



*Happy Holidays to all our FCRB Members and CASA Advocates,
to our system partners, and to our community partners!*

*We are always amazed at the advocacy work you do so selflessly
on behalf of children.*

*Thank you volunteers for making room in your life for them
and for your ICAB service.*

Congratulations to All Iowa Child Advocacy Volunteers!

2019 Outstanding Volunteer Program Award



The Iowa Non-Profit Summit honored all of the volunteers associated with the Iowa Child Advocacy Board with the “2019 Outstanding Volunteer Program Award.” Lieutenant Governor Adam Gregg, pictured at the far right side of the photo, delivered the award to representatives of our organization, from left to right: Amy Carpenter, Sherri Ripperger, Jim Hennessey, Jamie Galligan, and Lesa Christianson.

As staff members in the Child Advocacy Board organization, we all take great pride in the dedicated force of 669 volunteers who advocated for the best interests of over 3000 children in Iowa in 2019. You have helped to ensure that the children you serve are safe, have their needs met through essential services, and have nurturing permanent placement where they can thrive.

This honor is shared also with the volunteers who make up the Governor-appointed positions of the Iowa Child Advocacy State Board, the Friends of Iowa CASA and ICFCRP Board members and many program support volunteers, all of whom are extremely instrumental in providing guidance to our programs and securing funding to help build the capacity of our programs.

As the Child Advocacy Board Administrator, I share my thanks and gratitude for the selfless, far-reaching contributions all of you have made to the benefit of Iowa’s most vulnerable children. Along with all the other staff who are here to support you in your effective advocacy work, I am, we are all, in awe of your efforts in the crucial and demanding work you do for our children.

Thank you for your service!

Jim Hennessey



WELCOME TO OUR NEW VOLUNTEERS!

Sandra Buhl, CASA Calhoun
Ginevra Doretti, CASA, Johnson
Stephanie Filer, CASA, Polk
Mike Franz, FCRB, Buena Vista
Catherine Harvey, FCRB, Iowa
Gina Keck, CASA, Polk
Fatima Khalil, CASA, Polk

Erin Kuester, CASA, Cedar Rapids
Hope Marshall, CASA, Polk
Anna Masengarb, CASA, Muscatine
Jim McFadden, FCRB, Buena Vista
Lisa Mehle, CASA, Polk
Macey Snell, CASA, Polk
Joseph Wernau, CASA, Polk

Volunteer Spotlight: Annie Novak Clough

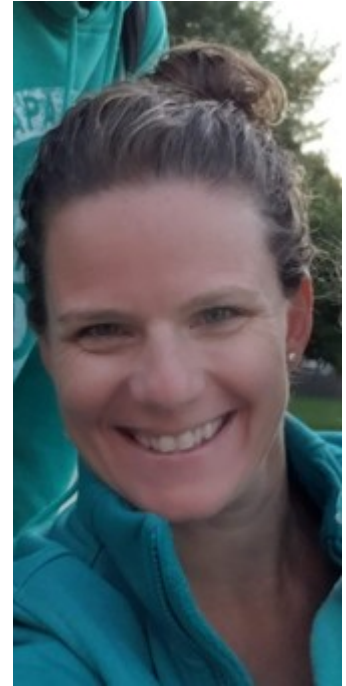
Annie Novak Clough wanted a way to give back to the community and learn more about the foster care system. She had a close family friend who had been a CASA and became excited about the work. She became a CASA in October 2014, and as she pointed out – this is her fifth anniversary with CASA!

In Annie's role as a special educator, she has been involved with students affected by the foster care system. Annie said, "I saw a need for more advocacy for those without words - babies, children with special needs, or children whose voices weren't being heard for other reasons." Annie believed CASA would be a good way to advocate.

Annie shares that her current training as a behavior analyst gives her an objective perspective that works well for court reports. She finds it rewarding to be able to offer an objective neutral perspective that other parties might not be able to see to help get children's needs met.

