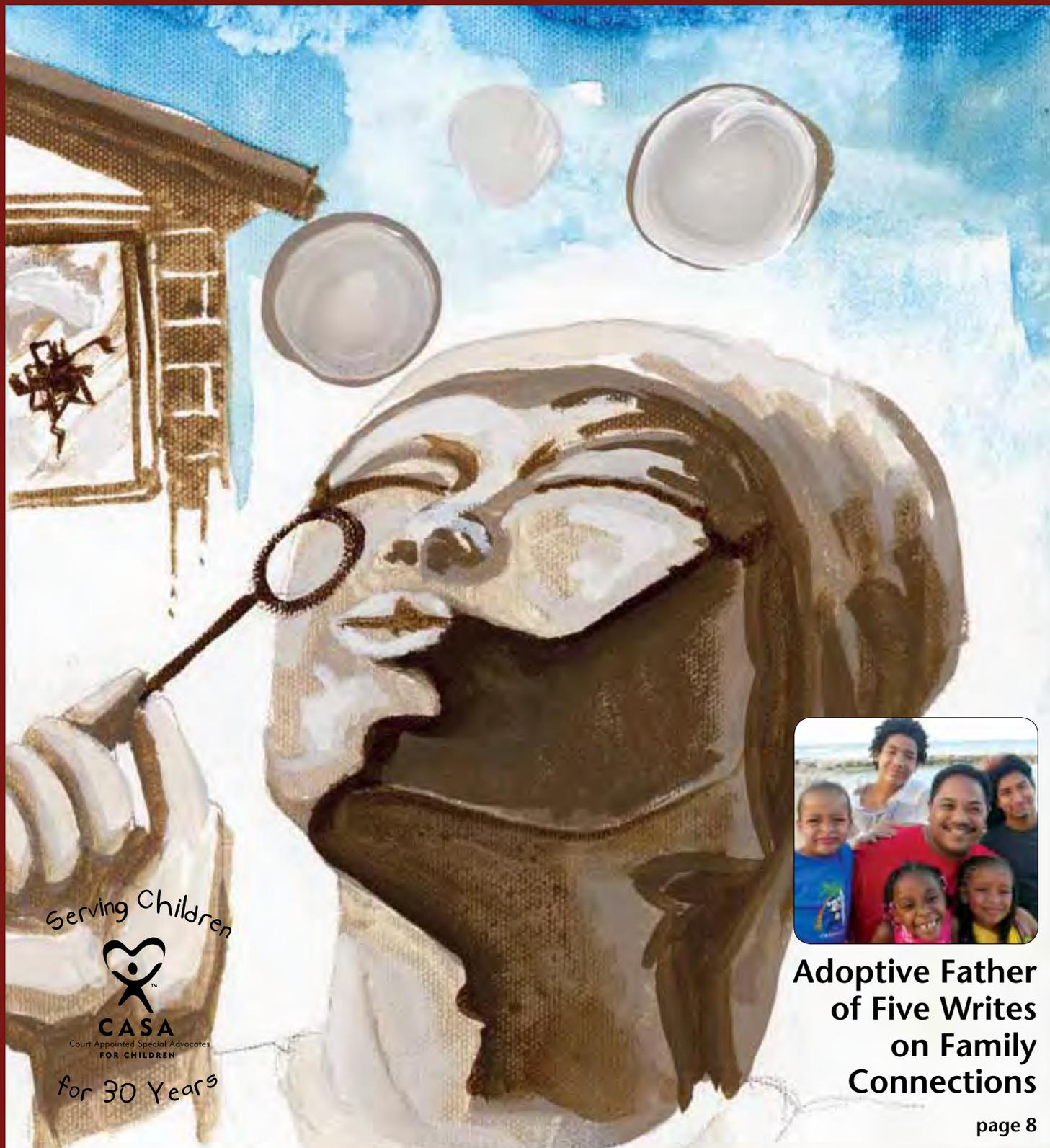


THE Connection

News and Information from the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association



Serving Children



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

for 30 Years



Adoptive Father of Five Writes on Family Connections

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volunteer voice

Evelyn Gibson

2007 G.F. Bettineski Child Advocate of the Year
CASA of Orange County
Santa Ana, CA

It is not lost on me that in order for me to receive National CASA's Advocate of the Year award, there had to be children who were abused. That's a very poignant situation, and it affects me greatly. I have a list I keep with me of 35 names: the names of the children I've had the privilege of representing over the past 19 years.

One young girl on the list I'll call Anna. Hers was a very difficult sexual abuse case. I won't go into the horrific details. But this was a girl who I anticipated would not live out the year. I was almost positive she would take her own life. It was a struggle for her, but she survived. I became her volunteer when she was 8 years old and concluded when she emancipated two years ago. This young woman, now 22, stood proudly with me at an Orange County celebration event and, with great confidence, told the story of how much she had gained through her involvement with the CASA program.

When I help train new CASA volunteers, I come to the last session to talk about what volunteer advocacy is really going to be like. It's a motivational talk, and I always ask the new volunteers to write out on an index card the reason they signed up in the first place. I did the same, and I still refer to it all these years later. Mine reads, "If nothing else, I want a child to know that for a short time someone cared for them and was willing to stand up for them."

Many people ask me, "What percentage of children are you really able to help?" I always answer—100%. I tell them I'm not responsible for changing a child's life, although that may happen. It is my privilege, however, to come alongside a child at a time when they are the most vulnerable and give them hope.

Why have I remained a CASA volunteer for 19 years? It's part of my overall value system; I believe I should reach out to those who have no voice. Also, I've decided at this phase of my life to use my time, money and energy to help children. I originally came to CASA of Orange County as the result of a letter I received from them about a new sexual abuse advocacy program they were starting. It was an innovative idea at

the time to bring in a whole team of professionals to support the child in one visit—to avoid making the child repeat again and again the trauma they've been through. I was the first graduate and took the first case.

To come back to my list: Another little girl I'll call Kathy. One day I asked, "How's my friend Kathy?" Many times before she'd answered, "Kathy is just fine." This time, though, she said, "I'm not Kathy." That startled me. I questioned her a bit further. She told me a story about a girl named Lisa. I slowly realized Lisa was part of her imagination. So I spoke to a psychologist recommended by my CASA program, who suggested we might be dealing with multiple personality disorder. All of us

were skeptical because it's very unusual to discover this in a child of 8. It turns out she had been ritualistically abused and had developed 16 personalities; to escape the pain, she had to become someone else. She got psychiatric help, and she was able to dissolve many of these personalities. When her case closed, Kathy was doing extremely well in therapy. The discovery of this problem and her subsequent treatment probably saved her from an adult life plagued by mental illness.

These stories are multiplied over and over. Everyone who is an advocate understands that we are not the heroes. The heroes are the hundreds and thousands of children who have been abused, abandoned and neglected. And we have the privilege to work with these incredible young people. As I accepted my award at the National CASA Conference in Orlando, I had my list of precious names. And I asked the hundreds of volunteers from all over the country to stand as I closed. When I gave the signal, every one of them spoke aloud the name of a child they had served. The murmuring waves of the names of the heroes we all represent wash over me to this day. 🏠



A “Fire in the Belly” to Help Children

Mimi Feller
President
National CASA Association Board of Trustees



As I complete my final year as president of the National CASA Association’s board of trustees, I’ve been thinking about what makes a great board—and a great board member. After all, an effective board is key to a nonprofit organization such as ours in reaching out to the community and soliciting support in a host of ways, including garnering public awareness, legislative support and funding.

A fine example of a board in action was the process of creating National CASA’s current strategic plan, which set the ambitious goal of increasing the number of children served by 100,000 in just two years. For a day and a half, our board members worked together with staff representatives and child welfare colleagues. We all had to roll up our sleeves and exercise discipline. Everybody had an equal voice; all our thoughts were put up on the wall for discussion. But then we had to narrow our focus tremendously, meaning some things necessarily were left out. Because everyone put their hearts and souls into the process, we all felt that the final result was one to be proud of. We came up with a plan that was visionary and specific yet achievable. At the same time, we agreed to review the plan annually to make any needed changes or additions.

In addition to serving on the board of National CASA for eight years now, I’ve also been a long-time board member for Creighton University in Nebraska. Boards I’ve served on in the past include Marymount University in Virginia and the Media Institute in Washington, DC. Based on this involvement, I think a successful board is diverse in many ways. While ethnic and racial identity is an important measure of diversity, so are members’ careers, interests and—for a national board—geographic locations.

While a good board understands its role and lets the CEO and management staff make operational decisions, board members need to be able to articulate the major projects and issues of the organization. These volunteer leaders represent the organization and are going to be asked by the public about “news” at the nonprofit. A strong CEO like Michael Piraino involves the board in substantive, mission-related discussions.

And to bring it down to the individual level, what makes a great director? I think that foremost a director has to have a “fire in the belly.” The individual is dedicated and truly enthusiastic about the organization’s work. If you don’t have this excitement for a charity’s mission, you’re not going to stay with it very long or contribute in a significant way. Other attributes of a good board member:

- Is realistic regarding the required time commitment
- Contributes strengths, time and dollars to a meaningful extent
- Aims for mutual respect among colleagues
- Rises above any personal agenda and works as part of a team
- Is a cheerleader when the opportunity presents itself
- Speaks up—after doing the necessary homework
- Is willing to help staff by being a resource—not by micro-managing
- Keeps fiduciary duty in mind and avoids conflicts of interest

How do you attract outstanding individuals and motivate them to stay on your board? The primary factor is the mission of the organization. This is where CASA and GAL programs have an edge. Volunteer advocacy for abused children is a critical need that we can all understand. In addition, I think a board member is attracted to and motivated by other high-achieving board members as well as a strong CEO and a terrific staff.

