



# Everyday Heroes

Spring 2015

April 15, 2015

## Did You Know?

- Last year there were 537 substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect in Vermilion County.
- Substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect have increased 72.60% in Vermilion County

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## Greetings from the New Director

Greetings from CASA of Vermilion County! As many of you already know, I was hired in December to be the new Executive Director of CASA of Vermilion County. I look forward to maintaining and growing our wonderful network of advocates to serve as many children as possible throughout Vermilion County.

As a Vermilion County native, and someone who has worked in our court system for years, I know the importance of CASA.

Thank you to our advocates, board of directors, and benefactors who have welcomed me and embraced many of my ideas for growth and organizational change.

I look forward to the challenge of making CASA the best it can be, and with your help I hope to one day serve all Vermilion County children who need our help.

If any of you wish to get to know me further or would like to see our NEW office, do not hesi-

tate to give me a call at 446-5975, I look forward to expanding our organization together!



## CASA of Vermilion County's Commitment

CASA is central to fulfilling society's most fundamental obligation by making sure a qualified, compassionate adult will fight for and protect a child's right be safe, to be treated with dignity and respect, and to learn and

grow in the security of a loving family.

### CASA's Mission

*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.*

**Be a Hero.  
Be an Advocate.**

## Court Appointed Special Advocates Are Hometown Heroes

We, as a community in Vermilion County, IL, have a responsibility for assisting neglected and abused children whose lives have been torn apart through no fault of their own. CASA of Vermilion County, in its 8<sup>th</sup> year, is a nonprofit designed to help more than 500 abused and neglected children who suffer annually. CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) works with the Juvenile Court system to help these children achieve what every child deserves – a safe, loving, permanent home. In order for volunteers to be eligible to advocate on behalf of an abused and neglected child, they must successfully complete 30 hours of pre-service training based on the National CASA advocate training curriculum, meet with a staff member for a one-hour case orientation session, pass a background check and screening process, and be sworn in as Officers of the Court by the presiding judge. Advocates are also required to complete 12 hours of in-service training each year.

**Ready to  
volunteer?  
Please contact  
Lucas Seilhymer  
at  
217-446-5975  
or email him at  
director@casa  
vermilion.org  
for additional  
information.**

CASA volunteers are appointed by the Juvenile Court Judge to conduct an independent investigation of the child's circumstances and submit their findings and recommendations to the Court. The advocate visits with his/her appointed child regularly and interviews all relevant people in the child's life including but not limited to: foster parents, biological parents, siblings, relatives, teachers, doctors, counselors, therapists, the Guardian ad Litem (GAL) and the State's Attorney. Additionally the advocate attends court hearings, administrative case reviews and any other meetings pertaining to the child. The advocate, using the information he/she has gathered, then makes a written recommendation to the court regarding the child's well-being and long term permanency options from reunification to adoption. An advocate acts as a consistent presence for a child as their case progresses. It is not uncommon for the caseworkers, foster parents, attorneys and judges to change, not once, but multiple times throughout the course of a case.

It is the advocate who remains the constant adult in a child's life, advocating for them until they are in a safe and permanent home. For children whose pasts have been chaotic and whose futures are uncertain, the advocate may be the most consistent, interested presence in their lives.

**There is no such thing as an undeserving four-year old. Child abuse and neglect doesn't just hurt the child – it is an issue that affects the entire community.**



Vermilion Chevrolet-Buick-GMC  
presents

# A Night at the Races

to benefit the children served by  
**CASA of Vermilion County**



**Friday, April 17**

Knights of Columbus, 310 Bryan, Danville

6-7 PM Happy Hour  
7:00 Races begin

Join us for a casual evening of fun, good food and video thoroughbred horse races with cash & merchandise prizes! Cash bar.

Admission \$15  
Horse owner-50/50 drawing ticket \$10

To purchase tickets, call 446-5975,  
or visit [www.casavermillion.org](http://www.casavermillion.org)

CASA of Vermilion County is an approved 501(c)(3) nonprofit.  
CASA is a United Way agency

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## Meet the Advocates Our Everyday Heroes

- Adam Brown
- Emma Brown
- Wendy Brown
- Maria Coleman
- Jacqui Collins
- Mel Cornell
- Mike Courson
- Linda Culotti
- Loquita Flowers
- Precious Foreman
- Joanie Hedlund
- Mary Mancuso
- Julie Mann
- Mark Meyer
- Michelle Mitchell
- Evelyn Phebus
- Tamarai Red
- Dee Ann Ryan
- Lisa Taapkin
- Mike Westfall

## Optima Software Improves

Thanks to a very generous software grant from the Vermilion Healthcare Foundation, and the Cadle Foundation, CASA has upgraded to the Optima software program.

