

KEARNEY/BUFFALO COUNTY CASA *Fall* NEWSLETTER



New Volunteers: August 2018



Kelsi Trampe
Kearney



Lona Mason
Kearney



Mary Louise Nelson
Kearney



Each of these brave volunteers embarked in their journey to becoming CASA Volunteers starting April 3rd, 2018. These volunteers have completed a full 30 hour training. In this training, they learned about their role as a CASA Volunteer, how cases move through the system, who is involved in these cases, the roles of the legal parties, children's needs and development, Child Abuse and Neglect, Trauma and Resilience, Communication and Interviewing, mental health, poverty, professional communication, substance abuse, cultural competence, domestic violence, permanence, educational advocacy, advocating for older youth, and LGBTQ youth. Once these volunteers completed the in-class training, they observed a juvenile court hearing and were then sworn in by Honorable Judge . Each of these volunteers accepted and were assigned a case following their training. We are so blessed to have them and are grateful to the hard work they put in training.

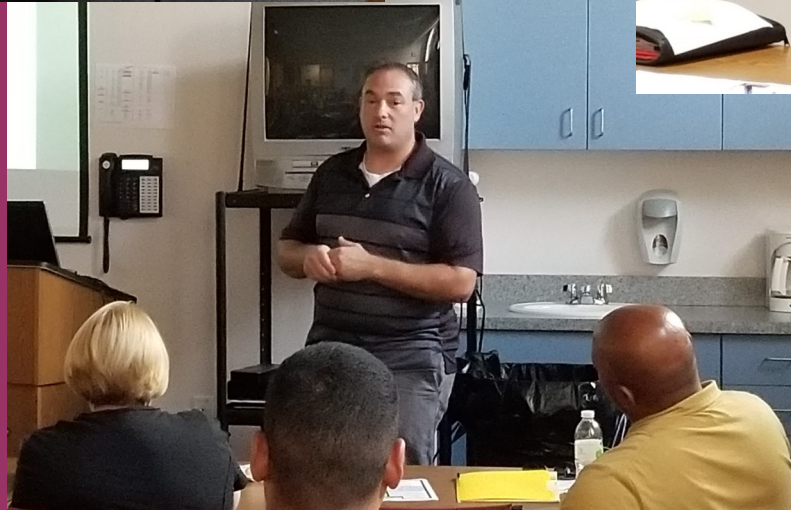
August 2018 In-Service

We were honored to have Investigator Dan Warrington and DHHS Supervisor, Brenda Rodriguez be our speakers at our In-service. We had 39 CASA Volunteers that came from Hastings, Kearney, Minden, Lexington, Holdrege and Alma to learn from Investigator Warrington and DHHS Supervisor Rodriguez. At our in-service, CASA volunteers were able to earn 3.5 CUE's.

Investigator Dan Warrington is with the Kearney Police Department, Nebraska ICAC Task Force, Special Deputy US Marshal-F.B.I. CETF and Special Deputy State Sheriff-ICAC. Investigator Warrington shared about the Dark Web, a collection of websites within an encrypted network.

The Dark Web is riddled with child pornography and predators. The group learned about bullying, child enticement and how to search on the Sex Offender Registry. We also learned more about what to look for as indicators of sexual abuse and indicators of an offender.

Brenda Rodriguez is a CFSS Supervisor with DHHS in Kearney. Most of the CASA's are used to knowing that families need services and then they receive them. Brenda went through the process of how services are put into place. She helped us to understand how the HHS caseworkers first use a Provider Service Referral and send that out to the providers stating exactly what is needed in detail. We learned who pays for the services and the different resources they use.



September 2018

Advocate of the Month:

Samantha Arehart



Kearney/Buffalo County CASA is proud to honor Samantha Arehart of Kearney for her advocacy for abused and neglected children, Kathy, CASA Volunteer Supervisor states “Samantha has been a CASA Volunteer for 5 months and has served on one case. Samantha is such a blessing to the two children she serves and goes above and beyond giving many hours of her time each month to the children, foster parents and biological parents. Samantha has worked very hard to get to know her family and because of this has been able to help them all immensely whether it be recommending additional resources or the giving of her time. Should problems arise, the family will call Samantha knowing she will be a familiar friendly voice willing to help them in any way possible. Samantha is an amazing advocate for these children and works very hard to give her best no matter what is asked of her. Her knowledge and input has been very valuable throughout her case and she has proven to be a strong advocate in helping to make sure any decisions made are the best option possible for the children and their family.”