In my experience, board members want the opportunity to use their talent and to contribute in a meaningful way. That’s why nonprofits have to keep challenging board members to be involved and not lose interest. Members are motivated by results. The board needs to meet the people who do the work as well as those who are affected by it. In the case of our trustees, we’re able to talk to staff from our local and state CASA/GAL organizations at various meetings throughout the year. Most importantly, we have opportunities to hear from our volunteers and from youth once in the system who were served by advocates. This occurs at our annual national conference and periodically at other events. Understanding our volunteers and our CASA youth keeps us grounded in what we’re working to achieve.

Unless the miracle of a cure for child abuse materializes, I expect that National CASA’s board, staff and supporters will keep their fire in the belly stoked for many years to come. 🚀

THE Connection

News and Information from the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association



A publication of the National CASA Association, representing 946 program offices and 57,938 CASA volunteers nationwide.

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

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

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

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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. 2007-CH-BX-K002 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.



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

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Cover Artist



Jose Diaz at National CASA's 2006 conference in San Diego, CA, where he and other youth talked about creating their *Digital Stories* to help train new CASA/GAL volunteers

Jose Diaz was born in Portland, OR in September 1986. At the age of 5, he relocated to Miami, FL with his father. In 1996, he was placed in a shelter and later returned to his father. Two years later, he entered the child welfare system. Diaz then moved among foster homes until the age of 14, when he met Belkis Calderon, his GAL volunteer. She worked to have him placed in a permanent home. Diaz recently graduated from Design and Architecture Senior High and describes himself as happy.

Voices for Children Foundation recommended Jose Diaz to National CASA as an artist. The foundation raises funds to support Miami-Dade's Guardian Ad Litem Program and to ensure that necessary resources are available to meet children's educational, health and social needs. There are over 4,000 children in Miami-Dade's foster care system, with the GAL program representing 72% of them. The program has 370 active volunteers. For more information, visit voices4.org.

What Resilience Means to Me

Amanda Metivier, 23



Many children and youth who enter the foster care system come from a life of adversity. Once they are in the system they are often separated from their siblings, bounced from placement to placement and ultimately set up for failure. Faced with all of these struggles, many youth and alumni of foster care have the ability to overcome these obstacles and are surprisingly resilient.

Personally, I went through childhood trauma and turned out “normal,” and I’ve always wondered why. Now I can express myself well. But when I was younger, I was really quiet—like a sponge taking things in. So maybe I was born with qualities that helped me succeed. My rational mind kept me moving forward. For example, learning that foster care alumni have twice the rate of post-traumatic stress disorder as Gulf War veterans has been very motivating for me.

I entered foster care at the age of 17 and was lucky enough to remain in one placement with my younger sister. Soon after entering care, I dropped out of high school because I didn’t have enough credits to graduate on time. I became fearful of my future knowing that I would soon be 18 and would not have the skills needed to succeed on my own.

With support from my foster parents and an amazing social worker, I was encouraged to obtain my GED. After passing the tests, I felt empowered to work toward my future; but I knew I couldn’t do it without help. I decided to extend custody until I turned 20 so that I could remain with my foster parents and build my skills.

When I think back, it’s remarkable that I took the advice of my foster parents and social worker regarding my education. I really didn’t feel ready to work on my GED. But my social worker called me and nagged me almost every day. Finally in self defense I said, “OK, I’ll do it!” I know he went beyond what most people would do in following up.

I also remember my foster mom giving me statistics on the average income of someone without a high school diploma or GED, in contrast to someone with a diploma or even a college degree. She’d write out budgets showing me how much it would cost when I moved out on my own. With her help, I learned that it would be unrealistic to try to survive without an education.

One day my social worker told me that I had the opportunity to go to college. I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. College was a dream that I had never thought would be possible for me. I applied to the University of Alaska Anchorage and crossed my fingers hoping that I would be accepted. The day my acceptance letter came in the mail, I knew I was destined to do something with my life—I just didn’t know what.

When faced with choosing a major, I asked my social worker for a visit. He said that when he was trying to decide what to major in, he wanted to do something that made a difference. At that moment I decided that I wanted to be a social worker. I wanted to help young people in the same way I had been helped.

I became involved with Facing Foster Care in Alaska when I was 19. This is a group of youth and alumni in and from the foster care system working to improve foster

care for all youth in the state who may someday enter the system. As a member, I often hear stories about the people who helped foster youth succeed. These are the individuals who go beyond their jobs to develop relationships with young people and genuinely care about their success. They are foster parents, social workers, CASA/GAL volunteers and anyone else who may be a potential permanent connection.

A CASA volunteer or other concerned adult can help a young person in care bolster their resilience and get through the hard times. Mostly it’s just by letting them know you’re there and willing to stay connected. Unfortunately, I didn’t have a volunteer advocate. But I often hear youth in Facing Foster Care in Alaska saying things like, “I had this one CASA that I was so mean to for so long, and they just kept coming back!” Now some of these young people are 25 and still have a relationship with their former volunteer.

I am just one of many young people who have been given the tools to succeed. I owe my accomplishments to my foster parents, social workers, independent living workers, guardian ad litem attorney and everyone else who worked with me. I wouldn’t be where I am today if it weren’t for the support and encouragement of these inspiring individuals. 📌

Amanda Metivier is a senior at the University of Alaska Anchorage in the Bachelor of Social Work program. She is engaged in a practicum with Casey Family Programs in addition to serving as president of Facing Foster Care in Alaska.

Count the Ways to Encourage Child Resilience

Martin Westerman

“Sandra” was living on the edge in foster care. Her mother was dead, her father had abandoned her, and she had just given birth to a baby boy. Her newly appointed CASA volunteer, a woman from a similar background, advocated for a foster home that would take both Sandra and her baby. Her advocate’s encouragement supported her in graduating from high school, earning a nurse assistant certificate and gaining independent living skills. Sandra and her son now live in their own apartment. She is studying nursing in college.

How did Sandra “make it”? How do some children bounce back from abuse and bad foster care experiences while others seem to carry permanent scars? The difference appears to be each person’s *resilience*—her or his ability to adapt successfully over time despite developmental risk, acute stressors or chronic adversities. It is a quality found more in some people and less in others. What makes this so? And how can a concerned adult help develop this quality in children?

Professor Norman Garmezy at the University of Minnesota (UM) is credited by resilience researchers with asking these questions first. In the mid-1960s, he studied why some children of schizophrenics fared better than others. In the early 1970s, psychologist Ann Masten joined Garmezy at UM, and they, with others, began what became a two-decade study of whether a resilient personality is a function of temperament, will or intelligence. They found that children of average or above intelligence were most likely to exhibit resilience. Perhaps more importantly, they found that the same or better effect could be created by nurturing healthy child relationships with adults.

“CASA’s role ends now when social services closes its case, or the case is dismissed from court or the child ages out of the system,” explains Galen Williams, a case manager with Voices for Children, Boulder County, CO. “So we don’t usually learn the outcome for the child beyond that.”

Williams ticked off key points in a 2007 report on foster care youth who age out of the system: one in four will be incarcerated; one in five will become homeless; 58% will graduate from high school by age 18 compared with 87%



of non-foster youth; and fewer than 3% will earn college degrees versus 28% of the general population. (*Time for Reform: Aging Out and On Their Own*, the Pew Charitable Trusts Kids Are Waiting campaign and the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative)

There is no simple, direct relationship between risk factors and bad outcomes, according to Dr. Alan Leshner of the National Institute of Drug Abuse at the National Institutes of Health. Many “high risk” children and adolescents do not develop problem behaviors, nor do those with “protective factors” always turn out well.

Is a resilient personality a function of nature or nurture—or something else? And is any one factor a stronger influence than another on a child’s ability to bounce back from adversity?

A middle school boy and his two siblings were removed from the home of their guardian, a close relative known for persistent domestic violence and neglect. Before the boy was finally settled in a foster children's boarding school, he had gone through 5 foster homes, while his siblings moved through 11 and 19. But he connected with the boarding school staff and with a CASA volunteer who not only made sure he got to see his siblings but also that they found a place every year to cook turkey dinner for Thanksgiving with their mother. His grades and aspirations showed such promise that his counselor and volunteer advocate encouraged him to apply for a full college scholarship. He earned it and is now a successful college student.

Nature, Nurture or Something Else?

It was geneticists who supplied the next puzzle piece—the discovery of a gene called 5-HTT. This gene is critical to regulating serotonin, the substance our brains use to promote well-being and protect us against depression. Each of us possesses a pair of 5-HTT alleles (a gene at a single spot on a chromosome), which come in short and long versions. A pair of long alleles can boost our resilience; a pair of short alleles can reduce it; and one of each can let us tip either way. People with one short allele can tend toward depression if they are abused as children or experience several major life stresses. But none of these negative genetic tendencies appears to activate unless a person's environment pressures her or him with prolonged stress or trauma.

[continued on page 6]

Resources

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Hallowell, Edward M. 2002. *The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Organizations and Websites

The Annie E. Casey Foundation (aecf.org): The foundation aims to build better futures for disadvantaged children and families in the US by fostering public policies, human service reforms and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families.

The Forum for Youth Investment (forumfyi.org): This nonprofit organization helps communities make sure all young people are ready for college, work and life when they turn 21. It advocates for support and services for young people as well as providing information, technical assistance, training and partnership opportunities to increase youth investment and youth involvement. Includes the helpful publications *Forum Focus* and *Out-of-School Time Policy Commentaries*.

The Mockingbird Society (mockingbirdsociety.org): Through advocacy, public education and system reform, this organization works toward

universal recognition of children and adolescents involved in the child welfare system. It offers programs to foster system change on multiple levels and provide marginalized youth with new opportunities.

