

KEARNEY BUFFALO COUNTY CASA

Autumn NEWSLETTER

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The Heart of a CASA

After a trip to get last minute birthday party items, helping with harvest, homework, football practice, more homework, a collision with a deer, ironing dress clothes for homecoming week, painting hair for purple/white day, and everyday life, Kelly Jensen got to feel like a princess at 11pm while she wrote her CASA Report, and was the voice of a child. We admire Kelly's dedication to her CASA kiddos. Even in the midst of a busy and chaotic day, she is determined to make a difference.



Meet Our New Volunteers!



Barb Icenogle
Kearney



Courtney Arram
Kearney



McKenna Peplinski
Kearney



Barbara Alexander
Holdrege

Meet our new volunteers! These fabulous volunteers were sworn in following a 30 hour training. As part of their training, they learned about the CPS and court processes, cultural diversity, understanding Child Abuse and Neglect, family strengths, stress in families, risk factors for abuse and neglect, Impact of mental illness/domestic violence/Substance Abuse to children and families, Poverty, Child Development, Attachment and separation, Understanding Confidentiality, Investigation, Community Resources, Writing CASA reports, Appearing in court, and Monitoring a case.



May 2016 Swearing In

Jean Kolbo
Kearney

Ramona Sexson
Gibbon



August 2016 Swearing In



Misti Schroeder
Kearney

Tiffany Coufal
Shelton



June Volunteer of the Month: *Ron Eckloff*

Kearney/Buffalo County CASA is proud to honor Ron Eckloff of Kearney for his advocacy for abused and neglected children. Ron has been a CASA volunteer for one year and seven months and has been an advocate for two different families. Since July 1, 2015, Ron has put in over 48 hours on his cases and driven over 206 miles in attending team meetings, court hearings, and visiting with all parties to the case. He takes the time to get to know his CASA children and identify their needs and wishes. Ron has been dedicated to each of his families from the beginning of the cases to the end. Ron has been that constant advocate in their lives. He has developed great rap-

port with his families and worked to identify resources to meet their needs. Ron has always looked to what is in the best interest of the children he has served and that they are safe.

Ron says, "We're called to help others. This is a way we can be involved directly in someone's life and come alongside those who need help. Being a CASA volunteer has really stretched me. I'm dealing with issues I have never had to think about before. At the same time it has been really rewarding. I've had a chance to meet some wonderful, caring people and I've been really impressed with what has been happening to make sure kids don't get lost in the legal system through CASA."



July Volunteer of the Month: *Katie McAdams*

Kearney/Buffalo County CASA is proud to honor Katie McAdams of Kearney for her advocacy for abused and neglected children. Claire Morrison, Katie's CASA Supervisor, says, "Katie has been a CASA for five months and is doing a stellar job advocating for the teenage child for whom she is Court Appointed Special Advocate. In those five months, Katie has gone above and beyond and put in over 60 hours on her case and driven over 500 miles. She spends this time and energy to make sure her CASA child feels heard and then she collaborates with the team to address Angela's needs and expressed desires. Katie makes sure all the services needed are in place for both her CASA child and the child's parents to ensure the child's needs are being met and that are more likely to be met in the future. Katie puts in the drive time to see her each month and has regular phone contact. She

consistently connects with me, provides the necessary paperwork and writes a very good court report."

Katie says, "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

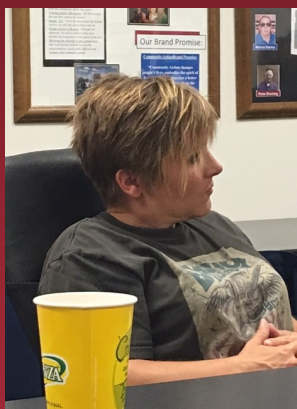
in my life holidays with family just happen. Being able to help facilitate something that seems so small, but is so important to the child, is important to me. Being able to help her have a voice, to help her be heard ensures that when the team makes decisions they can take her wishes into consideration."



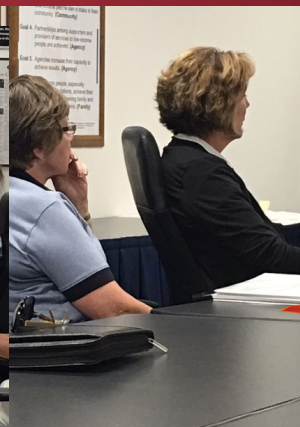
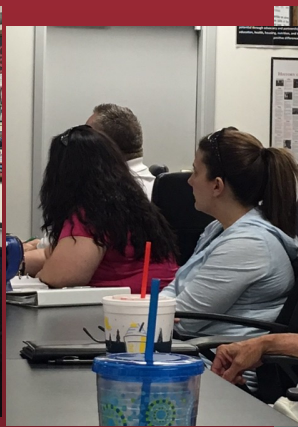
Kearney/Buffalo County CASA is proud to honor Connie Larsen of Kearney for her advocacy for abused and neglected children. Margot Icenogle-Larsen, Connie's CASA Supervisor, says, "Connie has been a CASA for 11 months and will be celebrating her 1 year anniversary with CASA on August 31st. We are so proud and lucky to have her! Connie is doing a fabulous job advocating for the four children for whom she is Court Appointed Special Advocate. In that year, Connie has gone above and beyond and put in over 53 hours on her cases and driven over 172 miles. She has also put in 32 hours of ongoing continuing

education hours. Connie goes above and beyond when investigating her case and gathering information to help identify the best interest for her CASA children. Connie is stellar on providing all necessary paperwork and writes an impressive CASA report. Her last CASA report got the attention of the Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) and County Attorney on her case. The GAL stated, "This is the best CASA report I've ever read."™" Connie shared, "I became a CASA Volunteer because I enjoy working with children and families."

