



Winter 2006
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the CONNECTION

News and Information from the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association

All children

deserve to

grow up

in a safe,

permanent

home.



Learning to Walk in Their Shoes—the Life of a Child Whose Parent Is Incarcerated

Also in This Issue:

Profile: Author Dorothy Roberts

Methamphetamine Abuse Resources

National CASA Partners to Promote Foster Care Month



CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

Volunteer VOICE

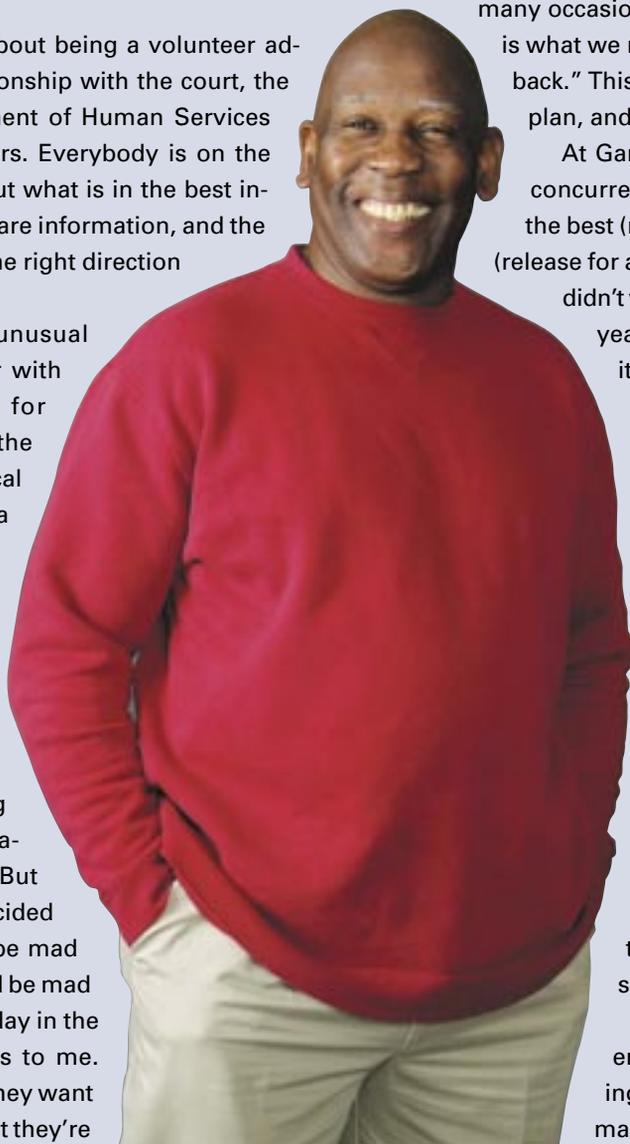
by Jerome C. Rhodes
Volunteer, Garland County CASA
Hot Springs, AR

This past September, I celebrated six years as a CASA volunteer. I feel like the kids and families here in Garland County, Arkansas need all the help they can get. And I enjoy what I'm doing. When I'm about to meet a new child, I get a gleam in my eye because I know I'll be hitting the streets and getting nosy!

One of the best things about being a volunteer advocate is my working relationship with the court, the attorneys and the Department of Human Services (DHS) family service workers. Everybody is on the same page, concerned about what is in the best interest of the children. We share information, and the others always point me in the right direction to get the facts I need.

I came to CASA in an unusual way. I've been a volunteer with the American Red Cross for about 12 years. I learned the assistant director of the local Red Cross chapter was a CASA volunteer. She told me more, and three weeks later I was going through training myself.

One CASA case that sticks in my mind involved an infant whose mother was diagnosed as bipolar. As long as she was on her medication, everything was fine. But that wasn't very often. I decided early on that if she had to be mad at somebody, then she could be mad at me. After 20 years and 1 day in the Marine Corps, nothing gets to me. People can cuss me out all they want as long as they're doing what they're



Jerome C. Rhodes appears on a Garland County CASA volunteer recruitment billboard. Rhodes amazed his local juvenile court when he managed to keep up with his CASA work at the same time that he was putting in 20-hour days helping hurricane evacuees from Texas and Louisiana through the Red Cross. According to Rhodes: "These are just two different ways of helping families in need."

supposed to be doing. So I listened to the mother vent on many occasions, then I always got back to "This is what we need to do for you to get your child back." This refocused her on meeting her case plan, and the family pulled through.

At Garland County CASA, we always do concurrent planning. That is, we hope for the best (reunification) but plan for the worst (release for adoption). In one case where things didn't work out, I was able to move a three-year-old boy into a foster home where it only took a week for the family to decide to adopt. In the five months before the adoption was finalized, I saw the child many times with his new family. It was so gratifying to see that he fit in from the start.

Now that I'm on the other side of the table at CASA training sessions, I tell new volunteers that we're in a win-win situation. If it's in the child's best interest to return to the parents, that will happen. If it's not, it won't. We just have to be the best investigators we can be and pass the information on to the court, which makes the decision. I haven't lost a night's sleep yet.

I tell my CASA supervisor that I enjoy what I'm doing, but I'm waiting for her to give me a case that will make me sweat!

A Message from THE PRESIDENT



We Need More Men

Marcia Sink, President

I would like to tell you about Steve Baxter. Steve is your guy next door, and he is extraordinary. Steve is also one of New Hampshire's male CASA volunteers. That alone is somewhat unusual: a male CASA volunteer. Steve brings such sincerity and passion to his advocacy, he has truly been a unique gift to us and to the children he has served. We need, and our children need, more male CASA and GAL volunteers like Steve. When we look at the population of children we serve, we see nearly a 50/50 split between boys and girls, and yet our volunteer population reflects approximately 20/80 with women far exceeding the number of men who serve as CASA volunteers.

I was talking about this problem the other day with Shane Salter, executive director of CASA for Children of DC. Shane has had some real success recruiting men as volunteers, and he has a great perspective on this issue. We recognized that male CASA volunteers can often play a special role in the lives of the children they serve, particularly boys. Many boys who enter the foster care system have not seen healthy male role models in their lives. When a boy is really struggling and a man steps in to help him, he sees that he is valued—and perhaps he sees this a bit differently because his CASA volunteer is a man. What's more, he sees a way to behave: to be responsible, to be caring. He sees that caring for children can be a "manly thing" to do; maybe it plants a seed in the child's mind.

When you talk with one of Steve Baxter's CASA children, Eric, you will hear a little of what Shane is talking about. During a recent TV interview, Eric told the reporter that the most valuable thing Steve brought him was trust. He was able to trust that Steve would be there for him and would do what was right. There is nothing more powerful for a boy than to hear a man tell him, "I'm here for you; I believe in you." And when the boy sees that man actually take action by speaking up for him in court and elsewhere, it can change a boy's life. It's profound.

New Hampshire recently conducted a small focus group of our current male CASA volunteers in order to better understand their motivations and reasons for volunteering. The

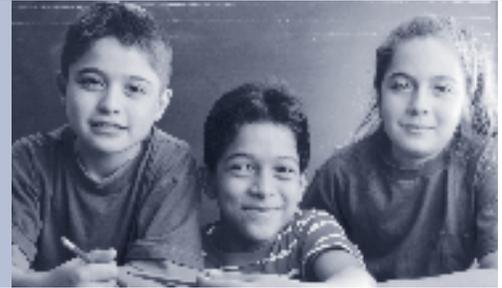
men we talked with were very honest about the challenges we face recruiting men as CASA volunteers, saying it was a tough sell, particularly for younger family men and men with heavy work schedules. But men who can make the commitment will find a special significance to being a CASA volunteer. They find the experience to be both challenging and meaningful to them.

The reasons our male volunteers gave us for volunteering are varied. Most of all, they want to connect with kids in a meaningful way. The men we talked with also have a strong interest in the legal system and the process. And they have an innate sense of needing to give back to their community in order to feel complete. This last quality is something men also want to pass along to their own children. As one of our volunteers put it, "I just want to show my own children an example of social responsibility and instill in them the need to be giving back to society as someone who has been blessed."

For those of us who work directly with CASA and GAL volunteers, it's very interesting to watch the dynamic in a training class containing men. We need to be careful about stereotypes, and I am not sure I entirely buy into the "men are from Mars, women are from Venus" idea. But I believe we can all agree that men and women often approach situations with different perspectives. It's very interesting to watch the women stop and look at an issue from a male perspective; just as it is to watch the men stop and think about the important emotional aspects of a case. Both perspectives are equally valuable, and having both brings us a balance that we need.

It is a challenge to recruit men; we all know that. But with men accounting for just 20% of our volunteer resource, we need to do more to persuade men to stand up for children. While we value all our CASA volunteers, we need to celebrate our current male volunteers. I believe this is something we must be committed to doing as a network because of the unique impact a man can have on a child, on his fellow volunteers and on our cause as a whole.

inside the CONNECTION



A publication of the National CASA Association representing 954 program offices and 51,674 CASA volunteers nationwide.

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) is a nationwide movement of community volunteers who speak up for the best interests of abused and neglected children.

CASA volunteers work for the judge to review and monitor cases of children who become part of the juvenile justice system. CASA volunteers work closely with the child and family to bring an independent assessment of the case to court, recommending to the judge what is best for the child's future.

CASA volunteers help prevent children from becoming "lost" in the child welfare system. CASA gives children a chance to grow up in safe, permanent homes.