ResilienceNet

(resilnet.uiuc.edu/library.html):

The ResilienceNet Virtual Library is a collection of publications related to the resilience of children and families in the face of adversities. ResilienceNet maintains some publications; the remainder are linked from other websites.

The Search Institute

(search-institute.org): This nonprofit organization provides leadership, knowledge and resources to promote healthy children, youth and communities. It generates and communicates new knowledge and brings together community, state and national leaders for this purpose. In particular, see their 40 Developmental Assets® used in National CASA's *Volunteer Training Curriculum*.

Bernard Van Leer Foundation

(bernardvanleer.org): This Dutch foundation funds and shares knowledge about work in early childhood development and child rights. Download or order free publications, and browse the projects for disadvantaged young children supported through partner organizations around the world.



More discoveries followed. Yale University psychiatry professor Joan Kaufman found that abused children with two short alleles tended more toward depression than abused children with two long alleles or non-abused children with short or long alleles. Short-allele abused children who rarely saw adults they regarded as important in their lives presented dramatically worse depression scores. Abused, long-allele children were far less affected by a lack of contact with their primary adult(s). But

depression scores for short-allele children who saw their important adults daily or almost daily improved to levels near those of the abused children with two long alleles—and those of the children who had not been abused at all. Resilient children also tend to be skillful at creating beneficial relationships with adults, which in turn help boost resilience even further.

After years of severe neglect by their low-functioning mother and psychotic father, brilliant young “Amy” and her younger, mentally disabled sister were placed in the foster care system and assigned a CASA volunteer. Their parents’ rights were ultimately terminated. Though the girls were never adopted, their volunteer’s strong advocacy helped Amy continue in a stable living situation, graduate from high school and go on to study special education at college. Now an adult, Amy lives in her own apartment and serves as her sister’s legal guardian.

Tips for Nurturing Resilience

1. **Set a good example.** Qualities to represent to the child include advocating and standing up for yourself; communicating clearly; being present for the child rather than distracted; taking time for yourself and enjoying your life; helping others; being calm and centered; and relating to solid, dependable friends of your own.
2. **Help children take small steps.** Children need to create their own senses of identity, control, family and community in their lives. While you must keep a positive vision of where the child will end up, you should also help her with the structure—the small steps—to get from here to there. This means assisting the child in defining what she wants in achievable increments. Every mini-success sets the foundation for the next.
3. **Encourage them to participate in things they love.** Arts, sports, music, clubs, camps, faith-based activities, etc. ground children in enriching communities.
4. **Get children to talk.** Ask the child to put her feelings into words and tell you what she learned from her successes and mistakes. You can make a game of it by asking her to describe the day or week in terms of “roses, thorns and stems”—what went well; what did not; and what was just OK. Also, it is more productive to ask, “Tell me what you were thinking when you did that” than “Why did you do that?” The first approach keeps communication more open and less judgmental.
5. **Use encouraging words with persistence.** Children need to hear that they are wonderful, sweet, intelligent, attractive, honest, compassionate people. They also need to hear that what they do is worthy, wise, effective, useful and shows good judgment. But every child carries a “bias screen” which, as he moves out into the world, tends to begin discounting the opinions of those closest to him. He may say or think, “You’re just saying that because you love me.” He may begin to put more value on the opinions of peers. But your encouragement will eventually pay off.
6. **Support children in forming their ethnic or racial identity.** This is especially important when a child is placed in a foster home or group home that does not reflect her heritage. If so, ensure that she finds other ways to connect to her culture. These can include facilitating visits with a friend of the same background, making sure that familiar food is available or encouraging the child to attend community events.
7. **Know your own limitations and resources beyond yourself.** When you cannot offer advice or direction, be ready to refer the child to other individuals or organizations that can.

The Trump Card: Healthy, Regular Adult Contact

This is what every CASA and GAL volunteer knows instinctively: healthy, regular adult contact can make dramatic, positive differences in children’s lives, even for children who have faced prolonged adversity. The recipe is simple, according to Jane Wehrmeister, program supervisor with Voices for Children, Inc., San Diego, CA. “Caring and consistency; letting children know that someone’s there who cares how they are and what they do.”

National CASA’s *Volunteer Training Curriculum* highlights the Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets® (see “Search Institute” in the resources sidebar) as part of teaching new volunteers to encourage children’s



resilience. The asset list mirrors the groupings of positive factors that other researchers worldwide have assembled. See the sidebar on “Tips for Nurturing Resilience” for ways to encourage these factors.

Psychologist Karol Kumpfer of the University of Utah laid out the broadest grouping of resilience factors: external environmental risk and protective factors; and internal, self-resiliency factors. UC Davis child psychologist Emily Werner and clinical psychologist Ruth Smith sorted out protective factors within the individual, the family and the community.

Edith Grotberg (Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa, 1995) grouped factors by the following phrases: “I have” (external support); “I am” (internal strengths such as feelings, attitudes, values and faith); and “I can” (problem-solve, communicate, manage feelings, relate socially). Arve Gunnestad (Norway, S. Africa, 1995) includes network factors (external support elements); abilities (innate qualities); skills (verbal, social, pragmatic, physical); and meaning (values, faith, existential support).

Culture Makes Youth Strong; Adult Support Makes Them Stronger

Children worldwide tend to self-comfort and depend on their cultural assets in similar ways. But each culture is unique, and Gunnestad suggests focusing on relationships between the generations and using the strengths of the culture to encourage resilience. For example, in some African cultures, such as among the Sudanese, children are mostly expected to solve their differences independently (Grotberg, 1992). Parents often react to children’s reports of conflict with discipline or indifference, even in cases of bullying. The child is expected to form his or her own alliances to find remedy.

Among US Latin populations, Stutman et al. found importance placed on loyalty and attachment to family, collectivism, respect

important to be a good person than to acquire material goods.

Synthesizing familial and cultural experience helps contribute to developing a resilient self-concept. Stutman et al. assert that those who keep their own culture *and* master their new one seem more resilient than those who entirely assimilate into the new—or those who keep their native culture and do not adjust to their new one. Bicultural individuals are at lower risk of school difficulties, family conflicts, substance abuse and other maladaptive behaviors. The positive effects of biculturalism in children are even stronger if their parents are also comfortable in both worlds.

All of the above reinforces the need for positive adult contact in children’s lives. “We know it takes one really good role model in a kid’s life to give extra resilience,” says



for authority and warmth in interpersonal relationships, similar to Mediterranean-based cultures.

Native Americans often see themselves as caretakers of the natural realm, so they treat history and traditions with tremendous respect (HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997 and Stutman, 2002). Extended family and relatives share childrearing responsibilities; and it is more

Anne Pringle, program director at Advocates for Children, Columbus, IN. “That’s why it’s so important to keep kids surrounded by appropriate, positive people.” 🗨️

Martin Westerman, father of two, teaches communications and sustainable business practice at the University of Washington School of Business. He has authored three books and most recently edited the stories for Spain from a Backpack and Italy from a Backpack.

8 Skills for Building Family Connections

Derek Peake



Derek Peake with his five children, all once in foster care

Should all children have a permanent parent who can take care of them? Yes. Should we work as hard as we can to find such a parent for every child? Yes. In the end, will every youth have such a parent? No. However, every child *can* have family.

We define our families and are defined by them. Families both challenge and nourish their members. Although families are often structured around succeeding generations of parents, they do not have to be. They can be cultivated. Family *structures* are not as important as their *attributes*: offering love and lifelong

commitments; sharing memories and experiences; being welcomed and celebrated; and receiving active support in becoming the best person possible.

The current and former foster youth I have spoken with express both a strong desire to have family and frustration with the system's attitude toward helping them to establish one. They are frustrated by the widely held myths that it is "too late" to help them build family and that family and permanence are always synonymous with adoption.

As CASA and GAL volunteers, we understand how important it is to

establish strong relationships with the children for whom we advocate. I believe it is even more important to help children to build family connections. These connections can be to birth relatives, siblings, friends, foster parents or other caring adults. We can play a critical role in helping build connections for foster children and youth through the following practices.

1. Inquire with Urgency

You will often uncover only traces and clues—and then have to track them down. You will call numbers that are no longer in service, reach houses where everyone has moved on

and talk with people who are angry, indifferent or scared. If the person you are talking to begins to get defensive and starts to shut down, remember that they may hold the key to finding a lifelong connection for the child. Do not be deterred: knock on the door; ask the question. You may be uncomfortable. The people you are talking to may be uncomfortable. But at all times share what is at stake—the best interests of the child.

2. Plan and Assess

As you begin to find potential connections, you will need to assess them—ideally with the rest of the child’s support team. Are they ready for and committed to building a connection? Do the potential benefits of this contact outweigh the potential risks? What is the best form of initial contact? Even in the absence of a team-based decision-making process, it will likely take the efforts of several people to initiate and build the connection. Caregivers may need to drive the child to a visiting location. The social worker may need to supervise the visits. A therapist may need to help the young person prepare for the connection and may even work with the child and the connection together on building their relationship.

3. Prepare for Change

Both the child and the potential connection are likely to have a mix of feelings. They may feel fear, anger, guilt, hope and a sense of hopelessness—all at the same time. They will likely have to know more about each other before they are willing to talk or meet. They may not trust that their histories and choices will be understood. To proceed, it is necessary to shape realistic expectations and recognize that it may take a fair amount of time for either to be willing to take the next step.

4. Initiate Contact

There is no “best” way to initiate contact. It is almost always somewhat tense and awkward. Having a process in place helps.

What will be the best introduction? Should they exchange photos, emails or letters first? Where should they first meet? Who else should be there? What are the activities going to be? How long should it last? Thinking through these questions will help facilitate the introduction, which can be a critical factor in the health of the relationship.

