April Newsletter

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On behalf of the Child Advocacy Board, we’d like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank the volunteers who lend their time, talent and support the activities and mission of the CASA and FCRB programs.

From the CASA advocates and coaches, to the FCRB members, individuals providing voluntary facilitation coverage and all those who volunteer “behind the scenes”, thank you for your service! The work you do day in and day out impacts the lives of children and families across the state and although it often goes without formal recognition, the work you do makes a difference in the life of a child.

As we continue to tackle tough budget challenges, create change to have the most effective programs and work together to impact positive outcomes for children served by our programs, we acknowledge the important role that our volunteers play in providing best interest advocacy and review of Iowa’s most vulnerable children. Without your commitment, passion and dedication, our programs would not be possible.
Recruitment News

Spring is upon us! As the days get longer and the warm rain washes away the chill of winter, there is relief in shrugging off the heavy coats, enjoying the sights and sounds of all that is renewed in Spring, and soaking up the sun.

It is also the time of year we focus especially on our volunteers and your commitment to making the world a better place. Iowa is a leader in volunteerism, and all who give of their time are invaluable. Forgive my impartiality, however, to ICAB’s CASA Advocates and FCRB Reviewers. You come to us with a heart to serve in a position that is not always (sometimes rarely) a “feel-good” experience. You are tasked with carrying a heavy emotional burden, at times, in your efforts to ensure safety and permanency for the children in Iowa who find themselves involved in the child welfare system. Having worked with many of you over the years in both programs, I’ve seen you carry that burden. And I want you to know that. I see you. We, at all levels of the Iowa Child Advocacy Board, see you. We see how the heaviness of this work weighs on you at times. We see you struggle to make right recommendations in the best interest of the children you serve. We see you rally for children with our State and Federal Legislatures as ambassadors for children. And we see you come back every single month to continue to fight the good fight. For that you have our unending gratitude.
As the State budget tightens, we are undeterred in our efforts to grow! Here are a few of the things we’re working on:

- **Service Enterprise certification** - Over the course of the next several months, we will roll out calls for non-Advocate and non-FCRB Reviewer volunteers. We will be considering unpaid staff positions at all levels of the agency and in areas where we have not had professional assistance (i.e. marketing, grant research/grant writing, office assistance, etc.).
- **Increase our VISTA participation from one to three recruits**
- **We are considering identifying what we will call Courtesy CASAs in the areas where we have children placed in residential treatment settings.** We understand the burden of traveling to see a child who may be placed several hours from the child you are assigned to. Our hope is that we can identify experienced CASAs who are willing to provide the face-to-face contact that is required and report back to you, allowing the assigned CASA to continue regular monthly contact by phone or digital interaction (Skype, etc.) and to maintain relationships with the child’s family, home community, social workers, and Court. (If you or someone you know is interested in this idea, please let me know).
- **Renewed focus on the Coach model to allow more children the benefit of a CASA Advocate.** If you are interested in learning more about Coaching, please contact your local Coordinator.

Because the focus of our agency has always been on volunteers, we are especially well-suited to continue our recruitment efforts, to recognize new, workable solutions to unanticipated revenue shortfalls, and to benefit from the skills, experiences and interests of our volunteers in new ways. If you have ideas that will enhance the CASA or FCRB experience or the Iowa Child Advocacy Board, as a whole, we want to hear from you!

Jennifer Slife, Eastern Region Coordinator & State Recruitment Specialist
jennifer.slife@dia.iowa.gov

“Everyone is a brand ambassador, everyone is a recruiter“
Lars Schmidt, founder Amplify Talent
Meet CAB Volunteer, Frank Toth

It is bittersweet that we feature Frank Toth in the Volunteer Spotlight this month. Frank has served as a CASA advocate in Dubuque since August 2013, became a CASA Coach in December of 2014 and joined one of the Dubuque Foster Care Review Boards in December 2015. He has been a strong advocate for children and will soon be moving to Texas with his wife. Iowa’s loss will be Texas’s gain!

What has most surprised Frank about the work of our CAB programs is “there are programs out there that advocate for the children. The adults have a voice, and can get representation, but often the kids are too young, cannot necessarily voice their thoughts, and really don’t know what to do. The kids are usually the ones in the middle, and no matter what their age is they understand what is going on in their lives. It is such a heavy burden on them and it just seems to make their situation that much more perilous. The kids deserve the best and these programs offer them a chance to have the opportunity to succeed. The challenge is to make sure that the kids remain in the forefront of everything we do, and to understand their situation and work to get the best results for them. It entails working with a lot of other people who are involved in the case, but this interaction gives you a very good perspective of what is going on in the kid’s life and helps you get the best results.”

Frank wishes other people knew that they could be effective as a CASA or FCRB member no matter what their previous experiences in life were, or what they feel their knowledge base is. “It is being able to be committed, understanding the various aspects of the case, being open to all possibilities, not being judgmental, and being able to work with others. The kids are the priority, and if you always keep that in perspective you can be successful. If you are thinking about volunteering, know that you can make a difference. The help and support you need will be there to help you succeed.”

