



CASA of Vermilion County
101 West North Street * Danville, IL 61832
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Everyday Heroes

Fall 2008



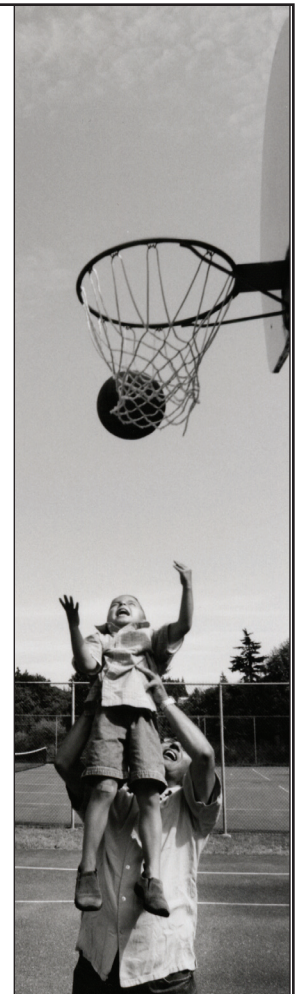
CASA

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

Our program has started well, and I am so proud of the advocates now at work for children in our area. We are hoping for a steady supply of volunteers to step forward from the community, and this hope has me thinking about volunteerism. What makes a person go this “extra mile”? Statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor show that about 60.8 million people volunteered through or for an organization at least once in the year beginning in September 2006. That means one in five Americans have given up some personal time for free. What is the payback?

- * Volunteers can learn a new skill- it is good for your brain to do something new; you are never too old!
- * Volunteers are positive parts of their communities- rather than gripe about what is wrong, dig in and help improve your community.
- * Volunteers gain a sense of achievement- of course, one person cannot solve ALL problems, but he or she can help with ONE.
- * Volunteers may boost career options- 73% of employers would hire a person with volunteer experiences over someone with none.
- * Volunteers enjoy new experiences- get out of the “same old, same old” by exposing yourself to new people, situations, and challenges.

The rewards are great, and sometimes unexplainable! If you feel you cannot volunteer with CASA just now, please help us spread the word about our program! Do you know someone who would be a good child advocate? You or your group may want to sponsor a trainee (\$300 per person is our cost). I feel very good about my work with CASA; I invite you to share in the good feeling!

Lois Gholson, Board President

Board of Directors

Alayne Anderson
 Tiffany Black
 Jane Dobbles
 Thomas Fahey
 Lois Gholson
 Ron Pridemore
 Tammy Wilson

Contact Information

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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 _____

E-mail _____

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

Thank you for your generous support.

The Illinois Attorney General’s Office Helps CASA to Grow!

The Illinois Attorney General’s Office’s Violent Crime Victim Assistance Bureau selected CASA of Vermilion County as a Victim/Witness Assistance Center and provided CASA with a \$6,000 Grant. The Bureau is dedicated to: developing and improving activities and services that promote the recognition of rights, needs, and interests of crime victims in Illinois; providing victims access to programs that supply needed information, assistance, and advocacy; educating the public about victim services; and ensuring that grantee agencies provide quality services.

This grant will support CASA hiring a second part time staff member who will recruit, train, and supervise CASA advocates! For more information about how the Illinois Attorney General’s Office serves victims of crime, visit their homepage at <http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov>

DONORS

January 2008 - September 2008

American Association of University Women Mark & Alayne Anderson Wilbur & Linda Bolton James & Paula Conder Linda J. Curtis Danville Township Kathleen Delzell Lori DeYoung William & Jane Dobbles First Midwest Bank James & Lois Gholson Illinois Bar Foundation	Keystone Sunday School Class, St. James Methodist Church Kiwansis Golden K Tom & Sharon Lacquet Thomas & Marsha Meyer Carol McClendon National CASA Jim & Frances Schoon Kelly Strader ThyssenKrupp Presta Chad & Tracy Turner Vermilion County Mental Health Board Margaret Ward Anne Weitzmann
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Family Fun Hog Roast

To benefit CASA of Vermilion County

Come and join us at Hickory Hollow and enjoy a delicious Bar-B-Q meal, live music, kids' activities, door prizes, and the chance to win a quarter hog and more!