5. Increase Communication and Collaboration

Building connections is more than simply developing relationships. It also means developing the strength of the child’s support network as a whole. The personal and professional connections should be working together to achieve the goals in a child’s case plan. What will happen when the youth leaves the system? Will her support network have the capacity to provide what is needed? Helping to develop lines of communication will greatly increase that likelihood.

6. Deepen Engagement

After the initial contact, a plan will have to be put in place to support the relationship. The child and the team should assess whether it seems promising or whether new concerns have surfaced. The goal is to have the connection make a lifelong commitment to the young person. Again, this does not have to be in the role of a parent. Just having someone who is dependable and consistent, someone to talk with and to hold their memories can be an important asset.

7. Recruit Resources

As the connection develops, you and the child’s support team will be able to assess what potential role the person might play. Can this person potentially adopt or become the child’s legal guardian? Provide a regular place for celebrations and holidays? Tutor or teach a life skill? Does she hold a piece to better understanding the youth’s cultural history or insight into what makes him special? Using a strengths-based

approach, you can be creative about the possibilities without accepting fear-based limits.

8. Anticipate Transitions

The looming transition for too many foster youth is aging out without a permanent family. The child’s professional and personal support system must be examined to see what will remain in place after emancipation. Start by looking at the resources tied to each person, and build on them. Do not discount the value of having even the little things secured, such as a regular phone call to check in. But also think big: finding someone to visit regularly, to help organize information, to discuss future goals and to prioritize next steps. While we cannot assume that future support will be easily accessed, we can ensure that coping strategies are in place to alleviate stress and isolation.

The dangers of leaving the child welfare system without family can be dire. As CASA volunteers, we can speak from experience and from the heart about the impact that feeling connected and having family can have on the life of the foster child we work with and love. To witness anger and depression being replaced by belonging and acceptance is beyond rewarding. Young people need us to prioritize their having family connections as urgent. Our efforts to meet this critical need will result in permanence beyond just placement stability—and will support children in becoming who they are meant to be. 

Derek Peake serves on California’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care and is the former program director for the California CASA Association. He is a founding partner in Costly Grace, a consulting partnership that supports nonprofit organizations, particularly CASA programs, by building capacity and improving program impact. For more information, contact derek@costlygrace.com.

2008 National CASA Conference

Washington, DC ★ June 7-10

Omni Shoreham Hotel

The 27th Annual National CASA Conference will be a time to explore issues related to the current state of abused and neglected children and learn what more can be done to improve their lives.

- ★ Choose from more than 60 workshops on practical topics.
- ★ Network with other child welfare professionals.
- ★ Honor outstanding constituents during the Awards of Excellence Recognition Banquet.

Also this year, make your voice heard on Capitol Hill at the optional *CASA Meets Congress* event on June 10.



Hear from keynote speaker Alma Powell, chair of America's Promise, and other experts in their fields.

"As a volunteer, I feel empowered to go out and stand up for my children."

~ 2007 conference attendee



Special Discounts and Conference Updates

In appreciation of the work that CASA and GAL volunteers do, we offer a volunteer discount of \$50 off the conference registration rate.

To receive conference updates, email staff@nationalcasa.org with "2008 Conference" in the subject line.

More information and online registration are available at casanet.org/conference.



How Are  the Children?

*Register today and save!
Go to casanet.org/conference.
Early registration discount ends
April 7, 2008.*

Results of *The Connection* Reader Survey

Thank you to nearly 800 readers of *The Connection* who took the time to complete a recent online survey. You have helped us better understand how well our national magazine works for you and how we can continue to make it better. The results have been closely read by the National CASA Communications Department to guide our future direction. Survey highlights:

- Nearly three-quarters of *Connection* readers who responded to the survey are CASA and GAL volunteers.
- The vast majority of readers surveyed stated that the magazine is user-friendly and written clearly. Respondents also indicated that reading *The Connection* helps them to be better informed about child welfare issues and to feel more connected to a national cause.
- Sections of the magazine that received the highest ratings include the in-depth cover stories on topics affecting foster youth and "Top Tips for Volunteers."
- Other highly rated features include "Volunteer Voice," guest editorials—particularly those from current and former foster youth—and "Pointers from Programs."
- Less highly rated as providing value was the crossword puzzle, which will be included in future issues less frequently.
- Readers would most like to learn about topics that include youth aging out of foster care, family reunification, mental health and child resilience.
- As far as changes, readers would like to see even more factual content related to volunteer advocacy for foster youth.
- Readers of *The Connection* love to read and to garden. Many also love to travel and enjoy seeing "Connection Sightings"—photos taken by fellow readers in interesting locations.

Survey respondents were given the option of entering a drawing for a \$50 gift certificate to ShopCASA. Winners were Pam Wysocki of Carlisle, PA, Eleni Cahn of Santa Fe, NM and Alyce Williamson of Terre Haute, IN.

If you would like to see the complete results of *The Connection* reader survey, or have additional comments on the publication, email theconnection@nationalcasa.org. Our editorial staff thanks all readers who participated in the survey. You can see the results of your feedback in this issue's cover story about resilience, the bonus article on page 14 and the new Program Spotlight feature on page 25.

National CASA Promotes Adoption by Creating New Benefit for Employees

Recognizing the critical need for new adoptive parents to welcome waiting children into permanent homes, National CASA has established an adoption benefit for its employees. As of November 2007, National Adoption Awareness Month, employees' eligible adoption-related expenses will be reimbursed up to \$4,000 per child. When infants are adopted, our policy of allowing a parent to bring a baby to work up to the age of six months will also be available. These benefits apply to women and men equally. Finally, National CASA's employee assistance program also offers resources, referral and other assistance for adoption at no cost to employees.

National CASA is proud to be registered with the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption as an Adoption-Friendly Workplace. We encourage our member programs to investigate this process. More information, including how to order free adoption posters and brochures, is available at davethomasfoundation.org.

Holland America Line Hosts Supporter Recruitment Luncheon



Seattle-based Holland America Line continued its partnership with National CASA by hosting an onboard event including a tour and three-course meal on the docked ms Amsterdam. The *Get on Board for Children* luncheon was held on September 14. More than 20 members of the Washington State School Retirees' Association, along with Seattle-based philanthropists and business leaders, learned more about National CASA's vision of ensuring that all foster children have a safe, permanent home.

In business more than 130 years, Holland America Line is recognized as a leader in the cruise industry. The company operates 13 ships traveling to 7 continents and carries nearly 700,000 cruise passengers a year. In 2006, Holland America donated two cruises to National CASA for use as incentives in our *Each One Reach One* volunteer recruitment pilot projects. A participating volunteer in San Francisco and another in Chicago were selected randomly to receive the trips.



Retired teacher and CASA volunteer Nancy Rudy (left) is seated next to Carol Huard, retired teacher, CASA volunteer and former board president of Washington CASA. Additional guests at the table are National CASA Executive Assistant Asantewa Antobam (far right) and unit leaders of the Washington State School Retirees' Association.

[continued on page 12]

Results of CBS Cares Prop Donation and New PSA

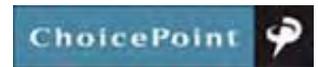
In September, CBS television premiered a public service announcement (PSA) featuring *CSI* actor William Petersen talking about the importance of safe, permanent homes for children. *CSI* is among the top two network broadcast television programs in current ratings. CBS aired the spot before a prime-time audience of approximately 22 million viewers during the season premiere.

This support came in addition to the *CSI* donation of an authentic prop—a replica of the office of Petersen's character Gil Grissom—for auction on eBay (see fall 2007 *Connection*). More than 300,000 potential bidders viewed the eBay page and kept a close eye on activities during the auction period—all the while having a chance to learn about the CASA/GAL cause. The auction was a great success, with an anonymous overseas donor purchasing the distinctive prop for \$15,600, which CBS graciously rounded up to \$25,000.

Thank you to the CASA network and our supporters who spread the word and watched the season premiere. This was a tremendous opportunity to raise awareness about the work of volunteer advocates and the children we serve. National CASA also thanks CBS, *CSI* and William Petersen for their generosity and support.

ChoicePoint Provides Discounted Background Checks Nationwide

National CASA is pleased to announce a partnership with ChoicePoint as a preferred provider of criminal background checks for potential volunteers and employees of CASA and GAL programs throughout the United States.



A criminal records check is a necessary element in program screening of potential volunteers and employees. This new partnership with ChoicePoint provides access to a national criminal background check that includes a 50-state sex offender registry as well as state, county, motor vehicle, credit and other valuable searches.

CASA/GAL programs can now receive substantial discounts (up to 60%) on background screening through ChoicePoint's VolunteerSelect Plus. National CASA has negotiated a special discount rate on this product for members of the CASA network. ChoicePoint will also donate 5-10% of fees to National CASA each time a network program utilizes VolunteerSelect Plus.

A complete toolkit for CASA/GAL programs is available in the password-protected area of casanet.org. To learn more about ChoicePoint services and community support, visit choicepoint.com/nonprofit.

Celebrating 30 Years of Volunteers' Dedication to Foster Youth

National CASA celebrated the 30th anniversary of volunteer advocacy on November 9 in Seattle in collaboration with King County Dependency CASA, Washington State CASA and Friends of CASA. The event included a swearing-in ceremony for a new group of CASA volunteers conducted by Judge David Soukup, former superior court judge and founder of the first CASA program. The event commemorated 30 years of advocating for abused and neglected youth in Washington and throughout the nation as well as service to the two millionth child. The CASA network has grown to 946 program offices in 49 states. Attending were government officials and state and county judges as well as state and local CASA/GAL program staff and volunteers. 🗨️



CASA founder Judge David Soukup greets newly sworn-in volunteers.

