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KEARNEY BUFFALO COUNTY

CASA SPRING NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

SPRING 2015

New CASA Volunteers



New volunteers, left to right: Tatiana Long (Loomis), Atricia Kenagy (Kearney), Ellen Geist (Gibbon), Judge Rademacher, Kaleigh Johnson (Kearney), Dorothy Feese (Kearney), and Robin Stevens (Gothembug).
Not pictured, Wanda Davis (Kearney)

We are very glad to welcome to the CASA family our new class of 7 volunteers from the February Training. Each new volunteer underwent a rigorous screening process including an application,

an interview, 3 reference checks, and a thorough background check to confirm that they will be dedicated and appropriate CASA volunteers. Then our fearless class underwent the 30

hour training covering everything from their role as a CASA to the impact of addiction on families to the juvenile court process to child development to court report writing and dozens of other relevant and diverse topics. These brave new CASA's then attended a juvenile court hearing to learn first hand about the process and to be officially sworn in by the Judge. Each one of our new CASA volunteers is now advocating for an abused or neglected child, and along with our more seasoned CASA volunteers, each is helping to make the Kearney/Buffalo County community a safer and happier place for many children. Thank you all for your time and dedication to the children of our community!

CEU Central: Beautiful Minds

At Princeton University, John Nash, portrayed by Russell Crowe, struggles to make a worthwhile contribution to serve as his legacy to the world of mathematics. He finally makes a revolutionary breakthrough that will eventually earn him the Nobel Memorial Prize in Game Theory. After graduate school, he turns to teaching and marries Alicia. Meanwhile, Nash de-

velops delusions that the government asks for his help with breaking Soviet codes, which soon gets him involved in a terrifying conspiracy plot. Nash grows more and more paranoid until a discovery that turns his entire world upside down. Now it is only with Alicia's help that he will be able to recover his mental strength by ignoring his hallucinations and regain his status

as the great mathematician we know him as today. Beautiful Minds is a great movie to help you come to a greater understanding of mental illness, worth 2 CEUs.



Potluck and Child Abuse Prevention Seminar



Get out your crockpots and break out your favorite brownie recipes; Kearney/ Buffalo County CASA will be having a potluck! We hope to see you all at the conference room at the Mid Ne-

braska Community Action Partnership building at 6pm sharp on April 30th for some a great potluck and some networking time. At 7pm Jaime Vetter, Director of FAN, will be joining us to talk about how to report child abuse to the hot-

line, how to handle safety concerns in an ongoing case, and prevention programs in the area. Bring your best dish and some great questions, it's going to be a great evening! Attendance for the speaker at 7pm will be worth ICEU.

*"We make a living
by what we get,
but we make a life
by what we give."*

-Winston Churchill

In the last 3 months We have...

- Gained 8 fantastic new CASA volunteers
- Matched 16 children with a CASA volunteer
- Seen 1 child be adopted
- Had 2 children receive a legal guardian
- Had 9 children be successfully reunified
- Received grant funding and donations from the United Way, the Kearney Area Community Foundation through Give Where You Live, Dobytown Kiwanis, Minden Interchurch Ministries, the Crime Commission, Kearney Area Barbershoppers, Roger and Kay Wolford, Richard and Laura Masters, and Susanne and Roy Wilson.
- Had a very successful Men in Tights Fundraiser with lots of wonderful sponsors, community attendees, and voters
- Spent Over 950 hours and over 10,000 miles advocating for the abused and neglected CASA children in Kearney and Buffalo Counties in the months of January, February, and March.



We would like to wish our Volunteers and Staff with birthdays in April, May, and June a Happy Birthday!

Birthdays

Kathy Gifford
Deb Woollen
Sarah Ternus
Nicole Peterson
Janna Ingram
Diana Luscher
Teresa Carey
Ron Eckloff

Barbara Petska
Angela Gibreal
Connie Choquette
Linda Martin
Atricia Kenagy
Andrea Potthoff
Jill Wicht

Volunteer of the Month: February



Amy Hendrickson is a student at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. Kearney/ Buffalo County CASA is proud

to honor Amy for her hard work to get to know the children and their family and provide quality advocacy. Amy makes sure that she connects

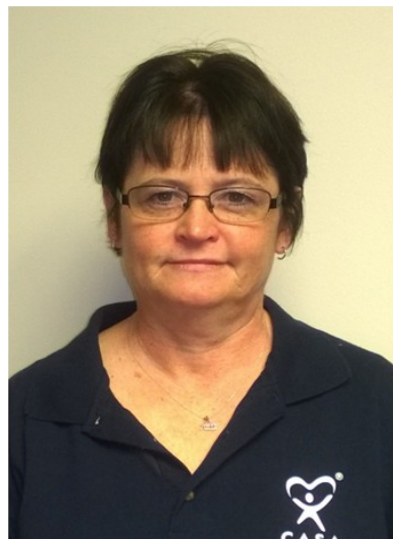
with everyone involved in the children's life so that she can have the full picture of what is in the children's best interest. Amy has also been an invaluable help in helping our program to connect more closely with the social work program on campus so that CASA can make positive connections with future caseworkers, family support workers, and other human services professionals. Amy says "I chose to become a CASA advocate because I am very passionate about working with kids in foster care. The first time