Kennekuk County Park
 22296-A Henning Road, Danville

Saturday, October 4
 Serving ~ 3:00 - 6:00 pm

Tickets: \$15 for everyone 12yr+
 \$5 for ages 5-11yr
 free for children under 5



Ensure you have the best spot, bring your own lawn chairs or blanket!

Order your tickets online at www.casavermilion.org/hogroast or mail the form below with your check!

Special thanks to all our event sponsors. Sponsor list on page 9!

FAMILY FUN HOG ROAST SPONSORS

Applewood Farms
Aqua Illinois Water Company
Charlotte's Coffee and Tea Shop
County Market - North
Dan Brown for Vermilion County State's Attorney
Darla Cruppenink for Vermilion County Circuit Clerk
Denny Gardner for Vermilion County Circuit Clerk
Diveley Enterprises
Doc Ashton and the Root Canals
Junkyard Dogs Antique Auto Club
First Midwest Bank
Lori DeYoung for District 104 State Representative
McDonald's
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Priceless Foods
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Lincoln Raiders
Peggy Johnson, Vermilion County Coroner
Quaker Oats
Randy Bringegar for Vermilion County State's Attorney
Schroeders
ThyssenKrupp Presta
Tom & Nancy Fahey
Wal*Mart
State Representative William B. Black, District 104

Ticket Order Form

Please clip and include this form with your check!

Name: _____
 Address: _____

Ticket Type	Cost per Ticket	Quantity	Total
Hog Roast Tickets for 12 yr+	\$15		
Hog Roast Tickets for 5-11yr	\$5		
Total Cost			

Mail to CASA, 101 W North St, Danville, IL 61832!

CASA kicks off its second year by doubling the number of child advocates!

There are more than 300 children in Vermilion County who have been abused and or neglected and need a voice in court. Volunteers serving as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), provide that voice. On Thursday August 7, nine community members were sworn in as CASA volunteers. Judge Michael Clary presided over the swearing-in ceremony at the Vermilion County Courthouse. These nine new advocates join the existing team of nine advocates, doubling the program's capacity to serve abused and neglected children.

Volunteers Ken Green, Connie Huffman, Suszanne Ingram, Ella Miller, Lawrence Nitzke, Susan Quick, Lloyd Randle, Ashlee Thomas, and Karen Wodetzki-Davis completed 30 hours of rigorous training including courtroom procedure, the juvenile justice system, the special needs of abused and neglected children, as well as passed a background check in preparation for their responsibilities. Each CASA volunteer will follow a single case, which may include one child or a sibling group, until the case is typically resolved in about two years. The advocate will meet at least monthly with each child to assess his or her progress, needs and wants. By regularly talking to foster parents, teachers, caseworkers and others, advocates gain needed information to help the judge make sound decisions, which at the end of the case, will result in a safe and loving home for the child. Judge Clary said, "Because of heavy caseloads and high staff turnover, it can sometimes be difficult to get thorough information about each case. I look forward to working with the CASA volunteers."

"I joined CASA's Board when I retired because I felt a need to do something for these children and for my community", stated Jane Dobbles CASA's Board Vice President. CASA's next training class will take place in October on Wednesdays from 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM. "It is my hope that other retirees will join us in October and take on the important role of advocate. These children are counting on us to make their lives better."

Our Amazing Advocates!

Barbara Bein	John Murray
Doug DeBarba	Lawrence Nitzke
Ken Green	Ron Pridemore
Connie Huffman	Susan Quick
Suszanne Ingram	Lloyd Randle
Janice Kempe	Nancy Russell
Judy Mattis	Ashlee Thomas
Ella Miller	Wendy Wilder
Michell Monroe	Karen Wodetzki-Davis



Aging Out and Rising Above

The nine years I spent in the foster care system in Georgia are a part of me, but they are not me. I have faced many obstacles in my life; however, I have worked hard to rise above all of the negative stereotypes that are placed on foster youth. I liken myself to the Phoenix, the mythical bird that was destroyed and then rose from the ashes. In a sense I have recreated myself. My spirit, my mentors, my learning experiences have all propelled me to a higher level.



