

THE POWERFUL VOICE!

News for champions of CASA children

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We're Listening to You!

The purpose of the National CASA Association's recent membership survey was to learn how we can best satisfy our members while furthering the goals of the CASA network. More than 200 of you responded to our email. Some interesting facts:

- 64% of members are either program volunteers or board members with a local CASA or volunteer guardian ad litem (GAL) program.
- The number one reason for being a member is to help children.

You have told us:

- In general, you feel that National CASA is meeting expectations.
- But you want to be kept better informed about our advocacy efforts and about how our work is complementing what local CASA programs are doing.
- You would also like more information on legislation affecting children.

We have already implemented some of your suggestions on ways to improve membership, with more to come (such as quarterly legislative updates and a 10% discount for new members at shopcasa.org). Thank you for your support and feedback—and for investing in the future of abused and neglected children across the country.

Volunteers and teens share their stories...



"I love being a bridge between the child and their hope for tomorrow, their chance at a better future."

—Marilyn Howard,
administrative assistant/
paralegal and CASA volunteer,
Fulton County CASA, Inc.,
Atlanta, GA



"She asked me if there was something I truly wanted. I replied yes. I wanted to see my brothers and my sister. The next weekend, I was having a visit."

—Teairrow, Age 15, Dallas, Texas about her CASA volunteer, Rebecca Rios, from *Someone There for Me: Everyday Heroes Through the Eyes of Teens in Foster Care*, CWLA Press, 2004

Our Strategy to Improve Children's Lives Depends on You



—Michael S. Piraino
National CASA CEO

As the new year begins, I want to give you our warmest thanks for all your support on behalf of abused and neglected children.

In these times when security and safety are so much the focus of national attention, you are truly creating zones of safety and security for children. I feel deeply honored to be able to work with you and all who support our cause.

In 2004, National CASA drafted an exciting new strategic plan for the next five years. We had the most diverse and talented group of board and staff members ever involved in this process, all working hard to make this a meaningful and ambitious plan to serve more children and serve them better. The 900+ local and state CASA member programs also provided thoughtful input. As a result of these efforts, our board approved the following five strategic goals for 2005-2009:

1. **Quality:** To assure that our organizations are well managed and employ best practices in volunteer advocacy for positive outcomes for children.

2. **Sustainability and growth:** To help programs maintain their commitments to the children currently being served while expanding volunteer advocacy for children nationally.

3. **Diversity:** To provide the best possible volunteer advocacy for children through increased inclusion and cultural competence.

4. **Promotion of the CASA mission:** To increase public understanding of the importance of volunteer advocacy, protect and enhance the value of the CASA name and promote the welfare of children who have been abused or neglected.

5. **National capacity:** To make sure that the National CASA Association is able to help the CASA network meet the needs of the children and volunteers we all serve.

As a CASA supporter, you are absolutely essential to realizing this ambitious plan. For example, with an increased and very generous contribution from Jewelers for Children, we are able to increase our pass-through funding to our member programs to over \$7.2 million—a record amount in grants to support new CASA program development and expansion.

We look forward to 2005 as a year of continued progress on behalf of abused and neglected children nationwide. Your support—as a donor, member or volunteer—continues to brighten the future of hundreds of thousands of America's children. ■



Outstanding Board Member and Philanthropist Mimi Feller

Mimi Feller not only has an impressive corporate and legislative background, but she is also a dedicated board member of the National CASA Association. Mimi joined the board of directors in 1998 after learning of National CASA through her work as senior vice president of public affairs and government relations at Gannett, a \$6.2 billion media company.

Mimi has always had a deep interest in children's legal rights and felt that National CASA was the perfect fit to put her experience to use to better the lives of abused and neglected children.

When Mimi first learned what a CASA volunteer does, she was deeply moved. She thought to herself, "how would that child feel if he or she had to go through court alone?" That feeling has motivated her work for National CASA and inspired her giving.

Over the past six years, Mimi has given her time and expertise to National CASA as well as generous financial support of our mission. This fall, she gave a leadership gift to inspire other board members and donors to dig deeper. This matching opportunity was a great success (see below).

