



PIEDMONT CASA

SPRING 2011

Newsletter

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



Daniel Nagin

This marks my first column as Chair of the CASA Board of Directors, a position I assumed this past January. I am humbled to follow in the footsteps of Board Chair Paula Newcomb, whose dynamism and vision helped CASA secure a permanent home of its own for the first time in its history. Let me again express my profound gratitude to Paula for her limitless dedication to CASA's staff and volunteers and the abused and neglected children whose safety and well being are CASA's reason for existing.

One of the most remarkable—and wonderful—things about CASA is that volunteers play such a central role in our mission. CASA volunteers provide a voice in court for the children who, because of circumstances far beyond their control, have faced violence, emotional abuse, or neglect—and sometimes all three. Local judges rely on CASA volunteers everyday to help them understand the complex needs of such children and to help them make informed, thoughtful decisions about these children's futures. CASA volunteers are able to fulfill this unique role because they devote the time and effort necessary to get to know these children and

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IN HER OWN WORDS: CASA Volunteer Rachel Paul

I have volunteered to work with children since I was a college undergrad. After doing pro bono work involving special education cases and juvenile justice cases through JustChildren, I longed for an experience that would allow me to be even more involved with the community. CASA was everything I was looking for. After extensive screening and training, I was inducted as a CASA volunteer. I have served on three cases, the third of which is ongoing. I know now what a profound difference a CASA volunteer makes in the lives of children.

I became involved in my current case after a Guardian ad litem (GAL, an attorney for the child) filed a Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petition due to the trouble a child was having in school and at home. I quickly learned as much as I could about the child's background. She never knew her mother, who had died when the child was just a baby. When she was later placed in a relative's custody, she was starved, often locked in her room, and physically and sexually abused. She was placed in foster

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care for a few years, living in several different foster homes, and then lived with her father. When things finally seemed to be going well for her, her father was sent to jail; she lives now with her aunt and her six children, all boys. The child I serve is only nine years old.

The more we've learned about what this child has been through, the more important our work has become. Though she has been diagnosed with ADHD and severe anxiety, she has had very little counseling and has never had a psychiatric evaluation. She has eating and sleeping issues,

and she pulls out her eyelashes and eyebrows. And yet – all of that aside – she is still functioning relatively well. She is only slightly under-performing in school. And she manages to make it through each day as a generally happy child.

This is a child who fell through the cracks; she lived through unspeakable tragedies and never got the help she needed. The fact that she was physically and sexually abused still has not been addressed; she will likely need long-term



counseling. Most importantly, she is in need of a constant, mature, female role model. Her aunt, a capable and loving caretaker who is doing the best she can with limited resources, is raising seven children and just doesn't have the time necessary to help this child improve in school or to attend to all of the issues that remain unexamined in the child's life. Further, there are no other women in the child's family with whom she could spend time. Both current and past teachers have all noted how attached she became to them. She also seeks to bond strongly with me and loves it when I visit.

Unfortunately, there have been many roadblocks in this case. The case started in one county, but just as we were finally able to begin participating in team meetings there, the child

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their world. Given the challenges such children face and the complex array of actors and service providers involved in a child's life, this is no easy task. So who are these volunteers? What kind of person, without any financial reward, steps outside of the comfort of his or her own home and family life in order to get know a child in need and speak up for him or her?

There are, I think, really two answers. First, CASA volunteers do not fit any single demographic. Some CASA volunteers are senior citizens and some are in their early 20s. Some are retired after long careers and some haven't had their first "real" job yet. And we have an incredible mix of women, men, people of color, long-time community members, recent arrivals, experienced volunteers, rookie volunteers, those who decided to volunteer after first donating financially to CASA over the course of many years and those who simply volunteered after hearing a single public service radio spot or learning about CASA from a friend.

Yet, second, despite all of this wonderful diversity, there are traits that unite each and every CASA volunteer. CASA volunteers are united in the view that child abuse and neglect will not go away on its own. CASA volunteers reject the idea that out of sight means out of mind. CASA volunteers believe that a community can and should be judged by how it protects its most vulnerable—and least visible—members. CASA volunteers know that in order for children in crisis to be safe and secure, everyday members of the community must stand up and find a way to help.

I find these traits—and CASA's volunteers—truly inspiring. One of the unique features of serving on CASA's Board is that our wonderful and multi-talented President, Ruth Stone, ensures that every Board meeting concludes with a presentation by a current

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Rachel Paul *continued from page 1*

moved to another county, changing schools for a fourth time. We returned to court, and while the judge retained jurisdiction in the case, he did refer the case to a new service planning team in the new county. We had to begin our quest for services all over again, which meant trying to secure new funding, getting on new waitlists and waiting – again – for the wheels to get in motion.