When asked about what she finds challenging about this work, Annie shared it is, "Not being kept informed about cases in a timely fashion." She states, "When this started happening to me I tried to identify that one person that I can trust to send me updates that are important. Sometimes it's the foster family, sometimes FSRP, once it was a close family friend, one time in a non-removal situation it was the mom on her case. I put it on my calendar every 2-3 weeks to send a message and reach out, if I haven't heard from them, for an update in addition to my visits."

Being involved in CASA has given Annie a lot more empathy for families affected by trauma, both children and adults. She feels she has a much better understanding of terms like 'denial of critical care' and has been able to think about strengths in families. She understands more about resources that are available to children and families in general. But mostly, Annie shared, that by advocating for these children she makes a difference that she doesn't always see in other areas of life.



Holiday Season Reflection

"The Holiday season is upon us. Christmas, Hanukah, New Years, Kwanzaa; these are times that can be extremely difficult for many foster children. During this time of Holiday Cheer, many foster children are faced with the realization that they will not be "home for the holidays," so to speak, with their biological family members. When they wake up Christmas morning, and are surrounded by people who just may be strangers to them, strangers who are laughing and having fun, it can be a very difficult time for them, indeed. To be sure, it is a day that is a stark reminder to these children that they are not with their own family. It is during the holidays when families are supposed to be together, yet these children in care are not. They are not with their families, and they may not know when they will see them next.



Along with this, foster children also struggle with trying to remain loyal to their birth parents while enjoying the holiday season with their foster family. There are those moments when a child from foster care may feel guilty for experiencing joy and laughter with their foster family, they may feel that they are not only letting their birth mother or father down, they might even be betraying their birth parents and member of their biological family, causing even more grief, guilt, and anxiety within the child during this season of holiday joy. Indeed, this can be a very emotionally stressful time for all involved.” *Foster Care & The Holidays*, Dr. John N. DeGarmo, Ed.D., <https://www.fosterfocusmag.com/articles/foster-care-holidays>

As we embark on this holiday season, it is important for ICAB volunteers to inquire about holiday plans for children we serve. Talk with children and biological families about their own traditions to reinforce the importance of their family memories and activities. Ask caregivers how they are preparing children and their own families for the holiday to ensure children feel as comfortable as possible and included in gatherings. Strive to ensure that each child’s emotional needs are being met as they navigate through the holiday season. Everyone can play a part in giving children in foster care hope for the holidays.

Child Advocates Help Children Get Items They Need

We are for the child.



CASA Advocates and Foster Care Review Board Members are tasked with identifying services and care that Iowa’s abused and neglected children need. However, a new grant is allowing these volunteers the chance to identify and meet the needs for tangible belongings that children may need. When a child becomes involved in child welfare programming, they may experience a very specific need because they have been removed from their home.

Friends of Iowa CASA and ICFCRB applied for and received a grant in the amount of \$5,000 from Variety of Iowa, The Children’s Charity. The grant is intended to help children served by CASA Advocates and Local Foster Care Review Boards by providing them with items that are harder to come by when children are in foster care.

The Iowa Child Advocacy Board office divided the grant funds between each of the 17 program coordinators located throughout the state. After an approval process, volunteers are able to purchase items children need and receive reimbursement through the grant. To date, important items such as winter coats, snow pants and boots have been purchased for children.



CASA Advocates and FCRB Members: if you know a child has a particular need, please contact your local program coordinator to learn if funds remain available and if an item can be approved for purchase.

CAMS CASA REPORT WRITING TRAINING AVAILABLE

Kerry Brennan, CAMS Specialist, offers a monthly training on CASA Report Writing in CAMS beginning in August. 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 create the CASA report in CAMS. Kerry will provide “best practice guidelines” to help CAMS users better understand the Court Report process. Between August and December, 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:

December 10 at noon [Sign up for December CAMS CASA Report Writing Training](#)

Registration is important so Kerry knows how many participants to expect each month. All registrants will receive an email from Kerry with instructions for how to join the Google Hangout prior to their selected session date.



THANK YOU FRIENDS OF IOWA CASA AND ICFCRB!