I heard about CASA was when a former foster child told me about it and suggested I get involved. Once the opportunity presented itself I could not wait to get started! I want to work with children who have been in foster care in my future career and CASA has been a great stepping stone in reaching that goal. My favorite thing about being a CASA advocate is watching the family grow on an individual level as well as the family as a whole. Being a CASA advocate is an amazing experience because you get to help give the children a voice. I have loved my experience thus far and cannot wait to see what the future holds!"

March Volunteer of the Month

Kearney/ Buffalo County CASA is proud to honor Connie Broweleit for all of her hard work in building a very strong rapport with the 2 highly traumatized children for whom she has advocated for the last 2 years. Connie has been a consistent presence in the children's lives, visiting them monthly regardless of their placement location and staying with them since the beginning of the case. Connie is also a great at

working with the other members of the team. Connie says "I am truly inspired by how hard DHHS caseworkers, GAL attorneys, and foster parents work together for the best interests of the kids. My CASA supervisor is also always there when I need her." Along with these other members of the team, Connie has advocated to make sure that her CASA kiddos find a safe permanent home.



April Volunteer of the Month



Amy Latter's first involvement with the CASA program was when she was asked to be on the Advisory Board in Kearney County. To better familiarize herself with the CASA program and to better serve the board, she decided to take the 30 hour new volunteer training. Amy

says "Once I got into the training, my eyes were opened to a need that I was completely unaware of. I knew child abuse and neglect existed, I just had no idea how the system worked and that I could

be a part of helping a child get through the process. I have always loved kids and becoming a volunteer for the program was something I felt I needed to be a part of. I am so blessed by the relationships that have been formed and truly feel like I have gained more than I have given." Amy has been a consistent presence in the children's lives, for each child she has served since she became a volunteer 7 years ago.

She visits them monthly regardless of their placement location and stayed with them since the beginning of the case until they find a safe, permanent home. Amy has a great ability to see the unique needs of each child she advocates for and advocates for the very best interests of each of them. She also has an ability to develop rapport with other professionals to enable her advocacy to be more effective.

Life Books



Nebraska CASA has generously supplied lifebooks which we have here in the CASA office. There are enough life-books for each child in the foster care system here in Kearney and Buffalo Counties.

A lifebook is cross between a babybook, a journal, and a scrapbook. It helps chronicle the significant parts of a child's life and provides a place to keep written or photographic memories

about their biological and foster families, their life, and their feelings along with any memorable events of their life whether that would be a vacation or a new school.

With all of the change and turmoil in their lives a life book can help a child in foster care keep track of all the good and important things that happen along the way so they can treasure those memories. Lifebooks

come with a variety of pages which can be removed or copied as relevant to the particular child.

If you are interested in discussing the helpfulness of a life book for the foster child (ren) you work with, please contact Claire, Margot, or Christina with the CASA office.

CASA

volunteers do a great job of investigating the case thoroughly and writing a complete report

Improving Working Relationships

This month the CASA staff has been meeting with several of the local GAL's, parents' attorneys, and HHS Supervisors to get a better idea of how to develop better working relationships between CASA volunteers and other team members. We are still in the process of meeting with attorneys, but here is what we have gleaned so far.

- Communication is key. Most GAL's appreciate an email update on how things are going, especially if there are concerns. Keep in mind that some GAL's really don't like secured emails. Always check with your case's GAL to make sure that they are able to open what you are sending.

- If you are having trouble getting a hold of an attorney by phone, try email. If you don't have their email address, ask your supervisor.
- Confidentiality is REALLY important, if you aren't absolutely positive that it is ok for you to share certain information with a particular person, please call your supervisor.
- While you are the advocate for the child, don't forget the best permanency option for a child is with their parents if the parents can provide a safe permanent home. Be respectful to parents and have realistic expectations of what improvements need to be made for the home to be safe.
- CASA volunteers do a great job of investigating

the case thoroughly and writing a complete report

- CASA volunteers spend a lot of time with the children and have regular contact with the other parties so they really know what is going on.
- Pictures on the report can be very helpful to humanize the case.

What tips do you have for establishing effective working relationships with team members and families? What problems are you facing? Give us a shout out here at the CASA office, we are looking to incorporate all the advice and questions we get to come up with a strategic plan for our next fiscal year and round of trainings to enable CASA to be even more effective in advocating for the abused and neglected children of Kearney and Buffalo counties.



