



Winter 2007
Vol. 23, No. 1

the CONNECTION

News and Information from the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association

Stand Up

for an

Abused

Child®



Advocating for Foster Youth in Special Education

Also in This Issue:

Guest Editorials by Foster Parent and Former Foster Youth

Top Tips: Maintaining Balance as a Volunteer

Summer Camp Resources



Volunteer VOICE

by Emogene Pye
Volunteer, Wayne County CASA
Detroit, MI

My CASA friends call me Jeanie Pye. I retired in 1996 after 32 years with the Ford Motor Company, where my job was to make seat covers for cars and trucks. I then traveled to Europe and other places, which I enjoyed. But after awhile, I had to find something else to do with my time. So I got more involved in my church committees. I also went to art school and learned to draw and do many arts and crafts. I love it!

While in school, I was looking for a picture to draw and came across the word CASA. I read what it was all about, and it stuck with me. I eventually called the 800 number and was referred to Wayne County CASA in Detroit.

I have been a CASA advocate for eight years now. My dedication to each family has made me act like their shadow, trying to lead them in the right direction that will help them to reunite with their children. Or when that's not possible, to have the child placed in a new, loving adoptive home.

So far, I have worked with four families and 19 children. I like being a CASA volunteer because it makes me feel that I'm giving something back to the community. Anything I can do for children is always rewarding. I especially like to see the joy in their eyes when they get to see their mother for the first time after they have been removed from their home and separated from each other.

When I do my job as a CASA volunteer and the parents do theirs, it's usually possible for families to stay together. Sometimes the mother is able to comply with the court order and the children return home. Other times, a parent can't or won't get the needed services. Then I have to recommend

that the children be placed in suitable homes with foster parents or next of kin, at least for the time being.

My third CASA case initially made me somewhat nervous, but it all ended well. The judge was ready to take the children away from the mother. Instead, he chose to put a CASA volunteer on the case to see what was taking the mother so long to comply with the court order. I do believe in keeping the children together if we can. The mother really loved her children. It took a lot of investigating to get this family back together, but I did that. And now they are doing fine.

At one point, the mother lost her job and went to a shelter for awhile. But she had enough confidence in me as a CASA volunteer that she called and asked me to advocate for letting the father take the children rather than putting them back into the system. I spoke with the father and did some other checking to make sure this was the right solution. Then I called the caseworker. She agreed to let the father care for the

children. This is just one example of why it is so important to work together with the other people involved in a case.

I have kept in touch with this family even though the case is closed, so I will always know how they are doing. As they grow up, the children are proving to be very bright. The girls have a 4.0 GPA, and the boy has a 3.2. The mother has a new job and is doing fine.

If there had not been a CASA volunteer for these children, I'm sure they would have been split up into different homes. I am very proud of what we do. Anyone who cares about children, especially if they have raised a family, could be a good volunteer. I don't think that there could be a better program—for children or for advocates themselves—than CASA.



A Message from **THE PRESIDENT**



Surveys Inform Recruitment Campaign for New Volunteers

Mimi Feller, President

Do you know how you feel when a bad cold/flu descends on you? Scratchy throat, watery eyes in slits because they hurt so much...well, you know the rest! When Michael Piraino and I visited the Pine Ridge Reservation and Oglala Lakota CASA program in South Dakota in November, we met Judge Emory, who was having one of those miserable days. Yet his whole face changed—lit up—when he spoke passionately about the difference the CASA program makes in Pine Ridge. Judge Emory also stressed the importance of honoring the “extended family” in our work with children there.

I had wanted to learn first-hand about CASA efforts on tribal reservations. Arlana Bettelyoun, Oglala Lakota CASA director, and Sara Kelly, South Dakota state director, made this possible. I came away with a firm belief that National CASA and many state directors must continue to work together and invest in ways to advocate for our Native American children.

Our tribal efforts are part of National CASA’s overall goal to significantly increase the number of advocates and children served by 2008. Key to achieving this is reaching out to prospective CASA and GAL volunteers (and donors too) in our CBS public service spots, “Grow CASA” marketing and other appeals.

But how do we know if such outreach efforts are successful? National CASA is committed to measuring results. Some recent examples are the following.

This past summer we surveyed over 1,500 people who made inquiries to National CASA over a 12-month period. Our research concentrated on how people learn about the CASA cause, who they are, why they seek us out, satisfaction with the response to their inquiries and conversion rate to volunteering.

Some results were expected, others were surprising. The research confirmed that women over 40 are well represented among prospective volunteers, as are people who enjoy gardening (nurturing, new beginnings, growth) as a favorite pastime. More revealing was the finding that internet information and television PSAs are key prompters to possible volunteers. We also found that roughly 25% of

those who inquire about CASA work are either current or retired teachers. Again, the shared qualities of nurturing and hopeful futures.

Is there a National CASA strategic partnership with teachers’ groups in our future? I hope so!

Another example of new learning is that about 12% of people who respond to our outreach efforts go on to become active CASA and GAL volunteers. We also learned that local programs do a great job of following up on the volunteer inquiries we send them. The potential volunteers in our study rate their satisfaction with local CASA program follow-up with four points on a five-point scale.

The research also drives home the value of timely response to prospective volunteers. Success with potential volunteers/donors is more likely if we respond to their inquiries within a week or less. Fully 72% of participants in our study received a response within a week and 21% within a few weeks, so our programs are doing a solid job. We also learned that it is important to find ways to engage potential volunteers whose schedules currently prevent them from taking cases.

From a separate set of in-depth interviews with potential volunteers/donors, we learned that people are most motivated to help the CASA cause when they see our work as helping to move children from living in temporary foster care to living in nurturing, permanent homes. This can mean reuniting the children with their birth parents once the homes have been made stable and safe or, when that is not possible, placement with a caring relative or adoptive parent(s).

Finally, donors and volunteers are motivated by the opportunity to help their entire community by ensuring that its children are more closely and safely connected to families, schools, friends and neighbors.

Using the insights gained through this research, National CASA has created a new volunteer and donor recruitment advertising campaign, which our programs and volunteers are receiving as you read this. We are off to a strong 2007 and, because of you, we are closer to realizing our vision of a CASA or GAL volunteer for every child who needs one.

inside the CONNECTION



A publication of the National CASA Association, representing 948 program offices and 53,847 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.

Mimi Feller *President*
 Marcia Sink *Immediate Past President*
 Hon. Ernestine Gray *Vice President*
 Michael Piraino *Chief Executive Officer*
 James Clune *Chief Communications Officer*
 Michael Skinner *Managing Editor*
 Sharon Heiber *Contributing Editor*
 Brian Lew *Contributing Editor*

The Connection is designed to keep CASA programs, volunteers and the public abreast of the latest news and developments affecting CASA's work with abused and neglected children. Written contributions are welcome. Published quarterly by the National CASA Association.

The Connection is produced and paid for by the National CASA Association.

This project was supported by Cooperative Agreement No. 2002-CH-BX-K001 from the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the US Department of Justice.

Unless otherwise noted, children in *Connection* photos are not from actual abuse and neglect cases.



Support provided by the
Kappa Alpha Theta Foundation

Subscriptions: \$35 for one year. Subscriptions to *The Connection* are included as part of National CASA Association membership.

© 2007 by the National CASA Association, 100 W. Harrison, North Tower - Suite 500, Seattle, WA 98119-4123.
 Phone (206) 270-0072 or (800) 628-3233 Fax (206) 270-0078.
 Email: theconnection@nationalcasa.org
nationalcasa.org and casanet.org
 All rights reserved.

Voices & Viewpoints

Volunteer Voice, Emogene Pye	2
Message from the President.....	3
The Advocate's New Clothes Guest Editorial by John M. Palladino, PhD	5
Will the Tortoise Win the Race? Guest Editorial by Former Foster Youth.....	12
Closing Words from Judge Hatchett	26

Special Features & Profiles

Advocating for Foster Youth in Special Education.....	7
---	---

Regular Features

Child Welfare News.....	14
Novel Volunteer Book Club.....	15
Top Tips for Volunteers: Maintaining Balance	16
Resources for Foster Youth—Summer Camp.....	17
Association News	18
Pointers from Programs	20
Off the Newswire.....	21
Awards & Recognition.....	22
People in the News	23
Donor Memorial Gifts	24
CASA Crossword.....	25



We welcome letters, comments and suggestions. The editorial staff of *The Connection* reserves the right to approve all content and submissions. If you do not want your comments to appear in the publication, simply include a line that says, "This letter is not for publication." Advertising inquiries are also welcome. Articles and advertising appearing in *The Connection* do not necessarily reflect the official position of the National CASA Association or its member programs.

The Connection
 National CASA Association
 100 W. Harrison
 North Tower, Suite 500
 Seattle, WA 98119
 Email: theconnection@nationalcasa.org

Photo Submission Requirements: Please submit your best original photos. Digital photos are often not acceptable for print purposes. *Connection* staff will make every effort to return photos but cannot guarantee their return.



The Advocate's New Clothes

Guest Editorial

By John M. Palladino, PhD

*Assistant Professor of Special Education, Eastern Michigan University
Foster Parent*

My journey through foster care advocacy has always reflected my role as a CASA volunteer, the core of all that I hope to provide on behalf of youth in care. My “inner CASA” keeps me honest, focused and committed—even now that I’ve put aside volunteer advocacy to serve as a foster parent.

It all began in Omaha, where, as a special education administrator, I encountered children who lived in foster care. I noted how my students endured hardships that entry into the system only exacerbated. Poor attendance, improper clothing and despondent affects were commonplace. It appeared as if no one cared about their education. School simply was not a bleep on anyone’s radar.

I did, however, meet several students who had on their side committed case professionals concerned about their education. The consistent variable throughout these cases was the presence of a CASA volunteer. I thought, “Should I become a CASA? Is that the route to securing educational and emotional stability in these young people?”

I contacted Nancy Wilson, director of Douglas County’s CASA program. We visited about the ins and outs of volunteering. I will never forget her wise words:

“If you’re going to do this, I need you to be there from start to finish. It’s the one gift we can provide. Otherwise, you will just be one more revolving door in these kids’ lives; they deserve better.”

I decided to fulfill Ms. Wilson’s charge. Over five years, I learned first hand the other side of the educational story. I met wonderful caseworkers, foster parents, guardians ad litem and counselors. These committed professionals genuinely cared about the education of the youth on their

caseload but were overtaxed with other pressing matters. After all, the court system typically requests court reports, not report cards. I began to understand why education was not always their top priority.

For Ms. Wilson’s volunteers, education was a consistent concern. We were the leaders who made sure that individual youths’ educational services were addressed. One of my cases involved a high school boy, Randy, who was 17 years old and still considered a freshman. Randy changed schools several times during his tumultuous foster care history. He was never in one place long enough to earn credits to advance to his senior year. Through my advocacy, Randy was able to embrace postsecondary vocational training and prepare for life after foster care.

