

SEASON OF THANKS
HONOR ♥ RESPECT ♥ APPRECIATE

ICAB'S GRATITUDE JOURNAL

People We're Grateful For

CAB Board Members
FCRB Members
CASA Advocates
Program Support Volunteers
Judges, Professionals, and Resource Families

Actions We're Grateful For

Children returned to Safe Homes
Support from the Judiciary
relational Permanency Found
Friends of Iowa CASA & ICPCRB Funding
Finalized Adoptions of Children

Challenges - Lessons Learned

Broken Families - Can be Healed
Harmed Children - Others Care
Limited Services - There's a Way
Quiet Fear & Anxiety - voices Heard
It's Too Late - It's Never Too Late

Our Fondest Memories

Realized Benefits to Children w/ volunteer
A Youth Graduates from High School
volunteers Truly Making a Difference
Hearing "I'm my mom's sunshine."
Witnessing positive life changes





Volunteer Spotlight: Rahkel Hansen

Rahkel Hansen became interested in becoming a CASA Advocate when she saw an interview on TV about the CASA program. At the time she thought, "My kids are almost grown and I have more time that I could give to a volunteer opportunity. I could do that." She applied, went through the training, and has been a CASA Advocate for 10 years. She is also a CASA Coach and supports other Advocates who serve children in Plymouth and Sioux counties.

When asked about the experiences Rahkel has had and prior work that she has done which helped her be ready to be an Advocate, she listed: majored in Criminal Justice with minor in sociology in college; interned with Juvenile Court Services; worked as a counselor at a group home facility for juveniles; and then worked with a school psychologist. Rahkel did all this before getting married to a farmer and began helping her husband farm full-time. Rahkel is quick to add that the background she has had is not necessary for someone to be a CASA, they are just the things that led her to this program. She shared that her dad had worked with troubled youth when she was growing up and it has always been an area where she felt she could do good work.

Rahkel has experienced challenges in this work along the way stating, "Sometimes you are the only one advocating for a certain thing and occasionally, the children you are working with/for may not feel what is happening is best for them at the time." Rahkel has found value from reaching out to her coordinator to review all the information she has gathered to make sure her conclusions are supported, which helps her feel more confident that she is advocating for something that is best for the children.

As to what is the reward to Rahkel she said, "Being there for children who are stuck in a difficult situation and seeing the cases to a resolution with hopefully the best outcome for the kids." Rahkel believes being a CASA helps her keep perspective on what is important in life stating, "There are many others who are going through things that most people have no idea about. I think we give children hope that there are people (unpaid) out there who care about them, with the only motive being to give them stability and safety."

Coordinator Kathy Fritz states there are so many awesome things about Rahkel it would be hard to include them all in an article. She describes Rahkel as being deeply committed to CASA. "Rahkel possesses a strong inner drive to take on the most difficult cases and accepts the challenges placed in front of her. She works well with professionals, is respected by all and her reports are given strong consideration. She builds great relationships with the children she serves and has been instrumental in ensuring the well-being and best possible outcomes for them. We are very grateful to Rahkel as she is an invaluable asset to the CASA program and children in Iowa.



WELCOME TO OUR NEW VOLUNTEERS!

Robin Abbott, CASA, Scott
Nicki Addison, CASA, Woodbury
Courtney Bruce, CASA, Cherokee
Jessica Carlson, CASA, Woodbury
Tracy Meis, CASA, Woodbury
Ashley Vanomy, FCRB, Linn

Child Advocates Help Children Get Items They Need

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 very 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.



#GIVINGTUESDAY™

#GivingTuesday isn't just about fundraising, it's about communities banding together and giving of their time, power, skills, expertise and resources. It's about the collective spirit of generosity that brings change to our communities. #GivingTuesday proves that acts of kindness + goodwill can transcend country, race, religion and political ideals, and create lasting connections between people. Anyone, anywhere can get involved and give back in a way that's meaningful to them. There's no minimum or limit to how YOU can do good.

This year, #GivingTuesday 2019 is on December 3, which will be here before you know it. Every act of generosity counts, and each means even more when we give together. Everyone has something to give. You can give time or expertise, monetary donations large or small or simple acts of kindness.

Please remember Friends of Iowa CASA and FCRB on December 3, 2019 and consider a donation. Visit [Friends](#) to learn more about how you can help every abused and neglected child in Iowa have a voice, not just on #GivingTuesday, but every day.



JOHNSON COUNTY CASA RECEIVES PROGRAM SUPPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF JOHNSON COUNTY



On October 16, 2019, the Johnson County CASA Program was awarded \$5,000 from the Community Foundation of Johnson County to support the salary of a part-time CASA Associate Coordinator. The Associate Coordinator will assist CASA Coordinator, Nancy Manion, in an intensive recruitment effort and enhanced support and training of volunteers, toward building CASA program capacity in Johnson County. The Community Foundation of Johnson County grant funds are being matched, in part, by a statewide National CASA grant for marketing materials, print and social media buys and brand awareness for a recruitment campaign that launched in September.

