



CASA of Vermilion County
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Everyday Heroes

Spring 2008



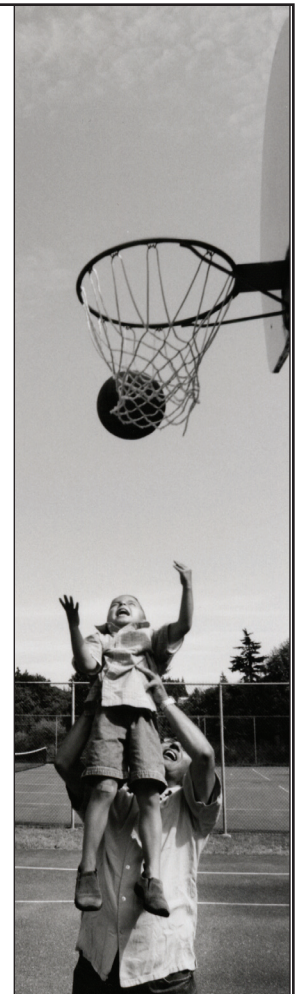
CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

VERMILION COUNTY

OUR MISSION...

is to advocate for abused and neglected children within the Juvenile Court System, by training and managing volunteers to represent those children's best interest to the court.



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message from the board president

It has been a learning experience to be in on the start of CASA of Vermilion County! Elements have fallen into place so well, I truly believe it was meant to be. With the help of Illinois and National CASA, our first board, and generous people like Dee Ann Ryan and Roger Boen, who offered us free office space, the program opened its doors on July 1, 2007. We secured our non-profit status, thanks to the patient work of attorney Kerry Clapper, and District 118 Schools donated office furniture. We “lucked out” with our director search, finding capable and savvy Heather Fox, who has gotten us off to a strong start.

But all that was preliminary to our real purpose: standing up in court for abused and neglected children in our county. I am so proud that we now have nine advocates trained and ready for cases! These men and women made a substantial commitment when taking the 30 hour training. It feels wonderful to know that this program is now in operation, and that children in need are being helped!

Yet more challenges are ahead. We need a steady stream of volunteers who are willing to train and serve. We need significant financial support, especially when our initial grant monies are gone. I feel optimistic that Vermilion County will help us reach out to its most vulnerable children.

Lois Gholson, Board President

Board of Directors

Tiffany Black	Lois Gholson
Jeanne Burke	David Quick
Jane Dobbles	Tracy Turner
Bill Donahue	Tammy Wilson
Carla Dumas	Sandi Wood
Thomas Fahey	

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Your Gift

will help give an abused and/or neglected child a voice in court.

Yes I wish to help abused and neglected children.

I have enclosed a contribution in the amount of \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

I wish to contribute in honor/memory of _____

Please acknowledge my gift in writing to the aboved named person or his/her family, below:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

I would like my gift to be anonymous.

Thank you for your generous support.

Illinois Bar Foundation Helps CASA to Grow!

CASA of Vermilion County was awarded a \$3,000 grant from the Illinois Bar Foundation. Over fifty years ago, a handful of visionary leaders founded the Illinois Bar Foundation. Their initial commitment was to provide aid to deserving members of the Illinois Bar who, because of age or infirmity, could no longer provide for their own care or support. Since then, the Foundation has expanded its scope to provide legal services for Illinois families, as well as facilitate and encourage the development of the legal profession within the State. CASA will use these funds to train and support volunteers who advocate for abused and neglected children in Vermilion County.



DONORS

Special thanks from CASA

Corporate & Foundation Donors:

American Association of
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Charlotte's Coffee and Tea Shop
Danville Township
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First Midwest Bank
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National CASA
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Vermilion County Mental
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MEMBER
NATIONAL CASA ASSOCIATION

On becoming a board member

As an elementary teacher in the Danville Public Schools for nearly three decades, I felt great satisfaction in the knowledge that every day I did something that was important, something that made a difference in the lives of the children and families I served. After retiring I still felt a need to do something significant, good work that would make our community a better place.

There are over 300 children in Vermilion County today who are wards of the Juvenile Court because they have been victims of neglect or abuse. This is heartbreaking for the children who were betrayed by their parents, the people they trusted most, the people who should love them most of all and protect them from harm. But, this is also a tragedy for our community. Children who have been neglected or abused are more likely to drop out of school, commit crimes and repeat the cycle of neglect and abuse with their own children. We can't afford to let this problem go unaddressed.

A CASA volunteer advocates for a single child or sibling group. The volunteer helps that child's voice be heard in court and makes inquiries to help determine what is in the best interest of that child or family, without the pressures of serving several families at once. Volunteers work in conjunction with the professionals who are assigned to the case. Children who have an advocate typically spend less time in foster care and will, hopefully, emerge from the process less traumatized and more likely to become productive citizens.

To ensure a viable, sustainable program to support our volunteers, we need a strong, dynamic Board of Directors. As vice president of the Board of Directors of CASA of Vermilion County, I urge you to consider joining our cause.

