



**New Year's Resolution:  
I WILL remember birthdays and  
special occasions!**

**Question:  
How can I do it in a fun,  
interesting way?**

**Perfect Answer:  
CASA Kids Cards and Bracelets!**

Be sure to stop by the VFC CASA office or call for a brochure to see the wonderful collection of all-occasion and note cards designed by kids to benefit kids. You can also see the beautiful bead bracelets, charm bracelets and lanyards that come in a variety of colors. A sample of the bracelets may be viewed on our website at [www.vfccasa.org](http://www.vfccasa.org)

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VOICES FOR CHILDREN

2305 Canyon Blvd., #101  
Boulder, CO 80302



VOICES FOR CHILDREN

Serving Abused and Neglected Children in Boulder County

Winter 2009

## Making The Relationship Work For Children

By Michael S. Piraino

*Michael S. Piraino is Chief Executive Officer of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association in Seattle, WA. This article is an excerpt from © 2004 Fostering Families TODAY magazine, all rights reserved.*

Foster parents and court appointed special advocates, or CASA volunteers, have the same focus: the safety and well being of children who are placed in out-of-home care. Our missions may be different - independent advocacy, as provided by CASA volunteers, and direct care and nurturing, as provided by foster parents. But our common focus means that, while volunteers and foster parents may not always agree, we serve children best when our relationship is respectful and mutually supportive.

It is difficult to get a clear handle on the state of the CASA and foster parent relationship. Anecdotes typically play a large role in how we feel about each other. Nationally, we believe foster parents need and deserve support for the often-challenging roles they play in children's lives. Locally, there is some evidence that foster parents generally appreciate and benefit from our volunteers' work. In a survey that included foster parents, a large majority reported that the volunteers asked for and respected their opinions. These foster parents said one of the greatest strengths of the CASA volunteers with whom they worked was their one-on-one involvement with the children.

The foster parents also reported many examples of how CASA volunteers helped the foster parents:

- Helping the foster parents navigate the child welfare system.
- Keeping them informed about the status of the child's case.
- Helping them understand their foster child's rights.
- Providing consistency when child welfare workers changed.

- Helping obtain needed services such as early childhood education.
- Becoming a friend to the foster parent as well as the child.
- Sharing information on the child's history that was helpful in dealing with behavior problems.
- Working with the foster parents to get the child more quickly into an adoptive home.
- Working with the foster parents to reunite siblings.



Some case examples might illuminate this list. We are fortunate to have more than 400 American Indian volunteers. In one case, one of these volunteers was assigned to advocate for a sibling group of American Indian children who were placed with a non-native foster mother. The volunteer was able to help the foster mother better understand the various cultural aspects of the children's lives, enhancing the foster mother's relationship with the children and eventually creating supportive relationships for the children with extended family members.

One of the greatest benefits of a good CASA and foster parent relationship is better information sharing. One foster mother tells of siblings being dropped off at her home for what was supposed to be a few weeks of respite care. The CASA volunteer was "the first person that called me and took the time to explain the children and their history." As the weeks grew into months, this foster mother and the

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VOICES FOR CHILDREN, INC. is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving the needs of abused and neglected children in Boulder County.

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## From the Executive Director

In his Letter from the President, Fred Williams speaks of challenging times. We have already begun to experience effects of some of the challenges.

- Parents who, in "normal" times, could cope with adversity have had one stressor too many, pushing them over the line into neglecting or abusing their children: Our caseload is up.
- The VFC CASA Board of Directors has put a contingency budget in place. This is a prudent move as we are uncertain of the ability to sustain financial support from individuals, foundations and corporations in 2009. It costs \$1,275 to provide CASA services to one child for one year.
- More teens have come into the system and need help in preparing to "age-out" when they turn 18. This year we are going to begin a diligent search program to find "forever families" - people with whom these youth can connect.

And among the challenges, we have much to be grateful for:

- Once again we will have a full class of well-qualified CASA trainees.
- As the lead agency for a *Communities Empowering Youth* federal grant, we are building our capacity and that of three other child/youth-serving nonprofits.
- The support of the VFC CASA Board of Directors has been and continues to be a vital part of the agency. We four part-time staff members could not be as successful without them.
- The staff of VFC CASA continues to innovate and improve training and support for CASA volunteers.

With your help, I am confident that we will face the challenges of 2009 successfully.

*Sincerely,*  
*Marsha Caplan*



### Donors Warm Children's Hearts

Wonderful new toys were donated to VFC this year. The Boulder Gourmet Group "adopted" five of our CASA families and fulfilled specific wishes. King Soopers had many of our kid's requests on their Giving Trees, too.

Donated gift cards were a huge hit with our teens - they LOVED them! Many of these donations were given as gifts from CASAs to their CASA kids during the recent holidays, the others will stock our toy closet so that CASAs can choose birthday, going home, etc. gifts as needed.