Jennifer Slife, ICAB Grants Specialist, accepting the Community Foundation of Johnson County grant award on behalf of the Johnson County CASA Program.

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 3. Choose or search for Friends of Iowa CASA and ICFCRB as your charity to receive donations
 4. Start shopping!
 5. Add a bookmark for smile.amazon.com to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile
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National Adoption Day



National Adoption Day is observed annually on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, however, many local Adoption Day events will be held throughout Iowa during the month of November.

The purpose of this event is to raise awareness of children in foster care waiting to be adopted. A coalition of national partners which included Children's Action Network, The Alliance for Children's Rights, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and Freddie Mac Foundation held the first National Adoption Day in 2000. The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute and Casey Family Services joined the coalition in 2002. Sponsors of National Adoption Day collaborate with states foster care agencies, child advocates, law firms, and courts to complete the adoptions of children in foster care. More than 54,000 children have moved from foster care to forever families through adoption since the inception of National Adoption Day. The aim of National Adoption Day is to provide forever families to as many children as possible.

We give thanks for the families who open their hearts and homes to children waiting to be adopted and for all the adoption workers, system partners and judges who work to finalize adoptions as timely as possible for Iowa's children waiting for their forever family.

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:

November 12 at noon [Sign up for November CAMS CASA Report Writing Training](#)

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.



Trainer's Corner:

Calling All CASA Coaches!!

If you are interested in a Coach Refresher Training, we will be offering current coaches an opportunity to participate in a session where we will unveil our newly revised CASA Coach Pre-Service curriculum. This event will encompass our reformatted model of how your efforts as a Coach provides three pillars of support.

These coaching pillars include how your role becomes an integral part of local programming efforts, how building a team of individual Advocates and supporting their efforts is instrumental in increased effectiveness, and how influencing the trajectory of each child's well-being that receives a CASA appointment through the judicial system expands our reach to serve more Iowa children!! In addition, this event will provide time for the training team and CASA Program Manager to receive your feedback.

If you would like to participate in the newly revised CASA Coach Pre-Service Training and provide your feedback, we would love for you to join us! To learn about the revised Coach Curriculum or how to register for the refresher training, please reach out to the State Trainer. Email lesa.christianson@dia.iowa.gov or call 515-986-4790 today!!

For CASA Advocates: In-Service Trainings

For a complete list of all available CASA in-service trainings please click [HERE](#).

From the Bench

Q & A with Judge William S. Owens, Associate Juvenile Judge in the Eighth Judicial District of Iowa. He was appointed to the bench in 1999. Judge Owens covers Wapello, Monroe, Appanoose, Davis and Jefferson counties. He is also a member of the Iowa Child Advocacy Board and was appointed in 2018 to the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association's Judicial Leadership Council.

Q. *What benefits have you seen for the children involved in CASA cases in which you have been a part?*

A. Better results for the child and family. I believe I can make better and more informed decisions in cases where a CASA has been appointed. The CASA worker often is able to "investigate" and speak to more contacts than the DHS case manager, which provides me with a better understanding of the family's situation and what may need to occur for reunification and case closure. The reports provided by CASA are well written, concise, and often contain the most recent information.