Letter from the Founder

Dear CASA /GAL Volunteer,

In November I had the honor of swearing in 30 King County Juvenile Court CASA volunteers. I could not help but think back to a day in January 30 years ago when the first group of volunteers came forward to be sworn in. They revolutionized the way child abuse and neglect cases were handled in King County and across the country. In 1984 National CASA coined the slogan "Speak Up for a Child." That is what you do—speak up for otherwise voiceless children.

But you do so much more than that. You have educated yourselves about the needs of these ethnically, religiously and gender diverse children, about the court system and about the child welfare system. You have challenged those systems to be more responsive to the needs of "your children." You have become champions for these children and, often, for their families as well.

You are indeed champions in my eyes and in the eyes of thousands of juvenile and family court judges across the country. You give so much. While many of you have your own families, other obligations and little time for yourselves, still you find time for these young children who need you. On behalf of the two million children who have been given a voice in court over the past 30 years because of you, I thank you. Because of you, their voices will never be silenced.

My deepest thanks and warmest best wishes to you.

Very truly yours,

Judge David W. Soukup
Retired Judge, Principal of Soukup Arbitration and
CASA Founder



A Great History

In the 30 years since the inception of the volunteer Guardian ad Litem (or CASA) program, guardians have etched their place in history with a clear determination: we did not create the past, but we can change the future.

And yet, despite my own pride in the history in which I have been just a modest part, many times I reflect that I could have done more; or, perhaps, that I could have done something differently. But as guardians we must always remember that what matters most is that we did something. It's not always about being perfect—every case offers a new lesson to learn. It's about being there and taking action.

And though the lessons may sometimes seem harsh and cause us to ask if we did all that we could have done, we must remember what created our rich and honorable history. Not everyone can be a guardian. It requires talent, energy, compassion, diligence, perseverance and determination. It requires someone willing to do something for someone who needs them.

We must remember that when something was needed, something was done. And we did it. What a legacy to have etched into history.

—Douglas Stewart Cooner
Volunteer
Lexington/Saluda County GAL Program
South Carolina



Volunteer Douglas Stewart Cooner with his daughter, Ashley

Infants and Toddlers in the Child Welfare System Need Developmental Checkups (It's Also the Law)

Margaret Dunkle

Developmental checkups to identify disabilities, developmental delays or other problems are so important that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends regularly screening every young child. Consider these facts:

- Fully 17% of all children have a speech or language delay, mental retardation, learning disability, hearing loss, autism, an emotional or behavioral concern or delay in growth or development.
- Children in foster care are four times more likely to have a disability than children living with a parent.
- They are also four times more likely to have a serious behavioral or emotional problem and five times more likely to have learning difficulties.

Given these figures, it is not surprising that two federal laws require that states ensure developmental screening of children 0-36 months old who have been abused, neglected or drug-exposed. Also, states must refer children with possible developmental problems to early intervention services. Following are key requirements in these two laws:

- The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 2003 (CAPTA) requires that states develop “provisions and procedures for referral of a child under the age of 3 who is involved in a substantiated case of child abuse or neglect to early intervention services funded under Part C [the Early Intervention program] of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.”

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) requires that states “have policies and procedures that require the referral for early intervention services...of a child under the age of 3 who is involved in a substantiated case of child abuse or neglect, or is identified as affected by illegal substance abuse, or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure.” [National CASA worked with US Senator Patty Murray (WA) to include this and other amendments to IDEA for special consideration of children in foster care. —*ed.*]

What Is the Early Intervention Program?

The early intervention program was created in 1986 as part of the federal special education law, IDEA. In return for federal funding, all 50 states agree to find and provide appropriate intervention services for children ages 0-36 months who have disabilities, developmental delays or diagnosed conditions likely to result in developmental delays. Services depend on a child’s needs and include speech and language instruction,

occupational and physical therapy, psychological services, counseling, home visits, health services and transportation assistance.

Early intervention programs (also called *Part C*, *Early Start*, *Early IDEA*, *Early Childhood Special Education* and *Part H*) can differ in two important ways from state to state:

- Since each state defines “developmental delay” for itself, an infant or toddler might qualify for services in one state but not another.
- States can *choose* to provide services to young children *at risk of* developmental delays in addition to those who have identified developmental delays or disabilities. California, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Mexico and West Virginia have chosen to do this.

Does Every Child Need to Be Screened?

CAPTA and IDEA require that every infant and toddler who has been abused, neglected or drug-exposed be screened. Screening means using a tool to identify children likely to have a disability or developmental

About Terminology

For ease of reading, the words “abused, neglected or drug-exposed child” or simply “abused child” are used in this article rather than the more precise but cumbersome language in the laws. The number of children covered by these laws is somewhat smaller than this shorthand wording implies.

delay. If screening flags a concern, then children must be referred to early intervention to determine whether they need services.

A state or community that wants to trim its long-term special education and disability costs might choose to refer every abused or drug-exposed infant and toddler to early intervention for a full evaluation. But federal law does not require this. Similarly, states could choose to screen the brothers and sisters of children who have been abused as an investment in the future.

What Is a High-Quality Screening Tool?

High-quality screening tools correctly identify delays and disabilities for 70-80% of children. These tools are accurate, standardized, reliable, valid and backed up by research. Three simple, low-cost tools that meet this definition are:

- Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ), available from Brookes Publishing at brookespublishing.com
- Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS), which can be taken online at forepath.org or ordered from pedstest.org
- PEDS: Developmental Milestones (PEDS:DM), which can also be ordered from pedstest.org

Note that the well known and widely used Denver developmental screening test does not meet the quality standards of the American Academy of Neurology. Visit aan.com and search for "Denver developmental screening."

Whose Job Is it to Make Sure These Infants and Toddlers Are Screened?

It is up to each state to decide how to screen abused or drug-exposed infants and toddlers and refer them for evaluation and services when screening signals a possible problem.

While a state does not have a choice about *whether* to screen these children, it does have a choice about *how* to make sure the job gets done well enough to meet federal requirements. The state child welfare department may take the lead. The state's early intervention program may take the lead. Or both agencies may work collaboratively and involve other agencies.

What About Infants and Toddlers Prenatally Exposed to Legal Drugs, Like Alcohol?

The law does not require that a child prenatally exposed to alcohol be screened. At the same time, *a state could choose to screen all of these children*, since Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is a leading cause of developmental problems.

[continued on page 16]

Resources

For data about the prevalence of disability and developmental delays in children, see:

- Boyle, Coleen A., Decoufle, P., and Yeargin-Allsopp, Marshalyn. 1994. "Prevalence and Health Impact of Developmental Disabilities in US Children." *Pediatrics*, vol. 93, no. 3, pages 399-403.
- Kortenkamp, Katherine and Earle, Jennifer. 2002. "The Well-Being of Children Involved with the Child Welfare System: A National Overview." The Urban Institute, New Federalism, National Survey of America's Families. Series B, No. B-43.
- US Bureau of the Census. 2000. "Characteristics of Children Under 18 by Relationship to Householder." *Children and the Households They Live In*, Census 2000, page 8, table 3.

For CAPTA and IDEA requirements regarding developmental screening for children in the child welfare system, see:

- Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, 42 U.S.C. 5101 *et seq.* Also see the *Child Welfare Policy Manual*, 2006, by the Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services. Available online at acf.hhs.gov. Search for "Child Welfare Policy Manual" and see section 2.1L for information regarding referrals to IDEA, Part C and the CAPTA requirements.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, Public Law 108-446: the early intervention (Part C) provisions begin with Section 631 of the law.

For an excellent report that spells out early intervention eligibility definitions for each state, see Shackelford, Jo. 2006. *State and Jurisdictional Eligibility Definitions for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities Under IDEA*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina. FPG Child Development Institute, National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. Available online at: nectac.org.

For position statements by medical societies on developmental screening, see:

- American Academy of Neurology and the Child Neurology Society, Quality Standards Committee. 2000. "Practice Parameter: Screening and Diagnosis of Autism." Available online at guideline.gov (search for "autism").
- American Academy of Pediatrics. 2006. "Identifying Infants and Young Children with Developmental Disorders in the Medical Home: An Algorithm for Developmental Surveillance and Screening." *Pediatrics*, vol. 118, no. 1, pages 405-420.

What You Can Do

- CASA volunteers, advocates and attorneys can make sure good developmental screens are done and included in a child's file—and monitor progress to ensure effective intervention.
- Judges can require developmental screening and follow-up in their orders, checklists and reports.
- Foster parents and kinship caregivers can do high-quality parental-report screening and advocate for good referrals and services when screening flags a problem.
- Children's social workers and caseworkers can integrate developmental screening into home visits.
- All partners can share this article and other materials with judges, attorneys, administrators and others who could help ensure that infants and toddlers are screened and, if needed, referred for services. They can also ensure that their state and agency are complying with federal screening requirements.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Despite federal requirements, many abused infants and toddlers never get developmental checkups or the timely intervention that could transform their lives. Because Congress will soon consider improvements to CAPTA and IDEA, now is the perfect time for judges, attorneys, administrators and advocates to ensure that effective screening and intervention are implemented—and to let their elected representatives know what works. 🗨️

Margaret Dunkle is director of the Early Identification and Intervention Collaborative for Los Angeles County and senior fellow at the Center for Health Services Research and Policy at George Washington University. She received the American Academy of Pediatrics' Dale Richmond Award for outstanding contributions in the field of child development. Dunkle is also an alumna of Kappa Alpha Theta, an important supporter of National CASA and local CASA programs throughout the US.

Editor's Note: Also see the spring 2006 issue of *The Connection* for extensive background, tips and resources helpful in advocating for infants and toddlers. Visit casanet.org/communications/connection-magazine.htm. We welcome unsolicited substantive articles such as this one for consideration.