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Children in *Connection* photos are not from actual abuse and neglect cases.



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CASA and Counties—Building a Partnership to Help Children

*Guest Editorial
By Bill Hansell
President, National Association of Counties
Commissioner, Umatilla County, OR*

As a local elected official and president of the National Association of Counties (NACo) in 2005-2006, I want to thank and congratulate you and the National CASA Association for the important work you do every day to improve the lives of children across the United States.

In my home of rural Umatilla County, Oregon, and in all 3,066 of the nation's counties, we know that kids are the future of our communities. Unfortunately, as you know, many children today are victims of abuse and neglect, and they need our help—as individuals, as communities and as governments—more than ever. That's why I have made support for the Court Appointed Special Advocates program a priority for the National Association of Counties.

Across the US, there are more than 900 CASA program offices in 49 states, serving about 1,100 counties in urban, suburban and rural areas. In many communities, county governments are already working in partnership with and providing critical support to local CASA programs. Nationwide, county governments are the fourth largest financial contributor to CASA programs (we give \$12 million annually). In all, 40% of local CASA programs receive county funding

support, and one in five operates as part of a state or county agency.

Counties and CASA have a strong alliance, but I think we can do better. So since early 2005, National CASA and the National Association of Counties have been working together to enhance the partnership between local CASA programs and county governments nationwide.

Last April, I had the honor of addressing a plenary session of your national conference in Atlanta. I took back some great ideas and information about CASA that I learned at your conference and shared them with my fellow county officials at the National Association of Counties. Later, at our annual conference in July, more than 4,000 county officials from across the country listened as Judge Glenda Hatchett talked passionately about her experience as a juvenile court judge and about the deep respect she has for CASA's great work. She challenged all of us to use our status as elected leaders in the community to strengthen local CASA programs. I am pleased to tell you that many of us are doing this.

Also in 2005, the membership of the National Association of Counties adopted a policy resolution to advocate before Congress for reauthorization of the CASA program under the Violence Against

Women Act and for steady increases in annual federal funding for the program until full funding is reached.

Finally, at our Health, Human Services and Workforce Conference in November, many county officials heard insightful presentations from Richland County CASA (South Carolina), which recently won a best-in-category Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties, and from the California CASA Association. We continue to be impressed by and enthused about your mission.

At home in Oregon, I have been a strong supporter of Umatilla County CASA. My wife, Margaret, has served as countywide CASA coordinator and as a volunteer for many years. As foster parents ourselves, we have observed firsthand the important service and positive results this program provides to children and families in my community.

I continue to believe that, working together, county officials and CASA leaders can and should make the partnership between counties and CASA even stronger and help CASA programs—and the children—in our communities flourish.

Thank you very much for your commitment to kids and our future, and here's to our continued partnership in 2006 and beyond!



Learning to Walk in Their Shoes

Thousands of children in foster care have an incarcerated parent. How can CASA volunteers best serve them?

By Lisette Austin

It is hard to imagine how millions of children could be invisible. But such is the case for most children of US prisoners—a hidden population with a multitude of unmet needs. Although they have not committed a crime themselves, they end up paying a steep penalty alongside their parents. Many struggle with traumatic loss and upheaval with almost no support from their community. Thousands of them wind up in foster care, one of many service systems that do not yet fully acknowledge or address this population's unique needs.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics an estimated 2,000,000 children in our country currently have a parent behind bars. As many as 10,000,000 children currently have a parent under correctional supervision (prison, jail, probation or parole). These numbers represent a 50% increase since 1991. For most of these children, it is a father who is incarcerated, but more than 116,000 are estimated to have a mother serving time.

These children are invisible primarily because they are difficult to identify. When an adult is incarcerated, the correctional system is not required to ask about children left behind and what their needs might be. This means there is no official record of affected children. Also—because of the social stigma around incarceration—families and children often hide the problem themselves, bearing their pain in silence.

How Having a Parent in Prison Affects a Child

The effects of parental incarceration on children are wide-ranging, profound and just beginning to be understood. What is clear is that having a parent behind bars can leave lifelong emotional scars.

“Any time a child loses a parent to prison, there are going to be abandonment issues,” says Dr. Sal Severe, nationally known parenting expert and former school psychologist. “The question often is ‘why did my parent choose criminal activity over me?’ It’s easy for them to blame themselves.”

Children Of Incarcerated Parents: A Bill of Rights

1. I have the right to be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent's arrest.
2. I have the right to be heard when decisions are made about me.
3. I have the right to be considered when decisions are made about my parent.
4. I have the right to be well cared for in my parent's absence.
5. I have the right to speak with, see and touch my parent.
6. I have the right to support as I struggle with my parent's incarceration.
7. I have the right not to be judged, blamed or labeled because of my parent's incarceration.
8. I have the right to a lifelong relationship with my parent.

Source: San Francisco Partnership for Incarcerated Parents

He explains that children often feel angry with their incarcerated parents yet also desperate to be with them. Although they may feel ashamed of what their parents have done, they still love them. All of this can be very confusing.

When families lie to children about their parent's imprisonment, it only compounds the situation. "Denial is a big problem in families affected by incarceration," says Marge Scanlon, a former middle school teacher who spent 13 years teaching parenting classes to prison inmates. "I knew a child who didn't know for years where her

mother was," says Scanlon. "It wasn't until her grandmother died and her mother came to the funeral in shackles that she found out the truth." Family deception can increase children's fears and mistrust.

Emotional distress is only one part of a constellation of difficulties that children of prisoners face. Many are transient, moving from caregiver to caregiver, particularly if their mother is incarcerated. The removal of a parent can send families into an economic tailspin, making it hard to meet basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing. Many live

in neighborhoods plagued with drug addiction, violence and poverty.

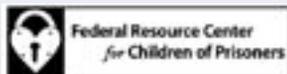
According to the Child Welfare League of America, children facing these overwhelming challenges often become depressed or act out. They have a difficult time trusting others. These children are at increased risk for problems at school and running away as well as drug and alcohol abuse. They are also prone to running into trouble with the law. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that roughly half of all juveniles in custody have a parent or sibling who is or has been incarcerated. "These kids

(continued on page 8)

Web Resources

The federal agency, Administration for Children and Families (acf.hhs.gov) initiated the Mentoring Children of Prisoners program in 2003 to support the establishment and operation of mentoring programs and to make competitive grants to applicants serving populations with substantial numbers of children of incarcerated parents.

Federal Resource Center for Children of Prisoners (cwla.org/programs/incarcerated)



This CWLA website provides information and publications about children of prisoners as well as technical assistance, training for mentoring programs, communities, agencies, corrections and law enforcement.

Families and Corrections Network (fcnetwork.org)

FCN is an organization for and about families of prisoners. The website offers information, training and technical assistance regarding children of prisoners, parenting programs for prisoners, prison visiting, incarcerated fathers and mothers, keeping in touch, returning to the community, the impact of the justice system on families and prison marriage. Contains a library with fact sheets about families and children affected by incarceration.



Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents (e-ccip.org)

Organizational goals are the production of high quality documentation on, and the development of model services for, children of criminal offenders and their families. Con-

tains numerous resources related to families affected by incarceration.

Women's Prison Association and Home, Inc. (wpaonline.org)

Provides programs through which women acquire life skills needed to end involvement in the criminal justice system and to make positive, healthy choices for themselves and their families. Publications include:



- *Supporting Women Offenders and their Families*
- *Partnerships between Corrections and Child Welfare*

Centerforce (centerforce.org)



Provides services for prisoners, former prisoners and family members of prisoners; holds an annual conference; and offers consultation and training for government agencies, community-based organizations and correctional facilities across the country and internationally.

Amachi (amachimentoring.org)

A unique partnership of secular and faith-based organizations working together to provide mentoring to children of incarcerated parents.

Lydia's Place, Inc. (lydiasplace.org)



Lydia's Place helps female offenders and their children rebuild their lives. Lydia's Place, Inc. sponsors a number of programs that help

female offenders in Allegheny County (PA) and their dependent children: re-entry and mentoring programs prepare women for release from jail and life on the outside, life skills classes, parenting classes as well as weekly support groups and referral services for women newly released from jail.

Other mentoring resources include:

- National Mentoring Center's Topical Resources on Starting a Program (nwrel.org/mentoring/topic_startup.html)
- Public/Private Ventures' Contemporary Issues in Mentoring (ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/37_publication.pdf)
- *Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters* (ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/111_publications.pdf)
- MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership's Elements of Effective Practice (mentoring.org).

Friends Outside (friendsoutside.org)

is dedicated to breaking the cycle of crime and delinquency and preserving families. Friends Outside chapters provide support and assistance for inmate families, offenders and ex-offenders and they also offer diversion, intervention and prevention programs. Friends Outside believes that by aggressively addressing the factors that cause violence, child and spousal abuse and criminal lifestyles, crime, delinquency and their effect on society can be significantly reduced.



(Learning to Walk, continued from page 7)

often grow up hating the system that took their parents away,” says Scanlon, whose middle school students included children of prisoners. “They can end up with a world view in which the authorities are the enemy. This obviously can be a huge problem.”