Reunified: The Experience Of a Mother



Maria Graham spoke to our volunteers on June 2nd about her experience and involvement with her own CPS (Child Protective Services) Case and how this affected her family. She also shared her strong desire to help others in the same situation she was once in. She shared the importance of all of the team members and how she eventually realized they were all there to help her. She believes having CASA's on cases not only would be great for families, but would have been great for her family.



CASA Birthdays

July

Jeri Runions
Ramona Hill
Kelly Jensen

August

Kaleigh Johnson
Connie Broweleit

September

Cheryl Echtenkamp
Julianne Jeffris
Wanda Fedorchik
Jody Lonn
James Hudson

October

Dorothy Feese
Marilyn Kenton
Linda Younes
Ellen Geist

November

Paul Mussman
Roberta Loescher
Amy Hendrickson
Gale Dorn

December

Shawntel Daniell
Amy Latter
Kent Lilly
Tatiana Long
Connie Larsen
Robin Stevens
Tiffany Coufal



Upcoming New Volunteer Trainings:

Holdrege

January 2017

For an application, call 308-865-5675!



KEEP
CALM
AND

Be An
Advocate

National CASA 2016

June 4-7
Washington DC



Above: Claire Morrison and Congressman Smith

Capital Hill Day: CASA had the opportunity to have their voice heard on Capital Hill and share the importance of the CASA/GAL mission with members of Congress. Claire Morrison, Kearney/Buffalo County CASA Volunteer Supervisor attended National CASA and was able to meet and talk to Congressman Smith, Senator Fischer and Senator Sasse.



Above: Claire Morrison and Senator Fischer



Senator Sasse and Claire Morrison



Foster Care Review Board

History

Foster Care Review in Nebraska began in 1982 when the Nebraska Foster Care Review Act was passed. The agency is separate from the judicial branch and from the Department of Health and Human Services so it can assess, report, and make recommendations without any influence from other agencies or departments. regarding the child's permanency plan, services for the child and family, and the appropriateness and safety of the child's placement.

Mission Statement

The Foster Care Review Office's mission is to ensure that the best interests of children in foster care are being met through external citizen review, by monitoring facilities that house the children and youth, maintaining up-to-date data on a statewide tracking system, utilizing legal standing when necessary, and by disseminating data and recommendations through an Annual Report. Citizen Reviews Make a Difference. Studies have shown that children who receive citizen reviews are as much as 3.9 times more likely to find permanency when compared to children similar in every way except not re-viewed.

What Does The FCRO Do?

The FCRO is mandated to maintain an independent tracking system of all children in out- of-home placement in the State. The tracking system is used to provide information about the number of children entering and leaving care as well as other data regarding children's needs and trends in foster care, including data collected as part of the review process, and for internal processes. The FCRO was established as an independent agency to review the case plans of children in foster care. The purpose of the reviews is to assure that appropriate goals have been set for the child, that realistic time limits have been set for the accomplishment of these goals, that efforts are being made by all parties to achieve these goals, that appropriate services are being delivered to the child and/or his or her family, and that long-range planning has been done to move the child to a permanent home where he or she can grow and thrive. This is done by utilizing multi-disciplinary boards of trained citizen reviewers. The FCRO is to provide information and direct reporting to the courts, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Legislature regarding the foster care system in Nebraska; and to provide oversight of the foster care system. The FCRO is also charged by statute with promoting and encouraging stability and continuity in foster care. This is done on the case level, through the review process, and on a systemic level using aggregate data gathered during the tracking and review processes.

Local Review Boards

Each board consists of 6-8 community volunteers who are diverse in professions, race, ethnicities, age, gender, and economic status. These persons successfully completed pre-service training and receive continuing education on relevant topics. Members of local foster care review boards gather monthly to review the cases of 5-11 children who are in out-of-home care. The review board discusses the issues that may be present and makes recommendations for further actions regarding each case. Once a case is reviewed, a formal document is written by FCRO staff and submitted to the judge and other legal parties.



Crystal L'Heureux
Kearney



Sara Stauffer
Kearney

Volunteer Appreciation



Quarter Happenings

Children served: 98
Cases Closed: 21
Waitlist: 72

Number of Volunteers: 44 Active
Number of New Volunteers: 7
Hours our volunteers put in: 756
Miles driven by our Volunteers: 9,328

Volunteers Length of time with CASA

< 1 year: 12
1 year: 14
2 years: 6
3 years: 5
4 years: 2
5 years: 5

Type of Cases

Neglect: 106
Physical Abuse: 6
Sexual Abuse: 2
Other: 3



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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.

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Kearney/Buffalo Co. CASA