Jane Dobbles, Vice President



Board of Director Meetings

When: Fourth Wednesday
of the month

Where: Township Building,
101 W. North St., Danville

These meetings are open to the public
and public input is encouraged.

Events honor CASA advocates

Two recent events focused on our first class of advocates and the commitment they have made to children in our community. On April 1st, advocates and supports of CASA were invited to our first ever Advocate Breakfast at Charlotte's Coffee and Tea Shop. This volunteer appreciation event is a small showing of our vast appreciation of our volunteers and the difference they will make in the lives of abused and neglected children. The guest speaker for the event was Susan Maurer, an CASA volunteer, with six years of experience working with over a dozen children through Champaign County CASA.

Judge Clary officiated at a Swearing-in Ceremony on April 14th. Guest speakers Judge Anderson and Assistant State's Attorney Randy Brinegar shared the need for CASA volunteers, and their appreciation of those who had made the commitment. Judge Clary shared his desire to serve abused and neglected children well, and how CASA will help by providing important information and insight about the child they serve. Nine advocates took the oath of office initiating them as officers of the court. Special thanks to Judge Anderson, Judge Fahey, Judge Clary, Randy Brinegar, Susan Maurer, and Charlotte's Coffee and Tea Shop for helping make these events a success!

Our Amazing Advocates!

Michell Monroe
Barbara Bein
Judy Mattis
Nancy Russell
Wendy Wilder

Doug DeBarba
Janice Kempe
John Murray
Ron Pridemore (not pictured)



Tips for Nurturing Resilience

1. Set a good example. Qualities to represent to the child include advocating and standing up for yourself; communicating clearly; being present for the child rather than distracted; taking time for yourself and enjoying your life; helping others; being calm and centered; and relating to solid, dependable friends of your own.

2. Help children take small steps. Children need to create their own senses of identity, control, family and community in their lives. While you must keep a positive vision of where the child will end up, you should also help her with the structure—the small steps—to get from here to there.

3. Encourage them to participate in things they love. Arts, sports, music, clubs, camps, faith-based activities, etc. ground children in enriching communities.

4. Get children to talk. Ask the child to put her feelings into words and tell you what she learned from her successes and mistakes. You can make a game of it by asking her to describe the day or week in terms of “roses, thorns and stems”—what went well; what did not; and what was just OK. Also, it is more productive to ask, “Tell me what you were thinking when you did that” than “Why did you do that?” The first approach keeps communication more open and less judgmental.

5. Use encouraging words with persistence. Children need to hear that they are wonderful, sweet, intelligent, attractive, honest, compassionate people. They need to hear that what they do is worthy, wise, effective, useful and shows good judgment.

6. Support children in forming their ethnic or racial identity. This is especially important when a child is placed in a foster home or group home that does not reflect her heritage. If so, ensure that she finds other ways to connect to her culture.

7. Know your own limitations and resources beyond yourself. When you cannot offer advice or direction, be ready to refer the child to other individuals or organizations that can.

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Understanding and Promoting Childhood Resilience

Is childhood resilience a function of nature or nurture? The answer is both, with healthy regular adult contact being the trump card in children's lives. Geneticists discovered that a gene called 5-HTT is related to resiliency. This gene is critical to regulating serotonin, the substance our brains use to promote well-being and protect us against depression. Each of us possesses a pair of 5-HTT alleles, which come in short and long versions. A pair of long alleles can boost our resilience; a pair of short alleles can reduce it; and one of each can let us tip either way. People with one short allele can tend toward depression if they are abused as children or experience several major life stresses.

Yale University psychiatry professor Joan Kaufman found that abused children with two short alleles tended more toward depression than abused children with two long alleles or non-abused children with short or long alleles. Short-allele abused children who rarely saw adults they regarded as important in their lives presented dramatically worse depression scores. Abused, long-allele children were far less affected by a lack of contact with their primary adult(s). But depression scores for short-allele children who saw their important adults daily or almost daily improved to levels near those of the abused children with two long alleles—and those of the children who had not been abused at all. Resilient children also tend to be skillful at creating beneficial relationships with adults, which in turn help boost resilience even further.

This is what every CASA and GAL volunteer knows instinctively: healthy, regular adult contact can make dramatic, positive differences in children's lives, even for children who have faced prolonged adversity. The recipe is simple, according to Jane Wehrmeister, program supervisor with Voices for Children, Inc., San Diego, CA. "Caring and consistency; letting children know that someone's there who cares how they are and what they do."