Tackling the Problem

Although the numbers of children affected by parental incarceration continue to rise, many of the issues they face remain unacknowledged by the greater community. However, a growing number of organiza-

tions are working to raise awareness. The San Francisco Partnership for Incarcerated Parents, for example, has published a compelling booklet entitled *Children of Incarcerated Parents: A Bill of Rights* in hopes that service systems will begin to recognize and respond to this population's unique needs (see sidebar on page 6). And in 2001, the Child Welfare League of America received a three-year award from the US Department of Justice to create the Federal Resource Center for Children of Prisoners. The center con-

ducts research, distributes publications and provides training.

Other organizations are trying to find and directly serve children of prisoners. The Girl Scouts' Beyond Bars program provides support to 5- to 17-year-old girls who have an incarcerated mother, while strengthening the mother-daughter relationship through structured prison visits. Started in 1992, Girl Scout councils are now running this program in 22 states. A few similar Boy Scout programs have also recently started. Another example is Amachi, a program that has connected

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Books & Movies Addressing Parental Incarceration

The following list is a sampling of books and resources available to those interested in learning more about the subject of incarcerated parents and their families.

Directory of Programs Serving Families of Adult Offenders, edited by James W. Mustin, provides an extensive state-by-state listing of programs and organizations focused on children and families of offenders (nicic.org/pubs/2002/017081.pdf).

Parents in Prison: Addressing the Needs of Families, by James Boudouris (American Correctional Association), provides information from a national survey of prison-based programs for incarcerated mothers across the country and in Canada. It addresses the needs of the whole family, the importance of parental ties, resources for parents and facilities, family advocacy and the increased role of volunteer programs.

Prisoners Once Removed: The Impact of Incarceration and Reentry on Children, Families and Communities, edited by Jeremy Travis and Michelle Waul, is available in paperback from the Urban Institute Press. This book is for anyone concerned about foster care, child development, strengthening families and post-prison adjustment (urban.org/pubs/prisoners).

Families Left Behind: The Hidden Costs of Incarceration and Reentry by Jeremy Travis, Elizabeth Cincotta McBride and Amy L. Solomon. This policy brief helps focus attention on the hidden costs of our criminal justice policies and the impact of parental incarceration on young children. Available from the Urban Institute (urban.org/url.cfm?ID=310882).

Coping When a Parent Is in Jail by John J. La Valle (Rosen Publishing Group). LaValle writes about how teenagers can deal with their emotions when a parent is incarcerated, explains what happens in prison, the visiting process and reports on where teens can find support.

Children's Books

Into the Great Forest: A Story for Children Away from Parents for the First Time by Irene Wineman Marcus and Paul Marcus, PhD, with illustrations by Susan Jeschke (Magination Press). Early separations—whether to go to school or camp—can be as upsetting as they are exciting for both children and parents. How these events are handled can affect how children behave in similar situations throughout their lives. This story about a young prince's adventures away from home explores the insecurity and anger children may feel and suggests ways

to resolve their conflicts by relying on their own strengths.

Two in Every 100: A Special Workbook for Children with a Parent in Prison, (Reconciliation Ministries, Inc., Nashville, TN). A workbook for children with incarcerated parents and their parents, teachers or counselors.

Zachary's New Home: A Story for Foster and Adopted Children, Geraldine M. Blomquist, MSW, Paul B. Blomquist (Magination Press). Children in foster care and adopted children usually suffer painful separations from their families for reasons they may not understand. This story, which explores their experiences, problems and emotions, can be a useful tool for understanding and helping these children to cope with their many losses and to feel happier and more optimistic. Ages 3-8.

The Kissing Hand, Audrey Penn (Child & Family Press) is a book for any child who will be temporarily separated from home or loved ones, whether going to preschool or to camp. Ages 4-8.

Visiting Day, Jacqueline Woodson (Scholastic Press). A young girl and her grandmother make the long bus trip every month to visit the girl's father in prison. Join the family for visiting day and find out what life is like for kids when a parent is incarcerated and what

it's like for a parent who can't be at home with his family. Ages 4-8

Mama Love Me from Away, Pat Brisson (Boyd's Mills Press). The story of a young girl, now living with her grandmother, who looks forward to visiting her imprisoned mother every Sunday. Prison is never mentioned; the focus lies on the emotional bond between the two. Ages 4-8.

Finding the Right Spot: When Kids Can't Live with Their Parents, Janice Levy (American Psychological Association). A story for all children who can't live with their parents, emphasizing, loyalty, hope, disappointment, love, sadness and anger. Richly illustrated. Concludes with chapter written by a child psychologist for caregivers on dealing with the emotional needs of these children. Ages 4-8.

All About Change, Kathy Kagy-Taylor and Donna Dansker (The Aring Institute of Beech Acres). This workbook helps to explain positives and negatives about changes in life. For children in grades K-4.

Help for Kids! Understanding Your Feelings About Having a Parent in Prison or Jail, Carole Gesme, MA, CCDP, with consultation from Michele Kopfmann (Pine Press). Gesme, who has created several therapeutic and educational games and tools, has taught parenting within the Minnesota Correctional System for more than 20 years. She is also a trainer for the Minnesota Child Welfare Training System in effective parenting skills and the effects of abuse and neglect on child development. Ages 6 and older.

A Visit to the Big House, Oliver Butterworth (Houghton Mifflin Company). Two children and their mother visit their father in prison. Ages 7-10.

Let's Talk About When Your Parent Is in Jail, Maureen Wittbold (Powerkids Press). More people are in prison today than at any other time in US history. Many prisoners have children. The impact of this situation on kids can be traumatic. This book takes kids through the stages of a parent's incar-

ceration to help them understand and deal with their thoughts, fears and other feelings. Ages 8-11.

Queenie Peavy, Robert Burch (Puffin). The biggest troublemaker in school, Queenie learns a lesson when her father is incarcerated. Ages 9-12.

Breaking Out, Barthe Declements (Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group). In this final volume in DeClements' trilogy, Jerry, a seventh grader who must adjust to his father's imprisonment, makes friends with Grace, a preacher's daughter with problems of her own. For older children.

Movies

A Sentence of Their Own, Edgar Barends, Director, chronicles one family's annual pilgrimage to a New Hampshire state prison, revealing the damaging impact incarceration has on families. It makes visible what is rarely seen, the gradual descent of a family "doing time" on the outside, and calls for a closer examination and deeper understanding of our growing use of incarceration and its impact on families, communities and our culture.

Champagne and The Talking Eggs, Michael Sporn, Director, shows two tales of love and hope:

Champagne: The true story of a young girl whose mother is jailed for murder. Living in a Catholic children's home, Champagne provides poignant commentary about her mother, her own situation and her outlook for the future. This award-winning film shows how hope can spring forth even in the most challenging times.

The Talking Eggs: When a young girl befriends a mystical elderly woman, magical things happen—not the least of which is the surprise of three talking eggs. Based on a Creole folk tale and narrated by Danny Glover, this richly textured animated fable encourages children to find their untapped potential and to pursue their dreams.

Children Left Behind, David Freudberg, Producer. Adults whose parents were incarcerated recall their experiences as children (the trauma of their parents' arrests, their feelings of abandonment and the sometimes humiliating treatment they experienced when visiting their parents in prison). The film also profiles community support activities for children whose parents are incarcerated and the views of experts and practitioners (reentrymediaoutreach.org/leftbehind.htm).

Children of Prisoners/Children of Promise, National Institute of Corrections, identifies problems and greatest needs of incarcerated parents and caretakers with regard to their children. This video-conference also addresses problems and issues that children of prisoners or former prisoners face that put children at risk; evidence-based and promising approaches to support these children and build on their strengths; and the benefits of the criminal justice system becoming more family-friendly (nicic.org/Library/018895).

Prison Lullabies, by filmmakers Odile Isralson and Lina Matta, is the remarkable portrait of four women who, serving prison time, have all given birth behind bars. Incarcerated in the Taconic Correctional Facility in New York State, one of five prisons in the US to provide a nursery program for inmates, they are allowed to keep their babies for the first 18 months and required to participate in a rigorous series of classes that range from basic child care to anger management and drug counseling. *Prison Lullabies* portrays life-altering choices and "the glimmer of possibility" the prison nursery program holds for them and for the future of their children. (reentrymediaoutreach.org/pl.htm)

When the Bough Breaks, Jill Evans Petzall, Producer. What happens to children when their mothers are incarcerated? In the United States, 80-90% of all female inmates are mothers of vulnerable children. This documentary is an up-close look at children coping with their mothers' incarceration.

Troop 1500 Documentary Examines Incarcerated Mothers of Girl Scouts



Their mothers may be convicted thieves, murderers and drug dealers, but the girls of *Troop 1500* want to be doctors, social workers and marine biologists. With meetings once a month at Hilltop Prison in Gatesville, Texas, this innovative Girl Scout program brings daughters together with their inmate mothers, offering them a chance to rebuild their broken relationships. Intimately involved with the troop for several years, the directors took their cameras

far beyond meetings to explore the painful context of broken families. Powerful insight comes from interviews shot by the girls themselves which reveal their conflicted feelings of anger and joy, abandonment and intimacy—as well as the deep influence their mothers still have on them.

An estimated 2 million children have incarcerated parents and 90% of female inmates are parents. Their daughters are six times more likely to land in the juvenile justice system. *Troop 1500* poignantly re-

veals how an inspired yet controversial effort by the Girl Scouts organization is working to help these at-risk young girls deal with their unique circumstances and break the cycle of crime within families.

Troop 1500 has a national PBS broadcast date on the Emmy-award-winning series, *Independent Lens*: March 21, 2006 (check local listings). Visit pbs.org.