For those of you who may not be aware of this, Friends of Iowa CASA and ICFCRB is a non-profit organization established to support the CASA and Foster Care Review Board programs throughout Iowa. The Friends organization and ICAB have a legal agreement through which Friends raises funds to support our programs and helps to recruit new volunteers for both programs and for other program support functions. During the past 4 years, Friends board members, who are also volunteers, have worked tirelessly to develop activities and events throughout the state to increase awareness of our programs and to raise funds. Many of you are familiar with the Light of Hope breakfast events Friends has held in Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque, Sioux City and Waterloo over the past few years.

Each year, Friends has made a monetary contribution to our programs. With each passing year, they have raised an ever-increasing amount of funds to support the advocacy work of CASA and FCRB. This year, Friends has reached a new milestone in the level of financial support for our child advocacy work. On November 20, the Friends Board voted to increase this year's funding for CASA and FCRB by an additional \$80,000. In addition to funds already committed to our work this year, that brings the total financial support to over **\$190,000** for the fiscal year. This amount comes solely from contributions of individual donors who participate in the Friends-sponsored events. The amount represents about 5.5% of the total ICAB budget.

Friends of Iowa CASA and ICFCRB seek to continue the increases in contributions they have obtained and increase the support to our programs as they move into the future. Members of the Friends Board include volunteers from throughout the state:

Executive Committee:

President: Liz Varnon

Vice President: Erik Kreissler

Secretary: Nikki Heyd

Treasurer: Robin Jenkins

Executive Director: Tim Pearson

Board Members:

Des Moines: Jamie Fitzgerald, Isa O'Hara, Dana Schultz-Ramos, VeeAnn Cartwright, Jaimie Miller, Dave Miglin, Micole Van Walbeek

Iowa City: Savannah Schott

Dubuque: Jake Rios

Quad Cities: Anthony Bielski, Polly Parrent

Cedar Rapids: Samantha McGrane, Andrea Rogers, Cynthia Sueppel, Jenny Skogman

Waterloo/Cedar Falls: Chris Schwartz, Lew Everling

Sioux City: Kathie Pfaffle

Ex Officio (from ICAB): Jim Hennessey

Trainer's Corner:

For FCRB Members and CASA Advocates and Coaches: Holidays can be the hardest for children in the foster care system

Understanding a foster youth's complex perspective and emotions regarding the holiday season is important for advocacy efforts. Many people perceive the holidays as a time filled with happiness and joy, but for some children in care, this is not the case. It could be a time of year filled with anxiety, frustrations, or even grief.

Some foster youth experience the holiday season as a time that brings back painful memories when they hear the holiday music or see the Christmas lights. It may be unsettling to remember when dad came home drunk and fell into the Christmas tree, or when mom went out shopping but instead got high and didn't come home. It might mean remembering gifts not being under the tree or cold days and nights wishing for the steaming cup of cocoa while snuggling next to the tree, representing what they always wanted but was not meant to be. The 'magic' of the holidays is hard to believe in when you are in a traumatic situation. Even if the youth understands that they are safe and will have their needs met while in care, the grief of not being with their family or experiencing someone else's fun traditions can be foreign and uncomfortable.

To learn more about how the holidays may impact youth in care, please visit [Foster Club](#) and review the articles and resources designed to provide an increased awareness and outline strategies for supporting youth through the holiday season.



For CASA Advocates: In-Service Training

For a complete list of all available CASA in-service training, please [Click Here](#)



Gift Giving Policy Reminder

With the winter holidays coming up, it's a good time to remind our generous, big-hearted CASA Advocates and Coaches about the CASA Program gift-giving policy. While we know that the children and families we serve have many needs, giving gifts at the holidays, or anytime of the year can set an unintended precedent.

When a child or family receives a gift from the Advocate, other parties on the case may adopt the view that the Advocate has lost their ability to remain objective to the case. Children or families who receive gifts from their Advocate may come to expect their Advocate to give them something at each visit. Worse, the child or parent may feel they owe their Advocate something in return. This pretense could cause the child or family to purposefully change their behavior or sentiment towards their Advocate. Thus, the Advocate would be observing child or family behavior that wasn't genuine. Rather, in your role as the Advocate, you have the opportunity to help DHS and the court identify needs for the child and family. One need identified could be to help the family have a nice holiday by asking DHS to refer the family for a 'adopt-a family' type of program.

