



KAY AND NOBLE COUNTIES

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2009

New CASA Volunteers Step Up!

CASA Staff would like to present two of our most recent additions to our CASA Family! August 3rd, 2009, Court Appointed Special Advocates Nancy Nebe and Paula Wolf took the CASA Oath, swearing before the Hon. Judge D.W. Boyd (center) to diligently and objectively speak for the best interests of the children they will serve in their work as

CASA Volunteers. Nancy (left) is a retired nurse who resides in Ponca City, and Paula (right) is a Blackwell resident who presently works as a Dorm Mom at NOC in Tonkawa. Congratulations, ladies...we know that you are excited to begin the important work of being advocates for the abused children of our community.



On July 28th, 2009, CASA Volunteer and Advisory Board Member Lynda Clark was awarded Eastman National Bank's Exceptional Citizen Award! Mark Detton, President and CEO of Eastman National Bank is shown presenting Lynda with award, as well as a donation to CASA of Kay & Noble Counties in her name. Lynda has been a guiding force in the inception, growth, and maintenance of our CASA program since 1997. Congratulations on this well-deserved award, Lynda!



Our mission is to speak for the best interests of abused and neglected children by providing quality volunteer advocates who work toward a safe, permanent home as soon as possible for each child.

CASA Volunteer Spotlight

featuring

Charlotte Evans



Charlotte Evans became a CASA Volunteer in April of 2008, and is serving a case with five children since completing her Core Training. Charlotte Evans was born and raised in Ponca City, and has one son, Kelby, and one granddaughter, Adrienne Johnson.

She has a Bachelor's degree in Paralegal Studies and is presently employed at the Wal-Mart Supercenter in Ponca City.

Before volunteering with CASA, Charlotte was volunteering in other areas of interest for years, but she had always wanted to

make a difference in people's lives, so she started looking into CASA. Though it took two years to complete school and settle, Charlotte pursued becoming a CASA Volunteer after completing her degree. Charlotte says, "When I started training, it was more in-depth than I had imagined", adding "There was a lot of focus on basic human needs, the family unit, cultures, and learning how to make observations".

Continued, pg 4



(left to right) Tracy Robertson, Myrlene McArthur, Kaye Jones, and Leslie Young

These photos below show some of our CASA Volunteers deliberating a volunteer/child scenario during a small group exercise at July's Continuing Ed Class titled "Rapport-Building with Children". This class gave volunteers tips on establishing and maintaining the crucial relationship between themselves and the children they advocate for.



(left to right) Debi Topper, Ann Bandy, & Nancy Nebe



(left to right) Fran Jackson & Kayla Smith

"Behavioral Issues in the Classroom" Class Informative for All

CASA's September Continuing Education Class was presented by Kirk Hollis, LPC of the Ponca City school system. In this class, CASA Volunteers and Staff learned about how child trauma and unstable home environments manifest themselves in the classroom, and ways to effectively work with school personnel. CASA Volunteers learn enormous amounts about the children they serve by gathering information about their school environment. Volunteers

speak with the children's educators and counselors to review their grades, disciplinary issues, interaction with their peer group and authority figures, the creation and adherence to Individualized Service Plans (ISP's) and more.



Pictured left to right are: JoAnne Robison, Kirk Hollis, Della Blackstar, Kaye Jones, Debi Topper, Sharon McKeown, Tracy Robertson, Diana Vaughan, and Jeremy Jones.

YES! I'D LIKE TO SUPPORT CASA BY...

ENCLOSING A TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION.

\$25 \$50 \$100 _____ OTHER

IN MEMORY/HONOR OF:

BECOMING A CASA VOLUNTEER.

TRAINING FOR NEW CASA VOLUNTEERS
 BEGINS OCTOBER 1ST! PLEASE SEND ME MORE
 INFO ON BECOMING A CASA VOLUNTEER.

Name Address City State Zip

Phone # Email address:

Please mail form to: CASA, 2203 N. Ash Street, Ponca City, OK 74601

Are You Being Called to Serve a Child?