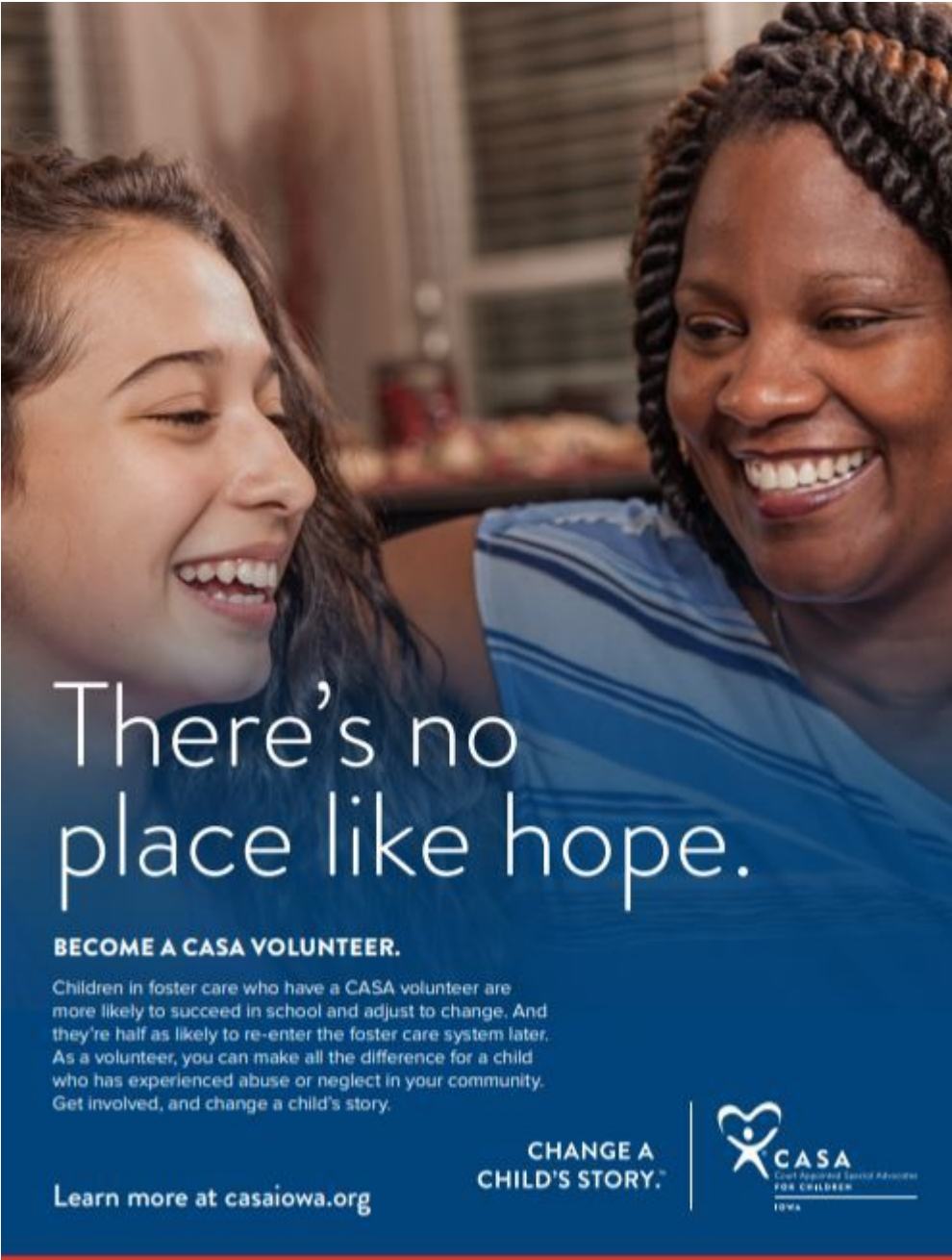
Q. *What ways do you think a Citizen Foster Care Review Board process benefits children in out-of-home placements?*

A. FCRB was originally conceived to prevent "foster care drift" for kids in the system, and it was extremely effective in assisting the court system and the department in achieving permanency for kids. With the enactment of ASFA (Adoption and Safe Families Act), the department and the Iowa court system (through the Court Improvement Project - now Children's Justice) have become more attuned to the urgency of achieving permanency for kids and have taken over some of that "oversight" role. However, FCRB continues to be of benefit. It provides a parent a further sounding board to share their "side of the story" thus allowing them to feel they are being heard. In addition, sometimes board members develop or suggest strategies that haven't been considered that might result in reunification more quickly.

And though their "oversight" role has been somewhat diminished, they continue to play an important role as a further check on the system to insure permanency is attained in a timely way.

Q. *What advice would you give someone considering volunteering as an Advocate with CASA or as a member of a Foster Care Review Board?*

A. All parents have a constitutionally protected right to parent their children, and only in the most unsafe circumstances should their right to parent be abrogated by the court. The families these volunteers will be working with often did not have the same advantages in upbringing they had. While the volunteers need to rely on their life experiences in interacting with these families and in making recommendations, they also need to be mindful that for some of these families their "best" may never measure up to what the volunteers experienced as children. We work with families and provide services to them in order to assist parents to become the best they can be. For most families that means working with them to achieve and maintain sobriety, helping them create a safe and nurturing environment for their child, and giving them the skills they need to attain a level of stability (financial, housing, employment) that will enable them to have long-term success and not reenter the system. A CASA volunteer and members of the Foster Care Review Board can help the families they serve achieve those goals.




There's no
place like hope.

BECOME A CASA VOLUNTEER.

Children in foster care who have a CASA volunteer are more likely to succeed in school and adjust to change. And they're half as likely to re-enter the foster care system later. As a volunteer, you can make all the difference for a child who has experienced abuse or neglect in your community. Get involved, and change a child's story.

Learn more at casaiowa.org

CHANGE A
CHILD'S STORY.™

**CASA**
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN
IOWA

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