Iowa CASA Program Policy mirrors the [National CASA/GAL Association for Children's local program standard 7.E.7.b.iv](#). The Iowa CASA Program CASA Advocate/Coach policy manual page 17 reads: *A. Gift Giving 1. Advocates and Coaches cannot directly give money, gifts, clothes or other items to a CASA child/family.*

Some CASA offices help with ensuring children receive gifts during the holidays such as collecting money or toys for children served by the CASA organization who may not receive a gift. When this occurs, items cannot be given by the CASA Advocate (i.e. the To/From tag cannot mention the CASA program or the advocate's name directly) and the CASA Advocate can't give the gift to the child or the family in person.

Additionally, due to issues of confidentiality, it's not appropriate for CASA Advocates to suggest children or families on their case to be the recipients of other 'adopt-a-family' types of activities. It's very kind for a CASA Advocate to suggest to their peers at their local service organization chapter or church group to adopt the Advocate's CASA family for gifting, but any details of the case, including age, gender, interests, etc could inadvertently reveal the family's identity and violate the CASA Program's confidentiality policy.

Finally, if you're considering remembering your CASA or FCRB Coordinator on your gift list this year, please be mindful that Child Advocacy Board employees are State of Iowa public servants and are unable to accept gifts from the public valued at more than \$3.00.

As always, the generous, servant heart of our volunteers shines through in all you do for children and families! Happy Holidays!

CASA Program Policy Change

RE: Subpoena for Testimony or Documentation in Other Legal Matters



Occasionally, CASA Advocates are asked to provide testimony or documentation in legal matters outside of the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. A CASA Advocate may be asked to testify on behalf of a parent in a divorce proceeding or a CASA Report to the Court may be requested as evidence in a criminal matter. The Iowa CASA Program has worked with the Office of the Iowa Attorney General to develop protocol surrounding subpoenas for CASA Advocates.

All observations and information gathered by CASA Advocates on behalf of children and the juvenile court is considered confidential. CASA Advocates, Coaches and program staff are not authorized to release any information outside of the juvenile court setting or to any other entities other than those allowed in Iowa Code. ([Link to Iowa CASA Policy on Confidentiality of Information](#)). For this reason, Advocates and Coaches are not authorized to provide testimony or documentation in criminal, civil or probate court settings as is often requested by families or attorneys.

As an Advocate or Coach, if you are approached about the possibility of providing testimony or documentation *outside of the juvenile court setting*, please inform the party that CASA Advocates are not authorized to provide information *outside* of juvenile court. If you are ever served a subpoena, please contact your CASA Coordinator immediately and provide a copy of the subpoena to assist program staff in determining the next course of action. As a reminder, CASA Advocates are encouraged to provide testimony if called to do so in their *juvenile* court case.

Your CASA Coordinator has materials available to assist you in learning how to handle a situation in which you are approached about the possibility of providing testimony or documentation or in the event you're served a subpoena. Please contact your CASA Coordinator for more information on subpoenas outside of the juvenile court. Volunteers can also visit this [link](#) for more instructions on managing subpoena requests.



If the Iowa Child Advocacy Board (ICAB) had Angel Trees, we could put the names of all 9,000+ abused and neglected children on those trees. We could place the trees in the center of the mall, in town square, and in the window fronts of all businesses, churches, and restaurants. We could ask individuals with compassionate hearts, a sense of commitment and a deep desire to serve children in need, to volunteer and take an angel with a child's name off the tree. In doing so, they would immediately begin making a significant difference as a CASA or FCRB Volunteer. They would learn about the child behind the name, learn how best each child should be cared for by parents and services and systems, and consistently advocate for the child.

This holiday season ask yourself if you could take an angel off our proverbial ICAB Angel Tree and Volunteer as a Court Appointed Special Advocate or Foster Care Review Board Member. It may be the best present you could give to a child and to yourself. Give the gift that keeps on giving for generations to come.

Visit childadvocacy.iowa.gov or call 1-866-469-2522.



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