Samantha Arehart states “I have always had a passion for foster care, but am not yet in a season of my life where taking in a foster child is an option. However, I kept getting called back and didn’t know where God was leading me. One of my good friends had recently adopted her foster son and was telling me about her CASA and what a difference they made in her case and I was like “what in the world is a CASA?” After she explained that it was volunteer based I immediately knew that’s what I was being called to. It is a privilege that I am given the opportunity to provide support for not only these children for the entirety of their time in the system, but their mommas, their foster parents, and even bridge communication between different parties on the case including attorneys and case workers. To be a CASA is to be the voice for your foster child and to be a face that is present and positive for the entire team in a way that can truly make a difference in both the outcome of the case and these families’ lives forever.”



UNK Homecoming Parade: September 15, 2018

Kearney/Buffalo County CASA designed and built a float with the help of the Recruiting committee and Board of Directors, for the UNK Homecoming Parade. Our float won best float for Non-Profits. Thank you to all who helped us put this together.



Truly Blessed! September 2018



Kearney/Buffalo County CASA is truly blessed by the support from members in our community!!!! We would like to thank the Green Team at Eaton's Corporation for their generous donation to our agency. On September 20th, Eaton's donated \$500 in diapers, wipes, body wash, tooth paste, tooth brushes, and clothes to ensure our CASA children have their basic needs met! Thank you so very much!

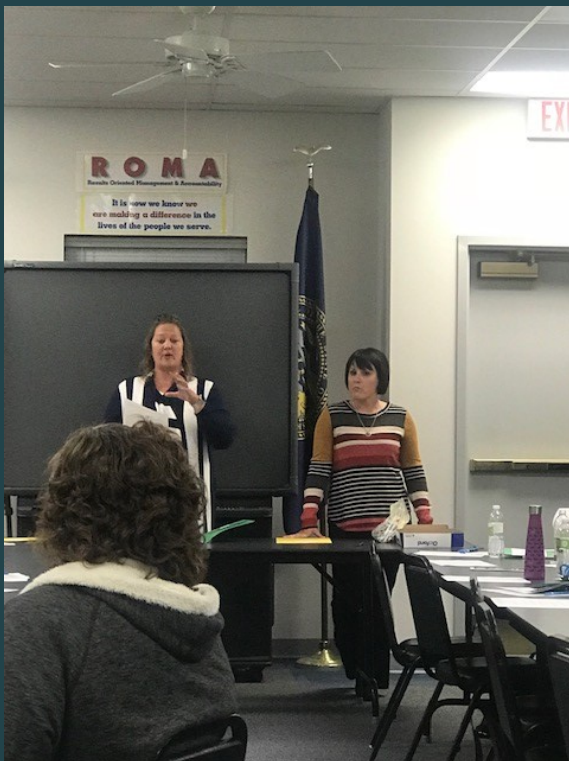
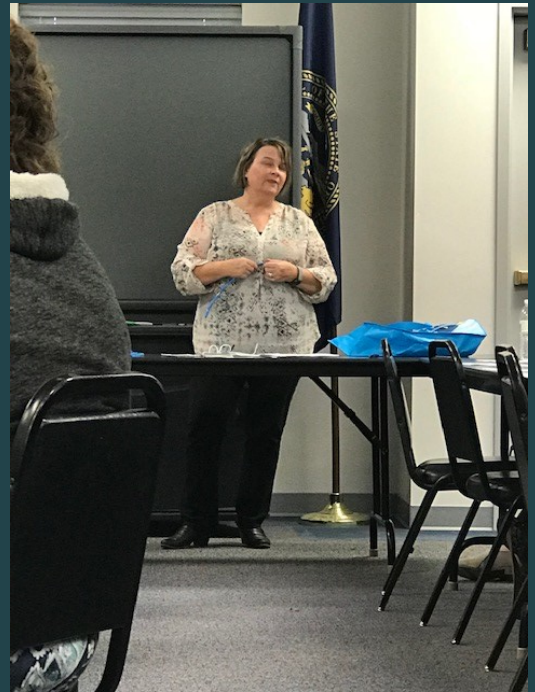
October 2018 Advocate of the Month: Tiffany Coufal



