



Court Appointed Special Advocates of the River Region

Serving Jefferson, Henry, Oldham, Trimble, Shelby and Spencer Counties

CASA news

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month.

If you are a CASA volunteer, then you are very serious about doing something about the tragedy of child abuse. In fact, you already are. Since April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, it is a perfect time to bring up the issue of child abuse and neglect and to tell others about your involvement with CASA. We are always looking for ways to publicize our cause. So, while you are out there in the community letting others know of your good work, please let them know that we are available to speak to groups and welcome any chance to tell the community about our mission.



April 2011 Issue

CASA STATS

- 191 children served in Jefferson County (as of 3/31/11)
- 53 children served in Henry/Oldham/Trimble Counties (as of 3/22/11)
- 50 children served in Shelby/Spencer Counties (as of 3/15/11)

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every child deserves someone to trust.

April is also Volunteer Recognition Month.

CASA could not do what it does without volunteers. The CASA staff and Board of Directors are very, very grateful to all of our volunteers and for what you do for our area's victimized children. We sincerely appreciate the time and heart that you give and salute you during this important month! Thank you to volunteers who have served over the past year.

Volunteer Recognition Month

Jefferson County Advocates: Jack Allen, Lori Arnold, Jean Augustine, Ken Baize Rachel Beanblossom, Linda Beck, Herb Bradley, Caton Bredar, Andrea Bruns, Peggy Buechler, Stephanie Caldwell, Andrea Camiolo, Paul Carmony, C'Allen Chauvin, Talley Cockerel, Clare Cooper, Margie Dimond, Diane Drescher, Jennifer Elery, Kim Fahey, Jennifer Franklin, Josette Gocella, Fred Graef, Jim Gravitt, Carol Gray, Bob and Shirley Haburne, Suzanne Hartman, Amy Held, Lori Holland, Bethany Vorn Holt, Liz Hubbard, Judy Huelsman, Linda Ilnick, Linda Ison, Jocelyn Johnson, Juanita Johnson, Rochelle Jones, John Kiesel, Christy Kramer, Pat Krider, Simone Leavell, Becky League, Donald Lockhart, Evelyn Mabry, Kathy Martin, Melissa McIntosh, Pete McManus, Jane McWilliams, Carol Miller, Christy Morgan, Jane Norris, Juli O'Brien, Lori Olsen, Joan Pedigo, Shelby Pile, Tony Ponte, JoAnn Potts, Tina Russell, Scott Sawade, Rosalind Scott, Penny Shaw, Dorothy Shipley Foster, Seth Sklare, Barbara Stallard, Linda Stark, Lee Staudter, Bob Stenger, Lillian Stratmon, Robin Sutherland, Skip Thoren, Elizabeth Tully, Karen Torrens, Joyce Voss, Amy Wade, Bobbi Waldman, Vicki Watts, Aaron Wilder, Addie Williams, Carol Wilson, and Barbara Wittebort

Henry, Oldham and Trimble County Advocates: Kelli Blevins, Kate Bowling, Carol Braund, Amanda Breslin, Sherri Caldwell, Tiffany Carnal, Megan Cheek, Rob Cooley, Caroline Cox, Charlotte Dawson, Rick Derthick, Diane Doll, Carolyn Garner, Tony Garner, Lee Griffith, Mary Jane Haller, Tiffany Huffman, Joan Jost, Gena McFarland, Debbie Mefford, Chris Murner, Diane and Ron Nash, Janie Parker, Helena Rawon, Mary Jo Robb, Denise Rowling, Kris Russell, Lois Vaughn, Stephanie Wenether, Lisa Whisman, Barry and Carolyn Wilding, and Bonnie Williams

Shelby and Spencer County Advocates: Jane Case, Lisa Casey, Bill Dunning, Monica Foster, Nancy Guilliom, Linda Handorf, Theresa Hardin, Beverly Hilger, Ruth Humphrey, Mary Johnson, Burch Kinsolving, Becky League, Darlene Murray, Walt Reichart, Tyler Reid, Teresa Roberson, Keshia Smith, Jonathan Stucker, Thre-asē Stucker, and Bill Tuttle



Volunteer Support Meetings.

The first Monday at noon and the third Thursday at 5:30 of each month is reserved for volunteer support meetings. These meetings allow volunteers to meet one another, discuss cases and problems or successes, and hear about any news concerning the organization. *Volunteers from all counties are encouraged to attend.* Please let your supervisor know at least a day before the meeting if you will attend. For April, the next volunteer support meeting is on the 25th at noon at WAVE TV. We will also hold a meeting on the 28th at 5:30 pm (meeting location TBA).

Please Contact Your Supervisor.

Please remember to contact your supervisor at least every other week and give them an update on your case. We need to be as up to date on your case as you are and look forward to hearing from you.

Upcoming In-Service.

The next in-service to be held in Jefferson County will be May 16th. This in-service will consist of lunch and a tour of Home of the Innocents at noon. *Please let your supervisor know by May 9th if you will attend.*

Did You Know?