By advocating for kids, Frank helps them achieve the best life they all deserve and his efforts can make a difference. When he’s not volunteering, he serves as a treasurer on a board and helps his brother-in-law with field work.

Local Program Coordinator, Kerry Brennan, always says that “as a CASA Coach, Frank is my hands and feet on the ground in Dubuque.” Kerry is located two hours from Dubuque and having a volunteer with Frank’s commitment and caliber as a coach was paramount in making the coach model work for the local advocates. She shared, “Frank’s commitment and dedication to the entire ICAB agency is a great example for all of us on what dedication to the children of Iowa can look like. Frank has been a tremendous addition to our agency and programs and he will be greatly missed by both the CASA and FCRB programs.” On behalf of the Child Advocacy Board, we wish Frank well in his future endeavors and express our gratitude for all he’s done as a CAB volunteer!
Have you looked, do you care,
Can you help me, will you notice that i am…
i am small and vulnerable- unsure of today,
i am afraid and untrusting of you,
i am in a state of constant worry of the unknown,
i am aching for you to notice i have secrets in the dark

You have looked, and you do care,
You are helping, you do notice that I AM…
I AM able and brave and hope for tomorrow,
I AM courageous and trusting you to care,
I AM sure and at rest knowing you are here,
I AM healing and growing – living in color.

APRIL IS NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH.

IT IS A TIME WHEN THE FOCUS OF A NATION AND A COMMUNITY SHOULD RECALL
THAT WE ALL HAVE AN IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITY TO PREVENT AND ULTIMATELY END CHILD ABUSE,
TO BRING HOPE, AND A LIFE IN COLOR, TO A CHILD!
LIGHT OF HOPE – CHILD ADVOCATES IN FCRB & CASA

H – HELPING HANDS THAT HOLD A HURTING CHILD AND REACH OUT TO FALTERING PARENTS
O – OBSESSIVELY SERVING AND OFFERING TIME TO THE MOST VULNERABLE IN OUR CITIES
P – PROVIDING PERSPECTIVE IN THE MOST UNCOMMON SETTING OF INTENSE NEED
E - ENSURING THE WISDOM OF THE COMMUNITY AND ENGAGING THE WISDOM OF EXPERIENCE OF ALL INVOLVED TO ENCOURAGE THE CHANGE THAT MUST BE

Helpful Information for Advocates:

Does the Foster Teen you are Advocating for Need $500 for Activities? IFAPA has received special money from Chaffee Funds for teens (age 14+) in foster care that can only be requested through June 30, 2017. These grants will be available for up to $500 per youth. This funding is for all teens in a foster care placement including shelter, foster family homes, group care, & supervised apartment living. To apply for this funding, an APPLICATION must be completed. Ask your youth or foster parent if they have considered applying for this assistance.

http://www.ifapa.org/resources/Friends-of-Children-in-Foster-Care-Program.asp
For CASA & FCRB Advocates:  Why focus on self-care?

We often hear about the importance of taking care of ourselves. We know one of the results of not taking care of ourselves is experiencing high stress levels. This stress can negatively impact our relationships, our work, our body and brain, along with our well-being: our mind and spirit. By taking care of ourselves better we can improve our sleep, our bodies, our health and our peace of mind. It’s what some may term the “fluffy stuff” that social workers and caretakers of the world advocate for others to do, yet they often forget to implement in their own lives. So the question becomes how do we internalize and act on the importance of self-care? The answer to how we internalize and act upon the goal of taking better care of ourselves varies between each individual.

What is Self Care? Self-care can be defined as taking care of ourselves physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually so that we can better live in balance. Self-care is critical to any “helper” because we can only give what we have.

“In dealing with those who are undergoing great suffering, if you feel ‘burnout’ setting in, if you feel demoralized and exhausted, it is best, for the sake of everyone, to withdraw and restore yourself. The point is to have a long-term perspective.” —The Dalai Lama

As the Iowa Child Advocacy Board kicks off our focus on Volunteer Appreciation in the month of April, we’d like encourage all our CASA Advocates and FCRB Members and our dedicated staff to take time to “really” take care!! We encourage this for many reasons, but one very importance reason is that it impacts our agency’s mission. We are better advocates when we first advocate for what is best for ourselves.

For some additional helpful information go to: http://lifehacker.com/why-self-care-is-so-important-1770880812
Consider this: If you were a child that needed an adult to advocate for your needs and best interests, what would YOU want that adult to be doing in their personal lives to be healthy and balanced so their efforts were as effective as possible?

***Please speak with your Local Coordinator for referrals to local professionals that can assist you in finding more formal resources regarding self help.