We at CASA would like to honor Tiffany Coufal, Tiffany has been with CASA for two and half years. She has served 6 families and 14 children in our local area. She has spent 166 hours towards her cases and driven 1,955 miles to see her CASA children. Tiffany is a wonderful volunteer. She works very hard on the cases she serves and is very dedicated to all of those children. She communicates with team members on her cases. She writes fantastic CASA reports and ensures her reports are turned in early.

Tiffany stated, "I joined CASA because I remember what it was like being a foster kid & I just want to help kids find their happy ending. All I ever wanted was my own happy ending."

October 2018 In-Service



Kearney/Buffalo County CASA held an in-service training for not only our new volunteers, but also for our current volunteers. Speakers were chosen based on requests from our volunteers.

Guest speakers included:

Honorable Judge Timothy Hoefft
Adams, Clay, Fillmore, Franklin, Harlan, Kearney,
Nuckolls, and Webster Counties

Melva Pavelka
Assistant Director
Families Care

Sarah Hock, LIMHP, LMHP, LADC
Outpatient Program Director
South Central Behavioral Services, Kearney

Karrie Schoenefeld, LIMHP, LMHP, LADC
Outpatient Therapist
South Central Behavioral Services, Kearney

New Volunteers: October 2018



**Rebekah Bennetts
Of
Kearney**

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October 12, 2018 Volunteer Appreciation

Each year we like to honor our Volunteers. Our Volunteers do so much for their CASA families as well as CASA and this is our way to give back to them.



Pictured above are Maria Graham, Cathryn Hohnholt, Tim Peterson, Barb Icenogle, and Denise Bryan. These volunteers were honored for all of the hard work they do.

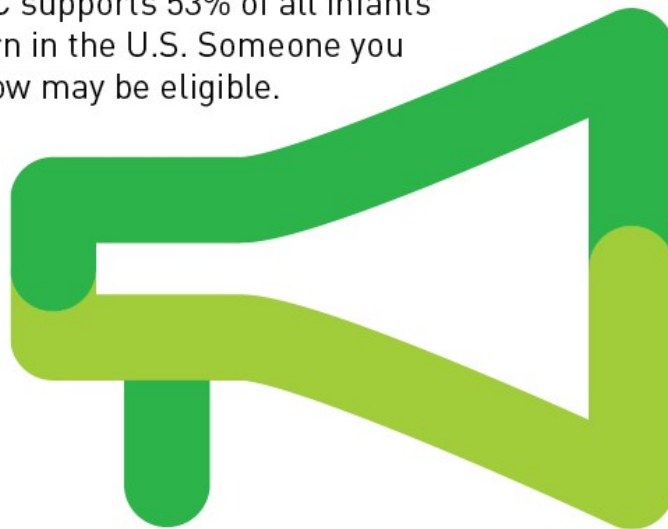
Those not pictured but were present were the following: Dorothy Feese, Lorissa Anderson, Ramona Sexson, Susan Tonniges, and Teresa Carey.



COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP OF MID-NEBRASKA

WIC is here for you! WIC provides wholesome food, nutrition advice, and community support for income eligible women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, post-partum, and for infants and children up to five years old. Community Action Partnership of Mid-NE, WIC program serves the following counties: Buffalo, Kearney, Phelps, Harlan, Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, Webster, Franklin Gosper, and Dawson. Contact us at signupwic.com or 308-865-5375 or 1-877-803-1712 for more information.

WIC supports 53% of all infants born in the U.S. Someone you know may be eligible.



