



CASA of Stanislaus County

JANUARY — FEBRUARY 2009

Keeping up with CASA

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COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES of STANISLAUS COUNTY

Volunteer advocates are needed to be the voice of dependent children during court hearings. They'll conduct case fact finding and produce court reports for all hearings based on what is in the **best interest of the children.**

CASA training includes the following topics: family dynamics; the court process; report writing; domestic violence; cultural diversity; and mental health. Advocates volunteer an average of 10 to 15 hours per month and commit themselves to being available until the end of the case assigned (usually 18 months). This commitment is essential so the volunteer can build and maintain trusting, stable relationships with the children they are appointed to in order to speak exclusively for those children in court.

Volunteers are provided training, supervision and support. 30 hours of in-house training and 10 hours of court observation is provided. Volunteer Requirements: Advocates must be at least 21 years of age; computer literate with access to e-mail; pass a fingerprint background check (paid for by CASA); possess a California driver's license; provide a DMV printout; and show proof of insurance.

Bilingual individuals and males are especially encouraged to apply.

If you are interested in joining us, please call:
Cindy Julsgard at (209) 567.4230
casacm@stanct.org

CASA CONTACT INFORMATION

Our office will be *closed* on *January 1 and January 19* in observance of New Year's Day and the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King; and *February 12 and February 16* in observance of Lincoln Day and President's Day.

Our Mailing Address: P.O. Box 3488 Modesto, CA 95353

Our Phone: (209) 567.4230

Our Fax: (209) 567.4231

Our Website: www.casaofstanco.org

Our E-mails:

casaed@stanct.org

-Steve Ashman, Executive Director

casacm@stanct.org

-Cindy Julsgard, Case Manager



The mission of the Court Appointed Special Advocates of Stanislaus County is to provide quality advocacy services for all abused and neglected children in the dependency system through the use of trained volunteers.

*CASA is a non profit 501 (c) 3
Tax ID # 91-2168629*

Our next orientation for potential NEW Advocates will be on
January 26, 2009 at 6pm at our CASA office ...
with **training** for those new advocates **beginning** on
February 3, 2009 at 6pm at our CASA office .



Please **SAVE the DATE!**
The 6th annual KIWANIS of North Modesto Golf
Tournament benefitting CASA of Stanislaus County will
be held at SPRING CREEK Golf & Country Club
in Ripon, CA on Monday, August 31, 2009



Dear Friend,

The holidays are here, and Robin and I will be sitting down with old friends and family around the holiday table. We hope you will be, too, and our blessings on you. In a perfect world, every child would know that simple joy this season—but every child won't. That's why we're asking you to stand up for foster kids by making a gift to CASA today.

You may have heard me say it before: "You can't change what you don't acknowledge."

National CASA's *Forgotten Children* campaign is all about helping America to acknowledge its problem: **too many abused and neglected kids, and not enough people to serve them**. This is what Americans need to change, and CASA volunteers—60,000 of them, working through 954 programs across the country—are already on the job, fighting to give these kids a voice and get them into safe, permanent homes. CASA volunteers are on the frontlines—investigating, communicating, and giving each child his or her voice in court.

That's why Robin and I have stepped forward to be the spokespersons for the *Forgotten Children* campaign. We want to help make the work of CASA volunteers known in every household in this nation. Right now, CASA volunteers serve approximately 250,000 of 800,000 kids who pass through the foster care system each year. If this campaign brings as much new awareness, money, and volunteer enlistment as Robin and I know it can, then it's going to bring us a lot closer to that day when there's a CASA volunteer standing by the side of every single child in foster care.

You can help us reach that ultimate goal by making a gift today. It costs on average \$950 a year to give a child a CASA volunteer. That means that every \$80 you can give supports a CASA volunteer's efforts for another month—but for that child, it's a gift that lasts a lifetime.