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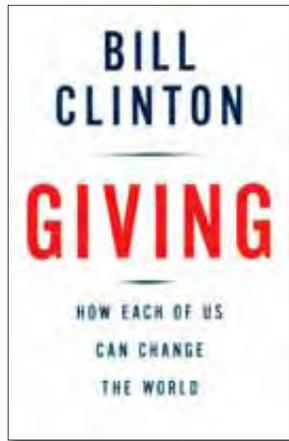
The Judges' Page is co-sponsored by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the National CASA Association.



Giving: How Each of Us Can Change the World

By Bill Clinton

Nonfiction, Alfred A. Knopf, 211 pages, 2007



Giving is a stone thrown into a pool of water, the first step in creating an outward-radiating ripple effect. The fact that we all have the power to make a difference is at the core of President Bill Clinton's new book, *Giving: How Each of Us Can Change the World*. Clinton offers powerful and practical examples of how everyday people can make the world a better place to live. "If we just all gave according to our ability, the positive impact would be staggering," writes Clinton.

One of the most important messages of *Giving* is that charity comes in many forms, including the gifts of money, time, skills, tangible items and creativity. Clinton cites a variety of organizations and individuals at work in the US and around the world. Included are the well known Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Oprah's Angel Network as well as lesser known organizations such as the Thea Foundation, which works to preserve school arts programs and provides performing arts scholarships.

Clinton speaks of his own foundation's work on HIV/AIDS. We learn of Tsepang Setaka, a 23-year-

old woman from the African country Lesotho, where about a quarter of the population is HIV-positive. The stigma of being HIV-positive did not stop Setaka from speaking out. In a speech she gave to a group of supporters in October 2006, she said, "I am responsible for those patients who have lost hope. I encourage them by sharing my story, teaching them that HIV does not mean death but means you can live like everyone...." Setaka's courage to give the gift of her story will help combat stigma and encourage others to get tested and treated.

For Clinton, giving is an act that all members of society should engage in, no matter how large or small the gift. In the "Giving Money" chapter, Clinton talks about mega-gifts from individuals and organization like Warren Buffett and the Robin Hood Foundation, the latter of which has raised over \$1 billion from wealthy donors to combat poverty in New York City. But he also highlights gifts like the \$150,000 Oseola McCarthy donated from her life savings to the University of Southern Mississippi. McCarthy had a 6th-grade education and made a living washing and ironing clothes. Yet she saw the importance of education and wanted to give young African-American youth the opportunities she never had. All gifts make an impact and have significance to the donor and receiver.

Giving seeks to challenge readers to find their cause and urges them to take action and give. John Wood, a former Microsoft executive, created Room to Read after a trip to Nepal, where he noticed that books were in short supply and children were eager

to learn. In six short years, Wood's organization has donated almost 1.5 million books, established 287 schools and 3,600 libraries and granted 2,300 scholarships in developing Asian nations, with plans to expand to other parts of the world. According to Wood, Room to Read has created much-needed access to education for millions of children. This is testimony to the impact of one individual with the desire to make a difference.

Another example offered by Clinton is Heifer International, which works to end world hunger and create sustainability through gifts of cows, chickens and other livestock. The ritual of "Passing the Gift" promoted by the charity requires that all recipients of an animal share its first offspring with others in need, thus creating a ripple effect of helping those without.

On his foundation website (clintonfoundation.org), Clinton writes, "...the true book of giving is being written every day by individuals like you." *Giving* calls for all its readers to be the next ripple in the pool. 📩

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.

The Health Benefits of Volunteering

A new report released by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the nation's largest grantmaker supporting volunteerism, has found a significant connection between volunteering and good health. The report, *The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research*, shows that volunteers have greater longevity, higher functional ability, lower rates of depression and less incidence of heart disease. The report documents major findings that reviewed the relationship between health and volunteering, with particular emphasis on studies that seek to determine the causal connection between the two factors. The report is available at nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0506_hbr.pdf.

Providing Better Opportunities for Former Foster Youth

In "Homelessness and Health Care Access After Emancipation: Results From the Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth," published in the October issue of *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, Drs. Margot B. Kushel, Irene H. Yen, Lauren Gee and Mark E. Courtney report the link between housing status and health care among 20,000 young adults aging out of the child welfare system. With high rates of drug and alcohol use, unplanned pregnancies and mental health problems, these youth are at risk of becoming homeless: an estimated 40% of homeless adults between 18 to 20 years old spent their childhood in the foster care system. In their commentary in the same issue, Dr. Peter J. Pecora and Tiffany Washington of Casey Family Programs, Seattle, wrote that "It makes no sense to spend tens of thousands

of dollars to care for young people during childhood, only to ignore their developmental needs and abandon them as young adults."

States Seek to Help Youth Aging Out of Care by Extending Benefits

Although all states provide some housing, counseling, scholarships and career training for youth who are "emancipated" from the foster care system at the age of 18, some states are seeking ways to extend more benefits to foster youth, according to an article by Christine Vestal. "States Trying to Extend Foster-Care Benefits," published on the website stateline.org, reports that Illinois, Vermont and the District of Columbia have extended foster-care services to the age of 21 for youth choosing to remain in the program. Other states reportedly would consider extending benefits through age 21 if there were more federal support. At least 18 states offer Medicaid health-care benefits for youth up to age 21, and some states are starting to find mentors for youth who have not found permanent homes. Critics argue that raising the age for foster care is only part of the solution and that states must do more to find permanent homes as well as to provide more preparation for adulthood. To read the article, go to stateline.org and search for "foster benefits."

Birthparents as Permanency Resources

Birth family reconnections can benefit foster youth even when a return home is not possible. The August 2007 issue of Annie E. Casey Foundation/Casey Family Services' *Connections Count* e-newsletter examines ways in which policymakers, child welfare administrators and practitioners can support youth in foster care to locate and establish safe relationships with birth families. See caseyfamilyservices.org/enewsletter/.

Research Finds Birthparents with Contact More Able to Resolve Loss

An English study interviewing 72 birthparents or grandparents of children adopted under age 4 (both voluntary and child welfare) found three patterns of adaptation: positive acceptance, resignation and anger and resistance. "Coming to Terms with the Loss of a Child: The Feelings of Birth Parents and Grandparents About Adoption and Post-Adoption Contact," by Elsbeth Neil, was published in the current issue of *Adoption Quarterly* (Volume 10, Issue 1). Grandparents were more accepting than parents, and parents having face-to-face contact with the child rather than mediated contact through letters were more able to come to terms with the loss. Surprisingly, those whose children were involved in child welfare adoptions were more likely to fall in the "positive acceptance" category than those in voluntary adoptions—52% compared to 39%. To read the Adoption Institute's report *Safeguarding the Rights and Well-Being of Birthparents in the Adoption Process*, go to adoptioninstitute.org and search for "birth parent well being."

Most Adopted Teens Express Desire for Contact with Birthmothers

Based on interviews with 152 adopted adolescents concerning their satisfaction with the openness in their adoptions, 74% of teens having contact with their birthmothers were satisfied with the contact, and almost all of those who were not satisfied wanted more contact. "Adolescents' Feelings about Openness in Adoption: Implications for Adoption Agencies," by Jerica Berge, Tai Mendenhall, Gretchen Wrobel and Adoption Institute Senior Research Fellows Harold Grotevant and Ruth McRoy, was published in the final 2006 issue

of *Child Welfare* (Volume 85, Issue 6). Of those adoptees not having contact with their birthmothers, about 55% wished they had contact and the rest said they were satisfied with not having contact. The study identifies themes in the responses of each group. For a free abstract, go to cwla.org and search for "Berge adolescent adoption."

Casey and American Bar Association (ABA) Partner on Online Educational Resource Center

The newly launched Legal Center for Foster Care and Education is a partnership between Casey Family Programs and the ABA Center on Children and the Law. This collaboration aims to bring attention and important legal resources to bear on the educational needs of children and youth in the nation's foster care system. The Legal Center for Foster Care and Education serves as a national technical assistance resource and information clearinghouse on legal and policy matters affecting the education of children in the foster care system. The center provides expertise to states and constituents, facilitates

networking to advance promising practices and reforms as well as gives technical assistance and training to respond to the ever-growing demands for legal support and guidance. Visit abanet.org/child/education.

California Community Colleges Provide Models of Support

Young adults from foster care are significantly underrepresented in higher education. Those who do enroll complete their programs at alarmingly low rates—especially at community colleges. At the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators annual conference, Casey Family Programs, with the California Community College Chancellor's Office, presented the Foster Youth Success Initiative (FYSI) model being implemented in all 109 of California's community colleges. Financial aid administrators who participated in the FYSI three-day training workshop left with action plans for improving support services in their own schools as well as copies of Casey's resource manual, *It's My Life: Postsecondary Education and Training*. Go to casey.org/resources/publications and search for "my life: postsecondary."

Hitting the MARC: Establishing Foster Care Minimum Adequate Rates for Children

In October 2007, Children's Rights, a national watchdog organization advocating on behalf of abused and neglected children in the US, the National Foster Parent Association and the University of Maryland School of Social Work released the first nationwide, state-by-state calculation of the real cost of supporting children in foster care. The report reveals widespread deficiencies in reimbursement rates to foster parents across the nation and proposes a new standard rate—called the "Foster Care MARC"—for each state to use in fulfilling the federal requirement to provide payments to cover the basic needs of children in foster care, including food, shelter, clothing and school supplies. Only Arizona and the District of Columbia are currently hitting the MARC; 23 states must raise their rates by 50-100% to reach it; and 5 states must more than double their rates to comply. Go to childrensrights.org to read the report and download state-specific fact sheets. 

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.



Housing

Statistics show that the transition from foster care to independent living can be a rocky one for many youth. Among the myriad challenges, accessing affordable housing is often the most overwhelming. According to a new report published in the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, roughly 39% of foster youth who recently exited the system had experienced “unstable housing arrangements,” meaning that they had moved three or more times or had spent more than half of their income on rent.

