

THE POWERFUL VOICE!

News for champions of CASA children

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Federal Audit Report Finds That CASA Volunteers Help Ensure Permanency for Children

A recent audit report conducted by the Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General (OIG), demonstrated that a child who has a CASA volunteer is less than half as likely to languish in long-term foster care. Fewer than 10% of foster children assigned a CASA volunteer reenter the child protective services system.

The report also found that National CASA's administrative costs were substantially lower than the national average for nonprofit human services organizations. Approximately 93% of National CASA's federally funded expenditures provide direct support to CASA/GAL programs. (Note that an equally impressive 90% of total income is used for program services.)

Your support helps to ensure positive futures and safe, permanent homes for children. To learn how you can help, visit nationalcasa.org or contact Michelle Finet, director of donor relations, 800-628-3233 ext. 267.

CBS and Jewelers for Children Recognized for Support of National CASA

National CASA recognized the outstanding contributions of the CBS Television Network and Jewelers for Children (JFC) at a donor reception held in New York City in December. The ongoing support of both CBS and JFC has helped to increase National CASA's visibility and strengthen our efforts to provide a CASA volunteer for every child who needs one.

The five-year-old partnership between National CASA and CBS has included the featuring of three CASA public service announcements that have put a CASA volunteer message in front of approximately 121 million television viewers. National CASA and JFC have worked together since 2003 on the Champions for Abused Children Initiative to increase the number of children served nationally by CASA programs.



The contributions of National CASA partners and donors were honored at a December reception. Pictured left to right: board president Mimi Feller, spokesperson Judge Glenda Hatchett, CBS Television Network senior VP Matthew Margo and actor Danny Pino.

National CASA Strategic Plan Activities Gain Momentum



—Michael Piraino
National CASA CEO

In 2007, we commemorate the 30th anniversary of the founding of the first guardian ad litem program by Seattle Superior Court Judge David Soukup. He envisioned a system that would allow volunteers to give children a desperately needed voice in his courtroom.

From that pilot has grown a nationwide network of 948 CASA and GAL program offices that has served more than one million abused and neglected children. Together, we have made great progress, but there is more to be done to achieve the vision of ensuring that there is a CASA volunteer in the life of every child who needs one.

Our work is guided by a strategic plan with goals that include increasing organizational efficiency, volunteer diversity and public awareness of CASA/GAL programs. Last year, National CASA made great strides toward achieving the objectives of the strategic plan. The following are just a few highlights.

Ensuring quality, sustainability and growth: Staffing changes called for in the strategic plan included many adjustments to job responsibilities and the creation of a new position, chief program officer, which was taken on by Sally Erny, previously our program specialist for the mid-Atlantic region. At the board level, we are recruiting board members

with an even greater ability to link us with the resources necessary to accomplish the activities that are envisioned in the plan. Two new board members joined in December 2006.

Increasing organizational inclusion and cultural competence: We are initiating a targeted African-American volunteer recruitment strategy in five cities. Four of the sites have been selected: Miami, St. Louis, Chicago and Los Angeles. A fifth site will be added in 2007. Targeted efforts in the four cities began in the fourth quarter of 2006.

Also in 2006, the board added two elements to this strategy: new targeting of our Hispanic/Latino recruitment efforts and a new approach to supporting existing tribal court CASA programs.

Enhancing general public awareness of CASA: Chicago and the San Francisco Bay Area are the sites for the rollout of a targeted marketing strategy. Plans are in place for this to begin in the first quarter with a variety of activities to increase both general awareness and volunteer recruitment in these two areas. Also during this time, we will test an "Each One Reach One" strategy for grassroots volunteer recruitment using current CASA/GAL volunteers as ambassadors for CASA.

Strengthening the CASA network: Plans are progressing for creation of an online volunteer community, based on input from several focus groups and national surveys of CASA volunteers.

With your partnership and support, we look forward to the next 30 years of continued progress on behalf of abused and neglected children nationwide. ■

My Involvement in CASA Is a Calling



—Denise Conway
Board Member
National CASA Association
and CASA of Travis County

We each have our own reasons for contributing our time and energy to a CASA program. For me, my involvement in CASA is a calling.

I grew up in the Midwest and am the oldest of five children. When I was a child, my mother, siblings and I would hide from my father in corn fields, the woods and ditches, hoping that we would not be found. At times, my mother would call the local sheriff for help. He would come out and talk to us, but he would always say, "You know that I have to take you back; there is nothing I can do. This is a domestic problem."

