



CASA of Vermilion County  
101 West North Street \* Danville, IL 61832  
Phone (217) 446-5975 \* Fax (217) 446-6018  
director@casavermilion.org \* www.casavermilion.org



*Saturday*  
*March 20, 2010*

# Everyday Heroes

Spring 2010



**CASA**  
Court Appointed Special Advocates  
FOR CHILDREN

VERMILION COUNTY

## OUR MISSION...

is to advocate for abused and neglected children within the Juvenile Court System, by training and managing volunteers to represent those children's best interest to the court.



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### Message from the board president...

This is an exciting time for CASA of Vermilion County as we begin a new chapter in our existence. As many of you know, our original Executive Director, Heather Fox, and her husband have adopted newborn twin daughters. Heather guided CASA through its start-up phase. We are grateful for her dedicated service and the guidance she provided for our agency and wish Heather and family all the best.

The board has chosen Barbara Bein to succeed Heather as Executive Director. Barbara was part of the first training class of volunteer advocates in February, 2008. A year later she was hired as an Advocate Coordinator. When Heather went on maternity leave in late October, Barbara took the reins and worked tirelessly to continue the agency's work without interruption. Barbara has proven her dedication and ability to lead CASA in its work for abused and neglected children. Barbara did a fantastic job as Interim Executive Director, and has moved seamlessly into the lead position.

Renee Poke will be our new Advocate Coordinator. She is a long-time Danville resident who brings a wealth of experience in social services, supervision and advocacy. She has worked with Family Advocacy in Champaign and locally in the Ounce of Prevention program and Job Training Partnership.

We are looking forward to working with the dynamic team of Barbara and Renee as they combine their talents to usher CASA of Vermilion County into its next phase as an agency that brings hope and assistance to the children of Vermilion County. We hope you will join us as we recommit ourselves to helping abused and neglected children find the safe, loving, permanent homes they deserve.

*Jane Dobbles*

#### Board of Directors

Jane Dobbles, President  
Alayne Anderson, Vice President  
Chuck Kasper, Treasurer  
Roxy Reed, Secretary

Tiffany Black  
Neil Ehrlich  
Liya Hussmann Rogers  
Tricia Keith

#### Contact Information

Barbara Bein, Executive Director  
director@casavermillion.org  
  
Renee Poke, Advocate Coordinator  
advcoor@casavermillion.org

101 W North St  
Danville, IL 61832  
Tel: (217) 446-5975  
Fax: (217) 446-6018  
www.casavermillion.org

## Your Gift

will help give an abused and/or neglected child a voice in court.

Yes I wish to help abused and neglected children.

I have enclosed a contribution in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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I wish to contribute in honor/memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Please acknowledge my gift in writing to the above named person or his/her family, below:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

I would like my gift to be anonymous.

If you would prefer to donate with a credit card, you can donate online at

[www.casavermillion.org/donate](http://www.casavermillion.org/donate)

*Thank you for your generous support.*

### Our Amazing Advocates!

Rose Askam  
Ellen Baxter  
Barbara Bein  
April Bennett  
Shalonda Foreman  
Janell Graham  
Connie Huffman  
Janice Kempe  
Judy Mattis  
Deb Martin  
Ella Miller  
Michell Monroe

Kathy Moore  
John Murray  
Ron Pridemore  
Terri Reed  
Nancy Russell  
Ned Smith  
Lisa Taapkin  
Juli Thornton-Busby  
Wendy Wilder  
Karen Wodetzki-Davis

WINTER 2010 CLASS:  
Joe Carter  
Mike Courson  
Miranda Duncan  
Linda Ellmore  
Kerrie Gill  
Steve Golseth  
Linda Hamer  
Mark Meyer  
Dinea Warrick



**DONORS**  
September 2009 - February 2010

5 Star Compliance	Kay Kilbourne
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*Adrienne Dahncke in honor of the Kelly Family*  
*Harith & Deborah Tamimie in memory of Frances Tamimie*  
*Evelyn Hanson in memory of Frances Dobbles*