I relocated from Nebraska to Michigan four years ago to begin a career as a special education college professor. Although Michigan’s slogan is “Great Lakes, Great Places,” the 6,000 youth in its foster care system could benefit from greater effort. I decided it was time to incorporate my CASA skills into a new role: foster parent.

Six months ago, two boys arrived in my home (ages 7 and 9). No school files accompanied their placement. I knew the ropes and thought I could access their records within 48 hours...the documents arrived four months later! Telephone calls, emails and dropping my “PhD” status did not speed up the process.

At the very least, I knew I could establish proactive collaborations with their new teachers. My experiences as advocate, teacher and professor informed my approach. In response, two extremely dedicated teachers set out to address the boys’ academic and behavioral deficits. Once the records ar-

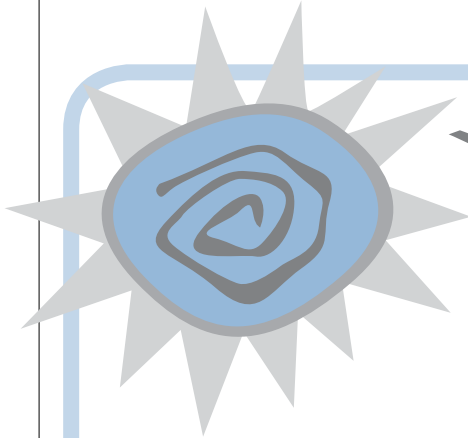
rived, we learned the boys had missed over 75 days of school each year. Their profiles mirrored the common educational plight of children in care.

My main goal became making sure the boys attended school each day. I immediately encountered barriers. The boys needed medical attention for their asthma. Available doctors who accepted Medicaid patients required daytime appointments. They needed glasses, and the only optometrist available also required that the boys miss school.

Family visits further complicated matters. The boys are part of a larger sibling group. Visits and counseling sessions had to be scheduled during the day. This caused the boys to miss school one morning a week.

My frustration in optimizing school stability for my foster sons further convinces me that CASA volunteers are vital stakeholders in this issue. They can sympathize with case professionals’ and foster parents’ roadblocks—yet do so while championing for and achieving ideal resolutions for children. I hope that this issue of *The Connection* motivates and assists volunteers in making education a top priority for the youth we serve.

The Connection normally includes an editorial from an expert to complement the ideas of another author writing the feature article. In the case of special education, however, we were fortunate to meet a subject-matter expert who also has very personal experience related to his specialty. As called for in CASA best practices, he is taking a break from volunteering while serving as a foster parent.



June 9–12 2007



Caribe Royale Resort
Orlando, Florida

Celebrate 30 Years of the CASA Cause for Abused Children

Why not combine training that will improve your child advocacy, networking with peers and leaders in the field—and enjoying fun in the sun?

Join us in Orlando for the National CASA Conference, with workshops on 60 practical topics, inspirational keynote addresses and an awards banquet recognizing child welfare leaders.

We're saving trees and postage this year with paperless registration. Visit casanet.org/conference to learn more or register now.

Special Discounts

In appreciation of the work that CASA and GAL volunteers do, we now offer a volunteer discount of \$50 off the conference registration rate. Visit casanet.org/conference for more information on this discount as well as special rates for students and National CASA members.



**Register Online for June
National CASA Conference**
Early-Bird Discount Ends April 16
casanet.org/conference

Advocating for Foster Youth in Special Education

By John M. Palladino, PhD

The child welfare system is riddled with complex policies and procedures created to protect the families and youth it serves. Understandably, the demands of court reports, family service plans, foster home placements as well as other legal and managerial tasks exhaust service providers' time. As a result, youths' educational needs are often overlooked. CASA volunteers, with their best interest mandate, are in an ideal position to offer insights and direction for foster care youths' educational stability.

The typical foster youth will spend 33 months in foster care during which time at least three years of schooling will occur. This reality is most pronounced among the 50% of youth who are 11 years old or older. Oftentimes the youth will have experienced multiple school placements prior to their entry into care. Thus, a need exists for consistent educational advocacy from the onset of the youth's placement until reunification or other permanency objectives are met (Bass, Shields, & Behrman; Massinga & Pecora; Conger & Finkelstein; Emerson & Lovitt).

One only needs to examine the bleak outcomes of aging-out foster care adolescents to understand the need for greater educational advocacy. The teenagers typically begin their independent lives entangled in at-risk problems, such as poverty, joblessness, homelessness, experimentation with controlled substances and no post-high school educational or vocational plans. They begin to develop profiles similar to the caregivers from

whom "the system" protected them. The apparent vicious cycle precludes positive solutions that a viable education could provide. Education serves as a gateway to positive outcomes, and its stability should occur at all levels, elementary through post-secondary.

Securing viable educational opportunities for foster youth requires awareness of

the connection between child abuse/neglect and academic or behavioral deficits. Although some foster children and adolescents succeed or even excel in their educational programs, many display academic and behavioral problems that necessitate interventions associated with special education. Bernice, a second-grade teacher in North Dakota, shares her awareness of the need for academic intervention:

"I believe that foster care children are not always able to work to their fullest potential. Unresolved family issues make it difficult for the child to focus on his or her studies. They usually arrive in their new school without any advance warning and without any former school records. It takes awhile to determine their strengths and weaknesses and to plug them into the correct academic setting. But...they are usually far, far below all academic benchmarks."

Andrea, a CASA volunteer from Nebraska, has experienced many school problems in her CASA cases:

"Not once have I been a CASA for a child or teen without some form of gap in their educational profile. For the young ones, the problem has usually sprung from ADD [Attention Deficit Disorder], and teachers see me coming in the front door of the school and say, 'Amen, you are here! Help!' For the older students, it's all about their bouncing around [from foster placement to placement] and never earning enough credits to graduate or even move on to the next



Continued on page 8



Education (continued from page 7)

page. They're so far behind and lack the skills to pull themselves forward, so they just drop out. Can you blame them?"

It is incorrect to assume that all foster care students require special education services or other similar interventions. However, research suggests that the need for educational advocacy on behalf of foster youth with disabilities is great. Intervention should address both academic and behavioral problems.

Academic Problems

Children typically enter foster care with deficit skills in the core academic areas of reading, math and writing that warrant a learning disability label. Approximately 75% of the children perform below grade level. Fifty percent of these students have repeated a grade. Researchers have cited children's exposure to alcohol and drugs as well as constant school placement changes as core risk factors (e.g., Evans; McMillen, Auslander, Elze, White, & Thompson; Zetlin, Weinberg, & Kimm).

John De Vivo, licensed master social worker and regional director of Lutheran Social Services in Ann Arbor, MI, con-

Important Definitions Related to Special Education

When working with a child who has been diagnosed with a disability, the child's advocate would do well to ask, "Who determines these criteria?" and to question the meaning of terms within each definition below. This can help individualize the support provided to the child in question.

Learning Disability

A learning disability (LD) is a discrepancy between one's intellectual ability and actual achievement in school. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) further defines it as a condition in which a student is unable to succeed with research-validated instructional interventions.

Emotional-Behavioral Disability

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act defines an emotional-behavioral disability (EBD) as problematic behavior in one or more of the following areas:

- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors

- An inability to maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers or teachers
- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems

Furthermore, an observed behavior problem must adversely affect educational performance and must occur frequently, over time and be of sufficient intensity to evoke concern. An educational advocate may well ask, "What about students who do not display disruptive/negative classroom behavior but have unmet emotional needs?"

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is the federal legislation that classifies Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD) as "other health impairment." The American Psychiatric Association defines ADHD as a pattern of frequent and severe inattention or impulsivity.

siders learning deficits to be the norm in foster care:

“Rarely does a child or teenager enter into care with a solid foundation in academics. It would be an injustice to the youth and the entire foster care system if academics are not at the forefront of our efforts.”

Behavioral Problems

Research has identified significantly higher rates of mental health needs among youth in foster care. The prevalence offers a rationale for why psychologists and school personnel have labeled between 50% and 80% of the nation’s foster care population with an emotional-behavioral disability (EBD). Similar to learning disabilities, EBDs are often deep-seated conditions intensified by entry into foster care (e.g., Marcus; Shinn; Sullivan).

Sexual abuse often precipitates negative internalized behaviors (low self-esteem, passivity, withdrawn affect, helplessness). Physical abuse typically manifests in damaging externalized behaviors (aggression, noncompliance, impulsivity). Neglected children demonstrate both types of behaviors. Youths’ abilities to cope with EBDs depend on secure attachments with foster parents and other adult caregivers. Yet behavior problems often result from youths’ release of rage and anger towards the one available adult presence in their lives, foster parents.

Responding to Special Educational Needs

Foster care status should not be an automatic gateway to special education. Researchers have confirmed a significant overrepresentation of foster youth in programs designed to serve students with severe behavior disabilities. Advocates should ask, “Do foster youth genuinely need to be placed in such programs, or do biases drive the decision?”

Placing a child in special education should be done only to meet defined needs (deficits), accentuate strengths and work towards measurable goals. While a special education classification can be beneficial, it

National Working Group on Foster Care and Education

To ensure successful educational outcomes for children and youth in foster care across the country, these ten organizations have joined together as the National Working Group on Foster Care and Education:

- ABA Center on Children and the Law (abanet.org/child)
- American Public Human Services Association (aphsa.org)
- Casey Family Programs (casey.org)
- Child Welfare League of America (cwla.org)
- Education Law Center (Pennsylvania) (elc-pa.org)
- Juvenile Law Center (jlc.org)
- National CASA (nationalcasa.org)
- National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues (abanet.org/child/rcjji)
- National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (ncjfcj.org)
- National Foster Parents Association (nfpainc.org)

This effort grew out of joint recognition that only with collaboration could practice, policy and cultural changes take place that will support educational stability and achievement as priorities in the lives of children and youth in

care and for those responsible for their well-being. The Working Group is committed to heightening awareness of the educational needs of children and youth in care as well as to promoting best and promising practices and reforms across educational, child welfare and juvenile and family court systems.

The goals of the Working Group are to promote:

- Educational stability for children and youth in foster care
- Seamless educational transitions for children and youth when education changes do occur
- High quality educational experiences, expectations and aspirations for young people in foster care
- Greater national attention to the disparate educational outcomes for young people in foster care, particularly children and youth of color

The Working Group is committed to multi-year efforts to reach its goals. To learn more about the National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, please contact Carmela Welte, National CASA deputy CEO, at 800-628-3233, ext. 203.



can also reinforce the negative stereotypes and low educational expectations of foster youth that are already all too prevalent. So it is important to only “label to enable.” No student should be in a program that inappropriately limits the student’s potential.

Likewise, educational advocates should not look to special education placement as a “fix” or “cure” for learning or behavioral difficulties. The field of special education acknowledges disabilities as lifelong conditions.

Success in school significantly increases the likelihood that foster youth will be able to manage the transition to adulthood. Yet, despite the importance of education, it is rarely a priority in the foster care system. CASA volunteers can make a difference in this arena by focusing their advocacy in the three special education-related areas discussed below: assessment, monitoring and transition planning.

