



We Are for the Child and the Social Worker

“This is my team. The team that saved my life.”

Those were the words of a young woman that Michael Piraino, Children’s Advocate, met years ago who had spent several years in foster care. She was talking about a remarkable group of people: her lawyer, her CASA volunteer and her social worker.

“At CASA for Children, we know that every day, social workers help keep abused and neglected children safe. We share a commitment to ensuring that these children are treated with dignity and respect, and that they and their families receive the help they need so the children can have a safe, permanent home. It’s an important job and a difficult one. A child’s safety and well-being are always at stake.

March is National Social Work Month. It’s a good time to honor this profession that takes on such an important and difficult task. Because we at CASA are for the children, we are also for the social workers, who believe that every child deserves a safe, permanent home.” [Michael Piraino](#), Children’s Advocate

THANK YOU to our Iowa Department of Human Services social workers!



Volunteer Spotlight ~ Vanessa Jones, Woodbury County CASA Advocate

When Vanessa Jones’ daughter moved away to attend college, she had planned on starting a volunteer activity to fill the void. She was considering the Big Brother, Big Sister program, until she heard an ad for the

CASA Program. Vanessa reports that for the last two years she has been working with two families and nine great kids.

Vanessa said, "The CASA program has great training, and there are many resources in the Siouxland area that are helpful to families, and/or individuals struggling, so just asking those questions is the biggest thing. I grew up in a very loving home and have always felt fortunate for that and this is one way to pay that forward."

When asked what she finds rewarding in her CASA work, Vanessa shared, my favorite hobby is reading, so to show up with a stack of books and share that passion with the kids is very rewarding. When I leave a visit and the children ask 'When will you be back?' that fills my heart."

When asked about the challenges in this work, Vanessa stated: "None of this is easy, but it is these children's reality." One of the toughest moments for Vanessa was when the children were removed from the home. DHS needed to find safe places for the children; they got happy meals; and there were stuffed animals they got to pick one from. She said, "There are ways like this to make a traumatic event maybe not so traumatic. After seeing this, along with the children moving their belongings in garbage bags, my friends and I donated luggage and stuffed animals to the DHS office."

CASA can improve the lives of the children we work with. Vanessa said, "In training we watched a You Tube clip from Josh Shipp in which he talks about how every kid is one caring adult from being a success story. The science behind that is overwhelming so how can you not do anything? When I hear terrible stories in the news I think what traumatic events happened to that person as a child...I go in with the mindset that I want to break that cycle.

Vanessa said being a CASA is a benefit to her in other parts of her life. She said volunteering is kind of selfish in some respects. She feels she gets as much (if not more) from this work. In addition, she feels it is very important for her own children to see this work as well and realize that life is about helping one another.

Local Coordinator Amy Hennies shared, "Vanessa has stepped up to get to know her kids and in turn is able to strongly advocate for what is in their best interest. Vanessa has worked diligently with treatment team members to ensure clear communication. She has been the definition of tenacity!" Thank you, Vanessa, for your dedication and service to our most vulnerable children!



Linn County Foster Care Review Boards are excited to announce receipt of a COVID-19 Disaster Response Fund from the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation in the amount of \$3,036. The award will be used to purchase equipment and technology that will allow for enhanced and continuing virtual reviews of children in foster care, while ensuring the health and safety of our staff, volunteers, families served and stakeholders.



Welcome to Our New Volunteers!

Melissa Baxter, CASA, Wapello
Morgan Chase, CASA, Woodbury
Aza Davis-Pico, CASA, Story
Jacy Kennedy, FCRB, Wapello
Barbara Landon, CASA, Warren
Rebecca Morton, CASA, Polk
Megan Neveau, CASA, Story
Sarah Sitzman, CASA, Woodbury
Jessica Turner, CASA, Pottawattamie

Diane Burkert, CASA, Polk
Edie Cole, CASA, Pocahontas
Jeanette Dostal, FCRB, Benton
Madeline Kruse, CASA, Cerro Gordo
Megan Logan, CASA, Wapello
Penny Neswick, CASA, Woodbury
Tracy Ozzello, CASA, Pottawattamie
Ashley Smith, CASA, Story
Carlotta Wilde, CASA, Hardin

Trainer's Corner: Social Work Month



Celebrating Social Work each March is a time to celebrate the great profession of social work and highlight the important contributions to society. The theme for 2021 is **Social Workers Are Essential**. Essential to community well-being!!

The following was decried by the [National Association of Social Workers](#) "As practitioners, social workers are trained to help people address personal and systemic barriers to optimal living. They are employed to effect positive change with individuals, families, groups and entire communities.

As a profession, social workers frequently use their collective power to pass laws and establish policies that give more people access to community services and benefits, improving the quality of life for everyone. Social work is the only helping profession which requires social justice advocacy as part of its professional code of ethics and is therefore a large workforce mandated to advance the rights of the most vulnerable in society. For more than 120 years, the social work profession in the United States has helped bend the arc of justice, making our nation a more equitable and inclusive place.

There are more than 700,000 professional social workers employed in the United States, and more than three million worldwide. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics continues to identify social work as one of the fastest growing professions in the United States. Other government sources report there are more clinically trained social workers providing mental health and behavioral health services than any other professional discipline in the nation.

The nation needs more social workers as it continues to deal with entrenched problems that have stressed our society, including systemic racism and the Coronavirus pandemic. The United States is also experiencing one of its worst economic downturns since the Great Depression. Social workers are on the front lines, helping people



overcome these crises. In fact, social workers are everywhere people need help navigating tough life challenges. They contribute to interdisciplinary care teams in schools, hospitals, mental health centers, nonprofits, corporations, the military—and in local, state, and federal government. Many social work professionals also own private consultation practices.

Throughout U.S. history, social workers have:

- Fought for civil and voting rights for people of color
- Protested American intervention in wars
- Achieved the minimum wage and safer workplaces for poor people
- Expanded reproductive and employment rights for American women
- Supported marriage and employment protections for LGBT people
- Advocated for immigrants seeking asylum.
- Pushed for sensible gun laws and anti-violence initiatives
- Raised awareness about HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment
- Fought for client privacy and mental health services”



Numerous resources are available to learn more:

- [Introduction to Self-Care for Social Work.](#)
- [Self-Care Assessments and Exercises](#)
- [How to Flourish in Social Work Infographic](#)
- [Social Worker Self-Care- the Overlooked Core Competency](#)
- [Mindfulness-10-lessons-in-self-care-for-social-workers](#)

For CASA Advocates: In Service Training



National CASA and the Iowa CASA Program encourage and support lifelong learning by offering in-service trainings on various topics. To increase advocacy efforts, application of self-care is an essential social work-related survival skill, and we encourage every one of our volunteers to consider taking one of our in-service training around this topic.

Classes available to Advocates and Coaches can be found here:

[In-Services Available List Jan 2021.pdf](#) **Please reach out to your**

Local Program Coordinator to participate in one of these classes and earn credit towards your annual 12 hours of in-service training.

Legislative Day

March 9, 2021 ▪ 7:30-10:00 a.m.

East Section of 1st Floor Rotunda ▪ Iowa State Capitol

Learn what our programs do for Iowa's abused and neglected children and how you can help!

Stop by and visit with us.



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