*Thank you donors for your continued generosity.*

## CHILDREN, continued from page 1.

CASA volunteer continued to collaborate. The volunteer was able to help change the case plan to better target services to the children's father. When visits with the father did not work out, it was the CASA volunteer who accompanied the children back to the foster home - with a Happy Meal from McDonald's to help ease the situation.

When children have major behavioral problems, CASA volunteers can be a strong and lasting source of support for foster parents. One such case involved a young child with severe emotional and medical problems. At one point, after working closely with the foster mother for four years, the CASA volunteer reported that the changes in the child were "absolutely amazing." That foster mother went on to adopt the child.

CASA volunteers can also help the foster parents in connection with court proceedings. Though foster parents may have certain rights with respect to the child welfare agency's actions, such as providing input into the permanency plan, they may have few rights and a limited ability to be heard in court proceedings. CASA volunteers can help ensure that the court does consider foster parent input. In a 2005 survey, judges indicated that CASA volunteers' contact with foster parents is useful for judicial decision making. One foster parent recently wrote to us about a court case where "CASA was there all the way defending the child and his bond to my family."

Beyond cooperating in specific cases, CASA volunteers - and the organizations that represent them - share a common interest in advocating for systemic changes that will make the children's lives better. Examples of these issues include foster care rates, adoption subsidies, training and support services for foster parents, and assistance to youth transitioning out of foster care.

Another concern we share is the educational rights and success of foster children. One of the national organizations with which we collaborate is the National Foster Parent Association. Our missions mesh well. The National CASA Association mission statement says we support volunteers for children so that those children "can thrive in safe, permanent homes." The National Foster Parent Association mission statement focuses on "safety, permanence and well-being for the children and youth." An example of our collaboration is our participation together on the National Working Group on Foster Care and Education.

The relationship between CASA volunteers and foster parents is not always as comfortable as we would all like. If we are doing our jobs well, we should expect times of disagreement. But even when we disagree, we can improve the relationship through open and honest communication.

If foster parents have concerns, it is most helpful if those are raised early so they can be dealt with effectively. Both foster parents and CASA volunteers should recognize that they have related but different roles.

*Michael Piraino is the Chief Executive Officer of the national CASA Association in Seattle, WA. He has law degrees from both Cornell Law School and Oxford University. In addition to practicing law, he has served as a juvenile probation officer, guardian ad litem, a law school faculty member, an associate research scientist at the National Center for Children in Poverty, and a frequent consultant to international social service organizations in Europe and Southeast Asia. At the National CASA Association, Piraino has led efforts to expand quality volunteer advocacy for abused and neglected children throughout the United States.*

### National CASA Conference Comes to Denver!



**Sheraton Denver Hotel**  
**April 25-28**

Here is a unique opportunity - this is the first time the National CASA Association annual conference has been in Denver. If you are a caseworker, attorney, or someone who just wants to learn more about the issues of child abuse and neglect, this conference is for you!

This conference will provide:

- Continued learning opportunities with top-notch faculty
- Choice of more than 60 workshops and pre-conference institutes
- Well-known general session speakers
- Opportunities to network with more than 1,400 CASA/GAL staff, board members, volunteers, judges, attorneys and other child welfare professionals
- Exhibit hall filled with resources

Early Registration Deadline is February 20.  
Register exclusively at  
[www.casanet.org/conference](http://www.casanet.org/conference)

Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer.

--Author Unknown

## Dr. Phil & The Forgotten Children

Hello, CASA volunteers! It's Dr. Phil and [my wife] Robin here with a message of gratitude from our hearts to yours.

When we were asked to become involved in the Forgotten Children Campaign, we answered "Yes" without a moment's hesitation. Having met so many of you who work so passionately on behalf of these children, we are honored to join your ranks.

We have always made it our mission to raise awareness of people in crisis who are unable to speak for themselves, most especially children.

Today there are over 500,000 boys and girls in the foster care system, many of whom languish without any sense of stability or permanency. Clearly these children often come from very difficult living situations, and once they are displaced, every fear, emotion and vulnerability they feel is magnified. The loving care you bring by giving them personal attention is invaluable. You know and we know what is at stake for these kids.

It is largely because of the sacrifice we see so many of you making that Robin and I wanted to do what we could do to support you in that effort, by doing what we can to bring much-needed attention to National CASA's Forgotten Children Campaign.

Last year, nearly 60,000 volunteer advocates from across the country were paired with more than 243,000 children. You made the decision to stand up for a child so they stand a chance. To those of you who have opened your hearts, please know that Robin and I are inspired by your unselfish service and willingness to be the eyes and ears of the court and be that child's voice.