SPREAD THE WORD!

signupwic.com

CASA Halloween and Chili Cook-Off October 28th



All of the CASA Staff this year participated in the Halloween Costume Contest as super hero's. We also participated in the Chili Cook-off that is to help support the local 4-H club. We placed 3rd in the chili cookoff!

Recruitment Video



Kearney/Buffalo County CASA works hard to recruit new volunteers on a daily basis. A new tool our staff and Recruitment Committee have been working to put together is our new recruitment video. Those who spoke in the video include: Justin Daake, Attorney, Foster Parent, Guardian, and Board of Directors and Gale Dorn, CASA Volunteer. Steve Buttress, CASA Volunteer also spoke along side a parent on one of his closed cases. Ramona Sexson, CASA Volunteer, foster parent, and guardian also came and spoke. All of them did a fantastic job. We would love to thank Joey Decker who came and filmed and is putting the video together. We would also like to thank Nadia Saadi who worked hard to bring all of this together!

November 2018

Advocate of the Month:

Denise Bryan



Kearney/Buffalo County CASA is proud to honor Denise Bryan of Pleasanton for her advocacy for abused and neglected children. Kathy, CASA Volunteer Supervisor states “Denise has been a volunteer with CASA since April and has served on two cases. Denise is just one of those people you can ask to do something and you know it will get done. I believe with Denise’s experience she is able to put everyone at ease and make them feel very comfortable and welcome. Denise is very organized and detail oriented which makes for an awesome volunteer. Denise puts in many hours a month being an advocate not only to the children in her case, but also to the parents when needed. Denise has a very kind heart and it shows through her volunteering. Although each case is unique in its own way, one thing that doesn’t change is Denise’s positive attitude in regards to making her CASA family whole again. “

Denise Bryan states “I grew up in a home with loving parents who took the time to meet our needs as well as create individual relationships with all five of us children. They were excellent role models while doing so. As a child myself, I saw kids I knew struggle with abuse and neglect. At that time, I believed I helped by befriending them. Those were memories of feeling helpless to make things better but still hoping for something better. Then in later years, as a teen, I

realized that kids don’t tell. They suffer silently or together, still loving the adults that are mistreating them. Through the years I continued to see children that wouldn’t tell and suffered. These children were overlooked partly because the signs they displayed weren’t recognized as warning signs. My heart and soul have been burdened since I can remember for these children. Some of them have grown to be adults and still suffer from their past. I’ve been able to help at times and at other times said prayers from a distance. Several years ago, the HUB ran an article about CASA to which my interest to participate was great but the needs of my own family were foremost and prevented a decision to participate. Recently at the beginning of this year, a colleague and I discussed their involvement with CASA and what was required. After that discussion, I felt in my heart that it was time to get involved. This is an opportunity to love these children, to be someone they can trust, to be their friend, and to be their voice to the court. I am honored and grateful to be able to be a part of the CASA program—to make a difference in the life of a child.”

CASA ADVOCATE BIRTHDAY'S

NOVEMBER

Roberta Loescher
Gale Dorn
Cathryn Hohnholt

DECEMBER

Shawntel Daniell
Kent Lilly
Lona Mason
Sara Schriener
Robin Stevens
Tiffany Coufal

JANUARY

Matt Mueller
Mary Louise Nelson
Misti Schroeder
Robert Zuehlsdorf
Barb Icenogle
Tim Peterson

FEBRUARY

McKenna Peplinski
Vickie Meier



CEU: 2018-2019

Each year our CASA advocates are required to complete 12 CEU's or continuing education units. Our fiscal year runs from July 1st to June 30th. The following advocates who have worked very hard and earned their CEU's for this fiscal year 2018-2019 are:

**Rebekah Bennetts
Jean Kolbo
Lona Mason
Mary Louise Nelson
Kelsi Trampe
Ashley Whitley**

Fantastic Job!!!!