Reminder: For more tips, resources and related articles on self-care, compassion fatigue, burnout and vicarious trauma, watch for regular posts on our state Facebook page throughout the month of April. https://www.facebook.com/CASAIOWA/

CASA Advocates: In-Service Training Credit

If you would like to earn in-service credit about additional ways you can prevent burnout and implement self care activities into your advocacy role, consider listening to the 3 part modules “Applying Positive Psychology to the Well-Being of Child Welfare Workers” from the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare.

Module 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JV_kwIGRVR4&t=1s
Module 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=stxykZA5IlI
Module 3: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s21pHPtj6WI

To receive credit following completion, contact the ICAB State Training Specialist at lesa.christianson@dia.iowa.gov and share how you plan on utilizing this information within your advocacy role.

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Watch Videos: To learn more click on the links or cut and paste into your browser:

- Brene Brown’s 2 minute message to helpers. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lud89Gi8Jgs
Light of Hope
Des Moines

Join us for our Second Annual Des Moines Light of Hope breakfast!
Because every child deserves a voice. Because you can help.

Friday, April 21, 2017
7:30am-8:20am
Shearton Hotel
West Des Moines
1800 50th St

Emcee- Maestro Joseph Giunta
Ashley Tift- Former Foster Youth
Liz Varnon- Des Moines Attorney
Gary Kroeger- Actor & Speaker

“The time is always right to do what is right”
- Martin Luther King, Jr.
Recap of the National CASA Conference, March 11th thru March 14th
- Amy Carpenter, Iowa CASA Program Manager

This year I again had the privilege to attend the National CASA Conference held in the Emerald City, Seattle WA. Several staff and volunteers from Iowa also attended the conference including Child Advocacy Board Administrator Jim Hennessey, Eastern Regional Coordinator/Recruitment Specialist Jennifer Slife, Central Regional Coordinator/Training Specialist Lesa Christianson, Local CASA Program Coordinator Jennifer Gericke, Local CASA Program Coordinator Aprile Goodman and CASA Advocate Deb Pumphrey. Over 1,300 State and Local CASA Staff, Advocates, Peer Coordinators (Coaches), Judges, Attorneys and Board Members from the 923 CASA programs across the nation gathered together with the simple mission of learning the many ways we can Build a Brighter Future for America's Abused and Neglected Children.

There are simply too many highlights of this conference to mention. One of the main highlights for me was the opportunity to hear from the originator of the CASA movement, the Honorable David Soukup (retired), Juvenile Judge from King County, WA (pictured left). As we all learn in CASA training, Judge Soukup was spending many sleepless nights worrying and wondering about the decisions he was making for the children whose cases came before him. In 1977, he invited five of his most influential community contacts to gather for a brown bag lunch to talk about the idea of having volunteer Guardian Ad Litems appointed to the cases of abused and neglected children. When he walked into the room for that meeting, there sat 50 individuals who like him, thought this would be a good idea. And just like that, the CASA movement was formed. In 1982, the National CASA Association took root. In 1986, the CASA program began in Iowa. And the rest as they say, is history.

I would have never imagined how moving it would be to hear from this humble man; to learn of the origins about my passion. I experienced the realization that over the past 40 years, there have been hundreds of thousands of individuals who have volunteered to help Judge Soukup and all of our judges sleep better at night knowing that they are getting a bit more complete picture of a child's needs thanks to the CASA Advocates assigned to those most difficult cases.

The most impressive thing of all? Judge Soukup, now in his late 80's, is a CASA Advocate himself.

Aprile Goodman and I have been serving on the National CASA Conference Committee for the past 14 months to help plan this conference and for this service received a scholarship that paid for our conference registration. To help off-set the expense of the scholarships, we helped by volunteering our services as room proctors, badge-checkers, door monitors and registration desk attendants. One of my best experiences was volunteering at the conference registration desk on Saturday afternoon. I had the opportunity to encounter several of the CASA/GAL volunteers who make up this amazing nationwide network. I also had the opportunity to say 'thank you' for choosing CASA as your passion.

I just want to take the opportunity to thank all of you as well. Iowa CASA and FCRB wouldn't exist without our volunteers and supporters. I have no doubt that child advocacy efforts in Iowa would see a notable absence of commitment and passion without our programs. Michaela Pereira of Headline News was the opening plenary speaker at the conference. Michaela, an adopted child herself, grew up in a blended family that included children adopted from the foster care system. I made note of one impactful statement she made regarding the children we serve: “Their start in life does not have to determine where they go in life.” My heartfelt thanks to our volunteers for playing that part in determining where these children go in life!
The Seattle Space Needle was built in 1962 for the World’s Fair. It is 605 feet tall and sways a bit when it’s windy. (Gulp! Not cool if heights aren’t your favorite thing; like my husband!) During my visit, some of the clouds were at eye level.

The iconic Public Market didn’t disappoint as we saw the famous fish mongers tossing fish through the air, farm fresh produce and artisan products from across the area.

To the right is a photo of the entire Iowa delegation gathered at once... As you can see, even the best attempt at a group photo, never came to fruition. At a conference with over 1,300 participants and 100 workshops, you can imagine how difficult it was to gather everyone for a photo opportunity.