But even with all that is being done by you and the many thousands of dedicated child protective caseworkers and the loving, caring and devoted foster parents, we must acknowledge the system is still overwhelmed. We cannot allow any child to become a face in the crowd, or a number on a file or the one who falls through the cracks.

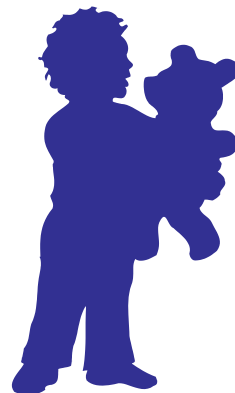
That is why we are issuing a call to action to encourage others to join with you to increase the number of children paired with a volunteer advocate from 243,000 to at least 300,000 in 2009.

To reach this goal will require each of us working together with state and local programs to recruit and train additional community volunteers to advocate one-on-one for these forgotten children. You have our pledge that we will work with you until many more children in the system have advocates or are placed in safe, permanent homes.

Again, Robin and I consider it an honor and a privilege to be associated with National CASA and the Forgotten Children Campaign, and it is our mission to ensure that one day, the acronym CASA - and the good work it represents - will become a household word. We thank you and stand with you in this challenge.

*National CASA has been fortunate to have spokespeople who joined our work as a result of their deep personal commitments to, and understanding of, the needs of abused and neglected children. For example, Judge Glenda Hatchett continues to speak powerfully of the need for more CASA and guardian ad litem volunteers.*

*Early this year, Dr. Phil and Robin McGraw decided to become spokespeople for our Forgotten Children Campaign. Since then, I have come to appreciate their understanding of our work, their thoughtful approach to working with us and their longstanding concern for the well-being of children in foster care. We could not have written a better script for celebrity support of our cause*  
--Michael S. Piraino,  
CEO, National CASA



## From the President

Happy New Year!

As this newsletter arrives we find ourselves looking back on a truly unprecedented time and a new era in many aspects of our lives. Personally speaking, as a 25-year veteran with the investment firm A.G. Edwards, I am amazed - almost dismayed - with the rapidly changing financial landscape and events of the last six months. Yet those changes also help to redefine what is true, constant and within our scope of control.

As many of the fruits of our labors have been eroded by this historic bear market (i.e. the 401K becoming a 201K) there is greater awareness of the inherent blessings in our midst. For those with children (I have an 11-year-old son) we can marvel at their pureness, their sense of amazed wonderment as they discover things and learn ("Dad, this is awesome.") and the truly unconditional love shown by them being in our lives. Perhaps this is another opportunity for the children to help teach the adults - and may we learn whatever lessons they present!

Perhaps also in the midst of "reassessing" our inventory of blessings we may discover items which were overlooked and recognize the fortunes we enjoy which others may not. My son, Carter, asked me at Thanksgiving if other countries enjoyed the meals and celebration we have come to know as "Turkey Time." Specifically, he wondered if perhaps the Cuban refugees who were rescued off the Florida coast would be able to enjoy Thanksgiving dinner before being deported. Again, the real and fresh perspective a child brings to our brow-furrowed world! I answered, "Probably."

May your blessings blossom as the new year unfolds. Certainly a part of our "new era" is that we are in the dawn of a fresh opportunity for our country, both domestically and on the world stage. Much of what has become America owes itself to the true grit, individual opportunity and core human spirit of our collective masses. We have weathered adversity before, be it world wars, recessions or life's misfortunes, and we have worked through and risen above it all in the process. I have no doubt we will rise to the occasion once again, albeit perhaps with a bit less consumer spending! So I welcome all of us to look for ways in which we can nurture our blessings to help them grow in coming years. You can even throw in a few New Year's resolutions if you want to!

So what does all of this have to do with Voices For Children CASA? If you are reading this, you are among our blessings and we thank you for your past and continued support.

- We continue to focus on our mission: To provide CASA services to the abused and neglected children of Boulder County. VFC CASA volunteers are an unheralded blessing and core group of specially trained and dedicated people.
  - Another blessing we have is the innocent children whom we have advocated for and provided services to. Their needs and situation help redefine what is "real" and timely.
  - Over the many years I have been of the VFC CASA board, I also have felt blessed to come to know dozens of outstanding people on the staff and board whom I count as blessings in my life.
- I wish to all of you faithful and healthy, happy and nourishing new year. A little prosperity in the nourishing would be great also!

*Sincerely,*  
**Fred Williams**

## Voices For Children Needs You!

### CASA Training 2009

Applications are still being accepted for the 2009 VFC CASA training class that will be held Feb. 19, 24, 26, March 3, 5 from 6-9:30 PM and Feb. 21, 28, and March 7 from 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM.

Trainees must be able to attend ALL sessions.

