

- Upcoming Training on Educational Advocacy
- Volunteers of the Month
- One Volunteer's Story about their CASA experience
- Men in Tights information!

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# KEARNEY BUFFALO COUNTY

## CASA WINTER NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

WINTER 2015

### New CASA Volunteers



Left to right: Judge Hoeft, Amy Hendrickson, Ron Eckloff, Lola Tiller, Barb Petska, Andrea Potthoff, and Marjean Schultz.

We are very glad to welcome to the CASA family our new class of volunteers from the October training. Our sister program Phelps/Harlan county CASA trained 4 new volunteers from the Kearney area alongside 2

volunteers from their own program. 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 is helping to make the Kearney/ Buffalo County community a safer and happier place for many children.

### Featured Friend of CASA

As a CASA volunteer you have discovered just how difficult the child welfare system can be and what a challenge those who work within it encounter on a daily basis. Whether they are Family Support Workers, HHS Workers, GALs, Foster Parents, Foster Agency staff, therapists, or oth-

ers, the professionals you work with as a CASA volunteer make differences in the lives of children everyday. We would like to offer you the opportunity to nominate a particular professional from the child welfare who you feel go above and beyond to protect they children

they serve. Please email Claire (kearneybuffalococasa2@mnca.net) with the name, job title, agency, and reason for the nomination for those you believe should be the featured friend of CASA!

# Educational Advocacy Conference



Many of you know that we have recently begun to put more emphasis on the educational piece of advocacy by gathering monthly data on how the children are doing in school. To help you in your endeavors to advocate for your children in the school system, representatives of many of the different programs in the Kearney Public Schools and a couple

of administrators have graciously agreed to come and present on the different resources available to help your CASA children including school social workers, the Special Education Director, the Director of KCLC, and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Carol Renner and Assistant Principal Kevin Madsen to not only speak about the best ways to visit with teachers and observe your kiddos in the school system but to

fill us in on tutoring opportunities, the Pyramid of Interventions for students struggling in school, and the PAWS program for elementary students. We also will be having the Nebraska DHHS Educational Specialist speak about the best way to advocate for the educational rights of children in the foster care system. We hope to see you there on February 19th from 5:30 to 9 pm.

*""Safety and security don't just happen, they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear."  
- Nelson Mandela*

## In the last 3 months We have...

- Gained 4 fantastic new CASA volunteers
- Begun to train 2 more wonderful CASAs
- Have 10 fantastic people who have submitted applications for the February Training
- Gained a new staff member
- Matched 21 children with a CASA volunteer
- Seen 2 children be adopted
- Had 2 children receive a legal guardian
- Had 7 children be successfully reunified
- Received grant funding and donations from the Crime Commission; Buffalo County; the Kearney Area Barbershoppers; Leroy Thom, Jean Thom, and T.L Foundation Inc.; CashWa; the Theodore Baldwin Foundation; Bethany Women of the ELCA, Truist, Kearney Area Community Foundation, and Minden Interchurch Ministries.
- Spent Over 1,000 hours and almost 9,000 miles advocating for the abused and neglected CASA children in Kearney and Buffalo Counties in the months of October, November, and December



## Birthdays

We would like to wish our Volunteers and Staff with birthdays in December, January, February, and March a Happy Birthday!

Kent Lilly

Lisa Cline

Jane Sattler

Kathryne Bean

Tim Peterson

Denise Jensen

Susan Honeyman

Becky Grimes

Joe Hultquist

William Aviles

Shawna Snider

Emily Lyons



## Volunteer of the Month: November

Roberta Loescher is the owner of Tru Café down on

the Bricks and still always finds time to go above and beyond in her advocacy for the 4 abused and neglected children she serves as a

CASA volunteer. Roberta says she became a CASA volunteer because "I believe in volunteering. I have always had a place in my heart for children. With the alarming number of children in today's society that are in transition due to abuse and or neglect, to no fault of their own, these

children deserve someone that will be their voice. CASA provides an opportunity for me to be their voice and volunteer in something I truly believe. If I am able to make a difference in the life of a child then I have become a better person. When you help to improve the lives of others you send out a message of hope."

## December Volunteer of the Month

Cheryl Echtenkamp is retired from her long time position as a Risk Management Specialist at Good Samaritan Hospital. Cheryl is always going above and beyond to ensure that the 6 abused and neglected children she advocates for receive the ser-

vices they need and a safe permanent home. She always goes the extra mile to make sure that the case manager and GAL are informed about occurrences on the case and to improve communication between all team members to ensure the children get the

coordinated services they need. Cheryl says she became a CASA volunteer because "I love kids, and a couple friends really encouraged me to do that. It's been really eye opening and I've helped anyway I could. It's very humbling."



## January Volunteer of the Month



Joe Hultquist has been a CASA Volunteer since 2007 and is an expert at developing rapport with other team members to gain the information and reports necessary to advocate for the child's best interests. Joe became a CASA Volunteer because "As the children go, so goes our future. That is why I

became a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for children. A CASA volunteer provides direction and continuity to young people who have become wards of the state. Social workers, lawyers, judges, Guardians ad Litem, schools, therapists and foster families frequently change so the child's life can

become a succession of confusing and sometimes tragic events. A CASA nearly always stays with the case until the case is closed. A CASA volunteer usually has a single and sometimes two cases, therefore, more time can be devoted to each case as compared to the system professionals who are assigned dozens of cases."