After the last court date, the GAL and I realized that while we couldn't do anything to speed up the system, we could start to get things moving on our own. I began making a lot of phone calls – for example, to Big Brothers Big Sisters, to the local Community Services Board and to the Child

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Development Center. Via her access to Medicaid, I have been helping the child's aunt get her on waitlists for therapeutic services, ensuring that the child is in line to receive necessary therapies. She is in desperate need of a psychiatric evaluation, medications, counseling, sexual abuse therapy, family therapy and a mentor. Unfortunately, the local Big Brother Big Sister program has had their funding cut so they aren't taking new children; I'm trying to find other options. I've also gotten to know her teacher, who has been making sure the child gets some extra interventions at school to help her catch up to her peers. She is a very bright child and just needs help focusing. Another obstacle is transportation, so while there are some services that the child could possibly take advantage of, she has no way to get to them (for example, tutoring before school, after school programs, etc). This remains a huge challenge, one for which there are no clear solutions yet.

While progress is slow, I have developed a relationship with my CASA child's family and with her GAL. Since the family lives several hours away, I have been the only person involved who has been able to visit with her regularly and spend time with her family. I know that my investigation has unearthed key issues and events that have shaped this child's life, but have not yet been addressed. I believe that my investigation and my advocacy will be instrumental in helping the court determine what services are in the best interests of this child. My CASA Supervisor has been extremely helpful to me in contacting the Victim Witness Office to learn more information about what happened to the child when she was younger. Our goal is to present that information in a report to the court so that the judge, counselors

and doctors will better understand what she has been through and what her needs are.

One day at her home, when her cousins were all eating their after-school snacks, my CASA child just wanted a popsicle (no cookies or anything else that was available to her). I asked her later if she just wasn't hungry. She told me that she never wants to eat very much, and that she sometimes spits up her food because she's afraid she's going to throw up. When I asked her if she was always this way, she said that yes, since the time she stayed with relatives when she was younger...they didn't feed her much, and there was nothing she could do about it. It just broke my heart.

Every case I have had as a CASA has affected my perspective. It's very easy to go about your life and be completely unaware of what is going on with some of the people in our own community. Child abuse is not rare! It happens all the time to families of all races and all income levels. CASA provides such a valuable service to these children, who aren't able to advocate for themselves. My CASA child's aunt is doing the best she can taking care of seven children, but even under the best of circumstances her job would be full of challenges. And the GAL, who has many other cases, doesn't have the time to focus only on this child either. So I know I've been really helpful in making sure this case and this child don't fall through the cracks again.

At the end of the day, it is incredible how resilient this child is, given what she has been through. She is still generally a happy, active and sweet child. She always asks me when I'll come back. She makes me smile. And seeing her smile is what motivates me to continue on with this case, no matter the challenges. I want to make sure she gets the help she needs, while she's still young, so that she has a chance at a future much brighter than her past. ■



CASA Facts as of May 23, 2011...

Piedmont CASA has served 229 children from 135 families so far this fiscal year

5 children are on our waitlist

The average volunteer age is 52 years old

40% of CASA children live in foster care

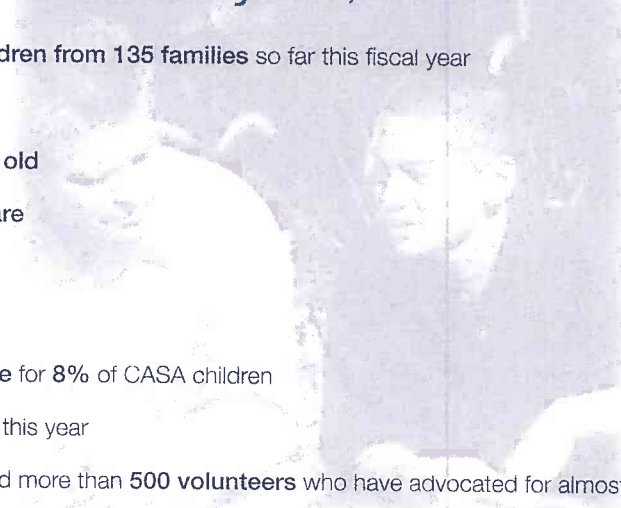
54% of CASA children are boys

Average case length is 19 months

English is NOT the primary language for 8% of CASA children

Piedmont CASA turned 16 years old this year

In 16 years, Piedmont CASA has trained more than 500 volunteers who have advocated for almost 1200 children



New Staff at Piedmont CASA

Piedmont CASA has two new supervisors on its roster. Chris Roberson and Kati Naess joined the staff in early 2011. They bring unique skills and a passion for helping children to the organization.