With best wishes for a happy holiday season,

Dr. Phil and Robin McGraw

Editor's Note: The above was reprinted from National CASA's website: http://www.nationalcasa.org/donate/index.html#MP_MESSAGE

*As of December 1, 2008 there were over 500 children in need of an CASA (advocate) in Stanislaus County ...
Please help us secure a safe future for a child in need by sending your 100% tax deductible donation to:*

*CASA of Stanislaus County
Post Office Box 3488
Modesto, California 95353*

*We are also happy to speak directly with you
and will gladly accept your credit card payment for any donation you wish to give.*

*CASA is a non profit 501 (c) 3 -
Our Tax ID is 91-2168629.*

Your generosity and support is appreciated!

Check out our new
(and we think improved)
Secure website:

<http://www.casaofstanco.org/index.asp>

for more information about our program; training and general advocate information;
upcoming events; sponsorship information; links and much more!

GIVE THE LIGHT OF
hope TO A CHILD.



Continuing Education opportunities for our Current Advocates include:



January 12, 2009 (Monday) - *Special Education Law* ... Training from 6:00 - 9:00pm at CASA Headquarters

January 14, 2009 (Wednesday) - *Statutes that effect children in care – AB490 and other laws PLUS School Discipline (What schools can and cannot legally do)* ... Training from 6:00 - 9:00pm at CASA Headquarters

Look for more Continuing Education Opportunities please see Page 4 ...

Our next **Training Opportunity for prospective advocates (and our current advocates who want the course and hours)** will take place on ...

January 26 (Orientation) with training to follow on the following dates and times:

- February 3; Tuesday ... Defining the CASA Volunteer Role and Responsibilities**
- February 5; Thursday ... The County Child Welfare Services System & Juvenile Dependency Process**
- February 11; Wednesday ... The Challenges and Opportunities of Difference**
- February 17; Tuesday ... The Needs and Development of Children and Youth**
- February 19; Thursday ... Understanding Families**
- February 23; Monday ... Core Responsibilities for Effective CASA Advocacy**
- March 3; Tuesday ... Youth Centered Advocacy**
- March 11; Wednesday ... Rights Based Advocacy**
- March 19; Thursday ... Building Strength, Building Family**
- March 24; Tuesday ... Putting Theory Into Practice**

All above trainings are from 6:00 > 9:00 pm and are held at the CASA office unless otherwise noted.
All dates and topics subject to change depending on our guest speakers' availability.



FOSTER PARENT / KINSHIP CARE TRAINING

offered by Modesto Junior College and Community Services Agency



JANUARY 2009



The following listed classes (**No pre-registration necessary**) will be held at the **Family Partnership Center**, 421 E. Morris Avenue, Modesto from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.



Note: Supervised child activities are **ONLY** available for ages 5 and older at the Center and is limited to six children....therefore supervised care activities is limited to first come first served.



Date: 5 Jan (Monday)

Topic: Roles, Rights and Responsibilities of Caregivers

Amie will address the roles, rights and responsibilities of caregivers, including legal rights regarding medical, education and the court system.

Trainer: Amie Prutch ... MSW




Date: 26 Jan (Monday)


Topic: Building Effective Relationships with Birth Parents

This presentation will focus on building the necessary skills for effective communication techniques and establishing boundaries with birth parents.

Trainer: Nick Konner ... FosAdopt Parent



The following listed workshops will be held at the **Community Services Agency**, 251 E. Hackett Road, Modesto from 9:00 a.m. to approximately 3:30 p.m.



Note: Please pre-register not later than **6 January** for the **10 January workshop** and **27 January** for the **31 January workshop** by calling one of the phone numbers indicated below and leaving your name and phone number. Lunch will be provided; therefore it is **important to pre-register** to ensure enough food is available for all attendees.




Date: 10 Jan (Saturday Workshop)

Topic: Trauma Attachment and Bonding

This workshop will focus on behavioral problems and other ways children act out as a result of trauma and ways to deal with their behavior.

Trainer: Jennifer Johnson LCSW




Date: 31 Jan (Saturday Workshop)

Topic: Effective Discipline

This presentation will give the caregiver a better understanding as to why children misbehave and how to build relationships, guidance and communication skills to nourish the child's self-esteem

Trainer: Joan Mancini MSW/Teacher



California Community Colleges around the State are offering classes in foster care and kinship care education through specially funded programs created by the California Legislature and the Governor. This semester, the Community College in your area is offering classes listed on this flyer and is free of charge.



