

# THE ADVOCATE

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Issue 6

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter for CASA Insiders

CASA of Vermilion County  
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## Confidentiality... A One-Way Road

In your work as a CASA, not only will you learn all about the child you've been appointed to advocate for, you will learn a great deal about their foster family, their biological family, and all the dynamics therein. CASAs are asked a lot of questions. Once the parents in the families (both biological and foster) learn that CASAs are not from DCFS, and are advocating for only the child's best interest, they tend to open up and share things with the CASA they might not share with the caseworker. If you are asked by any parent if what they tell you is confidential, you must explain to them that you are required to report your findings to the caseworker and to the Judge. We do not provide copies of your court report to foster parents. However, biological parents, through their attorney, are provided a copy. For this reason it is important that you do not include identifying information, such as the foster parent's name or address in your report.

A common question asked by foster parents (especially relative foster parents, or foster parents who want to adopt your CASA child) seems harmless enough - "How is the biological mom doing?" Relatives usually know the issues in the case and therefore may ask more specific questions, like "Is mom staying clean?" We absolutely cannot answer these questions; we must protect the privacy of the biological parents. However, a most effective way to address this question, ultimately, is with another question. Rather than shut down all communication on the subject by saying "I can't answer that," try asking "Are you concerned about something?" While we cannot reveal information about biological mom to the foster parent, we most certainly can and

should obtain information from the foster parents about biological parents. And vice versa; however, it's a one-way road. Let the foster parents share whatever information they'd like, but also explain to them that it is the caseworker who works with the biological family, and encourage them to share any concerns or questions with the caseworker as well.



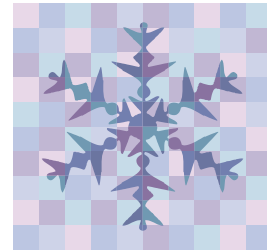
A common question asked by biological parents - "How is my child doing in their foster home, or who are the foster parents?" Again, we must protect the privacy of the foster parents. A great way to answer this type of question - "It's my job as your child's CASA to make sure he's doing well in his foster home... do you have any concerns?"

Additionally, while both the biological and foster parents are an extremely valuable source of information, they both have natural biases in the case, and it is important to confirm anything you learn from them with the caseworker or other professional.

### Confidentiality - Basic Reminders:

- Never discuss information about biological parents with foster parents.
- Never discuss information about foster parents with biological parents.
- Always report any/all information learned to your caseworker.
- Always keep your CASA case file locked up.

## WINTER 2010 TRAINING SESSION



Now is the time to be talking to friends, relatives, co-workers, and neighbors about their desire to help children in Vermilion County. Our next training class will be in February/March and we would love to have our largest class ever. We cannot do this alone. Please tell everyone about the work you do and encourage them to sign up now! Applications are available online at [www.casavermillion.org](http://www.casavermillion.org) or by calling our office at 446-5975.

Our 30-hour child advocacy pre-service course is required for anyone wishing to serve as a Court Appointed Special Advocate. The nationally recognized curriculum includes information on the Juvenile Court Process, Child Abuse and Neglect Laws, Childhood Development, Risk Factors of Child Abuse, and much more.

Individuals who are 21 years or older, dedicated to helping children, and who can pass routine background checks meet our basic qualifications for becoming an advocate. Volunteers are asked to commit to at least one year. Volunteers manage their own schedule, and on average work 8 hours a month.

### Training Information:

Dates: February 9 - March 16, 2010  
Days: Tuesdays & Thursdays  
Time: 12:30 - 3:30, Brown Bag Lunch  
Location: To Be Determined (Danville)

ADVOCATES ARE THE CORE OF EVERYTHING CASA DOES!  
THEY ARE OUR FOUNDATION AND OUR STRENGTH.

Welcome Tatiana & Isabelle!!

As many of you have already heard, Executive Director Heather Fox and her husband Doug Friedel, have adopted twin baby girls! On October 29, Heather went on family leave from the office and is busier than ever at home. She remains in close contact with the CASA Board and Barbara, helping us manage while she's away. Heartfelt congratulations to proud parents, Heather and Doug!



Giving Thanks

CASA is beyond thankful for our dedicated advocates who volunteer their time, skills, and energy on behalf of the children they serve. You are making a difference! We hope all our advocates and friends had a wonderful Thanksgiving and wish you all a joyous holiday season!

Our Amazing Advocates!

We currently have 28 active CASAs serving 62 children:

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Julie Ahrens        | Rose Askam           |
| Ellen Baxter        | Barbara Bein         |
| April Bennett       | Shalonda Foreman     |
| Janell Graham       | Ken Green            |
| Connie Huffman      | Linda Jones          |
| Janice Kempe        | Deb Martin           |
| Judy Mattis         | Ella Miller          |
| Michell Monroe      | Kathy Moore          |
| John Murray         | Cheryl Musson        |
| Alicia Pettigrew    | Ron Pridemore        |
| Terri Reed          | Nancy Russell        |
| Ned Smith           | Lisa Taapken         |
| Juli Thornton-Busby | Bill Wallpe          |
| Wendy Wilder        | Karen Wodetzki-Davis |



HOLIDAY SHOPPING HAS STARTED!  
DO YOU SHOP ONLINE?

