



Iowa CASA Program Receives National Grant to Improve Ability to Support Iowa's Vulnerable Youth

Des Moines, IA – February 6, 2020 – The Iowa Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program has been awarded a \$7849 Professional Development Initiative Grant from the National Court Appointed Special Advocate/Guardian ad Litem (CASA/GAL) Association for Children. Iowa CASA recruits, trains and supports volunteers across the state who advocate for the best interests of children who have experienced abuse or neglect.

The grant will pay for coursework and other costs leaders would otherwise incur to develop the skills to better serve the staff who coordinate our local programs and thereby, better serve our CASA Advocates who serve Iowa's children.

Steffani Simbric, Administrator of the Iowa Child Advocacy Board said, "We welcome this opportunity to invest in leadership development. Our CASA Advocate volunteers do extraordinary work within the child welfare and juvenile court arenas. They deserve the best leadership possible to accomplish extraordinary things on a child's behalf."

There are 950 CASA/GAL programs nationwide, including 45 state offices. In 2019, Iowa CASA Advocates represented children in 64 counties and continues to expand. The federal grant funds distributed through National CASA/GAL are provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, US Department of Justice, as authorized under the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990. In 2018, National CASA/GAL was awarded nearly \$10 million in federal grants.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: JOANN WINGERT

When she got involved with CASA, Joann Wingert had been looking for a volunteer role that served children. She began her CASA training about two years ago and had an active case for over one year.

Even though going through intensive training, which "was very interesting and at the same time heartbreaking", Joann felt rather intimidated beginning her role as a CASA. Having had no previous experience in the foster care world, she



wasn't sure she was prepared for the challenge. Joann said, "With the help of my amazing CASA coach and extremely supportive CASA Coordinator, I jumped in with both feet. I did things that were definitely 'out of my box'." She gained more confidence, making sure that each step she took helped to ensure the safety and well-being of the two young foster children.

The oldest of the children (in Kindergarten) had some educational deficits that Joann felt needed to be addressed. Though it was, at times, uncomfortable to tactfully challenge the status quo of the foster boy's academic situation, it seemed crucial to his future success. She made appointments with the classroom teacher, Principal, At-Risk Coordinator, Trauma Specialist and Reading Specialist. She visited the classroom to observe him in his educational environment and attended his parent-teacher conference. A joint plan was made to address his academic needs. She then visited his summer school program after the school year ended, and then followed up

with his teacher, principal and reading support staff the following school year to ensure his educational needs were being met.

The children Joann advocated for had lived in five foster homes over the course of three years. The last foster home became their forever home as the children were happily adopted after one year of being placed with them. Joann became very fond of the boys and enjoyed her relationship with them. She feels her role as a CASA Advocate was impactful, working hand in hand with the DHS caseworker, foster family, and children. Joann said, "The boys' happiness and security, and the knowledge that they are living in a loving family home, is more reward than I can express."

As a CASA, Joann expressed that the challenge is to accept the sad situations our foster children have experienced and the abuse that has often occurred in their pasts. She stated, "The best way to counteract this challenge is to work hard on their behalf to give them a chance at a better and safer life. We can't change their pasts, but hopefully we can change their futures. Being a CASA has opened my eyes and my heart to children everywhere in whatever manner in which they struggle. I hope that spreading a little kindness and understanding to kids in need will help them in some small way. Every child needs someone in their corner looking out for their best interests. It is an adult-oriented world and these children need that CASA voice speaking on their behalf with their best interests at heart."

ICAB Coordinator Meg Campbell said, "JoAnn is a terrific advocate for the children and families she serves! She worked persistently to keep in touch with a parent who was detained in an ICE hold when others did not know where to begin trying to contact this person. She provided excellent educational advocacy throughout the case as well. She developed good relationships with the other professionals in the case and became an integral part of the team. As a result of her efforts, two siblings who had previously been in and out of their home for over two years now have a forever family where they are safe, loved, and thriving." Thank you Joann for making such a huge difference in the lives of your CASA children!

YOUR GIFT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

DONATE

Your generous donation can help the Iowa CASA and ICFCRB programs lift a child's voice. Donations are tax-deductible and can be made online by clicking the button above or by sending a check to:

Friends of Iowa CASA/ICFCRB
4th Floor Lucas Building
321 E. 12th St.
Des Moines, IA 50319

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Thank you for supporting the Iowa CASA and FCRB programs!



March is Social Work Month. The National Association of Social Workers reports that each day nearly 800,000 social workers nationwide work to improve the lives of others. Where there's a need, social workers are there – e.g. in hospitals, mental health facilities, schools, therapy offices, in child welfare and social services. They serve all age groups, from newborn through the elderly.