**Coins for CASA Participants**

*CASA would like to extend our gratitude to the students and staff of every Vermilion County School that participated in Coins for CASA this year. Over \$1000 dollars has been collected to date and contributions are still coming in. We value highly every penny raised through your efforts!*

**THANK YOU !**

*Saturday, March 20, 2010*  
*5:15 - 11:00 PM*



*Join us for a wonderful evening to benefit the children served by CASA of Vermilion County.*

*Guests will arrive at Danville Gardens, 1307 Cleary. They will be transported to "Casablanca" at the Vermilion County Airport for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres.*

*We will return to the breathtaking Danville Gardens for a splendid dinner, silent and live auctions and dancing.*

*Tickets \$100 per person*  
*Contact Sandi Wood*

*442-6655*

*sandiwood1718@gmail.com*

*Tickets also available for purchase online at*  
*www.casavermillion.org*

*Dress for an elegant evening of dining and dancing in the Gardens.*

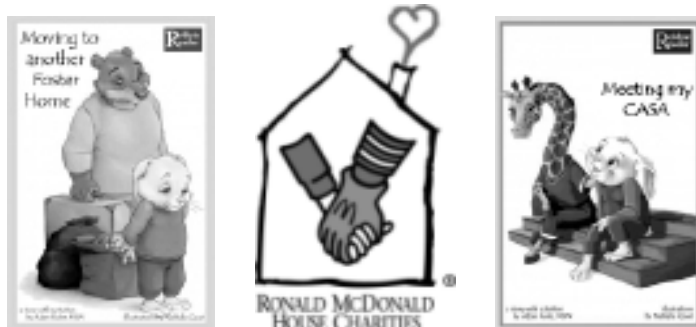
***Ronald McDonald House Charities  
funds CASA toolkits for children in foster care.***

CASA was awarded a \$9,600 grant from Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Illinois. The funds will provide kits for 200 foster children and their families. Deanna Witzel, owner and operator of all Vermilion County McDonald's Restaurants, said she was glad to be a part of the effort. "I just think it's a wonderful program," Witzel said of CASA. She said supporting the program is consistent with the restaurants' initiatives to work for local families in the community. "They do such wonderful things. They do make a difference in the lives of kids. When you read about Robbie Rabbit, it's very touching."

The money from the grant was used to purchase book bags, books and pamphlets from the Robbie Rabbit series, soft stuffed rabbits, comfort toys and materials for foster parents. The kits are designed to be tools that help articulate the situation to children in foster families. It is an opportunity to explain what is going on in their lives. Some of the children are so young. They know that something changed their lives, leaving them scared or confused. We are hoping to give the children language and stories that help them understand what is happening in their lives.

CASA was able to purchase 204 book bags and enough materials to stock them. They will be distributed to children and their foster parents by their CASA advocates. There are a variety of titles in the Robbie Rabbit series, including "Foster Care: What is it?" "Meeting My CASA," "Moving to Another Foster Home," "What is Adoption?" and "Robbie's Trail Through Adoption." Children will be given the written materials that are suitable for their situation.

Special thanks to the Westville Public Library who donated games made in their parent-child class to include in the toolkit. The games were made by children with materials provided by the local Red Hat Society.



adopted, whether because of circumstances or the youth's choice? For some time, those of us in national child welfare circles have talked about the importance of lifelong adult connections for these older youth. Think about it: In order for any of us to make it in life as an adult, we need people who we can call on when we want to celebrate the good times or commiserate in the bad times. Certainly for children who have grown up without the structure of an intact home, making those connections is absolutely critical. They need to know that when they stumble there will be someone there for them. It is also important that they have a person who can advise them and connect them to helpful resources. And when youth are connected in this way to a caring adult, we are not saying that reunification is ruled out. After all, we can never have too many people who love us!

I am currently reviewing a book compiled by two people who were in foster care, a book collecting stories from adults who have had some measure of success and who as children spent time in the system. As they revisit their journey through care, they talk about the coach, the teacher or the caring neighbor who was there for them. They talk about how important it was to them to have had someone to support them, to encourage them, to tell them that despite everything that had happened to them, they were still valued people. The message that young people can be successful needs to be consistent and needs to be reinforced for a lifetime. So when the judge, the social worker and the CASA/GAL volunteer are out of the picture, there needs to be somebody who can continue to deliver these positive messages to youth.