Are you a community citizen who feels called to look-out for the abused children who are entering our counties' child welfare system? CASA is excited to announce that our next training course for new Court Appointed Special Advocate Volunteers begins October 1st! Our Fall 2009 Training course will take place in 8 cumulative class sessions, each Thursday evening from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. from October 1st, 2009, to November 19th, 2009 in our offices in Northern Ok. Youth Services at 2203 N. Ash in Ponca City. Contact CASA Staff with any questions about training, the role of the CASA Volunteer, or the CASA program at 762-8341 or by emailing us at kaynoblecasa@sbcglobal.net.

Volunteer Spotlight, continued.

"Overall, our training gave me the confidence to work a case". Charlotte also mentions that the training helped her understand her role as a CASA Volunteer, which enabled her to explain her duties and presence to the families in her case.

Charlotte says, "For me the greatest reward in being a CASA Volunteer has been experiencing the change in the lives of the children". But Charlotte has found that being a CASA Volunteer can be difficult work. "In the beginning, I struggled with the writing of the court report, but CASA staff worked with me on the writing process, helping me a lot".

Another challenging part of being a CASA Volunteers is being on the emotional roller-coaster as her kids' case has progressed. Charlotte notes "It is heartbreaking to see parents who are unable to keep their children and how children struggle to adapt to profound changes in their lives.



How does she relax and maintain perspective? "I spend a lot of time working in the garden to relax" Charlotte says, adding "some of my toughest problems get resolved this way".

Charlotte has more than a year of casework under her belt, and offers a bit of advice to CASA Volunteers just beginning their voyage, stating, "The children need you to provide information about them to the court, and so you must stay focused and persevere on your goals although people may not always welcome you or freely give you the information that the court needs".

Charlotte concludes by stating, "This work is worth every ounce of energy to help a child have a safe home, and I will be a CASA Volunteer for a long time.



CASA Continuing Education Class over the topic of Domestic Violence scheduled for Tuesday, November 3rd.

Kay County Domestic Violence Shelter Executive Director, Ms. Amanda Doren, will be our guest speaker on Tuesday, November 3rd in the NOYS Large Conference Room from 6:30pm to 8:30pm for a continuing education session on Domestic Violence. Ms. Doren will cover core concepts of domestic violence, the effects of domestic violence on children, information about the Kay County Domestic Violence Shelter and answer your questions. CASA Volunteers will earn 2 CECs for attending. The public is welcome to attend this free training.

Facts About Domestic Violence

- Woman battering and child abuse often occur in the same family.
- Large-scale studies show that approximately 50% of men who batter their women partners also abuse the children in their home.
- Women separated from violent partners make up a large proportion of battered women. These women are often mothers with children.



- Child welfare programs also serve single-mothers. From 32.5% to 72% of those receiving child welfare services are single, female-headed households.
- An estimated 3.3. to 10 million children witness domestic violence each year.

Watchdoin'?

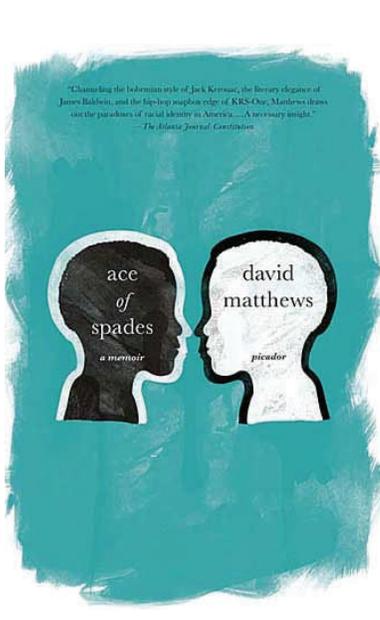
What have we been up to? Since our Spring Newsletter, our program has:

- Held two meetings of the CASA Book Club
- Facilitated three Continuing Education Classes for our CASA Volunteers
- Held two meetings of the CASA Advisory Board
- Provided support and supervision for 46 CASA Volunteers serving 110 families this year.
- Made two presentations to local civic groups.
- Attended the Oklahoma Court Improvement Project's Children's Court Summit titled "Best Practices for a Better Future" in Oklahoma City.