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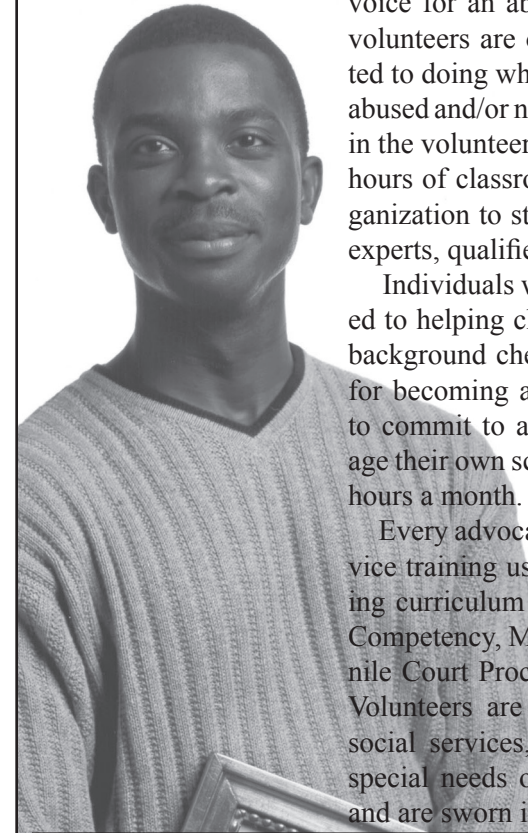


CASA Volunteers are professionals!

Volunteer with CASA of Vermilion County as a Court Appointed Special Advocate and be the voice for an abused and neglected child. CASA volunteers are ordinary people who are committed to doing what is best for a child who has been abused and/or neglected. Our advocates are unique in the volunteer field, because they undergo thirty hours of classroom training. This allows our organization to stand out as a model of specialized experts, qualified to provide excellent service.

Individuals who are 25 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 8-10 hours a month.

Every advocate is provided 30 hours of pre-service training using a nationally recognized training curriculum that includes lessons on Cultural Competency, Minimal Parenting Standards, Juvenile Court Processes, and the role of the CASA. Volunteers are trained in courtroom procedure, social services, the juvenile justice system, the special needs of abused and neglected children, and are sworn in as officers of the court.



Next CASA Training Class

July 1 - July 31

Tuesday and Thursday Evenings 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm

101 W. North St., Danville, IL 61832

We are looking for individuals who are committed to helping abused and neglected children to be part of this class. If you are interested in becoming an advocate please call (217) 446-5975 or visit our website at <http://www.casavermillion.org> for more information. The training and all associated materials are free!

Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect

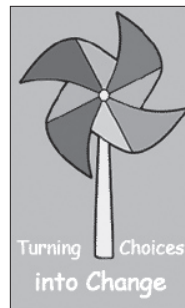
Child abuse is everyone's business. If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected call 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873)

What is child abuse and neglect?

- Physical abuse – an injury to a child that is not an accident: including beating, burning, biting, cutting, or shaking a child.
- Emotional abuse – maltreatment of a child that may involve criticizing, insulting, yelling, rejecting or withholding love.
- Sexual abuse – sexual contact with a child, including exhibitionism, pornography, prostitution, rape, or fondling.
- Neglect – failure to provide for a child's basic physical, emotional, medical or educational needs.

Warning signs of abuse include children who....

- Are nervous around adults
- Show sudden changes in behavior
- Have unexplained burns, cuts, or bruises
- Hurt themselves, other children, or animals
- Are frequently dirty or hungry



Did You Know That ...?

- There are over 300 children in Vermilion County who are involved in current child abuse and neglect cases.
- The majority of child abuse and neglect deaths are children under 5 years old.
- One out of four girls and one out of five to seven boys will be sexually assaulted by the age of 18.

How can you be involved?

- Report Child Abuse. If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected in Illinois, call 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873)
- Discipline your children thoughtfully. Remember that discipline is a way to teach your child.
- Support Parents. Parenting is the toughest job any of us will ever undertake. Reach out to parents. Help them get the support and encouragement they need to succeed.

For more information on preventing child abuse visit www.preventchildabuse.org

CASA: An Investment that Yields Huge Saving

A 2004 study on the costs of protecting vulnerable children estimated the direct costs of child abuse and neglect in the United States in 2002 to be \$24 billion. Direct costs include hospitalization, chronic health problems, mental health services, child welfare system, law enforcement, and judicial costs associated with child abuse. An additional \$69 billion was spent on indirect costs associated with child abuse. These costs include special education, mental and physical health care, juvenile delinquency, lost productivity to society, and adult criminality. Of these costs adult criminality accounted for \$55 billion. These numbers show the fiscal burden on our nation, and hint to the societal costs (such as crime and increased mental health problems).

CASA is an investment that can decrease the fiscal and societal costs associated with child abuse. First by serving children and helping them, we can break the cycle of violence and reduce the number of abused and neglected children in the next generation. Nationally, CASA volunteers contributed more than 4.9 million hours of advocacy for children in 2005. If compensated for performing such a role, the total would be more than \$245 million. By helping to reduce time spent unnecessarily in foster care, CASA can reduce child welfare costs. In 2004, an estimated 800,000 children were in foster care, at an estimated cost to Americans of \$24 billion. If the average length of stay in foster care (28.6 months) were shortened for CASA children by just one month, it would realize a savings of approximately \$1.2 billion.



How You Can Help

Every donation of time, materials, and financial support is greatly appreciated. Here are just a few ideas how you can get involved:

- Become an Advocate for a child (or sibling group)
- Join our Board of Directors
- Share information about CASA with your friends, family, and coworkers
- Invite us to present at your church, organization, or civic group
- Sponsor or host an event
- Consider CASA for your fiscal or in-kind donation