

The graphic has a green background with a large, stylized heart outline in a darker green. The text "SHARE THE COMMITMENT!" is written in bold, blue, sans-serif font at the top. Below it, in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, is the text: "Be a CASA team with a spouse, friend, relative, or co-worker." Further down, in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, is the text: "CASA teams work together - doubling the impact with two consistent adults advocating for children who need it most." At the bottom left, there is the text "CHANGE A CHILD'S STORY." in white, sans-serif font. To its right is the CASA logo, which consists of a white heart shape with a stylized figure inside, and the text "CASA" in white, sans-serif font, with "Child Advocacy Services FOR CHILDREN" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font below it. On the right side of the graphic is a photograph of an older man and woman smiling and hugging. At the bottom right, in a bold, blue, sans-serif font, is the text: "Learn more at [CASAiowa.org](http://CASAiowa.org)".

## Volunteer Spotlight: Ruth Ann Loebach, FCRB



Ruth Ann Loebach, of Burt, recently retired after volunteering for 17 years as a member of an Iowa Citizens Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) in North Iowa. It was years well spent, she said, ones in which she felt she made a positive impact in the lives of area children.

"It's a very rewarding position," Ruth Ann said. "You really feel you're helping - one by one, on a personal level - you're helping families, children, and those working in the foster care system."

She was part of the FCRB for the Algona Cluster, an area that included Kossuth, Palo Alto, and Emmet Counties. Ruth Ann joined the board in January 2003. It is estimated that during her tenure 201 children were reviewed and 595 total review meetings were held. The board has since disbanded due to budget cuts, conducting its last review on July 15, 2020.

"Ruth Ann rarely missed board meetings," said Carmen Cameron, an ICAB administrative assistant providing FCRB and CASA program support. She tracked and compiled numbers for the reviews done by the Algona Cluster, working with Ruth Ann the entire time she served. "Ruth Ann has always been a member we could count on."

Being a part of a FCRB was a priority for Ruth Ann. She recognized its importance and took her responsibilities as a member to heart.

“The value of the board is so the children don’t just get stuck in the system,” she said. “I think we really helped out that way. We were fresh eyes, a different set of eyes, to look at this and see what more could be done or if it was time to advocate for adoption.”

Being a part of the board and discussing the children’s cases could be challenging, but good facilitators and wonderful fellow board members made the process easier.

“I always felt valued,” Ruth Ann said. “I felt heard.”

She has seen a lot of changes during the nearly two decades of serving, she said, but perhaps the best and most beneficial shift she noted has been to put a real emphasis on keeping the family together, to give them lots of chances to do better and the assistance to succeed.

“It always feels good when you go into a case with an idea of what may be happening, but then you hear the testimony and you see the family is stepping up and making the effort,” Ruth Ann said. “And then there are the cases when the older children age out and have really gotten their acts together despite all kinds of things that could have sidetracked them. Those cases are the best ones.”

At the end of the day, she attributes her longevity on the board with its focus on the children. It was personally satisfying to be a part of it, Ruth Ann said. She has long played a helping “mom” role. First, as a stay-at-home mom for her own children, then as an employee with Exceptional Opportunities, an agency in Algona and Burt providing care and assistance for disabled people, and lastly as a paraeducator in the classroom.

“Volunteers like Ruthann are so precious,” said Crystal Engstrom, program coordinator. “Her experience and longevity with the program made her a leader on the board. The knowledge she held especially in those cases where the kids aged out of the system was invaluable. There is one case where the child entered foster care at age 5 and aged out at age 18. This child was in over 25 placements. Ruthann was the only person within the system that knew this child’s full history from beginning to end. And when you’re making decisions on what’s best for a child knowing that history is priceless.”

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## Welcome New Volunteers!



Janelle Beswick, Johnson County, CASA  
Sarah Bittner, Marion County, CASA  
Julie Brown, Polk County, CASA

Amy Cain, Polk County, CASA  
Jennifer Corkrean, Polk County, CASA

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## Iowa CASA Pre-Service Training Has Gone Virtual



After months of work, the Iowa CASA program has adopted a new Pre-Service Curriculum from the National CASA/GAL Association for Children. This change allows our program the ability to offer CASA Pre-Service training virtually, without travel, weather delays or unexpected cancellations. Most importantly in today's world, this change helps protect potential CASA advocates and staff during the pandemic. Virtual training has quickly proven to be very popular as our first three September training sessions have already been filled and sessions are being added with start dates as early as November or January.

