



CASA Connections

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A Note from the Director...

With a new year comes a new look for the CASA Connections Newsletter. Vigo County CASA has decided to change the format of the newsletter to decrease the overall content provided while increasing the number of publications per year. We have a lot to share with you as CASA volunteers, but we are again growing as an organization and we must make changes to suit those needs and provide a source to update all volunteers and related service providers on the status of all things CASA. Once again, thank you for all you do for the CASA Program and the children we serve. We are now fully staffed. so please feel free to contact your volunteer coordinator for assistance if needed!



READY TO READ

The Vigo County Public Library's Margaret Korenski held a brief training on the "Every Child Ready to Read" program on January 22, 2010. This library-sponsored program aims to engage parents, volunteers, service providers, school counselors and other professionals to recognize & address literacy-related reading issues.

advocating
Literacy
for your
CASA Kid

Margaret went over selected reading material for three specific age groups: birth to two-year olds, two & three year olds, and four & five-year old children. At all levels, research shows that children who have larger vocabularies tend to be better readers. The knowledge of many words helps children recognize written words and understand what they read.

Narrative Skills
Being able to describe things & events and tell stories.

Phonological Awareness
Being able to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words.

Vocabulary
Knowing the name of things.

Print Awareness
Noticing print, knowing how to handle a book and knowing how to follow the words on a page.

Print Motivation
Being interested in and enjoying books.

Letter Knowledge
Knowing letters are different from each other, knowing their names & sounds and recognizing letters everywhere.





Meet our new CASA Staff!

We are pleased to announce the addition of Susie Thompson and Tara Merriman to the CASA staff. Susie and Tara have both assumed full-time positions as Volunteer Coordinators.

Susie Thompson is a Terre Haute native who six years ago returned to her Terre Haute roots. Her career has been dedicated to serving the families and children of Indiana. Her experience includes roles in public child welfare and private non-for-profit child abuse prevention organizations. Thompson's most recent public service role was that of program-wide trainer, director of quality control and technical assistance and one of the original founding partners of the Healthy Families Indiana program. Susie is an avid reader and is always looking for the yet undiscovered bargain antique.

Tara Merriman is a 2009 graduate of St. Mary of the Woods College with a BS degree in Criminal Justice with a minor in Psychology. Before coming to the CASA Office, Tara was a Residential Supervisor of the Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility at Gibault, Inc. When not working, Tara enjoys spending her free time with her family & competitively showing barrel horses around the country.

The diverse backgrounds and experience brought by both Susie and Tara has already proven to make a vital addition to the Vigo County CASA program!

COMMUNITY TRAINING & EVENTS

February 17

12:00 - 1:30 PM

Terry Modesitt (Vigo County Prosecutor) discussed all aspects of the prosecuting attorney's office with an emphasis on areas that commonly impact the families we work with. Volunteers that attended this training were encouraged to submit questions to the CASA office that they wanted to be addressed at this session.

Video available, please contact the CASA office for details.

March 16
6:00 - 7:30 PM

An officer from the Juvenile Probation department will be giving an overview of the probation office and the services they provide. They will also discuss how we as CASA's interface with them. Questions are also welcomed prior to this training to address volunteers' concerns.

April 22

12:00 - 1:30 PM

RSVP by Friday, March 12, 2010

Mary Theisz of the Vigo County School Corporation will provide an overview of the services the public school system offers to children, from elementary to high school and everything in between. Questions are also encouraged in advance for this training session, as Mary will be addressing children in care and the impact on their educational outcomes.

RSVP by Thursday, April 15, 2010

May 13
5:30 - 7:30 PM

Joe Watts of the Indiana State Police will provide extensive information and visual aids on all aspects of methamphetamines, its manufacturing process, and its users. Meth use and abuse continue to run rampant in Vigo County, so this is a training session that all volunteers won't want to miss!

RSVP by Friday, May 7, 2010



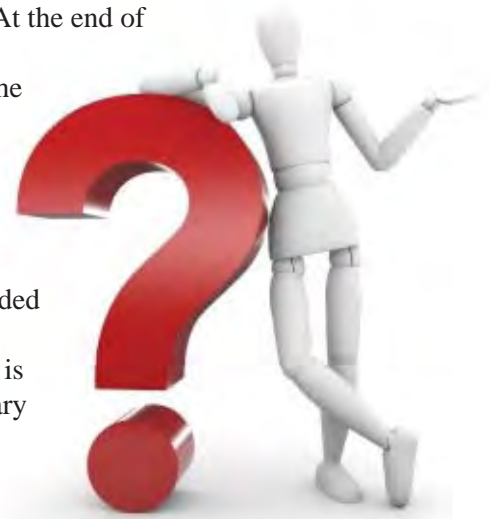
VOLUNTEER EVALUATIONS

As we all begin a new year, we strive to look back on the year we've completed. At the end of 2009, we sent out approximately 100 guardian/foster parent evaluations. About one-third of the evaluations received have been processed by our office. With all the data we received, we will be assessing our strengths and weaknesses, after which we hammer a plan of action into place to improve our program for those whose lives we touch in the community.