Don Rousseau (Asst Program Director) 529-6141

Amie Prutch (Foster Parent Recruiter/Trainer) 558-3983

The CASA of STANISLAUS COUNTY Vision:

CASA of Stanislaus County is a passionate community organization that provides every child received through the court system with personalized advocacy and support. Our goal is to provide a safe, permanent, nurturing environment for every child served.

CASA Partners with Community Groups to Provide Gifts for Stanislaus County Children

“Why would anyone do this for me? They don’t even know me ... I can’t believe there are people out there who would do this ... all for someone they do not know?”

Jennifer; one of the 67 recipients of our Gift Drive

It all began with a Rotary Club presentation. From there, introductions were made; facilitations were expedited, and within three weeks 67 dependent children of Stanislaus County were touched by a group of people they had never met.

The “Face to Face” youth group, comprised of 100 high school aged individuals from Monte Vista Chapel in Turlock, CA, provided a lifetime of memories for Foster Youth in need by organizing a drive to provide Christmas Gifts for children represented by CASA along with additional dependent children of Stanislaus County.

The “drive” was culminated in a

December 17 delivery of those gifts collected to CASA along with representatives from CSA (Community Services Agency), fifteen CASA advocates, and many of the Court staff who work with our dependent children. Over 100 people jammed into Department 15 (our Juvenile Courtroom) for the presentation.

Group leader Dave Nieuwsma commented “We look for opportunities to invest in people’s lives. CASA just gave us that opportunity. It was ... I don’t want to say eye opening, ... but it broadened our world around us. Kids were saying they realized kids in their classes were in Foster situations, and now they felt they

had a better understanding of their situation. The feedback I have received has been positive ... a couple of kids came to me to let me know it was a really neat deal.” When asked if they might consider participating again in another drive in 2009 he replied, “Yes, I think so ... absolutely!”

In addition to the generosity and commitment of the youth group, local business owners Erin and Lorna Davis (Play it Again Sports) stepped up and provided **personalized** duffel bags for every child.

Erin Davis commented, “What can I say? It was an awesome opportunity for us to be in-

(continued on next page)



Department 15 was jam packed with Community partners for the gift presentation.



Youth leader Dave Nieuwsma addresses the crowd of almost 100 people at the Monte Vista Youth Group gift presentation in our Juvenile Courtroom. Dave led a group of almost 100 young adults who contributed FULL gift bags to 67 foster youth .



Presiding Juvenile Court Judge Linda McFadden addresses those in attendance at the gift presentation.

“We cannot thank Dave Nieuwsma, Erin and Lorna Davis, and especially all of the Face to Face kids enough . Their generosity and commitment went beyond any expectations anyone could have had ...”

involved with some kids who just need to know there are people out there who care about them. It was a lot of fun for us and a privilege to be involved.”

Community Services Agency was represented by Director Christine Applegate, Manager Sheelah Grant and Supervisor Jeff Davis. Davis offered his thoughts on the efforts of the Face to Face Group “... it was awesome. I think the work the kids did ... how motivated they were, how **giving** they were ... well, it was just great.”

The children who received the gifts were no less appreciative.

CASA ED Steve Ashman relayed the story of one of the deliveries

he made on behalf of his advocates to a young woman about to emancipate. “When she received her bag, personalized with her name on it, she started to cry. ‘I’ve **never** had a bag with my name on it ... I can’t believe someone would do this for me.’ When she realized the bag was full of gifts she broke down and began to sob. ‘Why would anyone do this for me? They don’t even know me ... I can’t believe there are people out there who would do this ... all for someone they do not know.’ She looked in the bag and there was a teddy bear right on top. She picked up the bear and held on to it for dear life. As she peeked into the bag, there was a purse. She opened the purse

and inside were little, tiny gifts ... all wrapped. I told her to go ahead and unwrap them ... there was mascara, makeup, lip gloss, Kleenex; all the things she might have in her purse. To top it off there was a gift card for Target ... it was icing on the cake.