Other Websites Supporting Educational Advocacy

Annie E. Casey Foundation (aecf.org)

Works to build better futures for disadvantaged children and their families by fostering public policies, human service reforms and community supports.

The Future of Children (futureofchildren.org)

Provides research and analysis to promote effective policies and programs for children. You can sign up for email notification and a brief update whenever new material is added to the site.

LDonline (ldonline.org)

Seeks to help children and adults reach their full potential by providing information and advice about learning disabilities and ADHD. You can sign up for *ld news-line*, the latest national news on LD and ADHD emailed daily.

United States Department of Health and Human Services/Administration for Children and Families (acf.hhs.gov)

Provides information about services for families; policy and planning; and research.



Assessment

Advocate for assessment if the youth is having school difficulties. Rule special education in or out. If services are needed, the goal is immediate transition into a special education program. This process is often hindered by lack of school records. CASA volunteers with their unique role and access may be able to speed record transfers. The two elements of a student’s file most helpful in assessing disabilities are:

- **Individualized Educational Program (IEP):** A document detailing educational and behavioral goals as well as services to help the student cope with a disability. Related services should be documented, including whether an educational surrogate has been named and, if so, who it is.
- **Assessment Records:** Scores from formal and informal tests as well as other school measures that document the student’s current level of performance.

Monitoring

Monitor the progress of a student with disabilities. Make sure the intervention plan is reviewed periodically and revised as needed. Finding appropriate accommodations (interventions) requires trial and error, since no two disability profiles are alike. Developmental changes and other external factors may alter needs or strategies over time. Foster youths’ experiences of abuse and neglect further complicate matters.

An important element of the intervention plan is to help students understand their academic-behavioral limitations as well as their strengths to overcome them. Foster care provides a teachable timeframe in which life skills can be developed and sustained. Birth family, where possible, as well as caseworkers, foster parents, CASA volunteers, teachers and others should collaborate to identify and encourage the development of coping skills in foster youth with disabilities.

Planning for Transition out of Foster Care

Advocate for services necessary to prepare foster youth for adulthood. Equally important, discuss the future with them. Researchers and practitioners have sounded the alarm about the poor preparation of foster care youth for post-high school pursuits. While child welfare has earmarked limited funds for foster youths’ vocational and college expenses, funding is only part of the equation for success. Nick, a CASA volunteer from Nebraska, states:

“My CASA teenager really needed lots of help. I asked all the case professionals about monies available to help him. I... found programs that emphasized his vocational goals and got all the applications for him to complete. It went nowhere.

Helpful Publications

Please also note the references cited at lower right.

Casey Family Programs (2006). *It's my life: Postsecondary education and training*. Seattle, WA. Available at casey.org/resources/publications/imlpostsecondary.htm.

Lavoie, R. (2005). *It's so much work to be your friend: Helping the child with learning disabilities find success*. New York, NY: Touchstone.

McNaught, K. (2005). *Mythbusting: Breaking down confidentiality and decision-making barriers to meet the education needs of children in foster care*. Washington, DC: American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law. Available at abanet.org/child/rclji/education/caseyeducationproject.pdf.



Why? Because I did not discuss, at length, this whole new scary future for a young man who didn't even know what tomorrow was going to look like, never mind next month or next year. You've got to start at ground zero and meet them at their levels."

Educational advocacy at this stage works best when it involves the youth and their caregivers in planning. Does the teenager eventually want to attend college? Drive a car? Join the Army? Buy a house? One tool a CASA volunteer can use to talk about the future is a vision plan. Ask foster youth to share their perceptions of what a typical day, month and year will look like at age 18. Help the student link present skills with future aspirations. Talk about what elements are necessary for success, what may be missing and how it might be added before exiting the foster care system. Start early. Preparation for aging out of foster care takes at least three to four years of planning.

One example is Joe, a 15-year-old foster youth who wants to study car mechanics at a vocational school. He currently attends an

alternative school due to his behavior disability. He also struggles with academics due to poor reading skills. Joe's foster parents are willing to provide care for him until he reaches age 18. The foster parents have never provided care for a teenager before and do not know how to help Joe other than to make sure he goes to school every day. Ideal educational advocacy would engage

Joe, the foster parents, caseworker and other caregivers in planning benchmarks needed for him to realistically be ready for school or vocational enrollment in three years.

CASA Volunteers and Educational Advocacy

CASA volunteer involvement in educational advocacy varies from program to program. Some volunteers assume the role of educational surrogate. Others participate in special education planning in a less structured way. Regardless, CASA volunteers should be cognizant of the three types of advocacy discussed in this article and do their best to see that a concerned, capable adult has ongoing involvement in education issues throughout a youth's placement in foster care.

John Palladino is assistant professor of special education at Eastern Michigan University and the foster father of two boys. He can be reached at john.palladino@emich.edu.

References

- Bass, S., Shields, M., & Behrman, R. (2004). "Children, families, and foster care: Analysis and recommendations," *The Future of Children*, 14(1), 5-29.
- Conger, D., & Finkelstein, M. (2003). "Foster care and school mobility," *Journal of Negro Education*, 72, 97-103.
- Emerson, J., & Lovitt, T. (2003). "The educational plight of foster children in schools and what can be done about it," *Remedial & Special Education*, 24, 199-203.
- Evans, L. (2004). "Academic achievement of students in foster care: Impeded or improved?" *Psychology in the Schools*, 41, 527-535.
- Marcus, R. (1991). "The attachments of children in foster care," *Genetic, Social and General Psychology Monographs*, 117, 367-398.
- Massinga, R., & Pecora, P. (2004). "Providing better opportunities for older children in the child welfare system," *The Future of Children*, 14(1), 151-174.
- McMillen, C., Auslander, W., Elze, D., White, T., & Thompson, R. (2003). "Educational experiences and aspirations of older youth in foster care," *Child Welfare*, 82, 475-495.
- Shin, S. (2003). "Building evidence to promote educational competence of youth in foster care," *Child Welfare*, 82, 615-632.
- Sullivan, P., & Knutson, J. (2000). "Maltreatment and disabilities: A population-based epidemiological study," *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 24, 1257-1273.
- Zetlin, A., Weinberg, L., & Kimm, C. (2004). "Improving education outcomes for children in foster care: Intervention by education liaison," *Journal for Students Placed at Risk*, 9, 421-429.



Will the Tortoise Win the Race?

I'm 20 and still in high school.

by Eric Green

Everybody says you need to graduate from high school to succeed in life. But what if you just can't pass your classes? Should you keep trying? I'm 20 years old and I'm still in the 11th grade. I failed 9th grade once and failed 10th grade three times. I'm not sure I'll ever graduate.

Until 9th grade, I was in special education classes. In elementary school, I felt like the smartest kid in the class. I was a straight A student. In junior high, I constantly got 100s on spelling quizzes, and sometimes made the honor roll.

In sixth grade, I started to have trouble for the first time. When my math teacher called me up to the board to solve a problem, I was the slowest one to finish in the whole class. Some of my teachers yelled and screamed at me. One teacher called me "slow" and "stupid." I began to hate her and think of myself as stupid. On good days, I'd tell myself, "I'm smart, just not as quick as other people."

"I'm Not Slow"

In the 9th grade, I got switched to regular classes and went to the resource room for extra help. In my regular classes, students talked down to kids in special ed., calling us slow. I'd think, "That's where you're wrong. I go to resource room because I have a learning disability, and I'm willing to get as much help as possible." But I kept my mouth shut because I didn't want to get teased even more.

That year, my biological mom died. My mind was not on school at all. Suddenly school was too hard. I seemed to have lost my ability to understand the work. I began

to think I was not intelligent enough to pass high school classes. I would sit in class looking at the assignment while everyone else completed theirs.

Sometimes when I took an assignment seriously I'd do well. Then I'd feel proud and confident. Most of the time, though, I'd become overwhelmed and frustrated.

"I Tried My Hardest"

Once, in math class, I got extra help and did all of my assignments. When I got my report card, I saw that my math teacher had given me a 65.

"Why did you give me a 65?" I asked him.

"You didn't do well on the exams," he said.

I was furious. Didn't he know I was working as hard as I could? Didn't he understand how it feels to try hard but not be rewarded or recognized? I thought I deserved a better grade because of my effort, even if I couldn't do well on the tests.

Situations like that made me feel neglected by my teachers. Growing up, my parents and my first foster parent neglected me. My biological parents would disappear without a trace and leave my siblings and me in the house for hours. They didn't seem to notice who I was or what I needed.

"I'll Never Catch Up"

I felt the same way when my teachers overlooked the efforts I made, or stood by while other kids in the class teased me and called me names. I felt that some of my teachers did not want to deal with me anymore and didn't pay attention to me when I asked for help. I felt lonely and isolated and stuck with problems that I couldn't solve.

Eventually, I stopped asking for help. I'd feel stupid any time I tried to complete

a difficult task. I stopped believing that I could ever pass, even if I got all the extra help in the world. I thought I'd never be a successful person.

Then I began to refuse to do classwork. I'd spend my time writing poems or drawing pictures—two things I know I'm good at. When the teacher asked me about the assignment I was supposed to be doing, I'd have nothing to show.

"Inattentive" and "Uncooperative"

I hoped that my teachers would notice that I was angry, or lost. But when I took my adoptive mother, Lorine, to my parent-teacher conferences, my teachers only seemed frustrated.

One teacher told her, "Eric is a very talented poet and artist, but he doesn't do the work that is required of him. He just sits in the back of the classroom and writes his poems. He is very inattentive and uncooperative. He's a nice young man. I know he can do better."

Lorine said, "You see, that's the same exact thing that I be telling him. He gets mad and starts to cop an attitude. He doesn't like to study, or do his homework. Every day he just comes home and sits on the floor and draws and writes poems."

Every teacher we met told my mother the same thing. Even my art teacher, whose class is my favorite, told her, "Eric is not paying attention in class, he does not do the assignments. Eric does what he wants to do."

"School Won't Help Me"

I felt embarrassed because it was the truth. One day in my art class, the task was to draw a still life of a bowl of fruit. While the rest of the class was drawing the fruit, I was doing my own drawings, because I only like to draw self-portraits, cartoon characters and washing machines.

I knew that I should do what was asked of me instead of being troublesome. But when Lorine asked me why I wouldn't cooperate with my teachers, I was too embarrassed to come out with the reason for my behavior—that I felt like a failure. So I said, "I believe that school should suit my interests. I don't understand how learning math will help me become a poet or an artist!"

Finally, the anxiety and the feeling of wasting my life got to be too much. I told my mother, "I am dropping out."

"If you decide to drop out of high school, then you can leave this house and live with someone else," Lorine said.

A New School

Luckily, my counselor helped me transfer to a smaller high school where I could get more attention. I thought that in a better environment I would do better in school and be able to go forward in life. At first, I was more focused and willing to do the work. The teachers went out of their way to help me, and the students were respectful and easy to get along with.

