

News & Updates from the Cumberland County CASA Program

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Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

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CASA and Casa Mani Caffé



Casa Mani Caffé in Carlisle recently partnered with the Cumberland County CASA Program and hosted a public awareness event for persons interested in learning more about CASA and how ordinary citizens help children who are victims of neglect and abuse. The Court Appointed Special Advocate Program recruits and trains volunteers to advocate on behalf of children to help the Courts determine what is in the best interest of these children. Robert and Naomi Pham, owners of Casa Mani Caffé, are the parents of 5 children and recognize the importance of a safe, stable family life for children. When they learned about the CASA Program from Anita Brewster, CASA Program Coordinator, they volunteered space and refreshments for a reception where the public could meet and talk with CASA volunteers and staff. Current CASA volunteers were on hand to answer questions and explain their role.

Robert describes a life changing event he experienced while stationed in Japan as a Marine. He had been "volunteered" to do some community service at a small Catholic orphanage, and when he arrived his eyes were opened to the needs of the children and to the poor, run-down condition of the facility, due to scarce resources and supplies. While Robert was in Japan he also met his future wife Naomi, who is from Okinawa. Robert grew up in New Cumberland and Camp Hill, and when he and Naomi returned to Cumberland County they decided to go into business for themselves. Robert and Naomi feel blessed that they have been able to open a successful coffee shop in Carlisle and are overwhelmed by the acceptance they have felt in the community. They have determined that they will use their resources, no matter how large or small, for good to help those in need. Robert is passionate when he speaks about helping others. As he says, he helps "because it is the right thing to do." In the near future, the Phams plan to open a noodle shop next door to Casa Mani Caffé where they will continue to offer caring service to their customers and be a good neighbor in the community.

Carlisle Theater Lends a Hand

To help publicize the reception held at Casa Mani Caffé, the Carlisle Theater graciously permitted the CASA Program to set up a display table in the lobby area of the theater with information about the Program and the reception. CASA staff and community volunteers manned the table for one week prior to the event. They were able to talk to moviegoers who were waiting for the feature film to begin. Coincidentally, the movie that was showing that week had been sponsored in part by CASA volunteer, Pat Carey. It is one of the beauties of a community when many groups can work together to promote the safety of our children.



Funnel Cakes for CASA

Recently the Dickinson College chapter of Kappa Alpha Theta supported the CASA Program by making funnel cakes to sell on a street corner at the college. Despite rainy weather, they were able to raise \$120 to support the ongoing needs of CASA volunteers in the County. Pictured is CASA Chair Rachel Sondag presenting the check to CASA Program Coordinator Anita Brewster.



Meet the Thirteenth Corps of CASA Volunteers



New CASA volunteers: Donna Williams, Linda Ceconello, Susie Klimkos, Linda Wisner, Faith Elliott, and Judy Ross.

Linda Ceconello grew up in western Pennsylvania, and is now a resident of Carlisle. As an elected member of the Carlisle Borough Council, she realizes the need for public services to the community in which she lives. Linda also works full time as the office coordinator for Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance, an organization whose mission is child abuse prevention. She enjoys doing volunteer work, and as a mother and grandmother, hopes that she can make a difference in the community where children grow up. Whether it is volunteering for the Red Cross Katrina Effort, the Salvation Army, or as a judge for National History Day, Linda has learned something from each experience on how to help people.

Faith Elliott of Marysville loves life—traveling, friends, the arts, cuisines of many cultures, cooking, gardening, working to preserve nature, family and helping make the world a better place, if only in her little neighborhood.

Susie Klimkos is originally from Reading, and now works full time as a secretary at Dickinson College. As a wife, mother (her daughter is a freshman at Immaculata University), and community and church volunteer, Susie is ready at this stage in her life to get involved in activities that are truly of interest to her. On the “fun” side of her life, Susie participates in a local aerobics class; walks 3 miles daily; and enjoys gardening, cooking and baking, and getting together with friends for coffee and dinners. She also enjoys volunteering in different capacities at St. Patrick’s Church and at Project Share. In her position at Dickinson College, Susie enjoys the interaction with the students in the Departments of Physics & Astronomy and Mathematics & Computer Science.

Judy Ross was born in Williamsport, relocated to the Camp Hill area with her family at the age of 10, and currently resides in Silver Spring Township. She retired from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in December 2004. Since then, she has focused her attention on decorating her home and pursuing creative interests, working with fabric and fiber. She loves to learn new things and meet new people. As a CASA volunteer, she hopes that she can make a positive difference in a child’s life.

Donna Williams was born and reared in Harrisburg, where she still resides. She works fulltime as an auditor. She is a mother and grandmother, who in her spare time enjoys gardening and reading.