Special Offer to Connection Readers

Troop 1500: Girl Scouts Beyond Bars (wmm.com/catalog/pages/c659.htm) is distributed by Women Make Movies, wmm.com. To order, email orders@wmm.com, or call (212) 925-0606 ext. 360. The film is offered at the special rate of \$89 to all CASA programs until December 30th, 2006.

(Learning to Walk, continued from page 8)

volunteer mentors to over 7,000 children of imprisoned parents. Inspired by Amachi's efforts, Congress appropriated \$150,000,000 in 2003 to create 52 additional mentoring programs across the country.

How CASA Volunteers Can Help

So where does CASA come into the picture? Although many children of prisoners live with relatives or friends, roughly 10% end up in the foster care system. This means that any given CASA volunteer

could easily end up advocating for a child with an incarcerated parent. Having some awareness of and sensitivity to the issue is paramount, especially since CASA volunteers are often in the position to educate others involved with the child.

How can a CASA volunteer best serve a prisoner's child in foster care? An important first step is education. Becoming familiar with resources, attending workshops and reading available literature will create a firm foundation that can then be built upon.

An issue that CASA volunteers need to be particularly aware of is the effect of the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act on families with an incarcerated parent. Under the act, states must begin proceedings to terminate parental rights if a child has been in foster care for 15 of the past 22 months—six months if the child is under three. Over 70% of women in US prisons are serving sentences of 35 months or more, meaning that many incarcerated mothers with children in foster care risk losing their children permanently.

“CASA volunteers should keep this issue at the forefront,” advises Marsha Weissman, executive director of the Center for Community Alternatives, a New York organization that works to develop effective alternatives to incarceration. “You don’t want to have an automatic termination simply because the parent is incarcerated,” she explains. “You need to look at the bigger picture.”

She notes that there can be exceptions to terminations if efforts towards reunification have been made—most commonly through visitation. But visits frequently fall through the cracks, often because of the judgment of others. “It’s so easy to feel that because these parents have committed a crime they should have their parental rights terminated,” she says. “But the reality is much more complicated than that.”

Maintaining Contact With an Imprisoned Parent

In fact, many automatically believe it is detrimental for a child to be in touch with their incarcerated parent. It is true that visitations can be problematic. “Unpleasant things can happen during a prison visit, and there’s the chance a child will see something awful,” says middle school teacher Scanlon. But research suggests that regular visits and communication usually reduce recidivism for parents and improves emotional adjustment for children. “It is anxiety-provoking for the child if they never see their parent,” says Scanlon. “They wonder if their parent is really OK.”

Certainly each case is unique, and in some situations direct contact may not be appropriate. If physical distance or other factors prohibit visits, letters and phone calls are still good options. “I encourage kids to stay in communication any way they can,” says Severe, the parenting expert and psychologist. “It’s important for them to know that it’s still OK to love their parents.”



Building Support

Another way that CASA volunteers can make a difference is by building support. “There are more resources available now than there used to be,” says Weissman, whose organization also serves children of prisoners. “Advocates can work with the court and guardians to make sure the child is connected with as many resources as possible,” she says. Programs that allow children of prisoners to connect with other children and youth in the same situation can greatly reduce feelings of isolation and shame. And those that provide ongoing support after the parent is out of prison are ideal, as reintegration into the family is usually complicated and fraught with emotional minefields.

Another place to build support is at school. “Often school staff don’t know what is behind the behavior issues,” says Weissman. “If they don’t know the truth, they can’t properly respond to and support the child.” Severe agrees. “It is very important for teachers and counselors to know what is going on,” he says. “A CASA advocate could be very helpful by getting everyone on the same page.”

Keeping an Open Mind

Perhaps the most important message voiced throughout the literature and by those who work with this population is one of open-mindedness. “You have to be as non-judgmental as possible and learn to listen,” says Jarene Barnes, a former CASA volunteer who now works as a case manager with Lydia’s Place in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Lydia’s Place provides a wide range of services to mothers in the Allegheny county jail and their children—from providing parenting classes to recording mothers reading bedtime stories to their children.

“When you walk into that child’s life, you have to be very careful that you don’t get lost in your judgments and beliefs,” cautions Barnes. “You have to learn to walk a mile in these children’s shoes.”

Lisette Austin is a freelance writer who regularly contributes to local and national publications on a wide range of topics. She also works part-time as a communications specialist for Children’s Hospital and Regional Medical Center. She lives in Seattle with her husband and four-year-old son.

Shining a Light on Racial Disparity

A Profile of Dorothy E. Roberts

by Tracy Bier

When Dorothy E. Roberts talks about our child welfare and foster care systems, she speaks with such fiery passion it is surprising not to see smoke. Called “a brilliant and courageous legal and cultural analyst,” she has a resume 15 pages long. Roberts is a law professor and research fellow at Northwestern University and author of several books.

Roberts is as personable as she is authoritative. This spirited and credentialed woman makes it her business to study, document and craft policy on issues that are critical but not exactly headline material: the interplay of gender, race and class in legal issues concerning reproduction and motherhood.

From her work studying child welfare and foster care in the US, Roberts now shines a spotlight on racial injustice in our systems that is so deeply imbedded and pervasive that she calls the consequences “tragic for Black families and other minority groups.”

With degrees from Yale and Harvard, Roberts moves among many different settings giving speeches, teaching law students, conducting research, meeting with government and community groups, discussing policy and writing papers. She manages to do all this while keeping an eye on the one of her four children who still lives at home.

Roberts published the book *Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare* in 2003 because her findings would not fit in a research paper. The book chronicles the existence and effects of a disproportionate representation of African-American children in the US foster care system.

She argues that the child welfare system is destroying Black families and culture. In particular, she documents a trend of the state intervening and removing children from their parents. This is extremely counter-productive, Roberts believes, not just for the individual family



but for the African-American community and society in general.

The Effects of Poverty on Children

Roberts describes how separating children from parents and other negative trends are propelled by false beliefs and perceptions about African-American families. She points out that the stereotype of the welfare parent as “monster” is persistent and extremely damaging.

Statistics From *Shattered Bonds* Tell The Story

- African-American families are three times as likely as Caucasian families to be poor. By the age of six, 57% of Black children will experience at least one year of life below the poverty line as compared with 15% of White children.
- Black children make up 42% of the foster care population but only 17% of the nation's children.
- African-American children involved with child protective services are twice as likely as Caucasian children to be

separated from their parents and to linger in state custody.

- A national study by the US Department of Health and Human Services reports that minority children, and in particular African-American children, are more likely to be in foster care placement than receive at-home services, even when they have the same problems and characteristics as White children.
- The rate of child poverty in the US is many times greater than in European countries.

And the poorest children in this country are much worse off than their European counterparts.

- Data on the foster care system over the past 20 years show that the number of parental rights terminations far outpaces the number of adoptions.
- Black parents' rights are terminated sooner than those of White parents, yet Black children are less likely than White children to be adopted.

“Think about the cases most often covered in the media...the crack-addicted Black mom who neglects her children; then state welfare workers swoop in and rescue the children from harm,” says Roberts.

Roberts says her research shows this is true sometimes but for only for a small number of welfare families. Even though the prevailing image of welfare parent as monster is false, she says it contributes significantly to policies, programs and attitudes that severely damage African-American families.

“It is the exception, not the rule, when parents are so negligent that children need to be removed. But the stereotype is pervasive, and the bias has tragic consequences of splitting up families. Our studies show that as a result of this horrific image, our systems respond by being punitive and coercive.”

Shift Resources from Neglect to Poverty

Assuming universal neglect among minority welfare parents distracts from what Roberts sees as the real problem: poverty. She advocates for providing different types of services earlier to break the poverty cycle and help keep children with their families.

Roberts’ gift for communicating is noted by Michael Piraino, National CASA’s chief executive officer: “Ms. Roberts does a masterful job of describing the relationship between neglect and poverty.

Her work shows that a more equitable system of child protection would do much more to support families and keep more African-American children with their parents.”

Roberts says, “Just imagine if we could shift the resources spent now on

“For those of us dealing with children already in the care of the state, Dorothy Roberts’ work can open our eyes to a more sympathetic understanding of the situation for parents of African-American children. And that can help reorient our advocacy to enable more of those children to return safely home.”

*Michael Piraino
Chief Executive Officer
National CASA Association*

removing children from their families to addressing employment and other poverty issues.”

To Roberts, a functional welfare system is proactive, with neighborhood centers located where the clients live. An improved system recognizes that welfare parents need to be empowered—not blamed or discouraged during the process. They should be given a chance to be in voluntary programs and should help design services that they need.

Roberts admits there is hardly any time when she is not speaking, teaching, writing or being interviewed. She has appeared on the *Frontline* television show and has been interviewed by numerous radio and television stations.

“I think people are interested because I’m putting words and statistics on issues that many others observed and experienced for many years,” Roberts explains. “Talking about welfare and foster care problems can be uncomfortable; but for a researcher, it’s just part of our job.” At the beginning of 2006, she leaves her native Chicago to teach at Fordham University Law School in New York.

Dorothy Roberts is a featured speaker at the upcoming 25th National CASA annual conference, April 1-4, 2006 in San Diego, CA.

Tracy Bier is a writer who lives in Seattle, Washington.