Making the Argument for "Making A Difference"

Presently, there are hundreds (maybe thousands) of programs and organizations that appeal to people to "make a difference" in one cause or another. Honestly, CASA is no different in our use of the message. Nationally, the phrase "make a difference in the life of an abused child" is probably the most common phrase our CASA programs use to describe the impact of CASA Volunteers. However, when I hear "make a difference—recycle your empty water bottles" or "make a difference—make a pledge to NPR" constantly in the media, I can't help but think that the phrase is becoming empty rhetoric. Our CASA programs and CASA Volunteers are more invaluable and intrinsic to the welfare of abused children than this phrase gives credit for. Know that regardless of how thinly the phrase "make a difference" is spread, know that CASA Volunteers can make a profound and life-changing difference for the children we serve. Here are some key facts about CASA advocacy:

- Children with a CASA volunteer are half as likely to spend time in long-term foster care, defined as more than three years in care.
- Cases involving a CASA volunteer are more likely to be permanently closed. Fewer than 10% of children with a CASA volunteer re-enter the foster care system.
- CASA volunteers spend most of their volunteer time in contact with a child. They generally handle just one or two cases at a time so that they can give each child's case the *sustained, personal* attention he or she deserves. To a child, that means a consistent and caring adult presence in his or her life.
- CASA advocacy saves taxpayer dollars. If the median length of stay were shortened for children in foster care by just *one month*, it would realize a national savings to taxpayers of approximately \$2.75 billion.



You are Invited to the CASA Book Club!

CASA Book Club is a great way to connect with fellow life-long learners who care about children and love to read! Everyone, not just CASA Volunteers and CASA staff, are welcome to join our club and attend club discussions. Our next book selection is "Ace of Spades" by David Matthews. We will meet on Monday, December 7th, 2009, at CASA's offices in Northern Oklahoma Youth Services at 2203 N. Ash from 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Give CASA a call at 762-8341 if you'd like to attend...no strings attached! We look forward to meeting those in our community committed to the welfare of children.

Headlines Don't Tell the Whole Story!



Over the past weeks, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs and CASA volunteers statewide faced distressing news of the embezzlement indictment and guilty plea of a former Oklahoma CASA Association employee. The actions of the former employee are unconscionable but her actions are **not** a reflection of the work or integrity of the 26 individual CASA programs in Oklahoma.

We want to assure our local community that no local staff members or local funds were involved in this crime. CASA of Kay & Noble Counties is funded by federal, national and state grants as well as local donations. All local donations made to the program remain in the local community and are used to sustain the program's efforts to recruit, train and supervise local CASA volunteers.

CASA of Kay & Noble Counties is a member of the Oklahoma CASA Association along with 25 other independent programs across Oklahoma. The Oklahoma CASA Association office, located in Oklahoma City, provides resources to the member programs statewide and is not involved in the operations of the local programs.

For 12 years, Northern Oklahoma Youth Services and Shelter, Inc. has been CASA of Kay & Noble Counties' umbrella, non-profit organization, by providing the program with offices, non-profit status and management support, including financial oversight. It is through a grant from the Oklahoma CASA Association that CASA of Kay & Noble Counties receives state appropriated funding which makes up 26% of our total funding. We invite community members to review or request further information about our financial records and policies.

The NOYS Board, CASA of Kay & Noble Counties Advisory Board, staff & CASA Volunteers are committed to fulfilling our program's mission to provide well-trained CASA volunteers to advocate for the health, safety and well being of abused and neglected children involved in the Kay and Noble Counties juvenile court system. Thus far this year, local CASA volunteers have advocated for the best interests of over 100 abused children.

We depend on our local communities' support for both human and financial resources. CASA of Kay and Noble Counties appreciates the continued support of our community so that the abused and neglected children of our community and state have the voices they so desperately need.

Sincerely,

Sharon Clark
Program Director

Myrlene McArthur
Advisory Board Chairperson



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