Luckily, there is an increasing number of publicly and privately funded supportive services available to help youth access safe, stable housing. Following is a short list of resources that both inform and support a housing search. Most of these listings—and many more tools and tips—are included in the comprehensive guide, *It’s My Life: Housing*, published by Casey Family Programs in 2005. The 134-page guide was created to help child welfare professionals prepare young people to find, get and keep housing. Topics covered include assessing finances; finding and maintaining a home; locating housing for people with special needs; and transitioning from homelessness.

It’s My Life: Housing is available in printed form and for download in PDF format. A copy of the guide may be downloaded from Casey’s website (casey.org/resources/publications). Order a free copy by sending an email to HousingGuide@casey.org.

The **US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** website offers a wealth of resources designed to help individuals and families access affordable housing and avoid homelessness. Find the following information at hud.gov:

- Searchable listings of privately owned subsidized housing and housing assistance offered by state and local governments
- A housing counseling and referral line—(800) 569-4287—that provides contact information for local housing counseling agencies
- Searchable list of public housing agencies, including organizations that provide rental assistance through the Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8)
- Types of assistance available for homeless individuals, including referrals to emergency shelters, utility bill assistance programs and housing counselors
- Information about tenants’ rights, laws and protections, including fair housing regulations and instructions for filing housing discrimination complaints

Vstreet teaches teens valuable life skills through interactive, online cartoons and self-paced curricula on topics including employment, health, money management and housing. The “Apartment Hunt” curriculum includes interactive, skill-building activities such as making a “need and want” list and signing a lease. Vstreet subscriptions

cost \$24 per year, per user. Bulk discounts are available for agencies. Visit vstreet.com to learn more.

Independent Living Programs are administered through the state government. Each state has an Independent Living Program (sometimes called an ILP) that provides support and services for current and former foster youth ages 14-21. ILPs may provide assistance including locating apartments and paying rent. To locate an ILP in your area, go to fyi.com, click on “Independent Living” under the “Independent” tab, then click on “State Page.”

Nolo.com is a website providing free legal information and resources as well as publications for purchase. “Ten Top Tips” for tenants provides basic information to help renters understand their rights when renting a home or apartment. To read the tips, go to Nolo.com, type “Tips for Tenants” into the search box and then choose “Search entire site” from the drop-down menu below the search box. 



Pointers from Programs



Back row (left to right): State Representative Sheila Klinker, State Representative Dennis Avery, Governor Mitch Daniels, National CASA Chief Communications Officer Jim Clune, Indiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Randall Shepard, IRTA Executive Director Ralph Ayres, Incoming IRTA President Nancy Tolson, IRTA President Eugene Wease and Indiana State GAL/CASA Director Leslie S. Dunn, JD **Front row:** 17-year-old CASA-served youth Amanda and her volunteer from Gibson County CASA,Carolynn Butts

Indiana Retired Teachers Association Partners with Indiana CASA to Recruit Volunteers

On October 4, Indiana Supreme Court Justice Randall T. Shepard and Governor Mitch Daniels jointly called a press conference in the Indiana Supreme Court chambers to announce a new partnership between the Indiana Retired Teachers Association (IRTA) and Indiana CASA. This partnership will make the CASA program the statewide volunteer focus for IRTA members over the next two years.

According to Ralph Ayres, former state representative from Chesterton and a retired high school teacher, the idea of encouraging retired teachers to serve as CASA volunteers began with one IRTA board member and “It sort of steamrolled.” Ayres added that one objective of IRTA is intergenerational cooperation, making retired teachers serving as CASA volunteers a perfect match.

IRTA President Gene Wease noted, “The National Retired Teachers Association is looking at Indiana to use our program as a national model. I am excited about this opportunity to help children.”

Founded in 1950, IRTA has nearly 23,000 members. A key focus of the association is community service: members have donated over one million volunteer hours during each of the last three years.

Proceeds from Golf Tournament Benefit Program Hall-Dawson CASA, GA

The Hall-Dawson CASA program’s capital campaign, “A Casa for CASA,” received a big boost in October with a \$207,855 donation from the annual

Medical Center Open Golf Tournament. Last year, Hall-Dawson CASA Executive Director Connie Stephens successfully submitted a proposal to the Medical Center Foundation requesting that proceeds from the 2007 tournament benefit her organization’s capital campaign. In crafting her proposal, Stephens referenced the article “The Essential Advocate: Using CASAs to Promote Child Well-Being” from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges’ *Today* magazine to demonstrate the connection between the mission of the medical center and the contribution that CASA volunteers make toward obtaining medical care for foster children.

The goal of the 2007 golf tournament, sponsored by the Northeast Georgia Medical Center Foundation, was to raise \$130,000. Nancy Colston, executive director of the Medical Center Foundation, remarked, “To exceed our goal by this much is tremendous.”

To see a copy of the NCJFCJ article that Stephens referenced, go to nationalcasa.org/judgespage. Click on the “CASA/GAL Judges’ Corner Resource Center” in the sidebar and then on “Local Program Successes.”



Stephen Moore, MD, co-chair of the 16th annual Medical Center Open, Hall-Dawson CASA Executive Director Connie Stephens, CASA board member Ronnie Forrester and three siblings served by the CASA program and now adopted into one loving home

[continued on page 22]

Westwood Elementary Students Donate Books to Children CASA of McHenry County, IL

When Linda Gabrielson, a 4th-grade teacher at Westwood Elementary School, won a \$100 award for outstanding teaching from her school, she asked her students what to do with the money. After a presentation by CASA of McHenry County, the students decided to purchase 10 copies of the children's book *Chester's CASA* (see fall 2006 issue of *The Connection*) and give them to the abused and neglected children the program works with. The book provides a first-hand look at what having a CASA volunteer means: Chester, a young boy who has become involved in the court system due to neglect, takes children into the child welfare system and introduces them to the people who touch his life.

Kelly Pokharel, the CASA program's executive director, remarked, "It was exciting to build a connection with the students, to hear their questions and for them to give something to their peers. We hope...to share the CASA mission with other students in an effort to broaden awareness of child abuse and neglect and to give children the chance to contribute to the community."

Stop Horsin' Around: Help Stop Child Abuse!

7th Circuit Court CASA Program, SD

A herd of 27 life-sized fiberglass horses adorned with acrylics, oil paints and decoupage were recently introduced to the public at the Central States Fair in Rapid City, SD. The brainchild of Sheila Troxel-Snyder, executive director of the 7th Circuit Court CASA program, the ponies—painted by volunteer artists—were auctioned at the Black Hills Stock Show in January.



Troxel-Snyder says, "This project has been an amazing adventure and has united CASA with so many in the community. It has become not only a catalyst for more funding but has significantly contributed to a heightened awareness of CASA's important work." The original project of 20 horses, to commemorate the program's 20th anniversary,

received so much support from businesses, schools, organizations and individuals that an additional 7 horses were crafted.

Newlyweds and Guests Honor CASA Program CASA of Franklin County, OH

For Marcia Johnston, the occasion of her daughter's wedding was also an opportunity to contribute to the CASA of Franklin County program, where she has been a volunteer for seven years. Marcia and husband Jeff decided that rather than purchasing wedding reception favors, they would donate an equivalent amount to the CASA program. At each guest's setting they placed a CASA brochure and a card that told a child's story and shared the reasons for donating to the CASA program in honor of their daughter and her new husband. CASA of Franklin County is grateful for the Johnstons' creativity in supporting and promoting volunteer advocacy as part of the family's special day.



Painted horses by: (clockwise starting from top) Belle Fourche High School art class; Melanie Hurley and Knollwood Elementary School art class; Cheryl Rowe; YMCA Arts Science Center

Awards

The President's Volunteer Service Award, created by the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation, honors Americans who have made service a central part of their lives. Three members of the CASA network were recognized with an award recently.

In Salem, OR **Bob Arias**, executive director of **CASA of Polk County**, received the award from Peace Corps Deputy Director Jody Olsen in recognition of his significant contributions to the Peace Corps and to the community he now serves. Arias mentioned the importance of volunteering and how the Peace Corps could work in tandem with CASA programs.



Bob Arias and Peace Corps Deputy Director Jody Olsen

Paul Carmony, a volunteer with **CASA of Jefferson County, KY** received the award when President George W. Bush went to Louisville. In an interview, Carmony described how growing up in a coal town inspired him to help people in need: "If someone was in need or hurting, then everyone was in need. You didn't have to ask—it was just there."

Janet Parks, a volunteer with **Jackson County CASA, MO** received the award from President Bush in Kansas City. Expressing appreciation to US Bank, her employer, for its support of her volunteering, she said, "I would encourage anyone who is looking for a way to make their community a better place to volunteer with CASA. The joy of seeing a child go to a loving, nurturing 'forever' family is a priceless reward."



President Bush with Janet Parks



Annette Koonce (right) and her volunteer coordinator, Arbor Buchanan

Annette Koonce, a volunteer with **CASA of Northwest Arkansas**, was honored with a Hero de Corazon award from the Wal-Mart Corporation. The award was created to recognize outstanding individuals who contribute to the advancement of the Hispanic community. Although wheelchair bound with cerebral palsy, Koonce is a dedicated CASA volunteer. Fluent in eight languages, including Spanish, she has helped many Hispanic families through her volunteer work.

Toastmasters International, Region III, presented a Communications and Leadership Award to **Nancy Fisher**, executive director of **CASA of Tarrant County, TX** for her leadership and dedication to the youth of her community. Fisher said, "In receiving this award, I would like to also recognize our community and the value it places on the lives of those that have the smallest voice."