My counselor also explained to me that having a learning disability is different from being dumb. "When you're a smart person with a learning disability, you can master an academic curriculum if you have plenty of assistance and you work hard. A dumb person is one who is unwilling to participate in classes or stick to the curriculum," she said.

"Is There Something Wrong With Me?"

Lately, though, I've run into some new obstacles. In New York, you have to pass certain exams to graduate. I've taken some of those exams—in history and English—and I've failed all of them, some more than once.

And last year, I was looking through my file and I found out that I'd been diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. I looked that up on the internet and found out that it's a problem affecting children whose mothers drank a lot while they were pregnant. It listed these characteristics:

- Difficulty getting along with friends and family
- Mental retardation
- Growth deficiencies
- Behavior problems
- Incomplete education

Looking at the list, I thought to myself, "Do those traits describe me? Is there something wrong with me?"

I felt depressed. I feared that I might never be a normal student and might never graduate from high school. I felt angry that my biological mother drank (I remember her drinking when I lived with her). I also worried that my brothers might have the same thing.

"Everybody's in My Corner"

I went home and told Lorine what I had read and how I felt. She refused to believe it. She told me, "Eric, you're smart

and you should not use that diagnosis as an excuse."

I also told some of my teachers, who told me, "You need to have confidence in your abilities. You have potential and the intelligence to succeed. You're smart, creative, artistic and unique. You write beautiful poetry. Do not punish yourself like that, Eric. Believe in yourself."

Right now, I'm not sure what to believe about myself. Some days I feel smart and hopeful, other days I'm discouraged. On those days, I don't even try to work toward graduation. I just sit in my classes, drawing and writing poetry. Those are my talents, and when I look at the words and pictures I've created, I feel like it doesn't matter if I succeed in high school or not.

Still, if I don't graduate, I'll feel like a fool for letting myself and my family and friends down. I'm a smart person, I want to succeed, and everybody's in my corner. My friends tell me, "Your mother is right to be upset with you. You need an education." My mom tells me, "I want to see you with that paper in your hand."

I want to see that, too.

Eric Green graduated from City-As-School High School in June 2005. He is now a senior writer with Represent magazine. Reprinted from Represent, Copyright 2005, with permission from Youth Communication/New York Center (youthcomm.org).

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 the following sites to learn more.

NationalCASA.org

The National CASA website is 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 National CASA.



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

This webpage is dedicated to judges who hear child welfare cases. Content is valuable to other child advocates as well.

ShopCASA.org

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



Child Welfare News

Report Finds Higher Pregnancy Rates Among Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy asked the Chapin Hall Center for Children to analyze its ongoing study of youth aging out of foster care to examine the pregnancy, birth rates and sexual behavior of youth in the child welfare system. *Science Says: Foster Care Youth* presents data on pregnancy and birth rates, sexual behavior and the use of reproductive health services among youth in foster care. The analysis reveals disproportionately high rates of sexual activity, pregnancy and parenthood among foster youth when compared to all teens, and those who age out of the child welfare system experience higher rates of pregnancy than older adolescents who remain in care. Read the complete brief by searching for "Science Says" at chapinhall.org.

Synthesis of Research on Disproportionality in Child Welfare

Almost 37% of the 500,000 children in foster care today are African-American, yet they represent only 15% of the child population in the US. A new study by the Casey-Center for the Study of Social Policy Alliance for Racial Equity documents that African-American children and youth are not only overrepresented in the nation's child welfare systems but are also subjected to poorer treatment within those systems than are their Caucasian counterparts. The study is the first comprehensive summary of past and recent data examining racial disproportionality and disparities in treatment and services within the child welfare system. It gives credence to concerns long voiced by child welfare professionals. Find the report at casey.org/Resources/Publications/DisproportionalityResearch.htm.

Schools Should Do More to Serve Adopted Children

In order to give all students the best prospects for success, educators need to increase their knowledge about adoption

(including aspects of foster care) and should implement changes in their schools to make them more responsive to the needs of adopted children. This is according to a new report released by the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute and the Center for Adoption Support and Education. The report, *Adoption in the Schools: A Lot to Learn*, for the first time brings together research and years of broad experience on a range of issues that affect millions of children nationwide. As adoption becomes increasingly common in the United States, more and more adoptive families are confronting challenges when their children attend school. The report offers recommendations for how educators can better meet these challenges. To read the full report, go to adoptioninstitute.org/policy/2006_09_adoption_in_the_schools.php.

Preparing for Adulthood: A Holistic Approach for Helping Youth Move Successfully from Foster Care

Congress passed the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Act in 1999 to provide additional supports to young people to prepare them for aging out of foster care. Casey Family Programs also supports the successful transition of youth to adulthood with a collection of publications, tools and events. This fourth release in Casey Family Programs' *Focus on Foster Care* series describes the critical transition youth face as they leave foster care. The brief includes the *It's My Life Framework* and accompanying guides; Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment and supplements; the Agency Self Assessment; and Casey's guides to Chafee funding. Download *Focus on Foster Care: Preparing for Adulthood* at casey.org/Resources/Publications/FoFC-Adulthood.htm.

Exploring How Children React in Bullying Situations

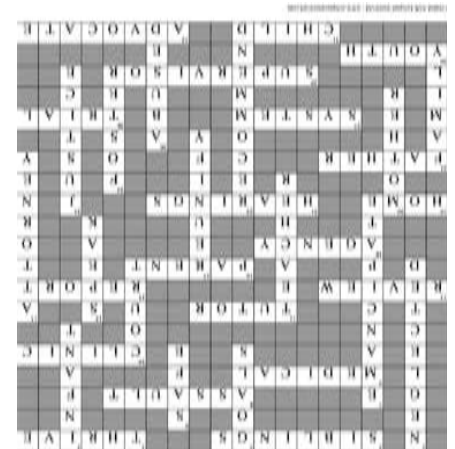
Bullying, which affects 20-40% of school-age children, can lead to low self-concept, school avoidance, poor academic

performance and peer rejection. *What Do Bystanders Do When Children Are Being Bullied...And Why Do They Do It?* is a Chapin Hall study of 6th- to 8th-grade students at a residential school. The study aimed to build understanding of children's behavior when they witness bullying and the reasons why children defend victims, join in the bullying or avoid involvement. The goal was to investigate whether students make decisions to not defend victims because they believe that doing so would be futile or dangerous. Researchers found that most students joined in bullying or withdrew from bullying situations rather than defending victims. The evidence also showed that as students' anti-bullying attitudes increased, their pro-bullying behavior decreased and their defending behavior increased. Read the complete issue brief by searching for "bullying" at chapinhall.org.


Opportunity in America: The Future of Children

Income and wealth in the United States are more unequally distributed than at any time in the past half century. Yet Americans have a deeply held belief in opportunity, and most Americans think they, or at least their children, will one day achieve the American Dream. The latest volume of *The Future of Children* reviews evidence on how close the nation has come to this ideal and what might be done to improve opportunity. For more information, visit futureofchildren.org and view the Fall 2006 edition of their journal.

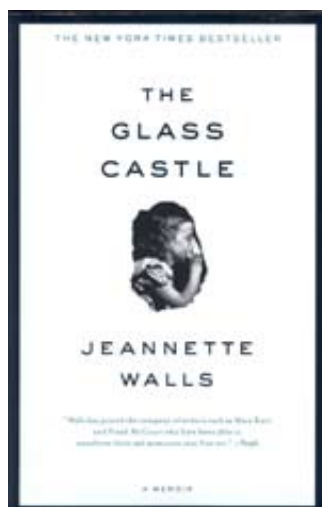
CROSSWORD SOLUTION



The Novel Volunteer



BOOK CLUB



The Glass Castle

By Jeannette Walls

Nonfiction, Scribner, January 2006,
304 pages, simonsays.com

In her childhood memoir, *The Glass Castle*, Jeannette Walls offers a blow-by-blow description of growing up with parents whose capacity for loving their children is greater than their ability to care for them.

Jeannette and her three siblings spend their childhoods on the road. The itinerant family travels around the West in a series of broken-down cars, following their alcoholic father's wild dreams and money-making schemes. Though he was a brilliant and (at times) charismatic man, Rex Walls's inability to hold a job—along with a penchant for spending what money did come in at the local bars—leaves the family in a perennial state of poverty.

Jeannette's mother, Rose Mary—a preoccupied artist and self-described “excitement addict”—shares her husband's intellect and taste for adventure. She also possesses a laissez-faire approach to parenting and a conviction that suffering would build character in her children. This theory was perpetually tested by Jeannette and her siblings, who frequently went hungry and suffered a series of injuries due to their parents' neglect.

What sets *The Glass Castle* apart from many contemporary, “tell-all” family memoirs is that while Jeannette Walls's story is one of extreme neglect, it is also one of her parents'—particularly her father's—love for the children.

“My father's love for me—flawed as it was—was pretty much what kept me going when I was a kid. I had to believe in him or I had nothing,” the author wrote in an Amazon.com forum. “I actually think that in many ways I was incredibly lucky because I did feel loved and my parents both put a huge emphasis on education and self-esteem,” she commented in another online forum.

But by the second half of the book, when they finally settle down in Rex Walls's hometown of Welch, West Virginia, the family is in an extreme state. Rex disappears on drinking binges for days at a time; Rose Mary is present but increasingly withdrawn, consumed by her own needs and her art. The family is living in a dilapidated home with no indoor plumbing and a garbage pit in the backyard.

It is at this point that Jeannette—now a teenager—realizes that she and her siblings must take control of their lives and escape from their parents.

“...That entire summer when I was 13 ultimately forced me to face the truth: that even if Dad did love me, he loved (or at least needed) alcohol more. And by the end of that summer I had to admit to myself that I could no longer kid myself into thinking that Dad was going to protect or save me; that the only one who was going to save me was myself. So that's when I started my escape fund,” Walls wrote in the Amazon.com forum.

Today, Jeannette Walls is a regular contributor to MSNBC. For years, she kept her early life a secret, finally sharing her story when she published *The Glass Castle* in 2005.

If you are inspired to read The Glass Castle, whether on your own or with your book group, you may want to ponder some thought-provoking discussion questions. They can be found at nationalcasa.org/news_events/publications_connection.html.

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.



TOP TIPS for VOLUNTEERS

Six Ways to Maintain Balance

*Gwen Wesley
Board Member, CASA of St. Louis County, Inc., St. Louis, MO
Member, National CASA Curriculum Advisory Committee*

As we advocate for our CASA children, it is important that we balance demands and values in our personal lives against demands and values in our advocacy roles. I was challenged all six years as a volunteer advocate (four cases, nine children) to maintain healthy relationships with my family and friends while I worked to establish effective relationships with the children, CASA staff and other service providers. It can be done. And when done well, all aspects of our lives are enriched and our children are best served. Here are a few of the lessons I learned along the way.