Nebraska CASA State Conference



**Panel of
Former
Foster
Youth**

What a great Nebraska State CASA Conference! We heard from several wonderful speakers and a great panel of youth and we just wanted to share some of their insight with you.

Noah Ben Shea shared some wonderful insight from his book The Journey to Greatness and How to Get There on how to become a well rounded successful person and on how to help encourage your CASA kiddos to strive for the same thing. One of the most memorable lines was "Don't let the past kidnap your future". All of our CASA kiddos and most of us have something in our past that has left scars, whether they are physical or emotional, that influence how we live our daily lives. While we cannot avoid having them influence us, we can try to make it a positive influence that will allow us to make the most of our future.

Then we had a panel of youth from Project Everlast. Project Everlast is a support group, a place to learn skills/connect with resources, and a youth advocacy platform for youth between the ages of 14 and 24

who are or have been in care. These youth stressed the importance of CASA volunteers having faith in their youth and seeing them as a strong person without judging them, but also letting them know that there are there to support them. Really the

most important thing they stressed was just being reliable and present and believing in them which could mean giving them that push to be the best that they can be. Especially as a youth looks at aging out of the system it is important to make sure that they have information about resources they could utilize to meet basic needs once they are on their own so they can access them if they want to and that they have those basic living skills to survive. With all CASA youth, not just older youth, it is important to celebrate with them their successes whether that is a birthday, their first lost tooth, their first job, their first car, or anything they are excited about. These youth also stressed the importance of keeping older youth up to date about what is going on and making sure the whole team is on the same page about what is going on.

Corey Craig shared with us a little bit about his program the Trouble Maker

Foundation which focuses on helping youth find and achieve their goals, especially youth who have experienced loss and trauma.

Michelle Zinke provided some education on dealing with trauma and self-care as a volunteer. Advocating for abused and neglected children can be frustrating and stressful. You have such big hearts for helping these children that often advocating for them becomes such a huge priority that other priorities, like self-care, get left behind. Compassion fatigue (exhaustion and desensitization to violent and traumatic events) is a normal and expected consequence of listening to, caring for and helping people who have experienced trauma. Please remember that self-care (maintaining mental and physical wellness) is crucial because you are most effective as a person and as an advocate when you are feeling healthy and happy. If you think you are experiencing compassion fatigue, please speak with your supervisor.



CEUS!

Thanks to All our volunteers who have already completed their 12 CEUs for ongoing training or who completed the 30 hour initial training this fiscal year.

Rhonda Artrup
William Aviles
Katie Bean
Connie Broweleit
Teresa Carey
Connie Choquette
Wanda Davis
Cheryl Echtenkamp

Ron Eckloff
Wanda Fedorchik
Dorothy Feese
Ellen Geist
Angela Gibeal
Kathy Gifford
Becky Grimes
Amy Hendrickson

Susan Honeyman
Joe Hulquist
Janna Ingram
Kelly Jensen
Kaleigh Johnson
Atricia Kenagy
Kent Lilly
Roberta Loescher

Diana Luscher
Emily Lyons
Paul Mussman
Rebekah Mussman
Kris Parlier
Nicole Peterson
Barb Petska
Andrea Potthoff

Pam Radtke
Robin Stevens
Kathryn Wilson
Deb Woollen

Kearney/Buffalo County CASA Men in Tights!





We had such a successful Men in Tights event, we had over 600 tickets purchased and 12 hilarious “gals” who rocked the stage and kept us all in stitches until the end of the night. Sharon Lunch (Jeff Enszy) was crowned Miss CASA 2015 and Izzy Covered (Cody Krull) was crowned People’s Choice. We successfully met our fundraising goals which will help us to advocate for the abused and neglected children of the community.

Photo Credit - Jim Bunker - Kearney Media





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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.

For more information please contact **Claire Morrison, CASA Volunteer Supervisor at 308-865-5675 ext. 134.**

Featured Resource: Resource Binder

Looking to help your family locate resources? Located in Volunteer Supervisor, Margot Icenogle-Larsen's office is a resource binder packed with tons of resources within our very own community. Resources will continue to be added to this binder and will be available to all of our staff and volunteers. In this resource binder, various topics covered that include but are not limited to the following:

Food Resources
Community Action Services
Prescription Help
Housing
South Central Behavioral Services
Region III Behavioral Health Services
Teammates
Head Start
EDN: Early Development Network

PALS Program
Big Brother Big Sister
Safe Center
FAN: Family Advocacy Network
WIC: Women Infant and Children
Central Health Center
KCLC Program
Kearney Public School Resources
Through the Eyes Of A Child Forms

If there are additional resources you would like to see or have more information on a resource that is not in our resource binder, please don't hesitate to let one of us staff know and we will be more than happy to add to our resources.