



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

COLES COUNTY CASA

CASA News

Coles County Court Appointed Special Advocates
651 Jackson Avenue, Room 13, Charleston, IL 61920
217-348-0599
colescountycasa.org

Spring 2013

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Mission: Coles County CASA is a not-for-profit corporation that advocates for the best interests of abused and neglected children brought into the Coles County juvenile court system.

Champions for Children

CASA staff and advocates enjoyed honoring those who work for the betterment of children during the 2013 Champions for Children awards dinner. Several deserving people were honored for their hard work on behalf of children. The Honorable Judge James Glenn was the keynote speaker.



CASA's own Bill Hill was honored as "Advocate of the Year." Bill has volunteered for CASA for about 8 years. He has been diligent in his advocacy for the many children he has served and has consistently been a voice for the abused and neglected children who would otherwise have no voice. Congratulations to all of the award recipients and to Bill Hill!

CASA Swears in New Advocates



On November 15, 2012, Judge Matthew Sullivan conducted a swearing-in ceremony for two new advocates, Pamela Klepzig and Brian Reed, both of Charleston.

Each new advocate had completed 30 hours of training. Friends, family members, and current advocates attended the ceremony to encourage these new volunteers as they speak up for a child. We're pleased to have them join our ranks.



MAY DAY BINGA!



Our Annual Longaberger Binga will be held on Wednesday, May 1 at the American Legion, 1903 Maple St. in Mattoon. Doors open at 5:00 P.M. and early bird games be-

gin at 5:30 P.M. Tickets are \$10 for entry and include three sets of cards for 10 games. Additional game tickets are available individually or all four of the extra game packages can be purchased together for a special price of \$20 (savings of \$3). Door prizes and raffles provide more chances to win. Dinner may be purchased. Plan to attend and bring your friends to win some fabulous prizes! Entry tickets can be purchased on our website and extra game packages will be sold at the door.

Thank you!



United Way of Coles County, Inc.

Coles County CASA is a proud member of the United Way

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Special Thanks to.....
Charleston Carnegie
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Volunteer Spotlight



Coles County CASA
Special Advocate

Erika Weaver

This season's newsletter focuses on Coles County Special Advocate, Erika Weaver.

Weaver, 39, is a mother of three. She works as a faculty adjunct and part-time counselor at Lake Land College in Mattoon. In addition, she is working towards becoming a lawyer.

How did you become an advocate? In 2011, I was looking for a volunteer experience when I came across a non-profit wish list in the newspaper. I was intrigued by Coles County CASA and began asking around about it. I

talked to a friend that had been an advocate, an ER nurse that had experience with children in need of advocacy and a social worker who regularly worked with CASA advocates. They all had good things to say about the program, so I made the decision to volunteer.

What is most rewarding? I feel that the most rewarding aspect of being a Special Advocate is having the opportunity to help a child that, unfortunately, has no one else to speak for them. It is an honor to be their voice.

What is most challenging? One of the most challenging aspects of CASA advocacy is having to isolate my emotions so I am not overwhelmed by the child's situation. I try not to worry about the children outside of visits or court dates. I also think it is difficult, having made an investment in a child, to not see how their future unfolds after their time with CASA.

Despite these difficulties, however, I find it easy to continue my work as an advocate. It is a very positive experience knowing that I am making every effort to contribute to the quality of life for some child and that, hopefully, something I have done will greatly benefit them.

Why should someone be an advocate? I feel that being an advocate changes a person. As a mother, I can come home stressed from a difficult visit or court date, struggling to not let the day show, and find that I am sweeter to my kids. I might take them for ice cream and save their homework for later.

I advise those interested in volunteering for CASA to prepare themselves mentally for the position. It can be very difficult to be of service to somebody that has been harmed, and hurtful to know that you are so needed, but CASA does a lot to recognize that and train you emotionally.



Adopt-A-Child

Need:

Over the past 5 years, Coles County CASA has served 315 children with 158 volunteer advocates. About 139 of these children were from the Mattoon area, 176 from Charleston, and 10 from other areas of the county. During that time, advocates have given about 4,921 hours as they worked on their cases and have driven about 59,574 miles.

The Illinois State Legislature has had to make significant cuts in the budgets of state agencies. Therefore, the Department of Children and Family Services has had to sharply curtail preventative services to families. DCFS officials predict a steep increase in the number of children placed in foster care as a result. Coles County CASA is eager to train enough volunteers to be able to provide advocacy for each abuse or neglect case.

Additional resources:

Support is needed to train new volunteers to be competent, effective advocates for the children they serve. Training for new volunteers is 30 hours and current volunteers are required to complete 12 hours of continuing education to ensure that volunteers are knowledgeable about and using best practices. Monetary support is also needed to ensure that staff are providing volunteers with

current information about cases, meetings, and hearings, as well as providing support and encouragement.

Outcomes:

Increased resources would help CASA to advocate for each child in an abuse or neglect case in the Coles County juvenile court. CASA volunteers work through the juvenile court system to facilitate prompt delivery of services and to make independent recommendations to the court, based on the volunteer's investigations, concerning the child's well-being. The goal of advocacy is to ensure that each child is in a safe and permanent home as quickly as possible.

Please consider making a three year pledge to support CASA's efforts! Your monetary contribution will enable us to continue to provide a voice to children who have no one to speak for them!

For more information, please call Susan Bulla at CASA (217) 348-0599



Adopt-A-Child Pledge

Your gift will allow Coles County CASA to provide all training and advocacy efforts needed for a neglected and/or abused child for 3 years. We are asking you to consider a 3-year pledge. Your gift may be given as:

- A gift of \$1,000 per year
- A gift of \$500 per year
- A gift of \$250 per year
- Other: _____

Name : _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please make checks available to Coles County CASA, 651 Jackson Ave. Room 13, Charleston, IL 61920

Can You Help Coles County CASA Advocate for Children?

- Friend of CASA** \$0 - \$99 Name _____
- Silver Level** \$100 - \$249 Address _____
- Gold Level** \$250 - \$499 City _____ State ____ Zip _____
- Platinum Level** \$500 - \$999 Phone # _____
- Millennium Level** \$1000 and up Email address _____
- I am interested in becoming an advocate.** I prefer newsletter delivery by **U.S. Mail** **Email**

This gift is in honor of _____ * Your donation to CASA is

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Please make check payable to Coles County CASA, 651 Jackson Avenue, Room 13, Charleston, IL 61920



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