New Web Resource Provides Information on Methamphetamine Abuse

The scourge of methamphetamine production and abuse continues to have a significant impact on child welfare. Many state and local child welfare agencies have faced increased caseloads as the children of meth-using parents have suffered from abuse or neglect or even exposure to the drug itself. Courts and child welfare agencies have developed special procedures for assessing children found in meth labs and helping them cope with some of the distinctive side-effects that exposure to meth can produce. While much of this response is in the same vein as the child welfare response to other situations involving chronic substance abuse by caregivers, the magnitude of the meth problem and its unique aspects (particularly, the danger of meth labs) have prompted the development of new resources and protocols.

Links to some of these resources are now available on a new webpage at the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information website. The Clearinghouse, a service of the Children's

Bureau, has pulled together a list of over 20 resources that cover three areas of concern regarding the impact of methamphetamines on child welfare:

- *Statistics and the Scope of the Problem* includes transcripts from a congressional subcommittee hearing on methamphetamine trafficking and abuse, the results of surveys of US counties on the impact of meth and other resources exploring the extent of the problem.
- *Responding to and Treating Methamphetamine Use* includes protocols from several different states designed to guide professionals working with at-risk children and families, as well as a number of promising practices and strategies for addressing methamphetamine abuse in individuals and in communities.
- *Additional Information on Methamphetamines and Child Welfare* includes links to a number of Federal resources (e.g., the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare and the National Institute on Drug Abuse) and other national and state resources that can provide useful information.

To access these resources and check for updates, visit nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/topics/issues/meth.cfm.

Conference to Examine Meth and its Effect on Child Welfare

The Children's Bureau, the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and other partners are collaborating to focus national attention on the problem of child welfare and methamphetamine use. A conference is being planned for 2006 in Washington, DC that will provide a forum for states to share their challenges and promising practices around this issue. The conference will also provide information on the federal activities developed to combat methamphetamine use. Representatives from states, federal agencies and non-federal partners will be invited to participate in a team approach to determine the extent of the problem and formulate a plan of action. Visit cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov for updated information about this event.

GET CONNECTED!

The National CASA Association hosts several websites of interest to anyone who values promoting and supporting quality volunteer advocacy to help assure each child a safe, permanent, nurturing home. Visit one of the following sites to learn more.

NationalCASA.org

The National CASA website continues to be one of the strongest resources for recruiting new volunteers and supporters for state and local CASA/GAL programs. The website contains volunteer stories along with information on recruitment, public relations activities, news and donating to the National CASA Association.



CASAnet.org

CASAnet is designed to meet the needs of CASA program staff and volunteers, including the advocate's library, program tools, updated information on national initiatives and other material for download.

NationalCASA.org/JudgesPage

A webpage dedicated to judges who hear child welfare cases.

ShopCASA.org

A broad assortment of support materials and CASA/GAL promotional items is available through the ShopCASA site.



Child Welfare News

Report Provides Permanency Strategies for Older Foster Youth

Best-practice strategies for achieving permanence for older foster youth have been consolidated in a project funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. *A Family for Every Child: Strategies to Achieve Permanence for Older Foster Children and Youth* was produced by the North American Council on Adoptable Children and issued in August. This 72-page report reviews the research related to older youth in foster care, analyzes the barriers to their adoption, reviews projects nationwide that have demonstrated success in accomplishing permanency for them and makes recommendations for action steps. To access, go to aecf.org and search for “A Family for Every Child.”

Tools for Working with Kinship Caregivers Now Updated

The National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning has updated a report entitled *Tools for Working with Kinship Caregivers* by Susan Dougherty. The tools include curricula, research studies, assessment forms, fact sheets and legal resources. One of the recommended tools is the *Kinship Care Practice Curriculum* developed by Faith Johnson Bonecutter and James P. Gleeson at the Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago. This 200-page curriculum contains six units with video segments and can be downloaded for free from their website. To access the *Tools* resource, visit hunter.cuny.edu and search for “tools for kinship”; to obtain the *Curriculum*, visit uic.edu and search for “kinship curriculum.”

Home At Last to Focus on Improving Safety and Permanence for Children in Foster Care

A new national project will address the needs of vulnerable children by encouraging action on recommendations by the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care. Home At Last, a new partnership focusing on reform of the nation’s foster care system, is supported by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts to Occidental College in Los Angeles. Led by the Children’s Law Center of Los Angeles, a nationally known and respected nonprofit organization that represents more than 25,000 children in foster care, Home At Last will conduct research, issue policy briefs and partner with state and national organizations. Their charge is to enhance awareness and provide education about the critical need to address the challenges facing over half a million US children in foster care and to enable other struggling families to remain intact without court involvement. Home At Last will encourage action in these areas in partnership with key legal, judicial and child welfare organizations across the country. For more information about Home At Last, visit fostercarehomeatlast.org.

Review Examines Models for Treating Problems of Foster Children

A recent report reviews the current treatment approaches used for children in foster care as well as research related to the success of these treatments. Cognitive-behavioral strategies have received the most validation in helping children generally, although studies have not been done on youth in foster care. Attachment-based therapies are also examined—as are system-of-care approaches such as Treatment Foster Care and Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care. “Psychosocial

Treatment of Children in Foster Care: A Review,” by Robert Racusin, et al., was published in the April 2005 issue of *Community Mental Health Journal* (Volume 41, Issue 2). Due to their histories of maltreatment, loss and multiple moves, foster children consistently receive problematic psychiatric diagnoses at a far higher rate than counterparts from similar socioeconomic backgrounds living with their families. For a free abstract, visit springerlink.com.

New “My Child Welfare Librarian” Offers Emailed Information

The National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information and the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse are offering a new service. “My Child Welfare Librarian” allows users to select from eight categories of information and to receive an email each month of any new library materials related to selected categories. For a free subscription, go to naic.acf.hhs.gov/admin/subscribe.cfm.

Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth Primer Now Available

Out of the 150,000 foster youth who have graduated from high school and are college qualified, only some 30,000 are pursuing postsecondary education. In a recent report, the Institute for Higher Education Policy argues that foster youth are the most disadvantaged group when it comes to opportunities for higher learning. The report recommends several key policy changes to address such obstacles as low educational expectations, frequent disruptions and changes in school placements, underdeveloped independent living skills and lack of access to mental health care and treatment. Visit ihep.org/Pubs/PDF/fosteryouth.pdf.

National CASA Partners with Leading Child Welfare Organizations to Help “Change a Lifetime” for Children and Youth in Foster Care

Foster Care Month Spotlights Year-round Needs of 523,000 American Children

Everyday, people in the National CASA network are making a difference in the lives of children. In addition to CASA/GAL volunteers, foster parents, relative caregivers, mentors, social workers and other supporters are working to ensure positive outcomes for children in foster care. National Foster Care month helps honor and recognize the many caring individuals and organizations that work year-round on behalf of our nation's most vulnerable children and bring to light the need for qualified foster parents in communities around the country.

The number of Americans who have been affected by foster care is staggering:

- There are more than 12 million foster care alumni in the US.
- An estimated 523,000 children and youth are living away from home because their families are in crisis and unable to provide for their essential needs.
- More than 2 million additional children are living with grandparents or other relatives.
- Children of color represent 59% of the foster care population. Research indicates that while they are not at greater risk for abuse and neglect, children of color are disproportionately represented in the system.
- This year, nearly 20,000 youth will age out of foster care. Many of them are only 18 years old and still require significant support and services or they will be left vulnerable to homelessness, unemployment, compromised mental health, poor educational status, poverty, substance abuse and incarceration.

“We must address the pressing needs of the foster care population now or face the consequences for generations to come,” says Virginia Pryor of Casey Family Programs and chair of National Foster Care Month. “Every child deserves a stable, loving family and a chance to succeed as an adult. Our

goals for Foster Care Month and beyond are to help raise national awareness of what these children need and to inspire many more people to come forward and help as foster parents, mentors, volunteer advocates and in other ways. We want to ensure that every young person who leaves foster care establishes a permanent, lifelong relationship with a nurturing adult.”

Three prominent foster care alumni are working to help the next generation of youth succeed in life. As National Foster Care Month spokespeople, they are mobilizing the television, music and fashion industries to establish mentoring programs assisting older youth in care with workplace preparation.

Victoria Rowell, award-winning television and film actress, spent 18 years in foster care. She recently received the NAACP Best Actress award for her role as Drucilla Winters and the foster care storyline she introduced on the CBS daytime drama *The Young and the Restless*. Through her nonprofit organization, the Rowell Foster Children's Positive Plan, she collaborates with top entertainment companies including Sony and Viacom/CBS Television in developing internships that allow foster youth to work behind the scenes of some of Hollywood's most successful TV programs.

Tony Shellman, the co-founder of ENYCE Clothing (a Liz Claiborne Company), is a trendsetter in the hip-hop and fashion industries who was adopted from foster care at a very young age. Shellman's story was recently featured in *Black Enterprise* magazine as a profile in courage. This year, ENYCE will begin offering career mentoring opportunities to foster youth interested in the world of fashion.

Kashif never knew his birth parents and endured an early life of abandonment and abuse. He grew up living in eight different foster homes in the poorest neighborhoods of Brooklyn, NY. Today, Kashif is a successful entrepreneur and an award-winning songwriter, musician and producer. He is the author of several books and software programs that teach others how to navigate the music industry. He shares his expertise with foster youth via his Kashif University courses and through internships at his own company, Brooklyn Boy.