Whether a young person ends up returning to the birth parents, being adopted or aging out of care with supportive adults in their corner, permanency is always worth the effort. These are certainly better options than languishing in care or aging out with no support. And CASA volunteers are critical in keeping the wheels of concurrent planning rolling.



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## Concurrent Planning in Permanency Decisions: Reunion, Adoption and Lifelong Relationships

*Hon. Ernestine Gray,  
Orleans Parish Juvenile Court  
President, National CASA*



Concurrent planning is a concept unfamiliar to many people outside of child welfare systems and difficult for many in child welfare to actualize. The idea behind concurrent planning is that while whenever possible we are focused on family reunification, we need to have a backup plan. We will not want to start over if reunification does not work out, creating delays to permanency. So we are always working on two parallel tracks. This makes good sense and does not detract from reunification efforts. It simply says that if reunification does not work out, we are going to move toward termination of parental rights and adoption. Or we are going to give legal custody to a relative.

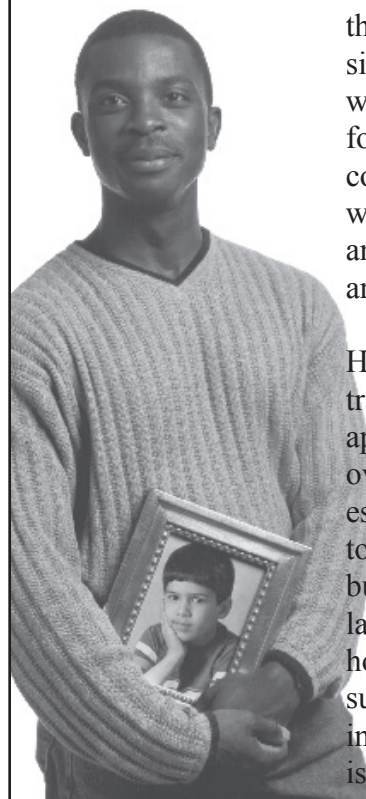
Concurrent planning is the “just-in-case” preparation that gets children to permanency much sooner. It is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. Different situations call for different plans. For example, let’s say I am reviewing a new case involving an infant. What I would usually require is a concurrent plan of reunification/adoption. I would go this route because for a baby or toddler, I would not be inclined to explore one of the less permanent options such as giving legal custody to a relative. Ideally the young child’s initial placement is in a “dually certified” home, where the foster parents are open to adopting. So adoption becomes the backup plan if reunification does not work out.

Concurrent planning for older children is often different. Unfortunately, this population is not adopted as often, making it harder to place them in dually certified homes. As a judge, I am likely to propose kinship care or guardianship as the backup plan for an older child because the child has probably had some contact—and hopefully a significant relationship—with relatives.

Additionally, it is important to work on other key factors necessary to ensure that the older child will become a productive adult. These are paying attention to their education, teaching them independent living skills and creating lifelong connections. At the same time that we ensure school success, we must teach youth independent living skills such as budgeting, setting up a household and accessing health care. This extra attention is needed when children have not had the benefit of growing up in an intact home and a stable school environment.

And what does permanency mean for older youth who are not reunified or

## *Now is the Right Time to Become an Advocate.*



Turn your desire to help into action – train to become a CASA for a child! You CAN do this and we’ll show you how... with extensive training, and step-by-step support as you work your case. To learn more and/or register for our 30-hour child advocacy pre-service course, call Renee at 217-446-5975. Visit [www.casavermillion.org](http://www.casavermillion.org) for an application and more information. Training & materials are FREE.

What does having a CASA mean to a child? Having a CASA volunteer means having a trained and committed adult who has been appointed by a Juvenile Court Judge to watch over you, and advocate for your best interests. That volunteer will investigate your case to make sure you don’t get lost in the overburdened legal and social service system, or languish in an inappropriate group or foster home. They will be there for you, making sure all your needs are being met, until you’re in a safe and permanent home and your case is closed.