This state of the art software designed specifically for CASA programs is a great improvement and comprehensive for all case management activities.

Training for the new system will be built in to the new advocate training, and all current advocates will be trained on Optima starting in May.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

**Lucas Seilhymer**  
*Executive Director*  
211 N. Walnut  
Danville, IL 61832  
Tel: 446-5975  
Fax: 446-6018  
[www.casavermillion.org](http://www.casavermillion.org)

### Board of Directors Volunteering Time and Talents

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <b>Jane Dobbles, President</b>         | <b>Anna Sykes</b>  |
| <b>Alayne Anderson, Vice President</b> | <b>Patti Rull</b>  |
| <b>Liya Hussmann Rogers, Treasurer</b> | <b>Bill Wright</b> |
| <b>Lois Gholson, Secretary</b>         |                    |
| <b>Neal Ehrlich</b>                    |                    |
| <b>Tricia Keith</b>                    |                    |

### CASA Has Moved

CASA's new location is 211 N. Walnut in Danville. Please stop by and see our new facility. This office is much more accessible than our previous location and would love to have you visit.

Come by and meet Paula Brown our executive assistant and Susan Glynn, who joins us from Experience Works. Both of whom have helped with the relocation process.

***Not only do we have  
a new Executive  
Director and  
Optima Software,  
we also have a new  
location!***



## Laura's Story - Living Proof of a CASA Hero

Long before my feet touched Iraqi soil—before I even joined the United States Marine Corps—I was a veteran of a long war for survival.

My first foe was my father, who was horribly abusive to my mother and me. When he finally left, a new enemy surprised me: my mother's demons. I was 13 when my mother's mental illness drove her to lock me in a back bedroom of our house—without food or water. By the time the police broke in a week later, I was literally starving. When I got out of the hospital I had a new status: foster kid.

During my five years in foster care I had more than a dozen social workers. Nearly every court date meant meeting a new lawyer. But through it all I had just one CASA volunteer: Sally Payne.

Throughout all the changes and different people I had to deal with, Sally was the one person who was there just for me. Knowing Sally cared about me meant the world to me. She was the anchor I desperately needed to stay in school, to keep moving forward, to make the

choices that got me safely out of foster care and into service to my country. She made me believe that I was destined for success—in college or in whatever else I decided to do.

“Whatever else” turned out to be joining the Marines—which I did as soon as I turned 18 without consulting Sally or anyone else. You see, while I was in foster care, my mom died—homeless and alone. I worried that I might be biologically programmed for a similar fate. The United States Marine Corps promised a roof over my head, job training and security. Sally wasn't thrilled with my decision, but she trusted me to make my own choices and she supported me.

I was a Marine from 2000 to 2005, and I served two missions in Iraq. Today I am 27 and a civilian police officer at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in San Diego. I am also a college student, studying psychology. Sally's lessons have never left me, and neither has Sally. She will be in my life forever.

I am living proof that CASA volunteers change kids' lives.

*I am living  
proof that  
CASA  
volunteers  
change kids'  
lives.*



# **Advocate Training to begin May 4. Please contact Lucas Seilhymmer at 217-446-5975 for additional information.**

[www.casavermillion.org](http://www.casavermillion.org)

## **Volunteer Your Time to Change a Child's Life**

Nobody longs for a safe and loving family more than a child in foster care. As a CASA volunteer, you are empowered by the courts to help make this dream a reality. You will not only bring positive change to the lives of these vulnerable children, but also their children and generations to come. And in doing so, you will enrich your life as well.

## **What Do CASA Volunteers Do? CASA volunteers listen first. Then they act.**

Volunteers get to know the child by talking with everyone in that child's life: parents and relatives, foster parents, teachers, medical professionals, attorneys, social workers and others. They use the information they gather to inform judges and others of what the child needs and what will be the best permanent home for them.