Now is the time to get involved and change the lifetime of a child. During May, there are hundreds of planned community events and activities that raise awareness and help increase support for youth in foster care. For more information on local events and the many ways to get involved, visit fostercaremonth.org or call (888) 799-KIDS.

National CASA has partnered with the following organizations to promote National Foster Care Month: Casey Family Programs; the Annie E. Casey Foundation/Casey Family Services; Black Administrators in Child Welfare; Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services; Child Welfare League of America; Connect for Kids; Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative; APHSA/National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators; National Association of Social Workers; National CASA; National Foster Care Coalition; National Foster Parent Association; and the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning, Hunter College School of Social Work, a Service of the Children's Bureau.



Resources for FOSTER YOUTH

Financial Literacy and Money Management

More Americans filed for bankruptcy than graduated from college in 2004 (*Parade* magazine, April 10, 2005). Foster youth face greater-than-average money challenges as they age out of the child welfare system. To prepare for Youth Financial Literacy Month in April, we have compiled this list of organizations, websites and publications that can be helpful in raising the financial IQ of foster youth.

Annie E. Casey Foundation (aecf.org)

This organization provides many resources for foster youth, including the three-part *Foster Youth Money Guide Series* (2002). The Casey Foundation and the National Endowment for Financial Education jointly published this series of guidebooks for use by foster children and teens to educate them about personal finance and empower them to make sound decisions about reaching their future goals. The guides were developed with input from foster parents, youth counselors, social workers and other foster care professionals. While printed copies are no longer available, PDF files of the guides can be downloaded for free from the publications section of aecf.org under the "Foster Care" link. Guides include:

- *Money Pals: Being Cool with Cash*—A two-part guide for youth ages 8-11.
- *I Know Where I'm Going (But Will My Cash Keep Up?)*—A two-part guide for youth ages 12-15.
- *Caregiver's Handbook*—The handbook provides tips on how to use the guidebooks and help build foster children's money skills.

Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (jimcaseyouth.org)

The Opportunity Passport™ is the centerpiece of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative's work. Now operating in 12 sites throughout the US, the Passport is designed to organize resources and cre-

ate opportunities for young people leaving foster care. This promising new tool has three related components:

- A personal debit account to be used to pay for short-term expenses
- A matched savings account to be used for specific purposes, such as education expenses and housing down payments/deposits
- "Door openers," opportunities to be developed on a local basis (for example, pre-approval for registration for community college courses or expedited access to job training)

The Opportunity Passport helps participants learn financial management; obtain experience with the banking system; save money for education, housing, health care and other specified expenses; and gain streamlined access to educational, training and vocational opportunities. It is available to youth ages 14-23 who were in foster care after their 14th birthday. Participants are recruited by Community Partnership Boards and Youth Leadership Boards supported by the initiative. Participants must complete financial literacy training prior to enrollment.

The initiative is piloting the Opportunity Passport in the following sites: Atlanta, Georgia; Denver, Colorado; Des Moines, Iowa; Detroit and 10 Michigan counties; Hartford, Connecticut; Jacksonville, Florida; Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas; Nashville, Tennessee; Providence, Rhode Island; Portland, Maine; San Antonio, Texas; and San Diego, California.

Jump\$Start Money IQ Quiz (pueblo.gsa.gov/quiz.htm)

This online quiz developed by the Jump\$Start Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy (jumpstart.org) gauges financial acumen and then links to information that will help improve one's score.

Junior Achievement (ja.org)

Junior Achievement uses hands-on experiences to help young people understand the economics of life. In partnership with business and educators, Junior Achievement brings the real world to students, opening their minds to their potential. This nonprofit organization's website includes a Student Center to promote financial literacy. This includes the *Money Might* game exploring a number of real-life situations while testing financial skills; the *Count on It* utilities exploring budgeting, saving and investing, credit and risk management; and a *Toolbox* of calculators, worksheets and a glossary of financial terms.

Living Large: Getting Money and Spending Wisely (youthcomm.org)

Teens write about their problems and lessons learned regarding saving and spending wisely. Topics include "I Shopped Until I Dropped...Into Credit Card Debt," "I Love My Cell, But I Hate the Bills" and "Countdown to Independence (From the System)." To find the book from the Youth Communication home page, click on "Books by Us," then select "Books," then "Youth Development Resources." Or call (212) 279-0708. \$10.

Young Money (youngmoney.com)

Young Money® magazine was launched in 1999 to change the way young adults earn, manage, invest and spend money. As a leading national money, business and lifestyle magazine written primarily by student journalists, *Young Money* focuses on money management, entrepreneurship, careers, investing, technology, travel, entertainment and automotive topics. Their website includes free advice on these issues as well.

The Novel Volunteer

BOOK CLUB

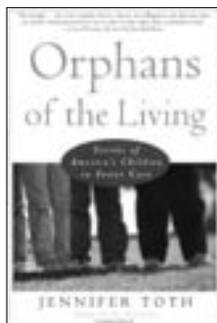
Orphans of the Living: Stories of America's Children in Foster Care

By Jennifer Toth

New York: Simon & Schuster, 314 pp. \$13.

Orphans of the Living paints a moving yet troubling portrait of the foster care system in the United States, especially at a time of drastic government cut-backs for social programs and the children (the “orphans of the living”) whose lives are determined by it. After the success of her earlier book, *The Mole People*, which described the horrors of life in the tunnels under New York City and spurred federal funding to house the underground homeless, Jennifer Toth highlights another of America’s almost-forgotten people.

The stories of five foster children around the country are featured as they are thrust into an overburdened and often antiquated system. One was a rape victim at age 8 who becomes a sexual predator by age 13; another struggles to benefit from one of the country’s best foster programs. Immersing herself into the maze, Toth has gone directly to the orphanages and group homes, to the streets and foster care homes. In interviews with social workers, judges, counselors and family members, the author



chronicles the complex safety net that is supposed to help children whose families cannot or will not raise them.

But the voices of the children themselves are what bring authenticity and poignancy to the book. As you meet Damien and Sebastian, Jamie, Angel and Bryan, you will feel their despair and rejoice in their successes. The book provides rare insight into how decisions that are made feel to the children involved.

Marion Hallum, training coordinator for the Alaska CASA program, recommended this book and believes reading the stories of real people involved in the child protection system is powerful. On one hand, the book illustrates the resilience that some children possess which allows them to overcome formidable circumstances. On the other, it permits us to spend time living in another’s shoes and to grow to care about the children and youth whose stories we read.

Orphans of the Living underscores how the system can fail children, illuminating the need for each child to have a CASA volunteer. The book offers a rich opportunity for discussion of the difference an individual can make in a child’s life. There are also strong points made about the importance of family to a child. And the subtext is prevention: the state simply does not make a very good parent. But perhaps the most striking point made by this book is that we need to really listen to the children who are in the foster care system.

Our job as child advocates is to be the voice of the child. Once you hear the voices of the children in *Orphans of the Living* and experience with them their journey through the system, you may never look at foster care the same way again.

Sample Discussion Questions for *Orphans of the Living* by Jennifer Toth

- Which stories and examples from the book moved you most and why?
- Pick two or three quotes from the chapter you are reading, and be prepared to talk about why you picked them: How did they inspire you, annoy you, trouble you or otherwise affect you? Break into groups and have different people represent various arguments.
- Has the book made you want to get more involved in some issue you care about?
- What barriers still remain, making involvement more difficult, and how would you get past them?

What books are you reading? Have you read a book that inspired, motivated or enlightened you about issues in child welfare? Send your book suggestions for future CASA Book Club features along with comments and reflections on the book to theconnection@nationalcasa.org. Put “CASA Book Club Suggestion” in the title of your message.



Mark Your Calendar!

**2006 National CASA Association
Annual Conference**

April 1-4, 2006

San Diego, CA

Town and Country Hotel

**For conference details or to register,
visit CASAnet.org today.**

Enjoy San Diego!

San Diego, California's second largest city, offers many attractions. Take advantage of your stay during National CASA's annual conference and experience San Diego's artistic and natural glories: 1,200 acre Balboa Park, the largest concentration of museums west of the Mississippi, local culinary delights and shopping in quaint boutiques or the 140-shop Horton Plaza.

Across the street from the San Diego Convention Center, find the Gaslamp Quarter, with Victorian buildings built between 1873 and 1930; this area is Southern California's premiere dining, shopping and entertainment center. If that's not enough, try out one of San Diego's four theme parks or 92 golf courses!



**Visit the following websites to learn more
about all San Diego has to offer:**

aerospacemuseum.org

aquarium.ucsd.edu

gaslampquarter.org

gosandiegocard.com

museumofmakingmusic.org

sdhe.com/san-diegharbor-tours.html

sandiego.org

sandiego.padres.mlb.com

sdhoc.com/main

sdmart.org

sdnhm.org



Pointers from PROGRAMS

Don't Send Flowers: Send Flamingos! CASA of Pulaski County, AR



The Pulaski County CASA Flock Your Friends project proves that “fun” is part of “fundraising.” This unique awareness and fundraising promotion “flocks” gardens and yards with a number of plastic, pink flamingos (a minimum \$25 donation for a flock of 50; 100 birds “fly in” for \$50). In addition to the birds, a yellow sign is posted featuring information about Pulaski County CASA and inviting “hosts” to pass the joke along. A card is left at the door noting the individual who sponsored the flock. The flamingos, which are retrieved after three days, have shown up throughout the program’s jurisdiction celebrating birthdays and other celebratory events such as welcoming people back from Iraq, college or the hospital. When some of the birds unexpectedly went “missing,” the program reported a “flamingo-napping” to the local media. This earned the program nearly as much publicity as the rest of the project. Program Director Julian Holloway, in a heart-felt yet tongue-in-cheek letter to the local newspaper, asked that the birds

be returned, no questions asked. Most welcome was the interest from potential volunteers and others interested in learning more about CASA.