Child welfare social workers spend their time nurturing families and helping find connections that are critical to a child's well-being. They specialize in building upon the strengths within a family and their community to help provide a safe and loving environment for their children. And they intervene when they must to protect children from harm.

In our ICAB world, a social worker is one of the most helpful resources in providing case information. They are in an agency designed to provide positive intervention on behalf of a child and family. They ensure necessary services are offered and guide the resolution of issues so a child's permanency can be achieved. ICAB Staff, FCRB Members and CASA Advocates appreciate the commitment and dedication it takes to be a social worker and are proud to partner in the work being done on behalf of children. **Thank you** for all the work you do!



WELCOME TO OUR NEW VOLUNTEERS!

Christi Boswood, Black Hawk, CASA
Vonda Bradshaw, Woodbury, CASA
Robyn Deacon, Woodbury, CASA
Stacey, Derochie, Woodbury, CASA

Michele Beck, Scott, CASA
Sarah Dean, Warren, CASA
Nichole Cox, Jasper, CASA

Trainer's Corner: Women's History Month



In honor of Women's History month we celebrate the life of Etta Wheeler. If her name doesn't spark a sense of familiarity, perhaps the name [Mary Ellen Wilson](#) will stand out. Mary Ellen's abuse at the hands of her caregivers in the 1870's led to what social workers in the child abuse field consider the landmark case for recognizing that children deserved to be treated at least as well as animals and that the community and the courts needed to stand up against cruelty to children.

Their story was one of mercy, justice, and of an objective person being the voice advocating for a child's needs and protection. Etta worked tirelessly for months to find help for Mary Ellen and then she found [Henry Bergh](#), the founder of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Etta attended every one of Mary Ellen's court hearings and testified during the trial, supporting Mary Ellen. Etta Wheeler exemplifies how one caring, committed person can make a difference in a child's life and how one person can impact the world. Etta Wheeler and her efforts to intervene on one child's behalf led to the founding of the first child protective agency, the [New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children](#). Their advocacy for legislation on child protection foundational concepts remain today.

Let us honor Etta Wheeler by continuing to advocate for children's well-being, safety and permanency!!

For CASA Advocates: In-Service Training

National CASA Program Standards and Iowa CASA Program Policy outline that Advocates and Coaches will annually participate in trainings that focus on recognizing abuse and neglect. This policy underlines the importance of being aware of warning signs and risks of abuse and neglect to further protect the children we are appointed to serve. Classes available to Advocates and Coaches include:

- Defining Abuse and Neglect: Recognizing Indicators and Risk Factors
- Human Trafficking-Public Law 113-183
- Neglect and Its Impact
- Sexual Abuse and Advocacy
- What is Child Abuse and Neglect?



Learn how you can attend one of these sessions through your Local Coordinator.

“How to Complete Your CASA Court Report in CAMS” TRAINING AVAILABLE

Kerry Brennan, CAMS Specialist, offers a monthly training on “How to Complete Your CASA Court Report in CAMS”. Each session will be held using Google Hangouts. The monthly session is for any CASA advocate, coach or staff who would like to learn more about how to complete the CASA report in CAMS. Kerry will provide “best practice guidelines” to help CAMS users better understand the Court Report process. The monthly sessions will be offered on the second Tuesday at noon.

To **register** for a class, complete the Google form for the date that works best for you by clicking the corresponding link:

- **Tuesday, March 10th @ 12pm noon** [Sign Up Here](#)
- **Tuesday, April 14th @ 12pm noon** [Sign Up Here](#)
- **Tuesday, May 12th @ 12pm noon** [Sign Up Here](#)
- **Tuesday, June 9th @ 12pm noon** [Sign Up Here](#)

Pre-registration is a must so Kerry can send you the Google hangout link and necessary documents. If you do not receive an email from Kerry at least one day prior to the training please email her at kerry.brennan@dia.iowa.gov.

“The solutions to adult problems tomorrow depends on large measure upon on how our children grow up today.”

-Margaret Mead
Cultural anthropolgist.



www.casaiowa.org

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CHILD'S STORY.



BE PART OF THE SOLUTION – MAKE A COMMITMENT – GET INVOLVED!

**BEGIN TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIFE OF A CHILD WHO HAS EXPERIENCEED ABUSE AND NEGLECT.
BE A VOICE FOR A CHILD IN NEED! BECOME A CASA VOLUNTEER**



Iowa Citizen Foster Care Review Board
Advocating for Permanency



Iowa Child Advocacy Board
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4th Floor Lucas Building
Des Moines, IA 50319

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