Ashman continued “We cannot thank Dave Nieuwsma, Erin and Lorna Davis, and especially all of the Face to Face kids enough. Their generosity and commitment went beyond any expectations anyone could have had. They truly made this a Christmas to be remembered for so many children AND the adults in their lives.”



Thank you to the members of our Board of Directors for all of their efforts and support ... you truly make the impossible possible with your generosity of time, energy and spirit.

- Marie Assali
- Susan Azevedo
- Jeff Bettencourt
- Cynthia Borges-O’Dell
- Elizabeth Demichelis
- John Campbell
- Catherine Hallinan
- Phyllis Haugabook
- Randy Hayashi
- Pamela Moreno
- Victor Pedroza
- Doug Roberts
- Peggy Stepro
- Michele West
- Jeremiah Willams



“The day we left home I had no clue what was going on. My mother wasn’t around, and I was just scared and wanted this whole thing to be over..”

A Difficult Journey Home Janelle A.

When I was young, life with my mother was good. I used to love going to her job and watching her at work. I remember playing little games with her like “thumb war.” I remember going to daycare and not wanting her to leave me. No matter how I was feeling, I was always glad to see my mom. But as I got a little older, it seemed like my mom was always stressed out. My brother was getting into trouble at school, and his teachers would call her almost every day. My mother became very depressed and tired of having to deal with the same problems all the time. It wasn’t hard to notice because she would complain about whatever made her angry and upset—her job, her kids or the landlord. I didn’t understand why she was feeling this way. All I remember is that things were not good and that I felt like my life would probably never be the same.

Too Many Problems

I always knew she loved us, but her spirit was down. She was having so many problems with my brother that she quit her job. My dad wasn’t around, and there is only so much a person can handle. My mother didn’t stop doing her duties as a parent, but she basically didn’t seem to care anymore about having fun with us and making us laugh. As the days went on my mom started getting worse. She thought we needed a better life than what we had, and the only person she felt that could give that to us was my aunt Gina, her closest sister. One day a worker from ACS

(child welfare) showed up. Later, I found out that a counselor at my brother’s school had called ACS because she misunderstood what my mother meant when she said she was fed up and couldn’t take it anymore.

In Care, with Questions

The day we left home I had no clue what was going on. My mother wasn’t around, and I was just scared and wanted this whole thing to be over. I remember it was a long drive, and I thought that when we came out of the car I would be in front of my aunt’s building. My mom had been talking about us going there, and that’s where I wanted to be. But I was in front of someone else’s building. My brother and I stayed at that first foster home for about a month with no problems. I would get phone calls from my mother from time to time. She’d ask me how I was doing, tell me how much she missed me and how she couldn’t wait to see me. I missed my mom a lot too. I really wondered what she was doing and where she was and what exactly had happened to her that day we got taken away. But I never asked her any of those questions.

A New Life

After a month we moved to my aunt’s house. Life was great. I started going to a new Catholic school, and I loved it. My mother would call sometimes and ask me if I wanted to see her and come home. Of course I said yes, but I really didn’t mean it. I enjoyed being at my aunt’s

and wanted to stay there forever. I just didn’t want to make my mom feel bad. The first time I went to visit my mother, I thought I would be happy to see her, but it was kind of weird. I acted like everything was fine, but I wasn’t really comfortable talking to my own mother. She was so happy to see us, and she couldn’t stop smiling. We stayed for a little while, then hugged each other and said our good-byes, and that was it. My mother visited us on holidays and birthdays, which was great, but I felt more distance towards her, like I didn’t want to see her at all. I knew it wasn’t right, but that’s how I felt. I didn’t show it or tell anyone.