When asked why she has such a deep commitment to National CASA, Mimi said, "I have a love for the CASA mission and believe that CASA volunteers, staff and board all have their eyes on the goal—helping abused children find safe and permanent homes." ■

Your Response to Leadership Match Campaign Benefits New Efforts on Behalf of Children

The commitment of the board and staff of the National CASA Association is evident from the success of our year-end Leadership Match Campaign. A lead gift by board member Mimi Feller was matched 100% by enthusiastic board members, and the staff of National CASA responded to a generous matching gift from CEO Michael Piraino. In total, \$40,000 was pledged by the board and staff.

This combined gift opened the doors to an outstanding year-end appeal. The \$40,000 matching opportunity, once taken to our supporters, was quickly turned into \$80,000. The funds will be used to implement key aspects of our newly completed strategic plan, and we will keep you updated as to how the funds are directed. The generosity of all who participated is a true testament to your dedication to better the lives of the children we serve. ■

The National CASA Association
Phone: (800) 628-3233
staff@nationalcasa.org

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Jewelers for Children Renews Support for CASA Services

Jewelers for Children (JFC) recently increased its commitment to supporting CASA programs' work with abused and neglected children. In its third year of partnership with National CASA, the industry group is funding a new initiative to directly support advocacy services provided by local CASA programs to children around the country. As a result, 100 programs will receive grants through National CASA of \$7,000 each, and six programs will receive \$25,000 grants. The JFC funds will provide advocacy services for approximately 1,000 children this year. Projects being supported range from targeted advocacy for abandoned babies and children who have suffered sexual or serious physical abuse, to programs providing life skills assistance and much-needed support for youth transitioning out of foster care.

JFC's support in 2004 made possible a nationwide volunteer recruitment campaign featuring two TV public service announcements (PSAs). The compelling and highly powerful spots generated great interest among TV stations and in the second half of 2004 were shown more than 1,000 times on major networks and stations throughout the US. Total viewership exceeded 8 million people. The PSAs, endorsed by the Ad Council, have produced increased volunteer interest for CASA programs around the country. The entire CASA network is grateful for the support of JFC and the admirable model for philanthropy established by industry competitors who have come together to support children in need. ■

Example of Your Gifts in Action

One of the first local programs selected to receive JFC funding through National CASA was the Douglas County program in Omaha, Nebraska. The grant was used to partially support an additional staff person to help train and supervise new CASA volunteers. CASA for Douglas County received the funding last spring, and since then the program has been able to serve 24 additional children as a result of this donation.

According to Nancy Wilson, the director of Douglas County CASA, "JFC's support produced concrete benefits and brighter futures for these children in 2004—and also allowed us to train several new volunteers who will be serving even more children in 2005. We are thrilled to receive this grant to continue our efforts to expand our services to the abused and neglected children of Douglas County."

Create a Lasting Legacy

Your will is a written testimonial of your concern for family and loved ones. It is a way to show others what you value most, including the charities that are most important to you. You may not know how simple it is to remember your favorite charity in your will. It can be as easy as a few sentences.

Each year we receive bequests from the estates of friends who have created lasting legacies of their lives and provided a much brighter future for abused and neglected children. These gifts make a tremendous and ongoing difference in the lives of the children we serve. We count on such gifts as we move into the future.

Gifts by will are one of the best ways of ensuring that CASA volunteers will continue to represent abused and neglected children. A bequest can be for a specific purpose or unrestricted. Unrestricted bequests are especially welcome, as the needs of the organization and the children can change over time.

National CASA board member Joyce Honeyman explains her motivation to plan an "ultimate" gift: "I decided to remember National CASA in my will not only because 'it is the right thing to do' but also because of my strong association with my national fraternity, Kappa Alpha Theta, which supports the CASA network as its national philanthropy. My 50-year association with Theta and my 13-year history with CASA contributed to my desire to remember National CASA in my will. Taking this simple step means that I leave a lasting legacy—and it warms my heart!"

If you have questions regarding how to include us in your will, please consult with your advisors or contact Bill Corwin, National CASA's chief development officer, at 800-628-3233 x 264. ■

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



"I like feeling that I'm filling a gap in these needy children's lives. They are thrust through no fault of their own into situations where they often have no one whatsoever. I enjoy being a consistent presence in their lives."

—Helen Coulson, retired middle school counselor and volunteer advocate, Advocates for Children, Aurora, CO

The National CASA Association, together with its state and local members, supports and promotes court appointed volunteer advocacy for abused and neglected children so that they can thrive in safe, permanent homes.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

National Court Appointed
Special Advocate Association
100 W Harrison, North Tower, #500
Seattle, WA 98119

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