



It's been said that Foster Parenting is a *verb*. It means:

1. Loving whomever is entrusted, for however long they are entrusted, and
2. Risking the protection of one's heart for the protection of a child.

Being a foster parent is one of the most selfless things you can do with your life. The moment by moment demands on one's time and meeting the endless needs of children can often be overwhelming. The fact that foster parents are more than willing to care for another's child is truly nothing short of amazing. For those who lovingly take on this role, we want you to know how grateful we are for your service. Thank you for daily taking up the cause of protecting children and watching over them until they can be in their own safe, permanent homes.

#### **VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Marcia Kruse, CASA Advocate & Coach**

After spending 42 years in education as an art teacher, technology teacher/coordinator, administrator, and finally a Keystone School Improvement Facilitator, Marcia Kruse was ready to leave education, but not so sure she wanted to stop trying to impact the lives of children. When CASA Coordinator Kerry Brennan discovered Marcia was retiring, she sent an email asking if she would be interested in volunteering for the CASA program. Marcia considered the idea for about a month and then decided the CASA program would be a good opportunity for her to continue working with kids by assisting them in dealing with the upheaval in their lives as a result of abuse or neglect. In addition to Marcia's various educational roles, she believes other experiences that have influenced her role as an Advocate were her years spent as a religion teacher, 4-H leader, and of course, being a parent and grandparent.

Marcia has been a CASA Advocate since 2017 and last year became a CASA Coach. She shared that the most rewarding aspect of her CASA experience is building a relationship with the children. It is also one of the most challenging aspects. Marcia said, "It is not easy, since most of the children have trust issues with the adults in their young lives. Those relationships take time, patience and consistency. But once they know you are going to show up when you say you are and that you are truly interested in them, how they feel, and what they need, those relationships blossom."

Another challenge Marcia has found in her advocacy work is "accepting the fact that the path toward providing a stable and safe home environment for the children is not without detours and backtracking. It sometimes seems like a puzzle without a solution, but you just don't give up."

Marcia believes being a CASA has helped her to have more compassion for people and their specific challenges and circumstances. She has become more aware of the struggle people have trying to do the right thing, but sometimes failing over and over. She stated, "I have discovered you cannot always make lemonade when life hands you lemons."

When asked in what ways she thinks the CASA program improves the lives of the children we work with, Marcia said, "I think all children need at least one adult who can give them undivided attention, demonstrate an interest in their life, and listen to them in a respectful way. If because of specific circumstances a parent cannot do this, it benefits the child to have someone who is willing to step in and give that child the time and attention he/she needs."

Coordinator Kerry Brennan shared that Marcia is an outstanding volunteer who is always thinking outside of the box. She comes from the world of education and brings a great perspective to the world of CASA. She believes very strongly in child advocacy and is always excited, ready and prepared to do the work. Thank you Marcia for doing such a wonderful job for "your" CASA children, the Advocates you coach, and our CASA program!

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## Foster Care Review Board News

Local review boards around Iowa have been continuing to hold modified foster care reviews for children via virtual meetings. This has been an adjustment and learning experience for many of our facilitators and board members. We commend them for rising to the challenge to ensure that boards continue to conduct case reviews during the covid-19 pandemic to assess safety, wellbeing and timely permanency for children in foster care. As we move into National Foster Care Month, we are reminded that we can all play a part in enhancing the lives of these children and it is important to recognize foster care as a service to families and promote reunification as the primary goal. We extend thanks and appreciation to our staff, facilitators and volunteers for their commitment to playing their part for Iowa's vulnerable children and youth.



The FCRB staff is implementing an annual survey for interested parties and stakeholders as part of the FCRB Program's annual evaluation. We have designed the survey to gather input on the effectiveness of citizen reviews in improving case permanency planning and meeting case permanency planning goals. Along with other interested parties, CASA advocates and coaches in areas with a citizen review board are encouraged to complete the survey. CASA advocates and coaches can obtain the survey information and link from the local coordinator where applicable. The survey will close June 30, 2020. We will incorporate information obtained from the survey in the Iowa Child Advocacy Board's annual report and use the feedback to assess the need for modifications or improvements to the citizen review process.

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### From the Bench

Q & A with Judge Joseph McCarville. He is a District Associate Judge in the Second Judicial District of Iowa and was appointed to the bench in 2017. Judge McCarville presides over juvenile hearings in Calhoun, Pocahontas, Sac, Greene, and Carroll Counties.

**Q.** Do you have a memorable case in which a CASA played a part? If so, how did the CASA make a difference?

**A.** I have one particularly difficult case that caused me to reach out to CASA and ask for a specific volunteer. In that case, I thought the DHS worker was possibly biased against the father and I wanted a fresh perspective. In this one particular county, when I read CASA reports and DHS reports, the CASA reports are almost always more positive and supportive of the parents. This fresh perspective is important to me. It's a benefit to the children if I am given a more objective view of the parents.

**Q.** What advice would you give someone who is considering volunteering as an Advocate with CASA?

**A.** I have advised friends to do it, to volunteer. They are needed. I am grateful when I have the chance to appoint a CASA volunteer.

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## Trainer's Corner: May is National Foster Care Month



### Importance of Sibling Connections:

For many children in foster care, their brother or sister has been the only constant presence in their lives. A brother or sister may be the only person who understands and shares their experiences and can help them make sense of their new lives.

*"When we enter foster care, we lose everything...our moms, our dads, where we lived. Everything is just so unfamiliar. To have your sibling there is what you need in order to move on, or to move forward in life, in foster care." ~*

*Noy, who first entered foster care at age 3.*

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Watch the Video

Follow the link to watch the 8-minute video: [Brothers and Sisters: Keeping Siblings in Foster Care Connected](#)

Several reasons why siblings should be kept together include:

1. It supports attachment and connectedness to their family.
2. It minimizes the trauma of parental separation.
3. Siblings provide emotional support to each other
4. Some siblings may have stronger ties to one another than to their parents

Learn more from the following resources:

- [Siblings and Foster Care Placement](#)
- [Sibling Issues in Foster Care and Adoption](#)
- [Keeping Siblings Together: Past, Present, and Future](#)
- [The Sibling Bill of Rights and Grassroots Advocacy](#)
- [Legislative Codes: Visitation and Ongoing Interaction with Siblings](#)

**For CASA Advocates: In-Service Training:**

In-Service trainings available to assist you in building upon your advocacy efforts that may be of interest on this topic include:

- Culture of Foster Care
- Keeping Sibling Together
- PMICs in Iowa
- Understanding Loss and Grief after Trauma



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



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