Our survey results showed that the areas of concern are that our CASA volunteers need to make more contact with the family and that CASA's also need to be reminded of their boundaries in their court-assigned role. As a result of this survey, we are requesting that your CASA child be seen one time or more per month if needed. It is essential that CASA's establish a rapport and build a relationship that is so necessary in the work of advocacy and speaking up for a child's best interests. Also, the CASA office will be offering further training in boundary issues to assure that we are not overstepping the boundaries set forth in our initial training.

Vigo County CASA did receive excellent ratings in other parts of our survey. We would like to quote some of our feedback. "Out of all the people involved with my children, the CASA volunteer they like the most." "I really think that the Vigo County CASA program was a godsend to us."

If there are problems occurring, please don't hesitate to contact the CASA office at 812-231-5658. Often times we are not aware of the problems that are occurring. As soon as we know these issues they will be addressed immediately to ensure the child is being represented in the best way possible! Surveys are one of the ways we will be able to improve our program. Thanks to all who participated and returned their surveys.



As the year ends and new one begins, CASA Kids reflects back and plans ahead. In 2009, we accomplished many good things for children thanks to the kind and generous donations from community businesses, volunteers and personal donations.

As a direct result of these gifts, we were able to provide bunk-beds and mattresses, build a fence to allow children to play safely at their home, provide gas cards, buy clothes and winter coats, fill cosmetic orthodontia needs, purchase eye contact lenses and more. It is the mission of CASA Kids to provide goods and services to children in need who aren't able to receive these goods or services from any other source.

Our CASA volunteers know that these children need and deserve more than just the bare necessities. To develop positive self esteem and strengthen the courage to try new things, children need enrichment opportunities and activities. Too often children in the juvenile court system are denied these opportunities simply because there are no funds to cover the additional expenses.

As we get into the swing of 2010 we have several exciting fundraisers started and planned. To launch the year, we began the Elder-Beerman Community Day Sale. We sold \$5.00 coupon booklets that could be used for deep discounts and bonus buys at Elder-Beerman on specific days in February. One-hundred percent of the proceeds have gone directly to CASA Kids.



We are also planning a "Breakfast with the Easter Bunny" at a local restaurant and a silent auction / barbeque in early summer. Details are still in the works and will be published when they are confirmed.

Cans for CASA Kids has raised more than \$200 by recycling aluminum cans this past year despite the decrease in prices for metals. Not bad for something that would have been just thrown away. We would like to make 2010 our best year yet. To recycle cans for CASA Kids, please drop your cans at Goodman & Wolfe, Gurman Containers or Sugar Creek Scrap in Terre Haute. Let them know you would like to donate the proceeds to CASA.

We also accept cans at the CASA office. Our goal for 2010 is to collect 1000 lbs of aluminum cans, and you can help us reach it. This year, we have already received over \$50 from our Cans for CASA Kids aluminum recycling campaign!



CASA Kids could not do what we have done without supporters like you. It is our shared passion for children that makes it all possible. We greatly appreciate and admire everyone who has stepped up for kids and helped make a difference in their lives.

Volunteer Birthdays



January

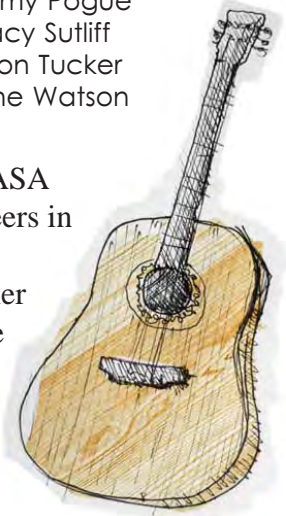
Barbara Alcock
Carolyn Bowers
Kathy Bradbury
Jacqueline Edington
Wanda Michael
Pamela Pahnke
Phyllis Peters
Paula Stites

February

Jennifer Davis
Brenda French
Sheila Gaskins
Andrea Gruenke
Jerry Lou Jeffers
Frances Overton
Janet Schlunt
Ruth Schrimsher
Becki Wiram

March

Becky Chilton
Yvonne Christie
Connie Fowler
Charlie Fuhrer
Jill Kuckewich
Deb Lindley
John McFarland
Teri Niebrugge
Tammy Pogue
Tracy Sutliff
Jason Tucker
Lynne Watson



VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DINNER

Volunteer Appreciation Week is April 18-24 this year, and that means a lot to us here in the CASA office as we rely greatly on all of you, our volunteers. We want to thank our awesome volunteers in the very best way possible. We have planned a dinner for all CASA volunteers on Thursday, April 22 at 6:00 PM in the council room of the Vigo County Annex building. Along with dinner & refreshments, music will also be provided for your entertainment. Additional details will be provided as we continue preparing for this event. For volunteers planning to attend, please RSVP to the CASA office by e-mailing nikki.fuhrmeister@vigocounty.in.gov or by calling (812)231-5658!

CASA Director
Nikki Fuhrmeister

Volunteer Coordinators
Jennifer Davis
Tara Merriman
Susie Thompson

Interns
Mileah Davis
Carla Kinman
Megan Pooré

Media Design / Dev. & Technology Adm.
Chris Fuhrmeister
Administrative Assistant
Penny Karn