THE DEADLINE FOR RECEIVING COMPLETED APPLICATIONS IS JANUARY 23

If you are interested in becoming a CASA and would like to apply or have questions about our training program, please contact our offices:

Voices For Children  
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# VOICES FOR CHILDREN ANNUAL REPORT 2008

## 2008 Highlights

We at Voices For Children join with you in celebrating the strides we made in 2009 towards preventing child neglect and abuse in Boulder County. Listed below are a few of this year's highlights. Voices For Children CASA is blessed with donations from foundation grants, corporations, and from individual adults and children alike, providing funding for CASA expenses, toys for our toy closet, food for trainings, mailings etc. We could not have done it without you and we thank you sincerely.

\* At the annual VFC CASA Recognition party in July, once again generously donated by the Outback Steakhouse in Louisville, one CASA achieved her 15-year milestone, five reached 10-year status and seven reached 5-year status.

\* Champions for Children awards were presented to DSS Sexual Abuse Team Supervisor Holly Smith, Attorney Stanlee West-Watt, child advocate Patty Smith, and psychologist Dr. Scott Brown.

\* The second annual Light of Hope Breakfast and seventh annual Light of Hope Luncheon featured CASA Janet Ackermann and her CASA kid.

\* VFC CASA sent six CASAs, two board members and three staff to the National CASA Association Conference in Washington, D.C.

\* VFC CASA continues to send a representative to the Safe Exchange Advisory Committee.

\* VFC CASA staff regularly attended meetings of the Boulder Interdisciplinary Committee and the Boulder and Longmont Child Protection Review Teams.

\* Kelly Crane chose VFC to share her award for her artwork in the Community Foundation Culture of Giving's Student Art Show.

\* Executive Director Marsha Caplan received the Daily Camera Pacesetter Award in the Community Service category.

## 2008 CASA Volunteer Profile

In 2008 we had a total CASA pool of 121, trained 22 new CASAs and had 71 CASAs on cases.

Ages:	21-35/12	36-50/26
	51-64/47	65+/19
Gender:	Female/93	Male/11
Ethnic Background	Caucasian/97	Latino/3
	Asian/1	African American/2
	Other/1	
Education:	High School/4	
	Some college/23	
	College degree/37	
	Masters degree/28	
	Doctorate degree/7	
	J.D./5	
Employment:	Full-time/332	
	Part-time/21	
	Not employed/16	
	Student/3	
	Retired/32	
Residence:	Boulder/51	
	Longmont/20	
	Louisville/6	
	Lafayette/7	
	Broomfield/3	
	Other/16	

Familiarity with second language: 30 (predominately Spanish)

In 2008, VFC CASAs donated 4,502 hours, drove over 37,069 miles in service to their clients and spent more than \$9,146 on activities, in addition to the cost of gasoline.

## 2008 CASA Case Statistics

Dependency and Neglect (D&N) filings in the Boulder County Juvenile Court

Total Filings	181	Total children receiving CASA services	185
Total Cases	95	Duration of average case	13 months
Cases opened in 2008	55/104 children	Cases closed in 2008	40/81 children

## THE CHILDREN WE SERVED

			Location	Cases	Children	Children's Residence*
Gender	Female/101	Male/84	Boulder	19	36	28
Age	Birth-5/52	6-11/42	Longmont	69	137	97
	12-17/83	18+/8	Louisville	4	7	11
Ethnicity	Caucasian/112	Latino/53	Lafayette	18	33	17
	African American/5		Broomfield	0	0	7
	Native American/8		County	2	2	7
	Other/7		Out of County	1	1	49
Children in out-of-home placement/64%						

OUTCOMES: Returned to Family: 17 Adoption: 4 Legal Guardianship: 6 Other: 13

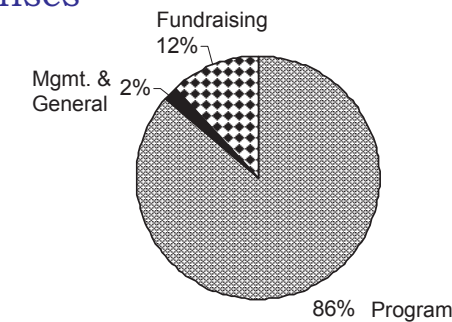
\*Not all children in out-of-home placement stay in their own city.

## 2008 Growing Your Child Statistics

Children we served	Income Level	New Families in 2008	461
Boulder 128	Less than \$26,249 124	Families requesting/receiving second year information	49
Erie 24	\$26,250-\$37,449 37	Total Boulder County	239
Longmont 63	More than \$37,450 157	Total Non-Boulder County	222
Louisville 22	Declined to state 143		
Lafayette 28			
Superior 18			

99% of people who returned questionnaires found the material helpful or very helpful.

## Expenses



## Revenue