1. Establish boundaries.

Being on call 24/7 for a child for whom you are advocating is noble and heroic. However, for your own sake, there needs to be some time that belongs to you and your family. It is not in the child's best interest—nor yours—for the child to become so totally dependent on his or her CASA volunteer that you attempt to fulfill roles beyond the scope of advocacy. (I am talking to myself on this one!) We are not to be the parent or legal guardian. In addition, sacrificing your own physical safety is not heroic; it is dangerous. If you perceive danger, do not take the risk. Contact your supervisor, the case worker, or, if need be, law enforcement to get help fast. Know your limits and honor them.

2. Facilitate collaboration and conflict resolution.

As you interact with all parties supporting your case, try to see each person as a contributing member of the team with individual responsibilities. Stay focused on the ultimate goal of getting a child out of foster care and into a permanent, safe, loving home. Objectivity is extremely important and requires that we balance our desire for personal wins against ultimate wins for our CASA children. We must do our part and facilitate others doing theirs.

3. Organize and prioritize.

We all get the same number of hours in each day. How we choose to use those hours is left up to us. Everything that comes our way is not necessarily ours to do. It is OK to say "no." As we manage our cases and the rest of our lives, it is important that we prioritize and then release ourselves from guilt over not doing everything. By organizing and prioritizing, we gain better control of how we use our time. When I accepted the responsibility of advocacy for my cases, my family took on more responsibilities in our home. Somewhat surprisingly, things went well. Tasks that I thought only I could handle were handled quite nicely—albeit differently.

4. Utilize resources.

We are not meant to be everything to everybody—nor to know everything there is to know about everything! There are resources that can better our lives and the lives of the children we serve. These include service providers, community groups, religious or other spiritual organizations, family and friends. Pay attention to the total you—mind, body and spirit. Your whole person is affected by your advocacy role. Using available resources can help balance our workload and provide needed support.

5. Appreciate all successes.

During the journey to permanency for your CASA child, take time to "see" successes. Sometimes, we miss opportunities to celebrate because the ultimate goal has not been achieved. Small successes give us encouragement to continue our work. There will definitely be challenges along the way, but look for what went right or what lesson was learned even in disappointments.

6. Allow mental health breaks.

With all of the demands on our time and energy, it is important to take mental health breaks. Set aside some time for yourself to do what you want to do even if it is nothing more than sitting, thinking or just watching grass grow. Every minute of every day should not be jam packed. That leads to burnout. An article by Henry Neils (assessment.com/mappmembers/avoidingburnout.asp) lists 13 signs as burnout indicators, including chronic fatigue; cynicism, negativity and irritability; sleeplessness and depression; feelings of helplessness; and increased risk-taking. It is your time; use it wisely to benefit all aspects of your life.

For more information, see chapter 10 of National CASA's Volunteer Training Manual. Here you will find helpful advice on self-care, safety and getting needed support and supervision.



Resources for FOSTER YOUTH

Summer Camp

While CASA advocacy is not focused on extracurricular activities, many volunteers—once the basic needs of the children and youth they serve are met—take the time to seek appropriate enrichment opportunities. These can include such activities as music lessons and team sports.

Summer camp is a rite of passage for millions of American children and youth. Time spent at a day or resident camp offers opportunities to explore new interests and develop skills and self-esteem.

For those in foster care, summer camp can offer added benefits, according to Dyan Eckstein, enrichment programs manager at Treehouse. This nonprofit organization in Seattle funds “additional supports,” including tutoring and summer camp, for local children in foster care.

“Summer camp introduces positive role models, while providing a much-needed opportunity to get away from it all, make new friends and just be a normal kid,” says Eckstein. “Going to summer camp allows children in foster care to share a common experience with their peers.”

Residential summer camps can also provide respite for caretakers and give youth in foster care opportunities to connect with siblings living in other homes (see “Camp to Belong” below).

Eckstein suggests that youth and their foster families consider the following when looking for a summer camp:

- First, foster parents should talk with their case worker to clear the way and ensure that camp does not conflict with summer school or other obligations.

- The process of selecting a summer camp is a family experience. Children and parents should review websites and brochures, then discuss goals together.
- Parents should help children establish realistic expectations by explaining camp rules in advance.
- Additional considerations include staff-to-camper ratios and a camp’s ability to accommodate special needs.

Foster families looking for financial resources to fund a summer camp experience should start by talking with their social worker, who is likely to have the best knowledge of local resources. Families may also want to approach child-serving agencies in their community and utilize personal connections with their own faith communities. CASA volunteers can help children and teens research local summer programs and potential sources of financial assistance. If the local CASA program has a “Friends of CASA” auxiliary, volunteers may be able to apply for funds to cover costs of activities such as camp.

According to the American Camp Association, 90% of summer camp directors report offering campers some level of financial assistance. Early planning is important for caregivers seeking scholarships and “camperships.”

Following are some national organizations that operate day and resident camps across the country. All offer financial assistance or scholarships at some or all program sites. Their websites will help locate a camp in your area.

Boys & Girls Clubs

Boys & Girls Clubs of America have served millions of youth ages 6-18. Visit bgca.org/clubs to search for a local program.

Camp Fire USA

Camp Fire USA offers day and resident camp programs across the country. To locate a day or resident camp in your area, go to campfireusa.org and click on “Go to Camp.”

Camp to Belong

Approximately 75% of children in foster care are separated from at least one of their siblings at the time of placement. Each summer, more than 700 children are reunited with their siblings during a week at Camp to Belong-affiliated camps. For details, go to camptobelong.org or email info@camptobelong.org.

Easter Seals

Easter Seals meets the need for accessible camping for children with disabilities at 140 camping and recreation facilities across the country. Go to easterseals.com, click on “Services” then “Camping and Recreation” to search for a camp in your area. Or call 800-221-6827.

Hole in the Wall Gang Camps

Hole in the Wall Gang Camps are the world’s largest family of camps for children with serious illnesses and life-threatening conditions. Children with cancer, sickle cell anemia, HIV/AIDS and many other conditions go to camp free of charge and experience the simple joys of childhood without compromising any of their medical needs thanks to state-of-the-art medical care. Visit holeinthewallgang.org.

YMCA

More than 80% of YMCAs across the country offer summer day camp programs. Most YMCA summer camps are co-ed, but some are single-sex. Go to ymca.net and click on “Find YMCA Camps.”

Association NEWS:

National CASA Spokesperson Co-Hosts *The View*
PRism Award Recognition
Communications Professionals Laud Annual Report
Workplace Flexibility Award



National CASA Spokesperson Co-Hosts *The View*

On October 23, National CASA spokesperson Judge Glenda Hatchett co-hosted *The View*, an ABC-TV talk show on which women discuss relevant issues and share their no-holds-barred opinions. Judge Hatchett talked about her support of the CASA cause with Rosie O'Donnell and the other co-hosts. *The View* reaches more than three million viewers and offers an incredible opportunity to raise awareness of the need for more CASA volunteers.

On the program, Judge Hatchett talked about her eight-and-a-half-year tenure as a juvenile court judge in Atlanta's Fulton County, where she personally saw the benefits of the CASA program. "We recruit and train volunteers from all over the country. They help get children into permanent placements. They're the extra set of eyes and hearts. And we know that if a child has CASA, they are more likely to get into a permanent home than if they don't. So we need people to come and help children out of foster care."

Rosie O'Donnell said of CASA, "It's a wonderful program. You get to change a child's life. You get to be the constant force, to be there at all the horrific trials that they go to, with the termination of the parents' rights...and then to try to help this child until they get placed in a permanent family."

Another co-host brought up the important issue of youth aging out of foster care without finding a family. Hatchett exclaimed: "They turn 18, they graduate from high school, they get a voucher—and they're out on the street! We need to do a better job for children."

PRism Award Recognizes New Hispanic/Latino Recruitment Video

National CASA and our Hispanic public relations agency, La Agencia de Orcí, won a prestigious PRism award from the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), Los Angeles Chapter, for outstanding work in the public relations field. The award was presented in October at PRSA's annual awards dinner in Hollywood, California.

The entry was submitted under the Audiovisual Presentation/Communications category for the *Suitcases—Volunteer Recruitment Video*. With more than 94,000 Hispanic/Latino foster children in the US, La Agencia de Orcí was charged with developing a video to be used in increasing the number of bilingual Hispanic/Latino volunteers that advocate for these children in the family court system.



League of American Communications Professionals Lauds Annual Report

The National CASA Association's 2005 annual report, *One Child's Story*, received three awards from the League of American Communications Professionals (LACP). Our 2005 report received a Platinum Award for excellence—ranking 11th out of 906 submissions from seven countries in all categories. We also took first place in the annual report category for organizations with annual budgets up to \$1 billion. Finally, we received a second-place Gold Award for "most inspirational" across all categories.

According to Christine Kennedy, LACP managing director, "National CASA Association's 2005 Annual Report: *One Child's Story*, proves to be remarkable in light of tremendous competition. Overall, we find this work to be superb. Our belief is that the target audience will find the level of relevance to be



excellent, demonstrating the success of this project in connecting with the right people and delivering a highly applicable and persuasive message.”

Key credit for this significant achievement goes to Kiaya, the young girl who willingly shared her story, and her family. For more detail about our awards, see lcap.com/2006spotlight/5265.HTM.

Alfred P. Sloan Award for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility

The National CASA Association was recognized with the 2006 Alfred P. Sloan Award for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility.

National CASA was one of only nine organizations in Seattle to score in the 80-90th percentile against a national representative sample of companies with best practices around flexibility in the workplace.

Each of the honorees was applauded for representing the best flexible work policies in the nation. According to the judges, these businesses understand that workplace effectiveness and flexibility are part of being an “employer of choice” today.

The award is a project of When Work Works, a nationwide initiative to highlight the importance of workforce effectiveness and workplace flexibility to enhance business competitiveness in the global economy. For more information, visit whenworkworks.org.



Organic Bouquet is National CASA's source for eco-friendly, sustainable and fairly traded floral arrangements.

Proceeds from the sale of any product purchased using the special online link below will result in a 10% donation to support our nationwide recruitment and training of community volunteers.

Send that special someone a beautiful bouquet and support better futures for children. *And remember to purchase this year's Mother's Day flower arrangement from Organic Bouquet.*

Visit organicbouquet.com/nationalcasa.
Or call 877-899-2468 and mention that you want National CASA to benefit from your purchase.

*Makes Someone's Day
With a Special Bouquet*



*— And Support Better
Futures for Children*

Pointers from PROGRAMS



CASA of Humboldt Kid Walk (CASA intern Kelly Herrell paints the face of Brian Foster, a CASA office volunteer's son)

Dreaming in Colour: Art Exhibit and Benefit CASA of Northeast Tennessee Johnson City, TN



Kingdom of Dreams by William Baxter Bledsoe

CASA of Northeast Tennessee received a large portion of the proceeds from the second edition of *Dreaming in Colour*, an exhibition of paintings by William Baxter Bledsoe. Stephanie Sanders, the program's executive director, commented, "CASA of Northeast Tennessee is proud to partner with William Baxter Bledsoe to increase awareness of the program and raise much-needed funds."