Lawyers Trained to Represent Abused Children IV Judicial District CASA - Family Advocate Program, ID

In many CASA/GAL programs, volunteers work hand-in-hand with staff attorneys. The Fourth Judicial District CASA program in Idaho recently trained lawyers to provide pro bono services in cases where children have been removed from their homes because of suspected abuse or neglect. Although CASA is a nationwide operation, Susan Hazelton, executive director of Family Advocate Program which administers the CASA program, said that “What is unique to the Fourth District is that it uses volunteer lawyers extensively.”



Ada County Prosecutor Andrew Ellis trains lawyers for CASA.

David Penny, president of Family Advocate Program’s board of directors, started with CASA as a volunteer lawyer in 1998. He said that since volunteer lawyers come from a variety of practices, training them in the nuances of child protection laws is very important: “Most of our volunteer lawyers practice in fields

like real estate or intellectual property rights, or some other field unrelated to family law.”

Penny, who practices with Jones Gledhill Hess and Fuhrman, added that CASA calculates the value of time donated by volunteer lawyers and guardians in his district as approximately \$4.2 million last year. “These are services that would otherwise come out of the public defender’s budget if they had to do the mandated guardian ad litem work.” The training, funded by a grant from the Idaho Children’s Trust Fund, was a collaboration between the Fourth Judicial District CASA, which includes Ada, Boise, Elmore and Valley Counties, and the Idaho Volunteers Lawyers Program.

Comedy Night Provides Evening of Laughs CASA of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties, Olathe, Kansas

Great Plains Community Church hosted Caffeinated Comedy Night as a benefit and community awareness event for CASA of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties in Olathe, Kansas. The evening of family-oriented comedy featuring A&E network’s Thor Ramsey brought together over



Emcee Thor Ramsey

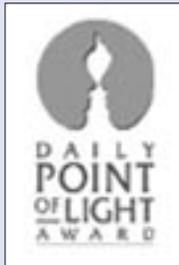
200 people for an evening full of laughter. Ramsey's humor was well received, which likely explains his new stint as host of PAX TV's comedy series, *Bananas*. Volunteers from Great Plains Community

Church worked with CASA to develop the event, which in addition to comedy and fun included a CASA volunteer sharing a touching story of her advocacy. An information booth was available with

materials about the CASA program as well as an opportunity to speak with staff. The evening was fun and proved to be very beneficial to increasing the awareness of CASA in the community.

Awards & Recognition

On October 11, longtime volunteer **Steve Strohschein** of the **Capital Area CASA Association in LA** was named a Daily Point of Light by the National Points of Light Foundation. The award honors individuals and volunteer groups that have made a commitment to connect Americans through service to help meet critical needs in their communities. More about Strohschein and the award can be found at pointsoflight.org/awards.



ognized for her work to make the world more beautiful for others. CG Vibes supports teens and women who are involved in improving their communities. Since its inception, PARACHUTE: Butler County CASA has helped over 1,000 kids change their lives and move in a more positive direction. Visit covergirl.com/cgvibes/winners.jhtml for more information on CG Vibes and the awards.

Kids' Voice, a program of **CASA of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties**, Olathe, KS, received national recognition from the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC), an international family law organization. At its annual conference, the AFCC published a compendium of "Exemplary Family Court Programs and Practices" listing CASA of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties' Kids' Voice program. This 6-week program provides a safe and supportive environment for children to communicate their feelings and thoughts, share peer relationships and learn problem-solving skills to help them through the divorce process. Lois Rice, executive director, said "CASA board and staff have always seen the Kids'

Voice curriculum as a unique, quality program for children and families. It's nice to see it nationally recognized by such a worthy organization."

Grant Awards

The **West Virginia CASA Association** was awarded a \$50,000 grant from the US Compassion Capital Fund (CCF) which helps grassroots, faith-based and community organizations enhance their ability to provide a wide range of social services to those in need. The award was in the area of "capacity building for at-risk youth." The CCF is a \$49 million fund that Congress appropriated to the Department of Health and Human Services. Initiated in 2002, it reflects the Bush administration's recognition that faith-based and community organizations are uniquely situated to partner with the government in serving poor and low-income individuals and families, particularly those with the greatest needs such as families in poverty, prisoners reentering the community and their families, children of prisoners, homeless families and at-risk youth.

CoverGirl Cosmetics' emphasis on beauty—both inner and outer—radiated more brightly than ever recently. CG Vibes presented an award to **Stephanie Shumard**, a CASA volunteer from Butler County, OH. Along with four other women, Shumard was rec-





CASA PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Michelle Burgess, Mrs. North Carolina, recently competed in the Mrs. International competition in Chicago. Michelle has been a GAL volunteer in the 11th Judicial District of North Carolina since 1999. In addition to her volunteer work on behalf of abused and neglected children, Michelle works for the District Attorney's office in the 11th District and has been attending college to further her education. Her platform is Domestic Violence Awareness and Prevention.

The September/October 2005 issue of *Fostering Families TODAY*, a magazine about people in the child welfare system providing foster care and domestic adoption to children, carried a feature article by **Tina Vercelli**,



Michelle Burgess, Mrs. North Carolina and GAL volunteer.

a CASA volunteer with the 22nd Judicial District CASA, Inc. Program in Ada, OK. "The Bend in the Road: A Path to Adoption through Foster Care," tells the story of how Vercelli, a public school visual arts teacher, became a foster-adoptive parent.

Tippecanoe County CASA volunteer **Pat Wilkerson** was featured recently in the *Journal and Courier* of Lafayette-West Lafayette, IN. During her six years as a volunteer Wilkerson has seen for herself how abuse and neglect can condemn a child's life. The article quotes Wilkerson as saying, "When you see a lot of things that just aren't right, well, you can't do anything if you just sit back and criticize."

OFF THE NEWSWIRE

Grant County CASA director, Wilma Pilkin, was quoted in an article which appeared recently in the **Chronical-Tribune of Marion, IN**.

Summit Daily News of Frisco, CO, featured a story highlighting the situation for CASA of the Continental Divide. District Judge Terry Ruckriegle rallied readers by explaining the benefit of CASA volunteers to the court and the community.

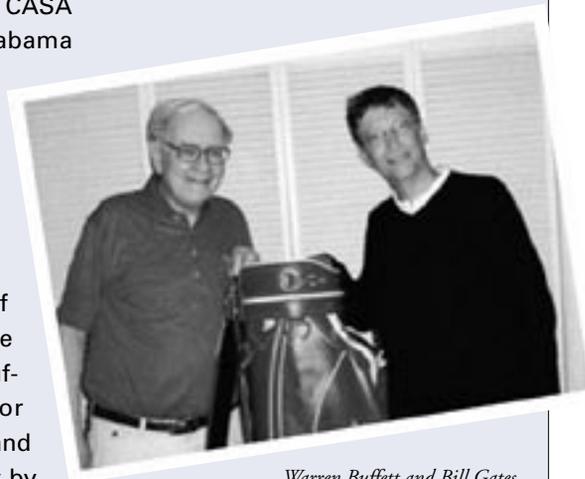
As a result of drug abuse and child neglect in Rogers County, OK, Angela Henderson, program director of Tri-County CASA, spoke of the benefit of CASA in an article printed in the **Claremore Daily Progress**.

Shelby County Reporter, AL, covered the Seventh Annual CASA Roast fundraiser organized by Beth Chapman, executive director of CASA of Shelby County, and the Alabama State Auditor.

Trudy Strewler, executive director of CASA of Colorado Springs, was featured in an interview with the **Colorado Springs Business Journal**.

The eBay auction of a golf bag, formerly owned by Berkshire Hathaway Chairman Warren Buffett raised \$3,300 for CASA for Douglas County of Omaha, NE and the story was carried nationally by

The Associated Press. The golf bag carries the autographs of both Buffett and Microsoft founder Bill Gates.



Warren Buffett and Bill Gates.

I Am by Kelinda - Age 12

I am not black or white.
I am swirls of green, blue, purple, orange and colors no one knows.
I am not rich with money, cars or jewelry.
I am rich with love, hope and faith.
I am not American.
I am part of a much larger culture...the human race.
I am not asking you to follow my lead or do what I do.
I am asking you to walk with me and be my friend.
I am not asking you to love me.
I am asking you to respect me even though we are different.
I am not part of the crowd, yet I am not alone.
I am just me.
I am not looking at you because you're different.
I am looking at you because I am curious.
I am not going to say I'm sorry that someone thinks you are different.
I am going to stand by your side and let us be different together.
I am not going to fight you for our differences.
I am not going to be mad at the people trying to bring me down.
I am going to thank them for making me stronger.
I am not black or white.
I am swirls of green, blue, purple, orange, yellow and colors no one knows.

Kelinda, 12, was placed in foster care at age 6. Despite the challenges she has faced in her young life, she remains positive, goal-oriented and convinced that she will attend college one day. This poem was submitted with Kelinda's permission by her GAL volunteer, Shara Weaver from the 20th Judicial Circuit GAL Program in Ft. Meyers, FL.