Chris Roberson joined Piedmont CASA in February 2011. He holds an M. Ed. and a B. A., both from the University of Virginia. Prior to his work with CASA, Chris was a teacher and school administrator for fifteen years, and he led fundraising efforts for the SPCA. His professional work in support of youth and families has been recognized with awards from the Cherry Creek School District, Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Academy of Educators, U.S. Department of Education, and Peabody School. In his leisure time, he enjoys family, motorcycles, hiking, U.Va. athletics, reading, and the outdoors. Chris and his wife share their space with a lively cadre of beagles and cats.



Kati Naess became a CASA Supervisor at Piedmont CASA in January 2011. Kati was born and raised in Germany. She has a degree in Medical Technology from the University of Munich. She came to the United States as an exchange student to the University of Vermont, where she met her husband. Kati was a Supervisor with ChildAdvocates in Houston, TX for five years, and after that a Supervisor with CASA for Children in DC for two years. She also served as a volunteer for Piedmont CASA for two years. Kati lives in Scottsville with her dog and cat. Kati has three grown children and five grandchildren. In her spare time she takes care of two of her grandsons in Ivy. She loves the outdoors, gardening, cooking, skiing and sailing.

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CASA volunteer. So, after hearing committee reports, discussing our financial health, and debating long-term organizational strategy, the Board goes silent. In walks a CASA volunteer who—with great care to protect confidentiality and with obvious passion—proceeds to tell us about the child on whose behalf he or she is currently advocating. There is often a moment when the CASA volunteer wells up with emotion as he or she describes the violence or neglect a child has had to endure and the many hurdles the volunteer has encountered in trying to ensure that the right decisions are made to protect the child. Indeed, sometimes a tear or two is shed by the volunteer and the Board when the volunteer describes a particularly harrowing episode in that child's life.

Long after the volunteer's presentation ends, I typically have a lingering sense of disquiet because of the story that's been told and the uphill climb some children must make. The struggles some children face are so obviously unfair and impossible to justify. But I always simultaneously have a sense of optimism. I have a sense of optimism because someone—out of the pure goodness of his or her heart—decided to volunteer and is now that child's voice and advocate. Each presentation confirms for me the deep commitment of CASA volunteers and the readiness of our community to step up and help children in need. This optimism is underscored by all of the wonderful community members who give financially to CASA and make the work of the volunteers—through hands-on training, support and supervision—possible.

It is only appropriate then that I end my first column by saying thank you to CASA's volunteers. And thank you to CASA's supporters. Together, you are helping hundreds of local children every year secure permanent, loving and safe homes. In the process, you help affirm the idea that while the arc of history is long, it bends toward justice.

Thank you for supporting and believing in Piedmont CASA. Your contributions to our Annual Fund make an extraordinary difference to our community's children. If you haven't yet made your tax-deductible gift to Piedmont CASA, there is still time to contribute!

The 2010-2011 Annual Fund Campaign goes through June 30, 2011.

Piedmont CASA and Our Community:

Highlights from the Second Half of Fiscal Year 2011

Piedmont CASA is incredibly grateful for the support we receive from the community. Because of you, local children who have suffered abuse or neglect at the hands of their parents or other caretakers have well-trained, caring and committed volunteer advocates by their sides.

Cavaliers Care from UVA's Madison House

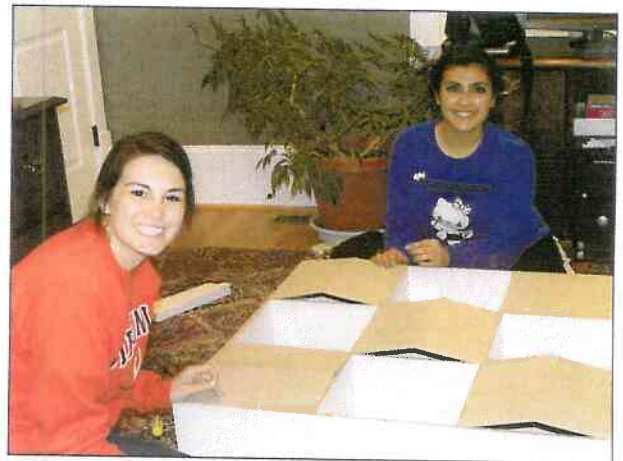
Five young women from UVA's Madison House Cavaliers Care program came to Piedmont CASA and spent a Saturday morning helping us to hang blinds, build a bookcase and clean windows.