The works vary in medium from pencil to watercolor and oil pastel. The collection's subject matter is primarily English landscape, taken from Bledsoe's sketchbooks and notes he kept when he lived in Fordham, England. Along with receiving numerous corporate and personal commissions, Bledsoe served 18 years as the National Storytelling Festival's official artist and has worked as a children's book illustrator. Recognition has come from such disparate sources as the United States Air Force and Prince Charles.

P. Buckley Moss: Speak Up For a Child Greene County CASA, Xenia, OH

Greene County CASA's first dinner event fundraiser was a resounding success. Held in November, it raised over \$19,000 thanks to many supporters and major contributions from Canada Goose Gallery of Waynesville, Ohio, and P. Buckley Moss, an artist from Virginia. Ms. Moss, who moved to the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia in 1964 from New York, appreciates the quiet beauty of rural scenery as well as the picturesque and deeply religious Amish and Mennonite "plain" people. Incorporating these new elements into her art created an impetus that revitalized her career.



Donations of Moss's works and prints to related children's charities have raised millions of dollars for their causes. One of her works, *Speak Up For a Child...Every Voice Counts*, is a numbered and signed print released in a limited edition of 1,000. A portion of the proceeds will be given to Greene County CASA. Moss was attracted to the CASA program in part due to her interest in special education.

Kid Walk Celebrates CASA CASA of Humboldt, Eureka, CA

CASA of Humboldt raised \$23,440 with its fourth annual Kid Walk in October. Participants—including CASA children

and members of 45 teams that support CASA through year-round activities—enjoyed pre-race festivities such as a magic show and face-painting. Executive director Steve Volow said afterwards, "The CASA Kid Walk is an opportunity to involve the community with CASA. Not everybody can be a volunteer. Whether you are big or small, it doesn't matter who you are; you can form a team and raise funds to support our work."

Other team fundraising efforts have included raffles and office drives. Tammy Brown, CASA board member and vice president of Umpqua Bank, led her team to raise money in such ways as holding an in-office fundraiser where employees are allowed to wear jeans on Friday for a \$5 donation. CASA of Humboldt celebrated its 15th Anniversary in 2006.

Americana Music Jam CASA of Central Texas, San Marcos, TX

KNBT 92.1 FM in New Braunfels hosted the 10th Annual Americana Music Jam at Gruene Hall. Proceeds from the



Country music star Marty Stuart (third from right) and His Fabulous Superlatives with the CASA program's volunteer coordinator Erin Taylor, executive director Norma Castilla-Blackwell and board member Diane Sanders (left to right with Marty)

concert, which sold out quickly, were donated to CASA of Central Texas, Inc. Featured performers included Robert Earl Keen, Buddy Miller, Cross Canadian Ragweed, Charlie Robison and Houston Marchman. CASA of Central Texas received \$27,500, which will be used to provide many abused and neglected children with a trained volunteer who will advocate for their best interests.

**Comedy Night for CASA of NH
CASA of New Hampshire, Manchester, NH**

It was an evening filled with flappers and feather boas. What else would you expect at *CASA's Annual Comedy Night* in Roaring 20's style at the Bedford Village Inn? The gala event featured top comedians



Sylvester M. Wrenn, CASA of NH board president, and Joann Neumann, event coordinator

Jon Fisch and Mike McDonald from Boston. McDonald has toured the globe with the USO and has appeared on Showtime, NBC's *Today Show* and MTV's *Half Hour*

Comedy Hour. Fisch was voted audience favorite on a recent appearance of *Last Comic Standing* and was chosen as one of Comedy Central's *Fresh Faces of Comedy*.

Martignetti Companies of NH served as event sponsor. The inn set the atmosphere with a superb menu. Photo opportunities in front of a classic 1929 Rolls-Royce were provided courtesy of Greg West Photography. As event coordinator Joann Neumann states, "It's always fun for our guests to dress up and feel special just for one night. [And] the support and cooperation of our sponsors and volunteers enabled us to entertain our guests in style and support the programs of CASA at the same time."

OFF THE NEWSWIRE

Nikki Amos, a volunteer for CASA of Douglas County in Roseburg, OR, was featured in the *News Review*. After retiring from teaching, she became a CASA volunteer in 1993 in order to "give back to her community." She was quoted as saying that her most rewarding cases were not just those when the kids graduate high school or even go off to college, but when the parents, too, can turn a corner: "The rewards are great when you see a family that's back together and happy and secure. It's well worth any time you spend."

The Hook of Charlottesville, VA, carried an article about **Ruth Stone**, who had initially opened her home to troubled foster children before establishing Piedmont CASA, Inc. in 1995. She recalled one volunteer telling her that when things do not get worse, that feels like a major victory. Indeed, she says, there are difficult cases and for most families, being in crisis is the result of a long history.

But there are happy endings, too, Stone believes, "with just a little support and guidance, and a lot of work on the parents' part." Those are the cases which keep her going. "My office is right by the Albemarle County Courthouse," she says. "Do you remember in *It's a Wonderful Life*, the little girl says, 'Every time a bell rings, an angel gets its wings'? Well, every time a child is adopted in Albemarle County, they ring the bell."

The *Midland Reporter-Telegram* highlighted **Ed McCabe, Margaret Olgin** and **Brad Cline**, volunteers for CASA of West Texas, in a recent article. McCabe, an oil and gas businessman, Olgin, who owns a day-care business, and Cline, a college student, attribute their dedication to knowing that a child is going to have a better life because of the decisions they help judges make in court.

Carra Harden, who had just retired from her work as a volunteer for CASA of Northwest Arkansas, said to

The Carroll County News, "The four years I spent as a CASA volunteer are among the most meaningful in my life. Although personally childless, there are nine young people who will always abide in my heart. They will live there, along with the organization which allowed me to become closely associated with them, and to assist in some small way in their quest for happy, productive futures. Only CASA could have given me such rewards."

The *Seguin Gazette* in Texas portrayed two CASA advocates, **Beverly** and **Walter Seidenschwarz**, in an article on CASA of Central Texas. Over the past six years, the couple has helped 14 children reunite with their parents or find an adoptive home. To make a positive difference in a life a troubled child, Beverly said that CASA advocates must be willing to stick it out for the long haul. Walter added, "The reward comes when they are adopted or reunited with their parents."

Awards & Recognition



CASA of Jefferson County executive director Dawn Lee, recruitment specialist Lancaster Gordon, attorney/photographer Don Vish, attorney and Jefferson County CASA board member Jim Milliman and Charles Middleton, managing director of Middleton Reutlinger



Public service announcements (PSAs) created by the Louisville law firm of Middleton Reutlinger for **Court Appointed Special Advocates of Jefferson County** received two Awards of Excellence at the 2006 Landmarks of Excellence Awards. The awards—presented by the International Association of Business Communicators of Kentucky and the Bluegrass Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America—recognize outstanding achievement in communications and public relations. The PSAs were created to help recruit volunteers and increase awareness and donations for CASA of Jefferson County. They were published in *Business First* and won the award for excellence in writing/special projects and for best color photography in a publication. Jim Milliman, a managing director at Middleton Reutlinger, serves on CASA of Jefferson County’s board of directors. Amy Shoemaker, one of the firm’s associates, volunteers as an advocate.

Renate Justin—retired family physician, author of articles on child welfare and volunteer with CASA, Inc. of Larimer County, CO—was recently honored by the Fort Collins community with three awards. Justin received the City of Fort Collins Human Relations Award—Senior Category, the United Way Senior Volunteer Excellence Award and the Larimer County Child Advocacy Center Annual Guardian Award. In the Human Relations Award citation issued by the City of Fort Collins, Justin was commended for her work as a CASA volunteer: “As a volunteer and advocate, she actively helps children who are the victims in tragic, abusive situations...



Renate Justin

[and] assisted the [CASA] agency a number of times helping with fundraising activities, volunteer orientation and continuing to dedicate her compassion and skills to helping these children.”

Judges from the Points of Light Foundation, the American Red Cross, America’s Promise—the Alliance for Youth, the Child Welfare League of America and the National Association of Volunteer Programs in Local Government recognized three CASA programs with the National Association of Counties’ 2006 Acts of Caring Awards. The three were **Grand Traverse County CASA, MI, CASA of Wise County, TX and Stevens County CASA, WA.** Grand Traverse County won the award in the category criminal justice/emergency management; Wise County in health/social ser-

vices; and Stevens County in programs for children and youth. The national awards honor community-based, county government initiatives that provide a legacy for the future of the country. The Acts of Caring Awards are presented by Counties Serve America, a long-term project of the National Association of Counties (NACo) in partnership with Freddie Mac.



NACo president Bill Hansell (right) joins Preston V. Lee, Jr., Freddie Mac director of industry relations, in presenting the award to Grand Traverse County CASA’s Esther Cooper, office manager, and Linda Fawcett, volunteer coordinator.



CASA PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

"Once Upon A Dream" Auction and Dinner CASA of Tulare, CA

CASA of Tulare's successful *Once Upon A Dream* auction and dinner featured celebrity guest speaker, actor, athlete, activist and author Victor Rivas Rivers. Mim Eichler Rivas, his wife, accompanied him. She also is author, coauthor and ghostwriter of more than 12 nonfiction books, including the *New York Times* bestseller *Finding Fish* with Antwone Fisher (who spoke in the National CASA Association 2002 annual conference and was featured in the Winter 2003 *Connection*).

Rivers began his career as an offensive lineman at Florida State University before being drafted by the Miami Dolphins. As an actor in more than two dozen films, he is best known for



Victor Rivers

such roles as Eddie Murphy's sidekick in *The Distinguished Gentleman* and as Antonio Banderas's ill fated brother in *The Mask of Zorro*. On television, Rivers has guest starred on such hit shows as *Miami Vice*, *JAG*, *Star Trek*, *CSI Miami* and *24*.

In 1999, Rivers became a leading activist in the cause of preventing violence against women and children. As the national spokesperson for the National Network to End Domestic Violence, he uses his own harrowing story of surviving abuse to raise awareness about what he considers our greatest yet most curable social ill. His memoir, *A Private Family Matter*, describes

how he overcame his childhood to become a loving father and husband.

A Canine "Volunteer" Champaign County CASA, Urbana, IL

CASA volunteers in Urbana, IL have a new resource to help them allay children's fears. Quinn, a four-year-old Labrador retriever, has completed extensive therapy training with both children and adults as well as logging more than 150 hours of visits to nursing homes, the local hospital rehabilitation unit and a children's home. Now, Quinn may sit right beside a frightened child who has to testify in court. According to Jillian Smith, Champaign County CASA volunteer coordinator, a dog provides a sense of comfort and safety that can help children open up about abuse: "It's amazing, just the difference a dog can make. It gives them something to pet and look at while they're saying all these things, so they don't have to look you in the eye."

Owner Kathy Trammel of Philo believes that the unconditional love that dogs provide is the key: "These kids have been through so much. That's what Quinn is there for. When Quinn's there, they've got his undivided attention—and mine, too. For a kid who doesn't have parents, that's a lot, to have 30 to 60 minutes worth of total attention."