Back to the Past

After three years at my aunt’s house, she told us it was time for us to leave. I couldn’t accept the fact that I was going to be coming home to my mother and living the life I left behind. I had my life here—my friends, my school and everything else—and now I had to leave it. It was very hard readjusting to my mother and my new life. My mother seemed so happy to finally have us back. She’d made many changes while my brother and I were gone. I think one of the biggest changes she made was with her anger. My mother used to get so angry whenever someone would give her attitude. She would yell at the top of her lungs while cussing them out. But since we’d left, it seemed like she’d learned how to control that. She seemed calmer, like she was at peace with herself.

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Talking Back

I started not to care about a lot of things that my mother told me to do or not to do. I didn't listen to her or give her any respect. I started talking back and arguing with her all the time. I guess since I'd been gone for a while I thought the only person I should be listening to was my aunt. I knew my mother had the right to give me rules and tell me what to do, but I just didn't feel like listening. My mother didn't know what to do with my brother and me because we were both being so disrespectful towards her. She said she wasn't going to give up on us again; she was going to find some way to solve this problem. And she did.

Learning to Listen

She took all of us to family counseling, which I thought was stupid at first. I didn't think it would work. When we got to our first session I was nervous. I just wanted to leave and go home, but I couldn't. So I sat there and listened to my mother talk to the therapist. Everything she was saying was true. My mom seemed not at all uncomfortable telling her business, but I was. I didn't know the therapist at all, and I really didn't want to tell her anything. But each day we went there I felt more comfortable and open. The therapist was nice, and we each got a chance to say what we were feeling to one another. It took me a while, but once I got to talking I couldn't stop. I told the therapist the problems I was having with my mom and everything else about myself. As the years went by I started noticing a change in myself as well as my mother. We were getting along much better and talking to each other. In therapy, my mother was getting a better understanding of how my brother and I felt, and I got a better understanding of how she felt. Being able to talk out our problems without yelling at one another made a big difference. We started really listening to each other, and we were gaining back the bond we once had.

Appreciating Each Other

It's been seven years now since I came home, and my mother and I have a fun relationship. We play around with one another all the time, making jokes and laughing hard at whatever we think is funny. I love my mother a lot, and I feel like the older I get the more I'm starting to appreciate her. I really love talking to her, and she understands me. My mother is a strong woman who has dealt with a lot of s--t in her life and has somehow gotten out of it. I see her as a good person to look up to, even though she doesn't think she is. She tells me all the time that she's made so many mistakes in her life and that I should learn from them. My mom thinks I don't listen to her when she tells me things, but I am listening in my own way. I know when I get older I'll look back and know exactly what she meant. I don't always show my appreciation, but I know I'm lucky to have a mother like her. In the past I felt like I would never be able to forgive my mother for putting me through all this. But now that I'm older, I can accept the fact that it happened and move on with my life, each day at a time.

Janelle was 17 when she wrote this story. She currently lives with her mother in Brooklyn, NY. Janelle's last name is withheld by request.

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"I love my mother a lot, and I feel like the older I get the more I'm starting to appreciate her."

THANK YOU TO OUR ADVOCATES !!!

Maisha Adams
John Arnold
Alice Bechard
Jamie Bertolotti
Sherry Bertolotti
Linda Bush
Angie Cherry
Sharon Clark
Jolene Daly
Holly Feebeck
Veronica Fernandez
Barbara Fontaine
Rob Gleeson
Charlotte Hernandez
Laurie Jamison
Cindy Julsgard
Donnajeane Kabella
Michelle Keener
Sherrie Keener
Yolanda King
Synthia Lofton
Veronica Napier
Nancy O'Reilly
Bill Parks
Carol Perry
Jerry Rhine
Michelle Sales
Kathy Schmitt
Karen Sederquist
Angela Timpone
Vivian Valentine
Joanne Wallace
Carolyn Whited
Lois Wilson

Without YOUR commitment and efforts we would not be here ...

ELIZABETH A. DEMICHELIS, D.D.S.
Family Dental Practice



2020 Coffee Road, Ste. J-4
 Modesto
 California • 95355
 Tel: 209•522•2348
 Fax: 209•522•2342

Advertise in the CASA Newsletter for \$25.00 an issue or \$250.00 for two years. Your advertisement can include your company logo and a short profile highlighting your services. **Contact CASA** at 567.4230 to reserve your advertisement space.