Join the National CASA Association

Help support our vital work for abused and neglected children by becoming a member of National CASA.

Your Member Benefits:

- *The Connection*, our quarterly magazine, full of information about CASA advocacy, child welfare and the children we serve.
- *The Powerful Voice*, a semi-annual newsletter showing how your support is making a difference.
- Discounts on National CASA conferences, merchandise and publications.
- Updates on legislation impacting abused children, with ways you can take action.
- A vote in the election of National CASA's board of directors.
- Satisfaction of knowing you're helping a network of CASA/ GAL programs to support abused and neglected children.

Thank you!

Mailing Address: National CASA Association, 100 W. Harrison, North Tower—Suite 500, Seattle, WA 98119

Membership Information Form:

Please check any of the following that apply:

- I am a new member.
- I would like to renew my membership to National CASA.
- I am a CASA/GAL Volunteer.
CASA/GAL Program Name: _____
- I would like additional information about the National CASA Association.

Name _____

Organization/Title _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

Email Address _____

- Enclosed is a check for the \$35 annual membership fee
- Please charge \$35 to my VISA or Mastercard:

Credit Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____

Signature _____

Association NEWS:

National CASA Named *CBS Cares* Charity

National Magazines Highlight CASA

Foster Care Month Partnership Underway

National CASA Named *CBS Cares* Charity for 2006

The CBS network has selected National CASA as a *CBS Cares* charity for 2006. A thirty-second TV PSA featuring actor Danny Pino of the CBS prime time show, *Cold Case*, will begin airing in February 2006. *Cold Case* is currently the fifth highest rated show on TV in terms of audience size, according to the November AC Nielsen ratings. The PSA could appear in any CBS TV segments including prime time. The value of this national TV campaign could reach millions of dollars in advertising time and help increase awareness of the cause. The 2004 *CBS Cares* initiative featured actor Simon Baker and is credited with increasing the number of volunteer inquiries over 50% from the previous year. "We are very grateful to CBS for this generous and powerful gift," noted Jim Clune, National CASA chief communications officer. Local versions of the PSA are being provided to local CASA and GAL programs for their use.



Danny Pino of the CBS prime time show, *Cold Case*.

National Magazines Highlight CASA

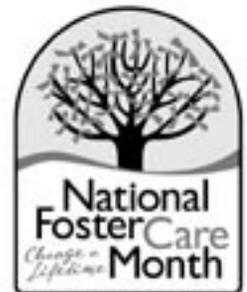
The CASA Rose initiative was recently highlighted in *Sunset* magazine. National CASA and the CA CASA Association teamed up with McCaffrey Farms and Edmunds' Roses to provide this unique fundraising and public awareness opportunity to programs. The CASA rose is a glandiflora rose with brilliant scarlet color and is damask scented with semi-double blooms on upright bush shrubs. Limited quantities are available. If you are interested in purchasing the CASA rose, contact your local program or National CASA.



The December 2005 issue of *Adoptive Families* featured the CASA network as an option for giving back to the community and giving to foster families in the US. *Adoptive Families* is an award-winning national adoption magazine and the leading adoption information source for families before, during and after adoption (adoptivefamilies.com).

Foster Care Month Partnership Underway

With guidance and support from a caring adult, children and youth in foster care are resilient and capable of realizing their fullest human potential. Working from this realization, National CASA has teamed up with several national child welfare organizations to promote and support National Foster Care Month this May. See page 16 to read more about this initiative and visit fostercaremonth.org to learn how you can be involved.



Connection Sightings

Where do you take *The Connection*? Send us a photo of you or someone you know reading *The Connection* in a unique or interesting location. Since *The Connection* staff is especially interested in comments from readers, submissions including feedback about the publication are most welcome.



Deirdre (Dee) Stogdill, Guardian ad litem volunteer with Richland County CASA in South Carolina recently visited Europe to see family and friends. Outside of Belfast, Ireland, Stogdill stands with The Connection.



Mary DeCanter, a CASA volunteer from Dallas, Oregon, since 1999, is a licensed pilot. Mary toted her Connection to the New Zealand Air Force Museum, where she attended a conference of the Ninety-Nines, Inc., an international organization of licensed women pilots founded in 1929 with Amelia Earhart as its first president.

Send photos (min. 4x6) to:

The Connection
National CASA Association
100 W. Harrison
North Tower, Suite 500
Seattle, WA, 98119

or email high resolution photos (300 dpi scanned at 4x6 size) to theconnection@nationalcasa.org. Include your name, address, phone number, email address and photo location.

Closing words

from

JUDGE HATCHETT



by Judge Glenda Hatchett

Connecting to Community, Culture and Role Models Improves Foster Children's Chances for Success in Life

Over the years, various economic, sociological and public policy studies have found that abused and neglected children who do not grow up in safe, permanent homes often experience school failure, joblessness, welfare dependency, mental illness and incarceration. While the statistics don't hold true for all children in foster care, for many children they do. When I was a juvenile court judge, I saw many of the statistics prove to be true in my own courtroom; as a result, the children often fell short of their potential and the successful lives that they could have otherwise led.

However, there is always something that—or someone who—can provide hope for a child whose life, according to statistics, seems to be destined for failure. One of those things that I believe can positively impact a foster child's future success in life is having the connection to community, culture and role models. When I reflect on my own childhood and what was influential in helping me succeed in life, I think of the fact that I had a strong support system, pride in who I was and people who I looked up to and admired. Unfortunately, many foster children don't have the same; but for those who do, it can negate many of the statistics and make a difference in their future success.

Growing up, all children need a sense of community. However, for children in foster care, that is often difficult. As we know, the average foster child is moved to a new home four times every year. By the time children begin to gain a sense of community with the people around them, they may soon have to adjust to a whole new set of family, friends, neighbors and classmates. Community does not only refer to a child's

family and friends but can include their neighbors, teachers, case workers and of course CASA volunteers.

The African proverb "it takes a village to raise a child" gives a clear definition of community. Rearing a child has to be a collective effort that includes people who have a vested interest in the child's future and want to see them succeed. Connecting to community for a child not only gives them a sense of belonging, which many foster children desperately need and long for, but it also gives them accountability. When they know others are watching them and holding them responsible for their actions, they may make smarter choices. Every foster child needs to know that, regardless of how lonely they may feel, they have a community of people who care.

Along with community, foster children should have a connection to their culture. Unlike years ago, today the country is vastly diverse and represents people from all different ethnicities and cultures. Because of this, many children in foster care come from different backgrounds and cultures, which is evident in the overrepresentation of African-American and Hispanic children in the court system.

It is important for children, especially those from minority groups, to know about their own culture because at the end of the day, that is how society sees them. Not knowing who you are coupled with feelings of being unwanted and abandoned can result in low self-esteem. Embracing one's culture opens up a door to learn more about who you are and where you come from, which boosts self-worth. To succeed, children need to know that they can achieve anything they set their minds to, and that

often comes from knowing who you are and being proud of it.

When we think of role models, we often think of athletes, actors and musicians. While celebrities are indeed role models, whether they choose to own up to it or not, there are other people right in a child's community who are role models. It helps them to set goals for themselves and work to achieve them. Connecting with a positive role model can change the direction of a child in foster care's life for the better and have a long-term effect on their future. Your role as a CASA volunteer or guardian ad litem can result in a child looking at you as a role model because of the care and concern you gave.

While connection to community, culture and role models is not the only thing that can improve the lives of foster children, it can make a considerable difference in the outcome of the child's future. The connection can help form a "whole" child who knows who they are and that there are others rooting for them. Just like others before them, they are ready to conquer the world and reverse the statistics one child at a time.

The Honorable Glenda A. Hatchett is a nationally recognized authority on juvenile issues. While perhaps best known by the public because of her award-winning, nationally syndicated television series Judge Hatchett and recent book Say What You Mean, Mean What You Say!, Judge Hatchett has also gained deep respect from her peers. She is the former Chief Presiding Judge of the Fulton County Juvenile Court in Atlanta. Among her numerous awards are both the NAACP Thurgood Marshall Award and Emory University's School of Law Outstanding Alumni of the Year Award.

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National Foster Care Month is a partnership of Casey Family Programs; the Annie E. Casey Foundation/Casey Family Services; Black Administrators in Child Welfare; Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Child Welfare League of America; Connect for Kids; APHSA-National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators; National Association of Social Workers; National CASA; National Foster Care Coalition; the National Foster Parent Association; and the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning Hunter College School of Social Work, a Service of the Children's Bureau.

Cool New Products!

at ShopCASA.org

NEW! **CASA KEY RING**
WITH LED LIGHT

Black with logo
imprinted in white.
Item #7018
\$5 ea or \$4 ea for 50+



NEW! **CASA BUSINESS
CARD HOLDER**

Made of Maplewood with the
CASA logo laser engraved on top.
Item #7020
\$9 ea



NEW! **CASA SMALL
PADFOLIO**

Black DuraHyde with CASA
logo debossed on front, zippered
closure, pen loop, and includes a
5" x 8" writing pad.
Item #7019
\$12 ea or \$10 ea for 50+



NEW! **CASA GIFT BAG**

Clear 13" x 5" x 10" plastic
gift bag with the CASA logo
imprinted in blue.
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CASA RIBBON PIN

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logo and border in silver;
measures 1".
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