### **Summer 2010 Advocate Training Session**

**June 15 – July 15, Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:30 am – 12:30 pm  
Danville Township Building, Board Room**

CASA offers 3 training sessions per year:  
February (Afternoons 12:30 - 3:30)  
June (Mornings 9:30 – 12:30)  
October (Evenings 5:15 – 8:15)

**To become an advocate please call (217) 446-5975 or visit our website at [www.casavermillion.org](http://www.casavermillion.org) for more information. The training and all associated materials are free!**

## *CASA Volunteers Help Ensure Permanency*



*Judge Glenda A. Hatchett  
National CASA Spokesperson*

I am 4 years old and at nursery school. I love my school and my teacher. It's late afternoon, and my mother has called the school office from a pay phone to say that she's been delayed. There was a car accident ahead of her. Fortunately she wasn't involved, but she was held up. I'm here with my teacher because all the other kids have been picked up, and all the other teachers have gone home. There are people outside the school burning leaves on

the curb. I stand watching for my mother and smelling the leaves burn. For this short moment, even though I love my teacher and she assures me that my mother is coming, I am devastated by uncertainty.

This was a brief and unique occurrence in my young life, but it is etched in my memory forever. I cannot imagine my life being full of such uncertainty. But this must be what it feels like for children in foster care who do not know what is coming next.

Permanency means many different things depending on a child's circumstances. But for me, permanency means for children to be in loving, caring homes where they are treated with dignity, nurtured and encouraged to be all that they can be.

When I was a juvenile court judge in Atlanta, I could not have been nearly as effective in helping children achieve permanency without the support of the local CASA program. The volunteers were instrumental in seeing to it that children did not languish in foster care but rather were guided toward permanent placement as quickly and safely possible.

One of my favorite stories from those days involves a retired gentleman in his late 60s who volunteered when we first started the CASA program in the court. He took on a case and insisted on serving all three siblings. The children had been in the care of the grandmother because the mother had mental health issues. This worked fine for a while, until the grandmother became overwhelmed by the responsibility. She actually ended up losing her home, at which point she left to seek help from out-of-town relatives. As I understand it, she did not return as quickly as people thought she would, and the children ended up back in the foster care system.

Fortunately, the oldest of the three children knew that there was an aunt who lived in south Georgia. But she only knew the aunt's first name. The CASA volunteer—we'll call him Ed—got up before dawn and drove nearly three hours to south Georgia.

Ed was not dissuaded by the fact that he only had a first name for the aunt. Let's say it was Betty. Ed went to restaurants, he went to barber shops, he went to beauty parlors in this small town and he asked, "Do you know a Betty? Do you know someone who might have relatives in Atlanta?" For three days he did this. Three nights he drove home without success, and then he got up and started again. And miraculously, on the fourth day, he found the aunt. He met someone who knew someone who knew the aunt. She then came to Atlanta and petitioned the court to take all three of the children home with her, and that is how it ended up.

I am absolutely convinced that those children might have lingered in care indefinitely but for the fact that there was this persistent, committed CASA volunteer. On the first or second day, Ed could easily have thrown up his hands. But for four mornings he got up at dawn and kept on trying. That was a huge commitment, but he was not deterred. I doubt any CASA program would ask a volunteer to spend four days in a car to find a child's relative. But in ways large and small, it is the volunteer's commitment that makes the difference.

Without the 1,018 CASA program offices around the country, what would happen? We would still have committed foster parents and committed social workers. The juvenile courts would carry out their work. But without the added value, the added resources, the added tenacity of this wonderful cadre of men and women who volunteer for CASA programs, there are lives that would not be changed. There are children who would linger in uncertainty. But the good news is that we do have CASA volunteers. And a fine example is Ed, who was the bridge to permanency for three young siblings.

The Honorable Glenda A. Hatchett is a nationally recognized authority on juvenile issues known for her award-winning television series Judge Hatchett and her book *Say What You Mean, Mean What You Say!* Judge Hatchett is also holding free "Parent Power" conferences around the country. See her website for more information: [glendahatchett.com](http://glendahatchett.com).



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