The staff and volunteers of the **Arizona CASA Program** received the Janet Napolitano Courage for Children award from the Arizona Association for Foster and Adoptive Parents. The award is presented to "a group or individual who leads systematic change that improves services for children in Arizona through legislative, political and/or social action."

Danielle Morrison, program director of **CASA of Allegheny County, PA**, was named recipient of the 2007 Chatham College *Young Alumna Cornerstone Award*. Morrison has spent 17 years in the child welfare field serving as a child and youth caseworker as well as a foster parent.

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Off the Newswire



Mark and Adri Magnuson

The *Coloradoan* recently featured Larimer County CASA volunteers **Mark and Adri Magnuson** in its "Living" section. The couple shared that the personal benefits of being a CASA volunteer include "seeing the positive changes in children's lives as a result of our interactions with the families and our influence in the court." They also noted that being a CASA volunteer has increased their connection to their own community.

The *Hyde Park Herald* spotlighted **Mary J. Peterson**, a volunteer with CASA of Cook County, IL and her newly released book, *Jason: Ward of the State*. The book describes her commitment to one of her 1st-grade students who later became a ward of the state. Formerly a teacher in the Chicago Public School system, Peterson says that she

has seen Jason and other children face situations that no child should have to endure. Peterson's book portrays her care and focus on the importance of education that helped Jason and his brother overcome obstacles and become successful adults.

Genevieve Conaway, a volunteer with the Fourth Judicial District CASA program in Council Bluffs, IA, was featured in *The Daily Nonpareil* as an example of the dedicated volunteers who help children "going through hard times." In addition to advocating for children in court, Conaway takes part in a "lunch buddy" program through which she visits a child who is having a difficult time making friends and helps the child with a project. "They talk to you," she said, and "you couldn't believe the difference you've made." She also sews stuffed rabbits for young children who are being adopted. Her youngest daughter, Melony, inspired by her mother's example, makes fleece blankets for the older children.

Six-year-old **Jewel Jordan** appeared in Brook County's *Review* for setting up a lemonade stand in front of Wellsburg's Rite Aid store to raise money for A Child's Place CASA of Wellsburg, WV. Her mother had seen CASA advertisements and told Jewel about the organization. Inspired, Jewel said, "I felt like there are other kids who don't have good homes, so I wanted to do something for them." She raised more than \$50 in one day.



Mary Peterson with her book, *Jason: Ward of the State*



Jewel Jordan in front of her lemonade stand

Program Spotlight *(New Feature!)*



In September, the Indianapolis Chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women were guests at a tea held in their honor for founding Child Advocates.

Child Advocates Indianapolis, IN

Last year, Child Advocates celebrated 25 years of representing the best interests of more than 55,000 abused and neglected children in Indianapolis. The program took advantage of its 25th anniversary by holding a number of events.

In April 2007, 75 volunteers helped kick off the celebration by attending a Volunteer Appreciation reception. Those attending enjoyed a buffet of deli food, birthday cake and coffee.

The law firm Ice Miller sponsored a corporate reception in July to thank existing donors and introduce

the mission of Child Advocates to potential supporters. More than 75 people were greeted by board members and staff.

Approximately 400 children and their families attended a free Kids' Fair in July. The fair offered carnival games, miniature train rides, a climbing wall, fire trucks, police cars, face painting and refreshments. Sponsorships were provided by St. Vincent Physicians Network, WISH-TV and the Marion County Health Department.

In August, Child Advocates held a "Birthday Party" downtown, complete with birthday cake, balloons and celebrity servers. Anyone walking by

during the lunch hour was invited to help celebrate with a piece of cake.

The 25th anniversary events were designed to help bring greater awareness to the plight of abused and neglected children in Marion County and to the mission of Child Advocates. The program's media sponsor, WISH-TV, provided on-air time and listings for events in their community calendar as well as produced and aired a public service announcement to attract volunteers and donors.

Celebrating this milestone contributed to an increase in the number of volunteer applications Child Advocates has received and attracted new corporate donors. 🎁



These children live in Mokuni Village, Zambia, a 700-year old tribal community near Victoria Falls. National CASA Deputy CEO Carmela Welte visited with them and their mothers during a trip to southern Africa.

“One mother was very curious about what CASA volunteers do, blessed us for this good work and was absolutely thrilled when I made a gift of this copy of *The Connection*. She was extremely proud to relate that she was a teacher in the new, first-ever high school in the village (pop. 7,000) that had just opened the previous week.”

Where do you take *The Connection*? Send us a photo of you or someone you know reading *The Connection* in a unique or interesting location. Since the *Connection* staff is especially interested in comments from readers, submissions including feedback about the publication are most welcome. Whether you are on an airplane or in a courthouse waiting room, help spread the word about this amazing way to advocate for children by telling others about the CASA/GAL cause. Pass along your copy of *The Connection*.

Send photos (min. 4" x 6") to:
The Connection
National CASA Association
100 W. Harrison
North Tower, Suite 500
Seattle, WA, 98119
or email high resolution photos (300 dpi scanned at 4" x 6" size) to theconnection@nationalcasa.org. Include your name, address, phone number, email address and photo location.

The National CASA Association gratefully acknowledges the generosity of those who made honorary or memorial gifts between June 1 and October 31, 2007.

In honor of

In honor of Sue Choate – Sherri Bangert
 In honor of Drew King – Nathaniel Briscoe
 In honor of Elyse Kremins – Karen Crawford
 In honor of Janet Ward – Barbara and Edward Disser
 In honor of State Representative Beverly Woolley – Dawnna Dukes Campaign, Michael Hamilton and Ellen E. Rach, Myra Crownover Campaign, Norma Chavez, State Representative District 76, Sylvester Turner Campaign Fund, Texans for Dan Branch
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 In memory of Virginia Beeson – Jerry Garry
 In memory of William Cox – Linda Hyde
 In memory of Claude Moorfield – Koinonia Group #2
 In memory of A. Lieberman – Dr. Robert Lieberman
 In memory of Carolyn Zanders – Brian and Jule Martin
 In memory of Dr. T.R. Miller – Robert Miller
 In memory of Gil – Barbara Engel Moss
 In memory of Dillon Henry – Patricia O’Connell
 In memory of Joan Francis – Joanne L. Platt
 In memory of Matthew Motto – Thomas Rehak
 In memory of Larry Hamilton – Mary Jo and Ron Rose
 In memory of June Turner – SCY Nursing Staff
 In memory of Joe Tamalonis – Anne Marie Tamalonis
 In memory of Vincent Schulte – M. Carmela Welte
 In memory of his father – Marc C. Wilson
 In memory of John Geras, Sr. – Ronald A. Zagorsky





Helping Children Hold On to Hope

Judge Glenda A. Hatchett
National CASA Spokesperson

Like most people who have worked in child welfare, when I was a juvenile court judge I often puzzled over what qualities allow some children to transcend the unfortunate circumstances that brought them into my courtroom. Why are some children totally broken, destroyed by circumstances and never able to bounce back, while other kids are able to hold on to hope?

I do not know what the exact formula is for creating this kind of resilience in children, but I have identified a few of the ingredients. Primary among them, I believe, is having a dream. Lately I have been working on a project called “Post a Dream,” talking with parents around the country and encouraging them to write down their children’s dreams and literally post them above their beds. I tell these parents that the posting does not have to be elaborate—just a piece of typing paper tacked on the wall with pushpins is fine. The important thing is that the dream—their dream—is the first thing that the children see every morning and the last thing they see at night.

Giving children something to hold on to is one of the most important things that we as adults—particularly as CASA volunteers—can do for the young people in our care. If we can get children to focus on a dream that they are reaching for—and to put *their* name on that dream—it will help them look beyond the gaps and avoid getting stuck in their current circumstances. Because as every CASA volunteer knows, children in the care of the dependency system are absolutely powerless over the circumstances that brought them there. By encouraging them to focus on their dreams, we give these children something that

they can be powerful over and help them shift from being victims to being victorious.

As important as it is to keep the focus on the future, it is equally important to make it clear that we also have more immediate goals. *Because “grown-up” seems like an awfully long way off when you’re a kid.* Simple reminders like, “When I see you next week, I’m looking forward to your telling me the good news about the science project,” encourage our children to achieve short-term victories that help them reach their long-term goals.

Achieving a dream is not easy work. Neither is being a CASA volunteer. When I talk about the importance of resilience, I am not just thinking about children. As someone who has seen the difference, time and again, that CASA and GAL volunteers make in children’s lives, I deeply appreciate the difficult and sometimes painful work that you are doing to make life better for our children. And I encourage you to not just take care of the children, but also take care of yourself by nurturing your own spirit. As a parent recently told me during a “Post a Dream” session, “I’m posting my child’s dream over her bed, and I’m also posting my dream over my own bed. *Just because I am not a kid does not mean that I cannot have a dream.*”

Thank you for everything that you do to keep the dreams alive. 📌

The Honorable Glenda A. Hatchett is a nationally recognized authority on juvenile issues perhaps best known for her award-winning television series Judge Hatchett and her book Say What You Mean, Mean What You Say!



My life is _____ . My grandma
_____. After school, I play _____ .
I like to _____ .

Make her story a good one.

All children deserve a safe, happy life — including the 513,000 American children in foster care.

Across the country, people just like you are helping vulnerable children build brighter futures by serving as their foster parents, relative caregivers, mentors, advocates, social workers and volunteers. We salute CASA and GAL volunteers and other nurturing adults who care for children and families in need throughout the year.

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



For more information on the many ways you can help please visit our website.

www.fostercaremonth.org

May is National Foster Care Month

20 years | of caring

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; FosterClub; 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.

Nate's in foster care.

He's attended eight schools.

Nate gives up

CASA VOLUNTEER
STEPS IN HERE.

and drops out.

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