Did you know that on December 20, 2010, President Obama signed the long-awaited reauthorization of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act? This legislation is especially significant for CASA programs, as it mandates that a guardian ad litem (GAL) must be appointed in any case alleging child abuse or neglect. The bill also specifies that CASA volunteers are qualified and trained to serve as GALs for these children.

Welcome New Volunteers.

Jefferson: Rachel Beanblossom, Simone Leavell

Henry/Oldham/Trimble: Tiffany Carnal, Joanne Ferson, Mary Kay Weibe

Shelby/Spencer: Evette Beasley, Sarah Jefferies, Kay Jolly, Carolyn Neff



Want to share your CASA story or a CASA related, community event? Email lauren@casarr.org.

CASA Snapshots.

- - - Henry, Oldham & Trimble In-Service - - -



On March 15th, Attorney Rob Riley presented "Giving Testimony as a Volunteer." The in-service was held at the Oldham County Courthouse. Below are CASA volunteers.



- - - Child Abuse Prevention Rally - - -

On April 13th, CASA staff attended the Family and Children's Place Child Abuse Prevention Rally. The event was held at the KFC Yum! Center; Councilman David Tandy (center) took a moment to smile with us.



Transition from Foster Care: 7 Myths

by Celeste Bodner

Founder and Director of the FosterClub

It's no secret. You've seen the shocking statistics about youth who age out of the system: the low high school graduation rates, the elevated incidences of teen pregnancy and incarceration as well as the homelessness suffered by youth who have recently been dismissed from foster care.

It's somewhat of a relief that the new federal Fostering Connections law has made major improvements to programs for older youth in care. This legislation mandates important new services. But to ensure that we meet the needs of older youth, we must face persistent myths:

Myth 1: It takes 90 days to put a transition plan in place.

The Fostering Connections Act goes a long way by requiring states, during the 90-day period immediately prior to a youth aging out of care, to "provide the child with assistance and support in developing a transition plan that is personalized at the direction of the child, includes specific options on housing, health insurance, education, local opportunities for mentors, and workforce supports and employment services." *(continued on page 7)*

Volunteer Spotlight.

Ron Nash

Ron has been a CASA Volunteer for five years. He serves on the CASA of the River Region Board of Directors as representative for Henry and Trimble Counties, has advocated for almost 20 children, and helps as a Supervisor of Volunteers. Ron and his wife, Diane, work as a team on their CASA cases. Ron is a retired police officer, therapist, and drug court counselor. He moved to Kentucky from California to be near his children. *Thank you Ron and Diane for being voices for children in need!*



Upcoming Events.

Thursday, April 28th, Time: 8:00 am
Embrace A Child Breakfast*

The Shelby and Spencer 2nd Annual Embrace A Child Breakfast will be held at the Shelby County Community Theater on the 28th. This event allows various community members to learn about the CASA mission.

Saturday, May 14th, Time: 9:00 am
1st Annual CASA Walk: *A Walk for Kids in Need*

CASA of the River Region is proud to announce the 1st Annual CASA Walk: *A Walk for Kids in Need* in La Grange. The CASA Walk is a family-friendly community event to support the CASA mission. Please spread the word and join us on May 14th at Seven Counties Services in La Grange (located at 2141 Spencer Court, off Commerce Parkway). You can pre-register by visiting www.casarr.org/walk. You may complete registration online or download and mail the application (see FORMS). Event-day registration begins at 8:15 am.

We are still accepting cash and in-kind donations for this event. So if you know of a business or organization that would like to get on board, please forward the information. For questions, contact Lauren at 595-4911 or lauren@casarr.org. *See you on May 14th.*

Wednesday, May 18th
Kickoff of the Annual Car Raffle*

CASA's annual car raffle is back! This year, CASA will raffle a luxurious 2011 Land Rover. The raffle committee is planning a grand kickoff event to get this year's raffle off to a great start. However, tickets are on sale right now! We have a website dedicated to online ticket sales. Please tell your colleagues, neighbors, friends and loved ones to visit www.CASARAFFLE.com so they can purchase their tickets today because tickets are limited. Raffle tickets can be purchased online through check or credit card. You can also post the raffle website on Facebook and Twitter. Just visit the raffle site to share and tweet. A live drawing will be held on October 4. Until then, let's make this year's raffle a big success!

**denotes invitation only events*



But three months to plan before a youth leaves foster care for good? This isn't sufficient time to implement a transition plan, particularly considering the setbacks and challenges many foster youth have faced throughout their teen years. Perhaps we should be thinking about three years instead of three months. FosterClub is excited that this is exactly the approach National CASA has taken through its new Fostering Futures curriculum.

Myth 2: Young people leave foster care.

The truth is, the foster care system leaves the youths' lives. Not the other way around. Once the age of emancipation is reached, support from the system generally falls away completely: shelter, food, transportation, mental health support, mentoring, a place to do laundry. Once we recognize this, we realize the imperative to install supports that will last into adulthood.

Myth 3: It's a transition.

For many youth, leaving foster care is less about a "transition" and more about a week's—or maybe a month's—notice that they'll need to pack their things. Ready or not. Perhaps more like "cliffhanging" than "transitioning." Although some states allow youth to reenter foster care, it's only allowed up until the age of emancipation—usually either 18 or 21. And the only way it can happen is if young people know they can come back.