Sherena Johnson, 22

Now that I know who I am, I can be of service. Because others have helped me, I can be an inspiration, a motivator—and I can make a difference in the life of a youth in foster care. Child and teen advocacy is my passion. I have chosen to be an advocate for former and current foster youth because I want to let them know that they too can rise above stereotypes.

As a child growing up in foster care, despite the physical and emotional abuse that I received from my family, I was determined to be leader of change. Today I stand up and challenge the child welfare system because I know that many children are afraid to speak up for the issues that affect their lives. Though I endured abuse, neglect and depression, I knew that one day I was going to stand up, be strong and speak out. I would be a "different seed" to ensure that youth journeying through the foster care system can have a good life.

There's a mythical bird related to the Phoenix, the Sankofa, revered by the Asante of Ghana. The Sankofa teaches that one must look back on one's past in order to move forward. The struggles that I went through transitioning out of foster care make me want to ensure that other youth have a better future.

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How You Can Help

Every donation of time, materials, and financial support is greatly appreciated. Here are just a few ideas how you can get involved:

- Become an Advocate for a child (or sibling group)
- Join our Board of Directors
- Share information about CASA with your friends, family, and coworkers
- Invite us to present at your church, organization, or civic group
- Sponsor or host an event
- Consider CASA for your fiscal or in-kind donation

Happy Birthday CASA!

Highlights of our first year (July 1, 2007 - June 30, 2008)

Building a strong organization that could be a stable source of support for this communities most at risk children was the primary objective taken on by our board in our first year. It was our hope to create a program that would build on the communities' resources in serving abused and neglected children. The first steps in this process included securing donated space, opening an office, and hiring an Executive Director.

Then we took on two important tasks. First building the organization and providing a foundation that the program could grow from. A website and selection of materials explaining the mission of CASA were developed as tools for sharing information about our program. We started our work engaging community members through over 30 group presentations through out the community, and worked with print and radio media in sharing our message.

That is when the real work started. We trained our first nine advocates who were sworn in as Officers of the Court. These nine advocates took cases serving 15 children all of whom had been abused and/or neglected and have Juvenile Abuse and Neglect cases.

This is just the beginning! Over the next year we expect to train at least 20 new advocates, hire a second staff member to work exclusively with advocates, and raise \$70,000 to support our third year of service! To accomplish this we will need the support of the entire community.

Please contact the office or visit www.casavermilion.org to learn how you can help support CASA!



Treasurer's Report		
Statement of Support and Revenue & Expenses for the year ending June 30, 2008		
Revenues		
Contributions		\$14,417.76
National CASA Grant		\$40,000.00
	Total Revenue	\$54,417.76
Expenses		
Conference & Training		\$2,641.81
Equipment		\$1,602.98
Personnel		\$32,587.08
Printing		\$2,450.15
Rent/Utilities		\$1,900.44
Supplies		\$2,105.92
Other		\$1,483.29
	Total Expenditures	\$44,771.67

CALL TO ALL RETIREES



More than 300 abused and neglected children are calling for help in Vermilion County. You can answer the call by becoming a CASA, or Court-Appointed Special Advocate. Although many CASAs are employed fulltime, retirees are particularly well-suited for this effort. The knowledge and experience you have gained throughout your life are invaluable resources for the children in your community.

CASA volunteers are ordinary people who are committed to doing what is best for a child who has been abused and/or neglected. Volunteers are provided 30 hours of training and are assigned to a staff member for continuous support and guidance.

There is no age limit on making a difference. Over half of CASA volunteers nationwide are over the age of 50. If you are interested in helping children, and can pass a routine background check, then there is a child who needs your help. Most volunteers spend an average of 8-10 hours a month working on their case. Volunteers often share that seeing their work help a child to thrive is extremely rewarding.