Upcoming In-Service Training:

January 29th 5:30-9pm
Holdrege

Upcoming New Volunteer Trainings:

January 2019-Holdrege
April 2019-Kearney



Donors in August, September, and October 2018

**Kearney/Buffalo County CASA would like to thank the
following donors for not only donating to our program,
but their continued support of our program.**

**Dr. Mark Meyer and Jayne Meyer
Nebraska CASA Association
Kearney Dawn Rotary Club
John & Maxine Lillis
Builders
Mr. & Mrs. Carlson
Mirepoix, LLC
Crime Commission
Minden United Methodist Women
Eakes Office Solutions**



Why I Volunteer

"Deciding to Volunteer was not a question, deciding where to volunteer was the question! I wanted to volunteer for something that I truly believed I could make a difference and an impact which led me to CASA. I have truly been blessed with the families and children I have worked with I know that volunteering for CASA has very much made an impact in my life showing me that the time in is not what's important it's the HEART that is put in that makes the difference."

~**Heather Crowley**

"I love making a difference—even if it's only one person at a time."

~**Bridget Limbach**

"Many times, after reading the newspaper or watching our local news, I would wonder what I could do to help abused and neglected children in our town. I learned of CASA on KGFV's Talk of the Town, about how they are the eyes and ears of the court and speak up on behalf of the child in court hearings. I decided to volunteer so that I could be a voice for a child."

~**Jean Kolbo**

"I became a CASA volunteer because I know there are a lot of families struggling and need help coping with everyday life. My eyes and heart have been opened to more than I could have imagined and I already feel that CASA volunteers are needed and are an important part of our community. As intimidating as the process of our job can be (court, team meetings and reporting) I am enjoying my role in helping the future of our children."

~**Kathie Merritt**

"I wanted to become a CASA volunteer, because I believe that God gives us a heart to serve those in need, especially those without a voice. I was an Advocate for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault victims for many years; but, last year, when I moved to Buffalo County, God was leading me in a different direction. I began to learn more about the CASA Program, and realized that I needed to be part of what CASA is doing to help children. I can really see where an invested CASA Volunteer is a must, for every child in the Court System. Working with the families this last year has been so rewarding and I encourage anyone who is looking for a place to serve in their community, to consider becoming a Court Appointed Special Advocate. (CASA)"

~**Ramona Sexson**

"The reason I chose to become a CASA volunteer- There have been experiences throughout my life that I have found myself in a situation that I could help a child/and or an adult get out of a bad situation or help steer them in the right direction and get them the help they need. I have always been passionate about helping others where and when I could. When I first heard about CASA I didn't have to think twice about joining. I thought to myself, this is where I'm supposed to be. So I messaged a friend of mine and asked how and where to go to sign up. So many of our children do go unheard and get lost in our system only to be left most times another statistic. If there is just 1 person that can take a few hours out of their already crazy, stressful, busy lives to be there for a child in the foster care system and give them a voice in our court system, and just be there for them to let them know that they do matter to someone, they could change so many lives for the better. So many times we as adults assume we know what's best for our kids, when in fact if we would take the time to listen to our kids we could save them from the abuse and neglect and give them a happy home, a place to always call home. Besides being a mother and step-mother of 5 amazing children, CASA is the most rewarding journey I have done in my life thus far. There are still more children in our area that desperately need a CASA Volunteer. I encourage anyone to take some time out of their own lives and go through the training and become a voice for our children; they deserve to have someone in their corner. After all, they didn't ask to be put into the system."

~**Misti Schroeder**

"It is a great opportunity to make things better in folks' lives and I'm seeing lives change. We're here to help each other get through this, whatever 'this' is."

~**Steve Buttress**

"I had past experiences as a mentor and working with the Cedars diversion program. I was interested in learning more about this different path through the court system. It is important to invest in your community through investing in non-profits and volunteering. I became a CASA because it is important to have someone that looks out for you and your best interests. Stability is also important. Having someone you know, who is a consistent presence in the midst of the chaos is crucial. Being a CASA is a challenge. On my last visit with my CASA kiddo, she brought up wanting to spend the Fourth of July with her family. There were no arrangements for a visit on that day. It hadn't even occurred to me that arrangements needed to be made, because in my life holidays with family just happen. Being able to help facilitate something that seems so small, but is so important to the child, is important to me. Being able to help her have a voice, to help her be heard ensures that when the team makes decisions they can take her wishes into consideration."