In mid-November, Trammel was sworn in as a

CASA volunteer with Quinn by her side. Associate Judge Holly Clemons of the Sixth Judicial Circuit, Champaign County, who allowed the dog to explore her courtroom so he could get comfortable, said, "It is terrific to have Quinn as a resource to ease the anxieties of the children who must appear in court."

Genevieve Lambert, the program's executive director, added, "We are thrilled to have yet another instrument that will assist in making children more trusting and comfortable while dealing with the many emotions that come with abuse and neglect. We are confident that Quinn will be the key to unlocking children's fears and the confusion that so many of them experience while in substitute care."



Quinn with owner Kathy Trammel after new volunteers are sworn in by Judge John Kennedy (far right)



DONORS

The National CASA Association gratefully acknowledges the generosity of those who made honor or memorial gifts between January 1 and October 31, 2006.

In honor of

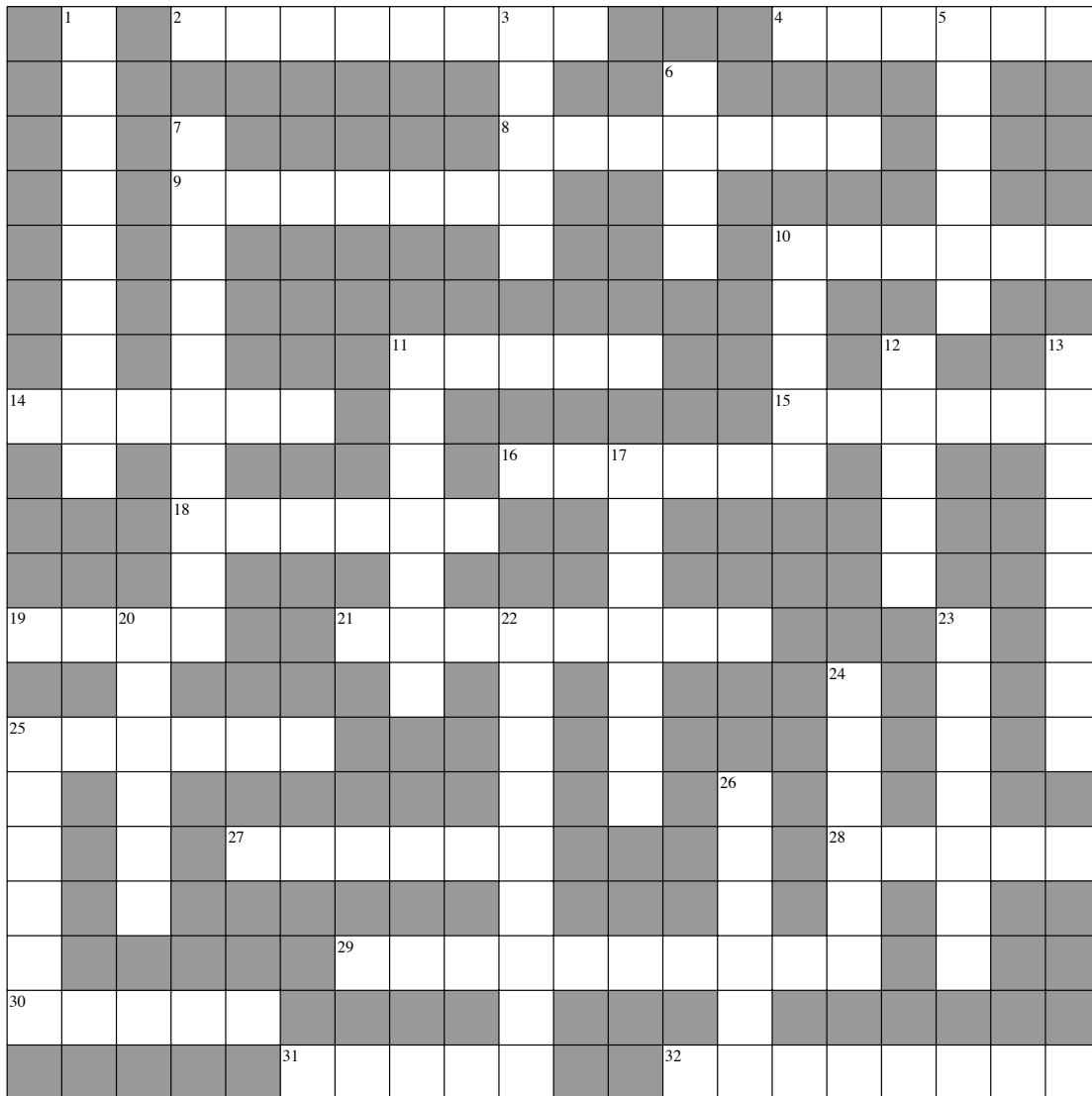
In honor of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Latif – *Amanda Jo Amadon*
In honor of Matthew and Christine Jones – *Are J. Andresen*
In honor of Patrick and Timothy – *Annette Biggin*
In honor of Louise Closs – *Robert Blum*
In honor of Britt Banks – *Charles R. Blumenfeld, Esq., Robert Connery, Esq., Goodman LLP*
In honor of Ed and Taeko Markovich – *Bradford A. Burns*
In honor of Theodore Skafidis Jones – *Nicole Collins, Michael Davoli, Jackie Mandel, Autumn Mascio, Arlene Mendelson, Marc Ornstein*
In honor of the birth of Patricia and John McCarthy's first child – *Francis and Courtney Conway, Antonio R. De Armas and Joann Digirolamo, Kathleen N. Debler, Emeli Gomez, Lissette Hernandez-Fernandez, Debbi Herzig, Barbara Holmes, Monica Mehta, Sarah M. Menninger, Jean Rothstein, Clarice G. Ryan, Patricia Ryan, Stephanie Ryan, Susan Ryan McCarthy, Aliya Sabai, Barbara Valk, Cynthia J. Wallace*
In honor of Matthew Lambert – *CRI/Criterion Catalysts*
In honor of Kip and Carroll Mallahan – *Stephanie Cromwell*
In honor of Janet Ward – *Barbara M. Dissler*
In honor of Anne Levine – *Katy Eldredge*
In honor of Kim Busker – *Stephanie Evans*
In honor of Michael Busker – *Stephanie Evans*
In honor of Barbara Flinker Ruttenberg – *Laurie J. Fortin*
In honor of Bev Sessoms – *Susan H. Freese*
In honor of Nancy Wood – *Laura E. Gray*
In honor of Sonja Laubhan – *Paulette Grothues*
In honor of Leslie Guillon – *Michon Herrin*
In honor of Douglas Rude – *Joyce and Ron Honeyman*
In honor of Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Honeyman – *Joyce and Ron Honeyman*
In honor of Michael James – *Mark and Paula James*
In honor of Jennifer Peters – *Karen T. Kawanami*
In honor of Michael Skinner and Mark Mendelow – *Brian Lew*
In honor of Duffy and Carlos – *Herbert B. Lipman, Tamar and J.P. Ravid*
In honor of Jago McLeod – *Lauren G. McLeod*
In honor of Sandy Keyser – *Anne E. McCollough*
In honor of Emily's Wedding – *Ruth E. Miller*
In honor of Mike and Dorothy Don – *Siefani J. Miller, Shari L. Reed*
In honor of Lindi Kirkbride – *Glenn and Ruth Moore*
In honor of Larkin Tackett – *Daniel Nold*
In honor of Peter Hirschberg – *Jeffrey Osborn*
In honor of Rod DePue – *Laura Otto-Salaj*
In honor of Ben Mahnke – *Leticia Pearman*
In honor of Evan Rice – *Maryann Pimentel*
In honor of Richard Polakoff – *Louis M. Polakoff*
In honor of Christine Arnold and Matthew Jones – *RAD Staff APHIS*
In honor of Marcia Sink – *Rev. Rudolph P.F. and Virginia Ressmeyer*
In honor of Joyce Honeyman – *Geraldine Roberts*
In honor of Steve Salstrom – *Christine S. Salstrom*
In honor of Ruth Scheuer – *Janet Sherman*
In honor of Isabella Blue – *David A. Sims*

In honor of Jeanne Criger – *Lori Spangenberg*
In honor of Lars Huschke – *Carrie J. Strauch*
In honor of Judy A. Terry – *Craig Terry*
In honor of Joanna Woodbury – *Lynne A. Thoman*
In honor of Dan Vogel – *Christian M. Vogel*
In honor of Shon Wilson – *Chantal D. Wilson*
In honor of Sally Erny – *Joan and Marty Wilson*
In honor of Carol Wilson – *Marc Wilson*

In memory of

In memory of Barbara (Galle) Baptiste – *Aranya A. Albert*
In memory of Le'Ann Dixon Steffe – *Susan J. Baratta, Lisa R. Feeley, Bonnie and Steve Furnett, Dinh and Jane Huynh, Diane McGovern, Sam Moser, Sue Nates*
In memory of Lori Morach – *Sandra Beitsinger*
In memory of Hon. Stephen Herrell – *Bruce H. Blank, Diane L. Christofferson, Van Hutcherson, Marge M. Silverberg, Stanley C. Silverberg, Mary Sundberg, M. Carmela Welte, Deanne and Richard Wilson*
In memory of Barbara Clune Foster – *Theresa Carleton, Sally Wilson Erny, Susan Grant, Sharon Heiber, Brian Lew, Michael Skinner*
In memory of Mark Benjamin Cayce – *Bill Chamblee*
In memory of Fran Dopirak – *Philip Crew*
In memory of Martha Marable – *Elizabeth C. Dunn*
In memory of Stella Marie Elliott – *Timothy Elliott*
In memory of John Mays – *Sharon French*
In memory of Lydia Schneider – *Friends of Niles/Riverfest Inc., J.L. Wentland*
In memory of Joan Ball O'Bryan – *Doug Garrett*
In memory of Ramona Cardenas – *Debbie I. Gayle*
In memory of Jack – *Jeannie Houts*
In memory of Momoy Ilumin – *IBM Corporate Support Program*
In memory of Bill James – *Ed and Ronne Kaufman*
In memory of Lyn Sullivan – *Breeda McGrath*
In memory of Dr. T.R. Miller – *Robert Miller*
In memory of Darlene Catherine Morgan – *Michele B. Morgan*
In memory of Aunt Claire – *Anthony Perrin*
In memory of Ricky Holland – *Sid Probst*
In memory of Frank Sampogna – *Carmela Puglisi*
In memory of Shelby Cordill – *Tonya C. Ratliff*
In memory of Mr. Kesnowski – *Nancy Saxton-Lopez*
In memory of Donna – *Karen Schlaegle*
In memory of Freida Sher – *Florence Shapiro*
In memory of Kim Krekel – *Leslie Smith*
In memory of Lisanne Hitt's Father – *Laurie Standard*
In memory of Joe Tamalonis – *Anne Marie Tamalonis*
In memory of Edward Pransky – *Pamela Tyson*
In memory of Marilou Caldwell – *Westin Kierland Resort and Spa*
In memory of James M. Brand, Jr. – *The Wholefood Farmacy*
In memory of Lee Wilson – *Marc Wilson*

CONNECTION CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 2 Brothers and sisters
- 4 To grow vigorously; flourish
- 8 Attack physically
- 9 Pertaining to health care
- 10 Place where health care is provided
- 11 Instruct or teach privately
- 14 To look over again or study
- 15 An account presented in detail
- 16 Direct ancestor
- 18 The CIA's last word
- 19 A dwelling place together with the family that occupies it
- 21 Individual court sessions
- 25 A male parent
- 27 A group of elements forming a complex whole; collaborative network
- 28 Examination of evidence and applicable law by a tribunal to determine specified charges
- 29 Boss
- 30 Early part of life
- 31 A person between birth and puberty; an offspring
- 32 Person who speaks up for another

DOWN

- 1 Not nurtured properly
- 3 Purposes toward which an endeavor is directed; objectives
- 5 A child in the earliest period of life, especially before he or she can walk
- 6 Not at risk
- 7 To declare someone independent of the birth family
- 10 A body whose task is to hear and submit a decision on cases at law
- 11 Instructor
- 12 Give voice to one's thoughts
- 13 Lawyer
- 17 To bring separate family members back into a whole
- 20 Maternal unit
- 22 To give an opinion on how something should be
- 23 The principle of moral rightness; equity
- 24 To develop or promote a quality in another; a system of care
- 25 A group of related individuals
- 26 Violated, whether physically, mentally or sexually

See page 14 for solution.