Not surprisingly, the CASA program experienced a small loss of volunteers due to COVID-19 pandemic and the vulnerabilities that the virus has exposed. As noted in the 'CASA Volunteer Satisfaction Survey' article in this newsletter, the CASA program's biggest recruitment tool is *word of mouth*. Many of our Advocates and Coaches come to the CASA program because a friend or family member encouraged them to do so. All of our advocates, coaches and child welfare partners help bring new volunteers into the program.

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### So how can you help recruit more CASA Volunteers?

- Consider your various circles of friends and family.
  - With training, which of these individuals could perform the functions of the CASA Advocate?
  - These are great people to approach.
- Talk with them about your experiences.
  - Just keep in mind you're not at liberty to disclose any case situations or personally identifiable information from your case(s).
- Talk about how this experience has made you feel.
  - You possibly found strength or courage you never knew you had.
  - Maybe your passion helped you persevere through frustration.
  - Perhaps you made a difference or discovered something about a child that no one else had.
- Be sure to mention that Pre-Service training is 30 hours, but for now, all hours are done either with a virtual class and independent study.
  - If you suspect this person isn't very computer savvy, our staff will do various sessions with the individual to make sure they don't have technology issues.
  - In-person training will eventually make a return to our program when it's safe to do so.
- Send these individuals to the Iowa CASA website to apply: [casaiowa.org](http://casaiowa.org)



Thank you for helping our program recruit even more volunteers to serve children in your area. Together, we strive to serve even more children in 2021.



## CASA Volunteers happy in their role

### Satisfaction Survey results are positive

In June, CASA volunteer Advocates and Coaches across the state had the opportunity to participate in the annual satisfaction survey. All active and "on-leave" volunteers were invited to share their thoughts and feelings about their volunteer experience. Here are a few highlights from the survey.

*"I wanted to create change. Yes, protect the children but also help hurting adults navigate their ways to a healthier life for themselves and families."*

--Iowa CASA Volunteer

## Who are CASA Iowa Volunteers?

60.24% of volunteer respondents are employed at least part-time, while 35% are retired. 87% of volunteer respondents are female. 27% of volunteer respondents are under the age of 45; 38% are over the age of 65. 79% of respondents are college graduates or hold a post graduate or professional degree. Only 10% of volunteers are people of color. 28% of respondents are Friends of Iowa CASA financial donors in addition to their volunteer work.

## The motivation to volunteer

99.4% of respondents volunteer because they saw it as an opportunity to make a difference. 90.8% of respondents indicated they wanted to respond to a specific social need. Not surprisingly, 100% of respondents indicated they wanted to help people. See page two for an inspiring list of reasons CASA volunteers chose the Iowa Child Advocacy Board to donate their time. The largest number of volunteers (31.2%) choose CASA because a Friend or relative told them about it.

## Are volunteer needs met?

Respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- 99% have support needed to accomplish the job
- 99% communicate with their coordinator or coach at least monthly
- 97% have had their expectations met
- 98% use their skills and abilities in this role
- 95% feel valued
- 97% experience a sense of accomplishment
- 97% feel their training prepared them for this role

### **ADDITIONAL REASONS YOU VOLUNTEERED WITH OUR ORGANIZATION**

[I volunteer] Because of the great coordinator(s) and judges.

I wanted to stay involved with juvenile issues.

I think kiddos need to be heard. I can make sure the judge knows what others can't tell.

I felt like I could use my social work skills to make a difference in the lives of children and their families

It hits close to home for me

I truly believe that one person can change someone's world by their impact. That is what I am aiming for. I can list two very vital people in my life and without them who knows where I would be.

I had been seeking a volunteer opportunity where my involvement would make a tangible impact on people who are truly in need of help.

Our family is not in a position to provide foster care at this time, and felt this was a way to be involved with children and families in need instead of fostering.

The needs of children are especially close to my heart.

To give back to a system that helped me as a CINA.

I wanted to learn about the system of foster care.

