give monthly?

By giving monthly, you help to provide CASA with a steady, year-round stream of income to ensure that our CASA volunteers continue to provide advocacy to children in foster care. You also make possible the necessary recruitment and training of additional volunteers to represent abused children who do not yet have an advocate.

You can help us save money while you declutter your mailbox! By becoming a monthly donor, you significantly reduce the dollars we spend on mailings for fundraising efforts.

It's an easy way to give. You tell us which account to withdraw from and whether you prefer the 1st or the 15th of each month—and we do the rest. You can contribute as little as \$5 per month (\$60 a year) or as much as you are able. This is also a way for you to give a significant annual gift that will not be a “stretch” at year's end.

Monthly donor A. Louise Jones has been a CASA volunteer for seven years. She puts it this way: “By giving a monthly gift, I know I will give year-round. CASAs are so important to these children, and there aren't enough of us to go around. I give to the National CASA Association to help recruit more CASAs.”

We are excited to offer this option to our supporters. If you would like more information, please contact D’Nika Jackson, Resource Development Associate, at 800-628-3233 ext. 263 or dnika@nationalcasa.org. ■

Thank You to Our 2004 Conference Sponsors!



Candlelight Ceremony at the Light of Hope Event.
(see reverse for more details)



National Light of Hope Event Made Possible by JCF

National CASA has designated April 1st, 2004 as Light of Hope Day. For the past four years, we have promoted this event to increase awareness of the plight of abused and neglected children, the hope brought by CASA volunteers, and the fact that April is National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month. More than 200 local CASA programs participated in 2003, most often in the form of a candlelight ceremony at a central location such as the steps of the local courthouse. The result of these efforts was many new volunteers and supporters joining our ranks.

Tying into the local events, National CASA will hold a unifying national event this year for the second time. We are grateful for the generosity of the



Jewelers Charity Fund for Children (JCF), which is the sponsor of the national Light of Hope event to be held in New York City's Bryant Park. The centerpiece of this event will be a lighting ceremony featuring a dramatic display of 8,775 candles, with each one representing a child reported abused or neglected each day in the United States. Our prior national event garnered radio and television coverage reaching over 8.5 million people, and we expect to exceed that number this year.

These local and national events convey the important message that even a single volunteer or donor can make a difference for an abused child. With all of us working together, we can bring hope back to these children. ■

We'd Love to Get to Know You Better

If you have story ideas, questions, or comments on this publication, please contact Michael Skinner at (800) 628-3233 ext. 261 or michaels@nationalcasa.org.

Freddie Mac Foundation Funds Outreach to Urban Programs

Freddie Mac Foundation

A grant from the Freddie Mac Foundation will allow National CASA to carry out the third phase of our Urban Initiative. Through this project, at least 3,000 abused and neglected children in America's 28 largest cities will be given a better chance of finding a safe, permanent home as quickly as possible. A force of 1,000 newly recruited and trained volunteers will make this possible.

National CASA will provide member programs in the 28 cities with targeted technical support, training, and coaching to build their capacity to grow and serve more foster children via trained volunteer advocates. Efficiency of this project will be maximized by concentrating on the 3% of CASA programs serving areas where fully 60% of currently unserved children live.

Research shows that when children have CASA volunteers, they are more likely to be placed in safe, permanent homes rather than languish in long-term foster care. A permanent home can mean reunification with parents, adoption, or guardianship. In addition to helping assure better long-range outcomes for children in care, the CASA volunteer is often the only person who remains in the child's life for the duration of the placement. This stability makes a huge difference to a child who has experienced numerous case-workers, foster care placements, and schools. The facts gathered and the trust developed with the child over time provide the volunteer with accurate and unique information to present in court.

The primary way in which foster children in these 28 areas differ from those nationwide is that there is an even greater overrepresentation of minority children. While African-American

children make up 15% of the overall population, they constitute 40% of foster children nationwide and 53% of foster children in urban areas. But only 18% of volunteers are African-American. Given the upheaval children suffer when removed from their families, having a CASA volunteer with a similar background can help a child feel less isolated and overcome barriers to an effective relationship. Through special outreach activities, at least 250 of the new volunteers recruited via this project will be African-American.

Our key partners in this project are the 28 CASA programs located in the following cities: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Columbus, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Ft. Worth, Houston, Los Angeles, Memphis, Miami, New Orleans, New York, Oakland, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Portland, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Ana (CA), Seattle, St. Louis, Tampa, and Washington, DC. ■

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Please Visit Us on the Web!
www.nationalcasa.org

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We speak for the best interests of abused and neglected children who are involved in the juvenile courts. The National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association works with state and local CASA and volunteer guardian ad litem programs to promote and support quality volunteer advocacy to help assure each child a safe, permanent, nurturing home.

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