CASA has partnered with GiveBackAmerica.org to help our agency raise additional funds, all at no extra cost to you, the consumer!

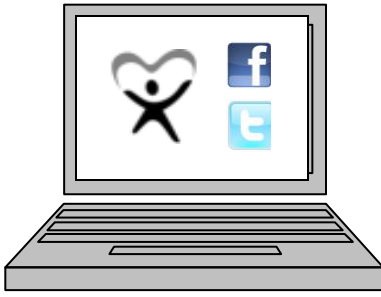
The concept is simple. Every time you shop online from your favorite online retailer (Target, Expedia, **Amazon**, Ebay, Office Max, just to name a few) a percentage of each purchase will go to CASA of Vermilion County! Just click on the GBA button (pictured below) on ANY page from the CASA website. This button takes you to CASA's shopping link. From there, find your favorite store and enjoy your shopping, knowing you are giving back to CASA!



Male Advocate Recruitment Efforts

CASA received a Court Improvement Grant from the Administrative Office of the Illinois Supreme Courts to support us in recruiting males to serve as advocates. We have formed a committee to work towards this important goal. Our committee is planning an information event to reach out to the men in our community to spread awareness of our program, the issues our foster kids face and how CASA makes a difference. The event will be held at Gino's Place at Days Hotel on Tuesday, December 8 from 4-6:30 pm – complimentary wings and drinks – guest speakers include CASA spokesperson BJ Luke (DHS Athletic Director), Presiding Judge Michael Clary, CASA Advocates Ron Pridemore & John Murray, and CASA Board President Jane Dobbles. If you know of any men who would be interested in learning about CASA, please contact Barbara at the CASA office.

*A VOLUNTEER is a person who is a light to others, giving witness in a mixed-up age, doing well and willingly the tasks at hand - namely, being aware of another's needs and doing something about it.*  
- Unknown



We continue to explore and utilize the powerful networking tools that Facebook and Twitter provide. CASA has a new Facebook page with over 200 fans. Updates to our Facebook page are now linked directly to our website by way of a

Facebook widget, whereby you can view our Facebook page from the CASA website, without joining Facebook... though we do encourage you to join! Facebook is an excellent way to spread the word about CASA and the good work you're doing, as well as connect with family and friends. Additionally, you'll now find a scrolling Twitter marquis in the Advocate Corner of the CASA website. The 'tweets' you see are updated monthly and reflect our advocates' court hearing dates and times for the current month.

[www.casavermilion.org](http://www.casavermilion.org)

The National CASA website and CASAnet are now combined on one site! Bookmark and visit the new website and all it has to offer!

[www.casaforchildren.org](http://www.casaforchildren.org)



Thank you to EVERYONE who supported CASA's second annual Family Fun Hog Roast on 10/24/09. The event was a big success, bringing in \$5,000 for Vermilion County CASA kids! It was a beautiful day out at Kennekuk. Everyone had a fabulous time – fantastic food, splendid music, wonderful people! The kids had a blast with all the activities, crafts, games, scavenger hunt, fire safety house, cake walk, and amazing face painting. Check out the Hog Roast Page on the CASA website for event photos and special thanks to our sponsors and vendors!!

### Raising Rabbits, a CASA toolkit for foster children and their families

Learning about the foster care system is daunting for adults and overwhelming for children involved. The system is full of acronyms, technical and legal terms, and professional titles, most of which are unfamiliar to the general public and foreign to children. A key job our advocates are often called on to do is to explain everyone's roles to foster parents and children who are confused, overwhelmed, and in need of support. CASA volunteers also work hard to help the foster families access community, social service, and educational systems to receive the care and support they need to maintain the child's placement.



Thanks to a generous grant from Ronald McDonald House Charities, CASA is developing new tools for Advocates to use with the children they serve and the foster families who house them. Every CASA child who is between the ages of 3 and 14 will be provided a new backpack that includes books and toys designed to help them understand the role of their CASA and other professionals working on their case. Their foster families will receive of folder full of information about local services and resources.

Resources and activities in the backpacks for the children will be separated into the following age groups - three to six, seven to ten, and eleven to fourteen. Children in the two younger groups will receive a Robbie Rabbit™ book, "Meeting my CASA", a rabbit comfort toy, and a selection of age specific items (such as toothbrush, activity book, modeling clay. etc). The oldest group will receive the Robbie Rabbit™ "Foster Care? What's that?" brochure, information on local programs, and age appropriate items (toothbrush, journal, drawing tools). The materials from this project will serve 200 foster children and 200 foster parents over a 12 to 18 month period.

**Advocates will be contacted when these materials are available for pick up!**