Darden Business School's First Year Capstone Leadership Project

In April the Darden School of Business launched its First Year Capstone Leadership Project and chose Piedmont CASA as one of their philanthropic beneficiaries. In one short week they created and launched short-term businesses and earned close to \$8,000 in the effort. They donated their income to Piedmont CASA's building fund. Their donation will be matched by the Perry Foundation.

Kappa Alpha Theta

Piedmont CASA is fortunate to be a philanthropic focus of UVA's Delta Chi chapter of Kappa Alpha Theta sorority. This year, thanks to the approximately 500 students and local community members who stopped by for breakfast despite cloudy and threatening skies, the Thetas raised more than \$3,000 at their 16th annual Theta Pancake Breakfast.



Cavaliers Care

Perry Foundation

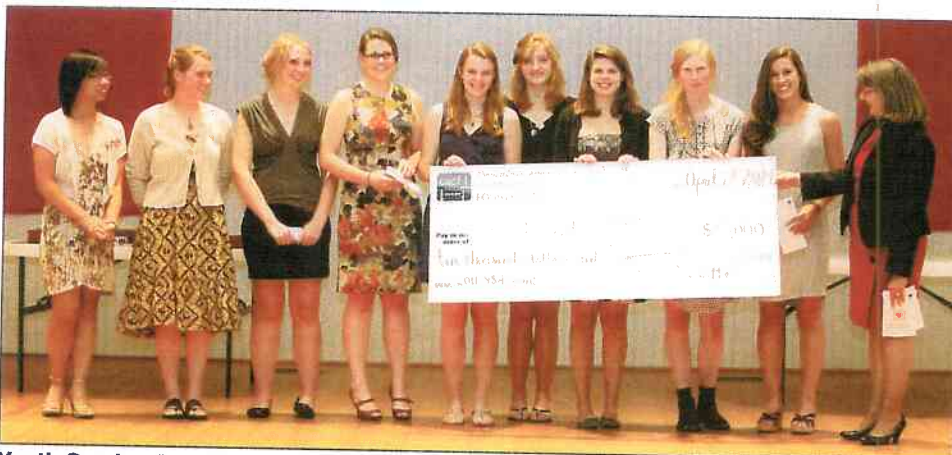
In support of Piedmont CASA's new, permanent home, The Perry Foundation awarded us a \$50,000 outright grant and a \$150,000 matching grant. Please call Piedmont CASA if you would like more information about our building fund.

PVCC - Battle of the Bands

The Youth Mentorship Club at PVCC held the *Battle for a Brighter Future*, a Battle of the Bands event benefitting Piedmont CASA. Seven local bands competed and the event was a huge success, raising almost \$1,000 in support of CASA services for local abused and neglected children.

Youth Service Award

Piedmont CASA was selected as the recipient of the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation's 2010-11 \$10,000 Youth Service Award. The Youth Service Award is quite special in that the award committee is comprised of nine high school seniors. The individuals chosen for this honor are students who demonstrate commitment to public service as well as excellence in academics. Since its inception in 1994, the Youth Service Award Committee has awarded \$160,000 to eighteen community organizations.



Youth Service Award presentation

photo courtesy Tom Daly Photography

Spring 2011 Piedmont CASA Volunteer Class



(l to r) Leticia Brady, Sandra Wagaman and Janie Williams during CASA training

Piedmont CASA is proud to welcome 16 new CASA volunteers!

Leticia Brady • Anne Marie Farrar • K. Michelle Foss • Mason Heidt • Donna Kelley
Kathleen Knaus • Marcia Langsam • L. Edgar Lee • Amber Lubeck • Chad Moreau • Martha Redinger
Dianna Smith • Marilyn Steedman • Sandra Wagaman • Jeanne White • Jane Williams



Judge Johnson and the Spring 2011 CASA volunteers



Ruth Stone welcomes new CASA volunteer Ed Lee

Piedmont CASA Board of Directors

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Martha Ballenger
Steve Bowers
Angela M. Davis
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Lindsey Henry
Annie Izard
Kati Naess
Hope Payne
Chris Roberson

Advancement Director

Rachel S. Lloyd Miller

Office Administrator

Janet Williams

JOIN US: VOLUNTEER TO ADVOCATE FOR A CHILD



FALL 2011 TRAINING BEGINS IN SEPTEMBER

To find out how you can help abused and neglected children find safe, permanent homes please call Piedmont CASA at (434) 971-7515, email pcasa@embarqmail.com, or apply on-line at www.pcasa.org.

Return Service Requested

www.pcasa.org

434.971.7515

Charlottesville, VA 22902

P.O. Box 603

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