

Overcoming Poverty and Building Capacity Kentucky CASA

To celebrate its 43rd year of service to America's most vulnerable citizens, VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) published a book profiling 52 projects, including 10 feature-length stories. One of the stories was dedicated to the five VISTAs who currently serve at Kentucky CASA, which seeks to serve the needs of more than 17,000 children residing in foster care. The five volunteers serve as "capacity-builders" and grassroots organizers in CASA programs throughout the state. They also help raise money through special events, grants and individual donations. Special attention was paid to VISTA Amanda Townsell for having assisted CASA of Ohio Valley in Owensboro, KY, by overhauling and growing the office's annual fundraiser. Kentucky CASA director and former VISTA Alex Blevins believes that VISTA's assistance has increased the number of children served by CASA volunteers by approximately 500 youth each year. He says, "Without the help of VISTAs, many of our rural programs would not have been sustained."



neglected children to have a voice in court as well as to highlight the disproportionate number of children of color who enter the foster care system every day. The event began on Saturday with an emotional march down Biscayne Boulevard with 850 cut-outs of children that were then placed on display at Bayfront Park and remained through Monday. Following the march, Voices for Children hosted its annual *Children's Celebration*, a free, fun family event designed to increase awareness of the lives of abused children through their own creative artwork. "The response from our community, the 19 collaborating agencies, our corporate sponsors, media partners and children formerly in foster care was overwhelming," said Sonia Ferrer, executive director of Miami's GAL Program. "This campaign has definitely raised the consciousness of our community and reminded them that our children will *not* be forgotten!"

Miami Forgotten Children Event Raises Awareness

The 11th Judicial Circuit Guardian Ad Litem Program brought National CASA's *Forgotten Children* campaign to Miami-Dade County on September 12. The event was hosted by the program's nonprofit arm, the Voices for Children Foundation. The *Forgotten Children* campaign was designed to increase awareness about the need for all abused and



The Miami *Forgotten Children* march



Left to right: Nelson Hincapie, president & CEO of the Voices for Children Foundation (VFC); Sonia Ferrer, executive director, Miami GAL Program; Johan Askowitz, GAL volunteer and VFC board member; Andrea Steinacker, GAL volunteer and VFC board member; Judge Marcia Caballero; Michael Rosenberg, DDS, VFC board chair; Tracy Evans, National CASA program officer; Gail Applerouth, GAL volunteer and VFC board member; and Michael Piraino, National CASA CEO

Walmart Donations Kentucky CASA

Kentucky CASA has received a \$100,000 donation from the Walmart state giving program. The award will help fund the *Speak Up for a Child Campaign*, which includes training and recruitment of volunteers statewide as well as pass-through grants to each of the 21 CASA programs in Kentucky. State Director Alex Blevins said that the funding closely mirrors the work done with Walmart on a national level. In addition, more than 50 Walmart stores around the state hosted volunteers collecting donations for the CASA program on August 6, the day proclaimed *CASA Awareness Day* by Governor Steve Beshear.

Preparing Youth for Adulthood

CASA for Children of DC, Washington, DC

Shumeka Moore, a youth served by CASA for Children of DC, Kristal Wortham, her dedicated CASA volunteer, and Shane Salter, the program's CEO, were featured on WTTG (Fox 5) in a discussion of the program's *Preparing Youth for Adulthood* project. The three also affirmed how a CASA volunteer can affect a youth's life. Kristal Wortham says, "Support is a lifelong necessity." Wortham, who had a son at age 14, says that she and Moore, who has a 1-year-old daughter, can understand each other in a way others may not. Wortham adds, "There is a very deep sense of personal satisfaction—just knowing that someone actually relies on my input, my feedback, my support on a consistent basis."



CASA for Children of DC Executive Director Shane Salter with Shumeka Moore

Volunteer Makes CASA Kitchen a Reality

CASA of Monterey County, CA

CASA volunteers in Monterey County, CA, are not permitted to meet with the children they serve in their own homes. So Wendy Grim was in a dilemma when she learned that the girl she volunteered for wanted to do some cooking. Grim and Executive Director Siobhan Greene came up with the idea of creating a kitchen in the CASA office itself. They rearranged some office space, raised funds from friends and relatives and solicited contractors to donate their services—and the galley kitchen was born! Children baked cookies and cakes, sharing them with staff and foster families. There are several benefits to this activity in addition to providing a bonding opportunity. Cooking together requires children to read and follow instructions as well as to use basic math skills in measuring ingredients. According to Greene, "In providing a life skill like this, we are also stressing the importance of eating healthy and preparing nutritious meals."



Wendy Grim, left, a CASA volunteer, and Siobhan Greene, CASA executive director, show off their new kitchen. (Photo courtesy of Richard Green, *The Salinas Californian*)

Awards and Recognition

US Commerce Association Honors CASA New Orleans CASA New Orleans, LA

CASA New Orleans was selected for the US Commerce Association's (USCA's) 2009 *Best of New Orleans Award* in the social service and welfare organizations category. Each year, the USCA identifies companies that have achieved exceptional marketing success in their local community and business category. Funded by local businesses operating in towns across America, the organization promotes local business through public relations, marketing and advertising.



CASA Staff Member Receives Award for Outstanding Service to Victims CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties, CO

Lori Markley, volunteer coordinator for CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties, recently received the *Thomas E. Green Award for Outstanding Service to Victims* in nonprofit-based settings. For more than five years, she has dedicated her time and compassion to support abused and neglected children and the CASA volunteers who provide them with appropriate and effective advocacy services.



Neiman Marcus—Willow Bend Honors CASA Board Member CASA of Collin County, TX

Neiman Marcus—Willow Bend in Plano, TX, held a series of events in August to honor ten Collin County women for their contributions to the community and to local nonprofit organizations. One of the honorees was Diane Chester, a former CASA volunteer and immediate past board president of CASA of Collin County. Her vision was instrumental in the program's ability to raise more than \$750,000 in a capital campaign during the current challenging economic climate. The funds were raised to purchase and renovate a building in downtown McKinney to ensure appropriate office space for CASA program staff and advocates. 🏠



(photo by Gittings)