Linda Wisner grew up in Plymouth, Wisconsin, and now lives in Shippensburg. She is a person who wears many hats, so that she works fulltime at her many part-time jobs. She has perfected the art of multitasking to keep her business/teaching/personal worlds in balance. Her passion is “Sing and Sway Linda’s Way,” a music and movement curriculum that she created for children. She is a substitute teacher, the owner/operator of the Wash Tub Laundromat, and also owns and manages numerous properties. Family and friends are very important to Linda, who tries to treat others as she would want to be treated – trying to be a good role model by example. Linda loves to travel and play in the dirt (garden). She definitely takes time to smell the flowers.

OUR MISSION. . . . The mission of the Cumberland County Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program is to assist the court in determining what is in the best interest of abused and/or neglected children whose cases are in the court system. Through objective investigation and observation with the focus on the child assigned, trained CASA volunteers will develop and present their recommendations to the court to aid in establishing a safe, permanent and nurturing home in an expeditious manner.

So-long, Farewell, auf Wiedersehen, Goodbye



Judge Guido is recognized for his work on behalf of children.

Without the foresight and hard work of Judge Edward Guido, and his clerk Carl Connellan, the CASA Program would not be in its sixth year of existence in Cumberland County. So it was with sadness that the Program received the news that Judge Guido, at the end of 2006, would be stepping down from his role as dependency judge within the Cumberland County Court of Common Pleas. At the Fall Appreciation Brunch on November 18, CASA volunteers and staff presented him with a memento box and hand written notes expressing their appreciation to Judge Guido for all he has done for the children of Cumberland County and the CASA Program. He has consistently made very wise, albeit often very difficult, decisions on behalf of dependent children. He has always kept the best interest of the children at the forefront in his dependency courtroom. Although Judge Guido will no longer be actively involved with the CASA Program in Cumberland County, we are confident he will continue to promote the welfare of children, not only in Cumberland County but throughout Pennsylvania.



Judge Ebert administers the oath of office to new CASA volunteers.

Judge M. L. Ebert, who has been hearing some dependency cases since he took the bench in January 2006, is now assuming the role of dependency judge for all such cases in Cumberland County. He has already shown a commitment to ruling for what is in the best interest of children, and has been supportive of CASA in past ceremonies and the CASA training sessions.

Volunteers Sworn-in



Jim Flower, dependency master, presents Susie Klimkos with her certificate.

Judge Ebert swore in the six newly trained volunteers at the Appreciation Brunch on November 18, and the dependency master, Jim Flower, presented them with certificates for the pre-service training which they each completed on October 28. A number of "veteran" CASA volunteers at the brunch welcomed the new volunteers into their ranks. Guest speakers from the most recent training session were also invited to the event, which was held at the Holland Union Building on the Dickinson College campus in Carlisle. It was hosted by Kappa Alpha Theta through the combined efforts of the Harrisburg Alumnae and Dickinson College chapters.



Above: Brenda Snider, CYS caseworker and CASA trainer (center), shares table conversation with volunteers and Kappa Alpha Theta member, Gretchen Petri (right).

The Dickinson College sorority women provided a sumptuous buffet table of food by using their meal plan points with the catering service at the college and the alumnae women created a cozy fall atmosphere by supplying table decorations. Each person at the brunch was encouraged to take his or her placemat as a thank you gift specially designed by the most recent Theta pledge class.



Left: Newly sworn-in volunteer Judy Ross listens to CASA volunteer Julie Haubert.

Program Statistics as of December 2006:

- 68 CASA volunteers have been trained (49 are active or are between appointments)
- 146 dependent children have been represented
- 262 CASA reports have been written, providing additional information to help the Court make decisions

Of the children whose cases have closed since the CASA Program was begun in 2000, 43 returned home, 30 were adopted, and 5 went to live with a permanent legal custodian or a fit and willing relative. Two children aged out of the system and another two had their cases transferred to other jurisdictions.

CASA Training Spring 2007

To explore becoming an advocate for children with the Cumberland County CASA Program, please contact the CASA Office at 240-6159, casa@ccpa.net or www.ccpa.net/casa.

Volunteers must—

- be 21 years of age or older,
- be able to pass criminal checks,
- complete 36-40 hours of training, and
- be willing to make at least a 2-year commitment.

The next pre-service training will be held in Carlisle on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, 6 to 9 pm, from February 15 through March 20. The swearing-in ceremony, held in conjunction with the Annual Light of Hope Celebration, is planned for March 29.

News and Updates from the Cumberland County CASA Program is published semiannually. Back issues are available upon request or at www.ccpa.net/casa. To be added to or removed from the mailing list, contact the CASA Office at (717) 240-6159 or casa@ccpa.net.

National CASA's 30th Anniversary Conference



Join us to celebrate 30 years of effective advocacy for abused and neglected children in Orlando, Florida on June 9-12, 2007.

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