# Social Learning Opportunities



The Winter Celebration was a great success and fun was had by all. It was also a good time to talk about our Men in Tights event and share good ways you have discovered to access the information and records you need in order to provide quality advocacy for your CASA kid.

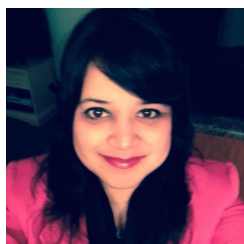
We are looking forward to having another social learning opportunity on April 9th from 6:00 to 8pm! We will be having a potluck and networking from 6:00 to 7:00 and then we will have a brief presentation followed by a group discussion of the subject.

We are looking for suggestions for possible topics, if you have something you are dying to discuss with other CASA's, please email Claire at [kearney-buffalococasa2@mnca.net](mailto:kearney-buffalococasa2@mnca.net) so she can add it to the poll we will be sending out in the middle of March for you to vote on the topic!

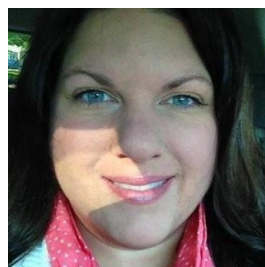


Our wonderful  
office volunteer:  
**Shirley McCammond**

## Meet the Staff



Executive Director  
**Christina McIntire**



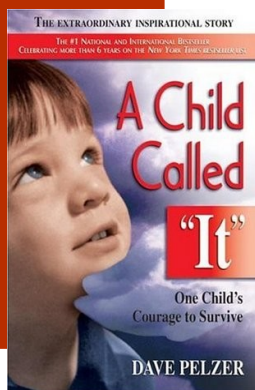
Volunteer Supervisor  
**Margot Icenogle-Larsen**



Volunteer Supervisor  
**Claire Morrison**

## CEU Central: Featured Book

Looking for a great, flexible CEU opportunity to enhance your understanding of abused and neglected children? Look no farther.



*A Child Called It* is the quintessential biography about a child who survived being abused and neglected. Dave was very severely abused and neglected. This book does a good job of not only describ-

ing what was going on in his life and how he felt towards his parents, but is also an excellent illustration of what outward signs might be present in the life of a child who is being abused or neglected that a caring neighbor, teacher, CASA, or other adult might

see. It is very educational and emotionally moving. If you have already read *A Child Called It*, there are also 2 sequels: *The Lost Boy* and *A Man named Dave*.

Reading the book and completing a Continuing Education Report Form is worth 2 CEUS.





Kearney/Buffalo County CASA  
*presents*  
*the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual*



**MEN IN TIGHTS**



**GREAT ENTERTAINMENT**  
*to help kids in need*

*Gala*  
**JOIN IN THE FUN**

*Thursday February 26, 2015*  
**6:00 PM PRE-SHOW 6:30 PM DINNER & CONTEST**  
*Younes Conference Center*

*Tickets*

For Tickets Call | 308.865.5675 Ext. 115

Tickets may be purchased at Tru Cafe 2100 Central Ave.

A satirical beauty contest featuring male personalities from the area competing in evening wear and talent with hopes of being crowned

*Miss* **CASA 2015**

*Thank You*  
**To Our Sponsors**





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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: RAFT**

Looking for a resource to help your CASA kiddo's family find a home and the support they need to be successful in becoming a safe home for their child? Consider encouraging them to apply for RAFT.

RAFT stands for Residential Assistance to Families in Transition. They seek to stabilize families in distress within a safe, secure, and empowering environment while they regain self-sufficiency. They provide a helping hand to those who are actively working towards becoming self-sufficient.

RAFT was created as a result of several agencies and concerned citizens in Kearney forming the Kearney Area Coalition on homelessness. The coalition designed RAFT to complement existing endeavors and help maximize efficiency and effective-

ness in the communities delivery of services.

RAFT provides a homeless family with a stable home so they can concentrate on working or attending training for 40 hours a week and working on other service plan goals like mental health counseling, education, future housing exploration, and community involvement. RAFT provides weekly case management for the families to help them work on these goals and also requires families to attend monthly budgeting meetings, Financial Peace University, parenting classes, and monthly life skills meetings.

RAFT provides services to homeless families where the head of household is at least 19 years of

age contingent on the families willingness to fulfill a Family Service Plan. The RAFT House is located in Kearney, NE and has 5 apartments. It is locked at all times and has shared laundry facilities and a fenced in backyard and playground. Staff are on call 24 hours of the day. RAFT does require a 6 month minimum and two year maximum residential agreement for each unit.

If you think your CASA kiddo's family would benefit from the help of RAFT come visit your supervisor! RAFT's office is located in the same building and your supervisor can assist you with obtaining an agency referral form for your CASA kiddo's family.