Somehow my mother found the strength and courage to take us out of harm's way. She raised us alone in the mid-60s, which was not an easy thing to do. My mother broke the cycle of domestic violence

for this family so that future generations would not have to endure what we did.

I was blessed to have had strong, wonderful women in my life who placed their children's needs and lives above their own. To this very day I never question that I and my siblings were loved.

My involvement in CASA is a way of giving back and honoring the women in my life who loved me. I know that I cannot do what our volunteers do for the children we serve. I would want to "fix it," and that is not what the children need. Having chaired most of our local fundraisers at least twice, I am much better suited to ensuring that we have the necessary funding to train volunteers and that they have the guidance they need to help our children.

If I can help a child know that there is someone in this world that cares about them and it changes one life, then my time with CASA has been well spent.

Denise Conway has served on the CASA of Travis County, TX board of directors for 15 years, including two terms as board chair. In 2006, she joined the National CASA Association board. Denise and her husband live in Austin, Texas. They are the owners of the Central Texas Sonic Drive-In chain of more than 58 restaurants. ■

The National CASA Association
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April Is Child Abuse Awareness Month: We all have a role to play in keeping children safe

More than 870,000 children are victims of abuse and neglect in this country every year. To help address this growing problem and encourage citizens to report suspicions of child abuse, in 1982 President Ronald Reagan declared April as “Child Abuse Prevention Month.”

Surveys have shown that while the majority of Americans believe that everyone should play a role in stopping child abuse, many people acknowledge witnessing child abuse without taking action.

Everyone has a role to play in keeping children safe. The following are just a few examples of ways that you can get involved:

- Volunteer! Get involved with your local CASA/GAL program or other child advocacy organizations in your community.
- Educate yourself and others about the children in your community in need of safe homes by visiting your local social service organization websites.
- Write your legislators—let them know how you feel about legislation affecting children in your community.
- Report suspicions of child abuse.

Please be sure to visit our website, nationalcasa.org, during the month of April for special links and information about how you can help to raise awareness in your community. ■



“I’m glad I met my CASA volunteer. . . because it was someone that took interest in me that I did not have before. . . . To me, my CASA was an all star; he enlightened us, he turned the light on.”

—Alonzo Portlock,
former CASA youth

PRism Award Honors CASA Hispanic/Latino Recruitment Video

On any given day, there are more than 94,000 Hispanic and Latino children in the US foster care system. National CASA is working aggressively toward the goal of providing all of these children with a CASA or GAL volunteer—ideally one who understands their culture—to advocate for them in the family court system.

Our work to recruit additional volunteers from the Hispanic and Latino communities has been recognized by the Public Relations Society of America, Los Angeles Chapter, which recently honored National CASA and our public relations agency, La Agencia de Orca, with a PRism Award for the *Suitcases—Volunteer Recruitment Video*. This inspirational video features interviews with Hispanic and Latino volunteers sharing their stories about how they help children find safe, lasting homes.

The production of the *Suitcases—Volunteer Recruitment Video* was made possible through a generous gift from NBC Universal Television. ■



Register Online Now for National CASA’s 30th Anniversary Conference June 9-12, 2007

Join us in sunny Orlando, FL to celebrate 30 years of effective volunteer advocacy for children at the 2007 National CASA Conference. Visit casanet.org/conference to register and learn about special discounts for members and active CASA/GAL volunteers. ■



Professional Advisory Groups Provide Valuable Insights

In 2006, National CASA convened meetings of professional advisory groups in New York and Seattle to discuss some of the most pressing issues and opportunities facing the CASA network. The groups were composed of corporate executives, attorneys, policymakers, marketing experts and others interested in lending their expertise and advice to our efforts to expand services to more children.

Attendees at these four-hour meetings learned about National CASA’s current priorities and brainstormed topics including enhancing the CASA brand, expanding our corporate partnerships and maximizing the resources of the CASA network. Advisory group members offered many helpful suggestions, several of which are currently being implemented.

We are planning to hold additional advisory group meetings in Los Angeles, Seattle and other cities in 2007. If you are interested in participating in one of these sessions, please contact Kris Gonzales at kris@nationalcasa.org. ■

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.

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