These days, transitioning from the average family home can take many years. Most young adults in America lean on their parents well into their 20s and sometimes beyond. Parents may be there for their children for many years past the onset of young adulthood.

Myth 4: Independent living is what we strive for.

Some child welfare systems state "independent living" as a goal for youth leaving the foster care system. At FosterClub, we differ. According to our young people,



having committed and reliable adult supporters is the number-one indicator of success for a young person transitioning from foster care. Interdependent living is better term to describe what a young person should aim for.

Myth 5: The solution is simple—permanence.

While establishing permanence in a youth's life has been given priority status within the child welfare field, FosterClub finds that young people who have experienced a lot of disruption during their years in care often don't know what permanence means, let alone how important it is. For example:

It wasn't until I became an intern for FosterClub that I began to truly understand what permanency meant. I thought that since I had "successfully" exited the foster care system I had permanency. Now I understand permanence doesn't have to be within the constraints of reunification, adoption, placement with a family member or another permanent living arrangement. Instead, for me it signifies a lifelong connection with a supportive adult, and I know what I need to do to reach towards that.

—Janessa, Iowa

Myth 6: Independent living skills = "I'm all set."

Many young people are understandably eager to leave the system behind. They dutifully participated in training for independent living. They've learned to fill out an apartment rental application, balance their checkbook and do laundry without turning everything pink. They feel ready for life on their own.

But everything can change in a second. A recent blog post by FosterClub 2010 All-Star Ashley Jackson (the author of this issue's Alum Editorial) illustrates how the situation of a young person, by all counts "successful," can change with no warning:

Saturday began as a typical day. I woke up, went to work.... I got off work, packed my bag, filled up my tank and hit the highway. I was expecting a normal weekend—visiting family and friends and taking a break from my hectic lifestyle. Those thoughts quickly faded when I swerved to miss a deer on the highway and experienced a motor vehicle accident. After a lengthy time and undergoing testing, the doctor informed me that I had fractured my back and would have to be sent to a specialist that night for further testing. I spent two days in the hospital, was put in a back brace and was told not to return to school or work for two weeks. In the blink of an eye my entire life changed. How was I going to manage all of this?

—Ashley, Michigan

It's great to have a good transition plan—even better to have independent living skills. But that's not enough. Fortunately, Ashley had taken *(continued on next page)*



the time to develop contacts and supports for life after foster care. They were her safety net in this emergency.

Myth 7: It's up to us to protect them.

This is actually partly true. Sure, as supportive adults in a young person's life, we need to protect them from harm. But teens often complain about missing out on normal milestones because activities are deemed too risky for foster youth: getting a driver's license, staying overnight with a friend, taking an out-of-state vacation with a friend's family—or even dating.

If we are asking young people in care to make responsible life decisions when they leave the system, we need to provide occasions that allow them to practice. Strategic scenarios should be offered that allow youth to take risks. Yes, there will be mistakes and failures. But what better way to learn than from experience? What better time to practice decision making than while foster care provides a safety net?

Let's move past the seven myths.

As Ashley's and Janessa's quotes illustrate, the greatest gift we can offer young people who will be leaving care is the support of committed adults. A CASA volunteer is in an excellent position to help youth arrange and strengthen these relationships. Young leaders from FosterClub overwhelmingly recite that the difference between success and becoming one of the statistics is the care and love of one or more supportive adults.

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Louisville, KY 40202



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casarr.org



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502-595-4911



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What did others say in response to the 7 myths article?

As someone who is well into my middle age I can still remember turning 18 at the beginning of my senior year of high school. I was a ward of the state but lived with relatives. When they lost their funding I was made very aware of the precarious nature of my living situation. Upon high school graduation I packed my bags shortly thereafter and moved out on my own. Not a great plan, but I did have "independent living skills" however young people in their late teens are just as vulnerable as much younger kids. I was no exception and while I didn't make horrible choices I made some choices based on my reality and looking back having had better or any support would have been beneficial to someone like me. I completely understand the need for long transitioning from the system out into the "real world." Bottom line, all children are valuable, however for me, I feel as if I had been thrown to the wind for the vultures to tear apart. I sincerely hope that the system changes and for the better. - *Anonymous 3/31/11*

Great article! You read my mind (and probably hundreds of others!). Realistic interpretation of what really happens. Love the "young people leave foster care." Yeah right, and with three months to plan an exit into the black hole without a safety net?! Three years is an excellent plan to prepare them and give them time to adjust. Having supportive adults in their corner is going to make a huge difference, so this time also gives kids the opportunity to think about who those adults will be and form the bonds needed. I believe it will set them up for success!!! Thank you :) I am going to pass this on...it's a wonderful piece. - *Anonymous 3/18/11*

Ditto the comments...The only comment I will add is that from now on this article will be required reading for all CAJAs in Madison County. - *CAJA-CEO 3/17/11*

*Share your perspective about the 7 myths in the next newsletter!
Email lauren@casarr.org with your response.*

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