Volunteers meet with the child monthly, and interview everyone who might shed light on the child's current needs. They then work with the caregivers, caseworker and other service providers to facilitate getting the child the support he or she needs. Periodically, this information is compiled into a report and provided to the judge. This helps provide the judge with a true picture of the child and his or her needs. The ultimate aim is that at the end of the case the children will be in a safe, loving home.

Next CASA Training Class

October 1 - October 29
Wednesdays 9:00am - 3:30 pm - lunch provided
101 W. North St., Danville, IL 61832

We are looking for individuals who are committed to helping abused and neglected children to be part of this class. If you are interested in becoming an advocate please call (217) 446-5975 or visit our website at <http://www.casavermilion.org> for more information. The training and all associated materials are free!



What Would You Do?

*Judge Glenda A. Hatchett
National CASA Spokesperson*

Imagine for a moment that you come home one day and all of your possessions are piled on the front porch of your house in garbage bags. When you turn to your family—the people you counted on yesterday for shelter and support—they tell you that they won't be there for you anymore. Then one of them hands you a check for a small amount of money and says, "Go, make your way in the world."

Even as an adult with rich life experiences to draw on, *what would you do?* Now think of an 18-year-old being put in that position because he is exiting the foster care system. Unlike you or me, he hasn't been given the best of what our society has to offer. His education has been interrupted by frequent moves, and his résumé comprises a short list of low-wage jobs. He has no credit history, no car and—as of today—no home. All the family that this young person has ever known have been affiliated with the foster care system, and now they are gone.

Each year, nearly 25,000 children age out of the foster care system when they turn 18 (21 in some states). The legal term for this occurrence is emancipation. But to me, the word that really describes the situation of these youth is uncertainty. They have been so preoccupied with—and sometimes overwhelmed by—their day-to-day survival that they have not had an opportunity to plan for their future. These youth are facing one of the most difficult and defining moments in their lives without a clear understanding of their options.

Sadly, national statistics show us that a few options are exercised regularly: Nearly 60% of foster youth drop out or fail out of high school; 25% face jail terms within two years of their emancipation from foster care; 20% experience homelessness; and less than 3% earn college degrees by the age of 25.

That's why it is so important to have CASA and GAL volunteers involved in our young peoples' lives leading up to this critical juncture. These and other caring adults can prevent teenagers from becoming another statistic. CASA volunteers can work with youth to help them chart a course and create a plan.

Volunteers can ask teens the critical questions that need to be asked and offer them the advice that most of us took for granted growing up: "If you want to go to college, these are the tests that you need to take"; "If you want to go to vocational school, these are the organizations you need to contact"; and so on. CASA volunteers can—and do—help youth look at aging out as a next step toward a wonderful new chapter in their lives rather than a dead end.

When I think of a foster youth succeeding against all odds, I think of Conception Cuevas. I met Conception when she appeared on my show to share her story of succeeding despite tremendous challenges. Growing up, she was separated from her siblings, lived in 11 foster homes and attended 8 high schools. Her CASA volunteer, Erica, ensured that Conception remained in contact with her siblings and stayed on track to pursue her dream of obtaining a degree in criminal justice. Erica rolled up her sleeves and worked hard to get Conception into school and helped her obtain the scholarships she needed to complete her education.

Conception persevered, and she succeeded. And if you ask her, she will tell you that she beat the foster care odds because a CASA volunteer who believed in her would not let her become another statistic. Like Conception, I am grateful for the efforts of Erica and of every CASA volunteer who is helping to guide a young person along the path to greatness.

The Honorable Glenda A. Hatchett is a nationally recognized authority on juvenile issues perhaps best known for her award winning television series Judge Hatchett and her book *Say What You Mean, Mean What You Say!*



Judge Hatchett with former foster youth Conceptions Cuevas at the 2004 Light of Hope event in Washington, DC

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