I had a great childhood and wonderful parents. I believe every kid should have that opportunity.

I lost my male [role] model 70 years ago. When I went to my first CASA event there were no men present as advocates.

I understand that our Hispanic children are in need of this assistance. I would like to help them in some way.

Because these children need to have something stable in their life!

I have adopted children who were in the foster care system. They would have benefited from a CASA in their cases.

I have family members who are attorneys, and I thought it would be interesting being involved in and learning about court proceedings.

...to give voices to those who get lost in the shuffle.

I want little children to have a voice, which they currently don't have. I want someone to be in their corner and help them get what they want.

I enjoyed fostering/adopting but the time came to stop doing that but I still wanted to help the kids, and my experience as a foster parent sets me up well to be a CASA

I felt it fit well with my skills and past experience

It fit my skills as a former educator since I was comfortable working with children and parents. I was also comfortable writing reports.

I wanted to give kids the voice I did not have when I was a foster child.

To learn something new

As a teacher, I see kids in very unfavorable situations all the time, and I wanted to be able to help kids in the system.

..as part of my mother's legacy

I've never found a program that allows you to specifically work with children in foster care! That was appealing to me because I wanted to work with children, and make a smaller more direct impact.

The value of an organization set to advocate for children

Originally volunteered for part of my school of social work application - but a lot has changed and I now can't imagine not volunteering as a CASA.

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**You are invited  
to change  
a child's story**

WHEN: TODAY  
WHERE: YOUR COMMUNITY  
WHY: BECAUSE VULNERABLE  
CHILDREN NEED A VOICE  
HOW: BECOME A VOLUNTEER

**COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE  
IOWA CITIZEN FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD**

CHILDADVOCACY.IOWA.GOV



Dear 'Change a Child's Story' Invitation,

I wish you could explain, to each person you are reaching out to, just how important it is to speak on behalf of the children involved in the child welfare system. I would want them to understand the trauma these children have experienced due to abuse and neglect. It is crucial for you to get across the true message behind our work. Truth: There are children who are harmed, who are unable to live at home safely, who do not have their basic needs met. A caring individual's response to your call to action could change that truth for the children they would serve. They would be an integral part of changing a child's story.

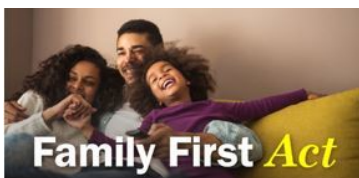
I know you share my desire to see our community's children safe, well, and thriving. Thank you for doing your part and inviting people to become CASA and FCRB volunteers. It is sure to speak to the hearts of individuals who believe as we do; there is something each one of us can do to help positively impact the lives of abused and neglected children. Because of their commitment and willingness to be a child's voice, I want to thank them in advance for stepping out and stepping up on behalf of children. Sincerely,

**CHANGE A  
CHILD'S STORY.™**



## Trainer's Corner:

### Family First Prevention Services Act



Family First Prevention Services Act, simply referred to as 'Family First,' is federal legislation which "includes long-overdue historic reforms to help keep children safely with their families and avoid the traumatic experience of entering foster care, emphasizes the importance of children growing up in families and helps ensure children are placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting appropriate to their

special needs when foster care is needed." [Family First Prevention Services Act](#)

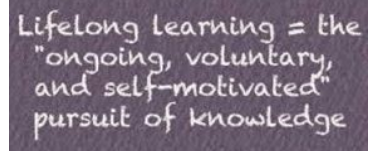
The legislation restructures how the federal government spends money on child welfare to improve outcomes for children by redirecting federal funds to provide services to keep children safely with their families and out of foster care through evidence-based family preservation services. If removal is necessary, placement will be prioritized in this order:

- Relative or fictive kin
- Licensed Foster Family
- Congregate care (for treatment only)

Key components of Family First will include foster care prevention services such as mental health, substance abuse treatment services, in-home, parent skill-based programs that include parent education, and individual and family counseling. Iowa's Department of Human Services offers multiple resources to learn more about implementing this change. [DHS Family First Overview](#)

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

If you would like to better understand the critical framework of what is best for children which the implementation of this legislation requires, and receive in-service training credit, please reach out to your Coordinator to learn more.



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