Our Current CASA statistics:
 Current Available & Active Advocates: 34
 Current Advocates on Leave: 5
 Average Advocate Age: 46.7
 Current Children Being Served: 51

Current Advocates by Gender:
 Female - 36 Male - 4

Current Advocates in Training: 2
 Advocates in Training by Gender:
 Female - 2 Male - 0

All Statistics as of December 29, 2008

As we begin a new year ... our staff wants to wish you a very Happy Holiday season, the BEST of the New Year ... and say "THANK YOU" for your commitment and support of CASA. While we (as a County/State/Country) have many challenges ahead, and we are hopeful we can not only meet those challenges but exceed expectations in doing so. The past six months have been unbelievably wonderful; we have expanded our program from 8 (incredibly committed) advocates serving 13 children on April 1 ... to 39 advocates (as of this date 22 active; 5 on leave; and 12 awaiting cases to be assigned in January) serving 50 children. As we assign the 12 advocates ready for cases that number will GROW.

We owe a major debt of gratitude to a few people we would like to single out among the many that shine for us every day:

Carol Kellert - Carol has been a supporter of CASA since our inception and without her background, guidance and support the transitions we faced this past year would not have gone nearly as smoothly. While Carol has left us (in an official capacity), we are reminded every day of her contributions that have enabled us to survive, grow and prosper.

Lona Stonebreaker - Lona came back as ED prior to my hire and without her energy and brilliance we might not have survived. Lona also convinced me to take over for her (well, we all can't be perfect - LOL) ... and has always been a beacon of support for CASA.

Jerry Rhine, Angie Cherry, Donnajean Kabella, Synthia Lofton, Sharon Clark and Carol Perry - these six advocates have been with the program the longest (many from our inception) ... and we cannot thank them enough for hanging in there with us through the many changes they have had to endure. Beyond their excellence as advocates and beyond their commitment to CASA; all of these individuals are incredibly supportive, committed and generous with their experiences and have helped guide our thinking over the past few months to (what we hope are) many positive changes for everyone.

Mike Tozzi, Denise Davis and Rebecca Fleming - Mike, Denise and Rebecca have provided unwavering support and sage advice to our program through their positions with the Superior Court. Our feeling is the Court would NOT be Superior if they weren't there (not just for us either!)

The staff of CSA (Community Services Agency) - In my former position, I was lucky enough to work with the gifted and committed social workers and staff of CSA. For the children we currently serve (and for those we hope to serve in the future), these individuals cannot be thanked enough for their dedication, perseverance and caring. We are thrilled to be able to collaborate with such quality individuals trying to meet the children of Stanislaus County.

Judges Linda McFadden, Nan Jacobs and Commissioner Williamsen - These three women have the (sometimes thankless) job of determining the best way to address the needs of our dependent and delinquent children. We want to thank them for their unwavering enthusiasm; their support, patience and advice in helping us address the many challenges of the past year. Their individual leadership on behalf of CASA has been astounding; they have paved the way for positive, collaborative relationships with many of the institutions in our community enabling all of us to be a more positive force in the lives of the kids we serve. Their generosity of time and spirit has been greatly appreciated (and needed!) ... and we hope we can live up to (and exceed) their expectations.

Elizabeth Demichelis - Elizabeth is our immediate past-President of the CASA Board of Directors. Without her tenacity and commitment we would not be here ... period. Elizabeth has always been a ROCK of support and persistence and although we will miss her leadership, we are thrilled she has chosen to stay on the Board as an active member and as a mentor to our new Board President, Catherine Hallinan. Elizabeth is (as my grandfather used to say) a jewel among many rocks ... and we cannot THANK her enough for all she has done.

YOU - we thank all of you from the bottom of our hearts for your support, confidence, guidance, commitment, time, energy, generosity, passion and help this past year. We have come a long way in 2008; and we cannot wait for 2009!

To all of you and yours, have a happy holiday season - and again THANK YOU!

Steve Ashman

Executive Director, CASA of Stanislaus County