~**Katie Varwig**

Quarter: July 1, 2018 to October 31, 2018

Children served:	122	<u>Children's Age Range</u>	<u>Case Outcome</u>
Cases Closed:	20	0-5: 61	Adoption: 3
Waitlist:	0	6-11: 50	Reunification: 15
		12-15: 19	Other: 2
Male:	71	16-17: 7	Guardianship: 0
Female:	71	18+: 4	

<u>Our Volunteers time w/ CASA</u>	<u>Ages of Our Volunteers</u>	<u>Type of Cases</u>
< 1 year: 18	21-29: 7	Neglect: 128
1 year: 11	30-39: 10	Physical Abuse: 10
2 years: 8	40-49: 9	Sexual Abuse: 1
3 years: 10	50-59: 10	Other: 2
4 years: 3	60+ : 15	
5 years: 6		

Miles driven by our Advocates: 10,952	SAVINGS: 10,952 \$.545 = \$5,968.84	Mileage
Hours our advocates put in: 1,062	1,062 x \$75 = \$79,650	Hours
# of New Advocates: 4		
# of Active Advocates: 56		
# of Advocates with more than 1 case: 12		
	\$85,618.84	TOTAL SAVINGS

GIVE WHERE YOU LIVE

Give Where You Live is a one-day fundraising event being held December 6, 2018 for the benefit of area non-profit organizations. This unique fundraiser is being organized and hosted by the Kearney Area Community Foundation.

We invite you to be a part of this unique one-day fundraiser to help Kearney/Buffalo County CASA raise \$6,000. Go to the link <https://www.givewhereyoulive.net/Kearney-Buffalo-CASA>

When a child is abused/neglected by a parent/guardian, they may be removed from the home for their safety. The child enters the foster care system and is placed with family/foster family. A court case is opened and the parent/guardian has a chance to regain custody by following the courts orders. Meanwhile, the child may experience many challenges, like placement changes, changing schools, loss of family connections, physical/emotional/health issues, etc. This is where CASA comes in. A CASA offers a child trust and advocacy during complex legal proceedings.

Please consider designating CASA for your donation, to enable us to continue our advocacy for abused and neglected children in Kearney and Buffalo Counties.



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Celeste Wells

Meet Our CASA Advocates!!

Lorissa Anderson
Samantha Arehart
Courtney Arram
William Aviles
Bryce Ann Bell
Rebekah Bennetts
Christy Bochart
Connie Broweleit
Denise Bryan
Seleste Bruce
Steve Buttress
Theresa Carey
Tiffany Coufal
Heather Crowley
Shawntel Daniell
Gale Dorn
Ron Eckloff
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Atricia Kenagy
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Amanda Kirkland
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Connie Larsen
Kent Lilly
Bridget Limbach
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Vickie Meier
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Mary Louise Nelson
McKenna Peplinski
Jessie Perez
Nicole Peterson
Tim Peterson
Griselda Ramirez
Amir Rizik
Jeri Runions
Sara Schriener
Misti Schroeder
Jere Sue Schroer
Ramona Sexson
Caroline Sikes
Rita Skiles
Jordan Smith
Robin Stevens
Susan Tonniges
Kelsi Trampe
Ashley Whitley
Dora Wilbur
Linda Younes
Robert Zuehlsdorf

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Kearney/Buffalo County CASA

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Court Appointed Special Advocates are appointed by the Court judge to represent the best interest of abused and neglected children in the court system. A CASA volunteer acts as the "eyes and ears" of children involved in court proceedings, and offer judges a critical perspective of what is in the best interests of each child, based on information gathered first-hand through research, interviews, and observations. Studies show that once a CASA volunteer is assigned to an abused or neglected child that the child is much more likely to receive vital services such as health care, education, and therapy. By getting involved as a CASA, you can help create healthier families and communities and change the course of a child's life.



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN



United Way
Kearney Area
Partner Agency