Closing words

from **JUDGE HATCHETT**



by Judge Glenda A. Hatchett

Bridging the Gap: Foster Children and the Faith-Based Community

Two popular biblical sayings, “Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is older, he shall not depart from those ways” and “Honor your father and mother,” found in Proverbs 22:6 and Exodus 20:12 respectively, focus on the importance of child rearing and parent-child relationships. Whether Jewish, Christian, Muslim or Buddhist, faith-based communities have always encouraged parents to instill morals and values in their children so that they will hold to those teachings as they become adults. Such scriptures as these have long served as important principles for parents and children.

Although these passages have been widely accepted by many parents and children, both scriptures assume that parents are in the picture. Now, consider a situation where there are no parents involved... who is there to raise up the child and teach them the principles to live the way God desires them to? Who is that child supposed to honor, when there is no one there to respect? For more than 500,000 children across the United States who are in the foster care system as a result of abuse or neglect, they don't have to imagine this because it is their reality.

For many years, religious institutions have been pillars in the community and stood at the forefront in tackling many issues that plague communities across the country. From civil rights to voting rights,

religious communities have always taken a stand in changing statistics and making a difference. One issue however that has not gotten as much attention is that of foster care and the welfare of children who are placed in the system. It's not because it is not as prevalent as other issues we face today because it indeed is. Most of us know of a child who is living in a foster home or a group home, but we don't always see the effect it has on not only the child involved but also the overall impact on the well-being of the community.

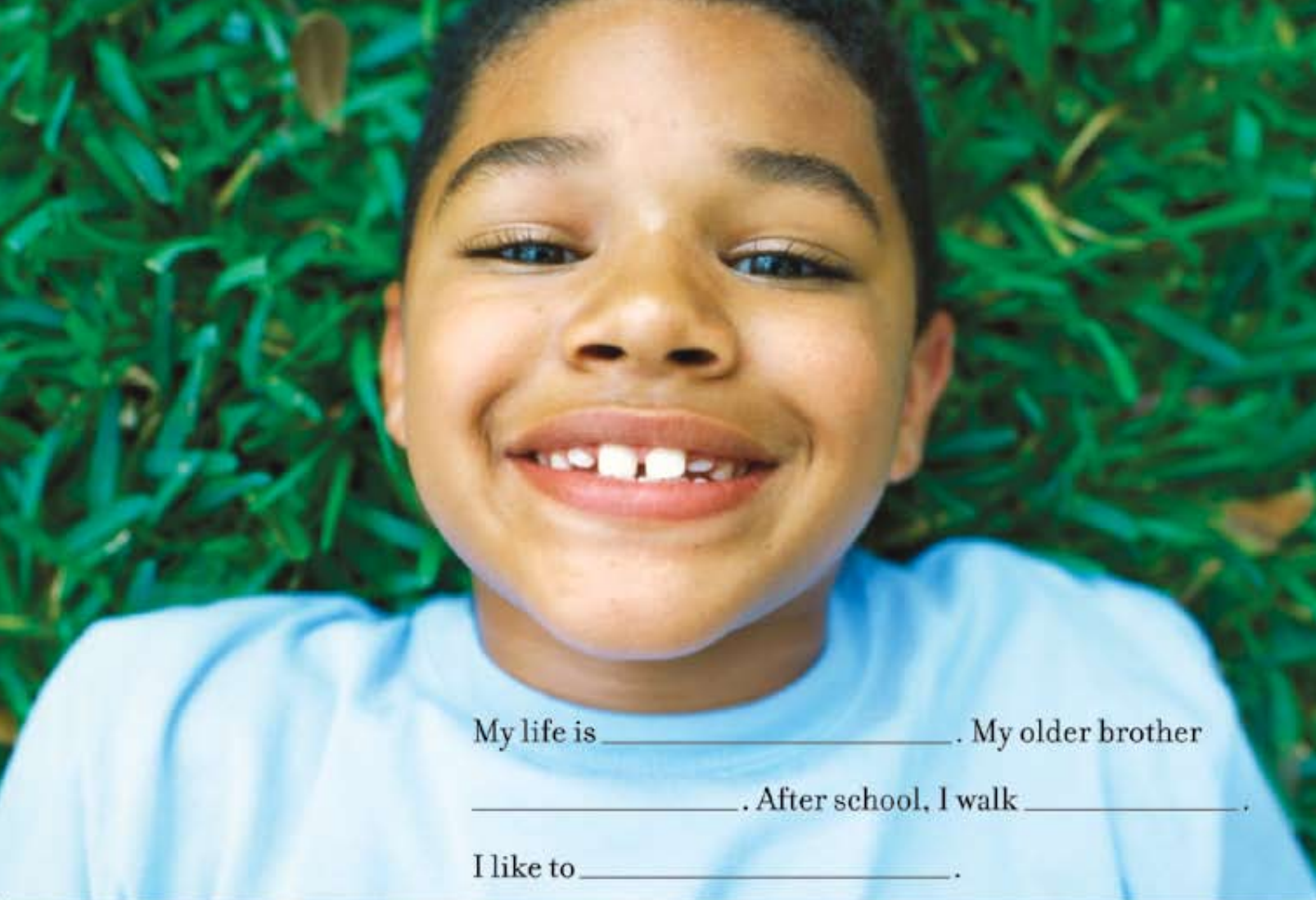
As with the other issues religion has addressed, I encourage the faith-based community to get involved in the issue of child welfare. There are many ways to help. First, it is important to build awareness. In addition to the more than 500,000 children who are in the foster care system on a given day, each year three million children are reported abused and neglected in the United States—that's nearly 9,000 children every single day. Nationally, 37% of those children are African-American—a disproportionate rate compared to the African-American US population.

Once you are aware, you can then act. One way is to get involved with the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association. There are currently more than 50,000 CASA volunteers—everyday heroes who are advocating in court on behalf of abused and neglected children

to help ensure that they grow up securely in permanent and loving homes. There are over 940 CASA or volunteer guardian ad litem (GAL) program offices throughout the country, so there is probably one near you. As a congregation, you can work with a CASA/GAL program to host events or have a CASA representative speak about the issue of foster care. As individual members in your congregation, you can make a difference by becoming a CASA volunteer. Last year, CASA volunteers helped over 225,000 children; however, with more than 500,000 children in foster care, over half of these vulnerable children still don't have anyone to help direct them onto the right path.

I pray that the issue of foster care will be taken on by the faith-based community so that the lives of children in communities across the country can be changed and positively affected for generations. When a child has no permanent home, it is hard for them to have a permanent spiritual community as well. Just think, by standing up for a child in the foster care system, you can help them find a home to live where they can be safe, loved, nurtured and encouraged to become all that God has planned for them to be.

Judge Glenda A. Hatchett is the author of Say What You Mean and Mean What You Say! and the presiding judge of the nationally syndicated court television series, Judge Hatchett, now in its seventh season. She is the national spokesperson for the National CASA Association.



My life is _____ . My older brother
_____. After school, I walk _____ .
I like to _____ .

Make his story a good one.

All children deserve a safe, happy life. For the 513,000 American youth in foster care it's the same story.

We salute the CASA volunteers and other nurturing adults who care for children and families in need throughout the year. We encourage you to help build brighter futures for young people by supporting Foster Care Month activities in your community.

No matter how much time you have to give, you can do something that will *Change a Lifetime* for a child in foster care.



For more information on the many ways you can help, please visit www.fostercaremonth.org

May is National Foster Care Month

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, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, APHSA/National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators, National Association of Social Workers, National Association of State Foster Care Managers, National CASA, National Foster Care Coalition, the National Foster Parent Association, and the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work, a Service of the Children's Bureau.

ShopCASA.org Presents

Indulge your passion for gardening and cultivate your community at the new GrowCASA section of ShopCASA.org.

The new garden section at ShopCASA.org offers a bountiful variety of quality merchandise selected to support your love of nature and enhance your gardening experience.

Best of all, your purchases at GrowCASA will directly benefit the efforts of CASA/GAL volunteers throughout the country as they help foster children thrive and bloom.

grow CASA



Where Nature is Nurture



SEEDS: Kids aren't forgotten—so show it by sowing it with GrowCASA Forget-Me-Not Seeds. A decorative, low-growing perennial, Forget-Me-Nots are loaded with hundreds of bright blue flowers. The seed packet offers information about CASA as well as planting instructions.

ITEM#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
8000	GrowCASA Forget-Me-Not Seeds	\$0.50 each or \$0.45 each when ordering 50 or more seed packets.

PLANT TAGS: Keep track of your seedlings and show you care with GrowCASA Plant Tags. Featuring information about CASA, these plant tags are multi-taskers—they mark your rows and make great give-aways! So spread the word about CASA with GrowCASA Plant Tags!

ITEM#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
8001	GrowCASA Plant Tags	\$2.00 per dozen or \$5.00 for 50

GLOVES: Get a grip with GrowCASA Gardening Gloves. These gloves are cotton canvas with knit wrists and dotted palms for better gripping and longer wear. A great general use glove—it's recommended for landscaping and everyday tasks. Choose size small or large.

ITEM#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
8002	GrowCASA Gardening Gloves	\$8.00 per pair

KNEE PAD: Love working in the garden but hate dirty and sore knees? The GrowCASA Knee Pad is a great solution for reducing knee pain and lower back stress. Protects knees when kneeling on hard surfaces while gardening or when doing handy work around the house.

ITEM#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
8003	GrowCASA Knee Pad	\$12.00 each



the CONNECTION

National CASA Association
100 West Harrison Street
North Tower, Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98119-4123

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Seattle, WA
Permit No. 1905

