

Fall 2011



The Children's Advocate





A publication of CASA, Inc., of Nashville & Davidson County
601 Woodland Street · Nashville, Tennessee 37206 · (615) 425-2383

A Message From the Executive Director

When a child is in the court system due to abuse and neglect, a judge must determine where he or she should go. Should he or she remain in foster care? Be reunited with parents? Or be adopted? The caseload is overwhelming for the courts and our social services agencies. CASA, Inc., provides a crucial resource of trained advocates who speak exclusively for the children. It is the CASA volunteer's duty to acquire in-depth knowledge of each assigned case, focus on the child's best interests, and express those needs and point of view to the court. Volunteer special advocates' recommendations help judges make more informed decisions and give children a voice during an uncertain and often frightening time.

For 27 years, CASA has improved children's lives in Davidson County; but unfortunately, today, we still cannot advocate for every child. To do so, we must double our current budget to \$1.2 million and significantly grow our overall operations. CASA's board of directors believes the time has come to bridge the gap. We are launching an initiative called *A Voice For All* to expand our reach into the community and meet our goal to serve 100 percent of the children who need advocates annually. This work will likely take at least three years, and we will need more than money to achieve our

goal, but we believe our community can support the effort and stand up for our children in need.

CASA was very fortunate to have been spared by the flood waters of May 2010. Unfortunately, the Juvenile Justice Center was not spared, and had to relocate to a variety of spaces across the city for 10 months. Its normal operations were disrupted, which ultimately resulted in fewer dependent and neglect petitions being filed, and fewer cases being referred to CASA. Despite the disruption from the norm, CASA served 501 abused and neglected children via 280 volunteer special advocates during our 2010 to 2011 fiscal year. Additionally, we trained 52 new volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates. The court accepted 86 percent of CASA's permanent placement recommendations, and our six-month follow-up showed 94 percent of the children remained in their safe placements.

In August 2010, with funding from an Urban High Need grant through National CASA, we were able to add another advocate supervisor to our staff. The addition of this full-time position increases our overall capacity to serve more abused and neglected children. Now that the number of cases referred from juvenile



court is back to pre-flood levels, we are glad to be able to serve approximately 125 more children per year.

To our donors and corporate funders, please know how much we appreciate your continuing support of the work our volunteers do. The only way we will be able to get closer to providing *A Voice For All* abused and neglected children in Davidson County is through your loyal contributions.

To our devoted and passionate volunteers, please know how much we value your time, energy and talents that you invest to save children from lives of abuse. You are the heart and soul of CASA!

Jane Andrews
CASA Executive Director

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WHY GET INVOLVED:

MARY

CASA was appointed to advocate for the best interests of 7-year-old Mary, who came to the attention of the court through a Department of Children's Services (DCS) petition. The petition alleged Mary had been sexually abused by her mother's boyfriend and that the mother's boyfriend was a registered sex offender. The alleged sex abuse occurred more than a year prior to the petition because it had not been disclosed by Mary until then. At the time Mary disclosed the sex abuse, she was in the custody of her father, and was living with her father and his girlfriend. DCS closed its case shortly after filing the petition. A few months later, CASA volunteer Michelle was assigned to Mary's case. Right around that time, the father's girlfriend was arrested, and the father lost his home. Mary began missing school, staying with individuals she did not know, and had yet to be enrolled in counseling for victims of sex abuse. Michelle worked hard, maintaining contact with Mary and her father. Michelle constantly pushed the issue of Mary missing too much school and not being enrolled in counseling to address her victimization. Despite the family moving frequently, Michelle never lost Mary. Michelle was able to locate the mother of one of Mary's half-siblings, who took Mary into her home. Michelle also helped this individual to get Mary enrolled in both school and counseling. Additionally, Mary had some unaddressed dental needs that she is now receiving medical care for since being placed with this individual. The father has also signed a Power of Attorney over to Mary's new caretaker. The case is still awaiting trial on the petition that was filed by DCS, but Michelle's involvement has secured stability, safety and services for Mary.

(Names have been altered to protect identity.)

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5 Years

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*(CASA Volunteer 1996-2006
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10 Years

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15 Years

Brenda Thompson
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CASA Mission Statement:

Provide trained community volunteers to advocate for the best interests of children who come to the attention of the court primarily as a result of abuse or neglect.

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WHY GET INVOLVED:

THE SPENCERS

CASA advocates were appointed to the five Spencer children after the Department of Children's Services filed a petition alleging sexual abuse of the two teenage daughters by their mother's boyfriend. The three other children in the custody of Ms. Spencer were her sister's children that she had gained custody of five years prior. The behavior of two of the children was out of control, and Ms. Spencer told the court that she could no longer care for them. Michael and Rachel were placed in state custody, and after evaluations they were deemed to be level three and four, respectively. There were no appropriate placements in Davidson County, and the children were placed in Memphis. The advocate not only has visited the children four hours away an average of twice a month, but has helped facilitate visitation with their parents, as their permanency goal is "return to parent." She was also instrumental in investigating the parent's home for the placement of the other children.

(Names have been altered to protect identity.)

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CASA honored volunteers at a luncheon held April 14.



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JIMMY WAYNE

In March 2011, Jimmy Wayne became the newest spokesperson for the National CASA Association. An alumnus of foster care himself, Wayne gives tirelessly of his time to support older youth in the child welfare system. In 2010, he walked more than 1,700 miles from Nashville, Tenn., to Phoenix, Ariz., to raise awareness of homeless youth and children in care. His Meet Me Halfway (www.projectmmh.org) campaign has been profiled by the media across the country. Wayne performed at the 2011 National CASA conference and has spoken regularly about the cause on television and radio as well as during performances.



12th Annual Light of Hope: Red Shoe Party



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or

Tuesdays and Thursdays

5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

2011 - Fall Session Oct. 10-Nov. 17

12th Annual Shelby Bottoms

Boogie 15K and 5K

Oct. 1, 2011

Exclusive Evening to Benefit CASA

Oct 5, 2011

ACC vs. SEC Alumni Golf Tournament

Oct. 10, 2011

Holiday Open House

Dec. 8, 2011

13th Annual Light of Hope: Red Shoe Party

April 21, 2012

Planned Giving Reminder

You can create a legacy of hope for vulnerable children through a planned gift to CASA, Inc. Friends and supporters who express their intention to include CASA in their estate plan may be recognized as a member of the Legacy Club. To learn more, contact CASA at (615) 425-2383 or casa@casa-nashville.org.



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