
CASA MATTERS

CASA of the Tennessee Heartland, Inc.

Court Appointed Special Advocates for Abused and Neglected Children
Serving Anderson, Morgan, Roane, and Scott Counties

December 2007

One CASA Speaks

By Toni Altenburg

As an adult survivor of sexual abuse and neglect, I want to make a positive difference in someone's life. Years of counseling kept me alive and out of jail, and because of God's great love and amazing grace I have experienced healing and freedom. Abuse is an insidious cycle. Because the victim does not understand and cannot deal with the overwhelming feelings of frustration, anger and despair victimization create, the victim, in turn, hurts someone else. The majority of victims assume the burden of the abuse on their own shoulders. They reason, "If I'd just done this, or not done that, or if I'd have just done it faster, or accomplished more, or if I weren't so

ugly, or so pretty then they wouldn't have hit me, or taken advantage of me sexually." I want abused kids to know the truth – that it was not their fault. Children do not cause, can not change, and can not stop abuse or neglect. I

want to tell them that when they are children they have no power, and no choice.

In my early years of volunteer work I was involved with many United Way organizations. All of the work was important, but I always felt something was missing. I never felt like I was truly fulfilling my desire to really effect change in a personal way for someone who was hurting. One day in 1997 I heard about the CASA program. I felt I had finally found the program that matched my deepest desire. The CASA program gives abused and neglected children the opportunity to share their pain with someone who cares. It allows them to find comfort and hope by allowing them to tell their stories to the CASA volunteer who has their case. It gives them the voice

they never had before, so they can have a safe, permanent and loving home.

In 1997 I became a CASA volunteer in Georgia. After my move to Tennessee, I became a CASA volunteer in Roane County. My first case I had as a CASA volunteer involved a little girl whose father killed her mother right in front of her. There was a struggle between family members over her adoption, but as her CASA I was able to bring to light some information the judge hadn't previously known, and so the little girl was adopted by a loving family where she found hope and healing. Another case involved a little girl whose mom was addicted to drugs. Her father wanted to adopt her but he was young and living at home with his parents. As the child's CASA, I was able to probe into the family background and determine that her father's parents would be able to provide the loving and healthy home that she so deserved. While CASA work has been difficult for me, it has been the most rewarding work I've ever done. It has fulfilled my need to help other people deal with the deep pain of their pasts and move towards a positive future. People talk about making a difference-as a CASA I know I have.

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Photo Credit:
National CASA Association

From the desk of our board president...

As I compose this message amid my holiday preparations, I realize once again how thankful I am for the dedicated staff, volunteers, advocates and financial contributors that support the mission of CASA of the Tennessee Heartland.

I look forward to seeing everyone at our special events in 2008 as we continue to raise awareness and funds to support our mission of a "Safe Home for Every Child." Remember holiday shopping will be easier this year with Heartland Products available online and at our administrative office in Oak Ridge.

In sincere gratitude for all that you do for abused and neglected children in our community, I wish you the very best for this season and in the future.

Michele Brandenburg

Heartland Products are Here

Please visit our new Heartland Products online store or office shop. We are very excited to begin our new on-line venture which will provide support for CASA of the Tennessee Heartland's mission of finding a safe, permanent home for every child.

Heartland Products offers a wide variety of merchandise and gifts that can serve as collectibles or individual gifts for family and friends. Our present inventory includes cuddly, adorable stuffed Heartland Pals, which are a moose, wolf, bear, and cow all dressed in cute shirts with a safe home message. We also have quality cards, mouse pads, piggy banks, beautiful and functional tote bags and water bottles. We also have freshly made fudge from Oliver Springs in an assortment of boxes and decorative tins, perfect for just about anyone.

Proceeds from the sale of our products fund the training and support of volunteers who advocate within the juvenile court and child welfare systems. The more products we sell, the more our goal of helping every child find a safe, permanent home is closer to becoming a reality.

Check out our online store today! Go to <http://heartlandproducts.org> or call 865-425-0888.

Zoe Sams: Americorps VISTA member

Zoe Sams is serving CASA of the Tennessee Heartland as an Americorps VISTA member for 12 months. A Maryville College graduate, she plans to go to law school after her service to the agency. Her plan while at CASA is to develop the Heartland Products line into a significant revenue source for the agency. Please join us in welcoming and thanking Zoe for all her efforts.

New Staff

In the Administrative office, we are happy to have Shelly Williams as Administrative Assistant. She has quickly mastered her duties and is always willing to take on the many tasks that occur each day.

New Recruiter/Trainer, Rhonda del Carmen will be working in all four counties, developing our expanding volunteer advocate base. An Anderson county native, Rhonda is rejoining the work force after a stay-at-home mom period.

Sandra Weaver is the Morgan County Coordinator. She will also train CASA volunteers. Originally from Roane County, she comes from Florida where she was CEO of a large YWCA. Sandra also ran her own, successful business for many years.

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County Updates from the Tennessee Heartland

Morgan: The **Morgan County** program office is established in Room 101 of the Morgan County Courthouse. Our open house took place in coordination with the Chamber of Commerce on November 16. Many people stopped by and enjoyed delicious pastries and hors d'oeuvres, coffee and holiday punch.

Judge Davis is the chairman for the Morgan County CASA Steering Committee. We have 15 members who are giving their time to offer insights into the development of CASA throughout the county. The committee is considering special events, and an ongoing public awareness program. Support CASA today and call (423) 539-5959

Our CASAs are growing in number, with one graduate in September and another in November. Our referrals from Judge Davis are growing too. A recruitment open house will be held December 13, 2-4 PM in the courthouse conference room. This will be a great time for interested community members to find out more about becoming a CASA and the training class that will start in January 2008.

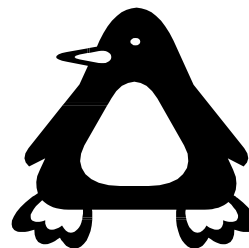
Roane: The **Roane County CASA program** continues to grow— unfortunately in the number of abused and neglected children needing us. We serve some 35 children at any one time even though there are many more children that need our services. Our ability to help these children is limited by the number of volunteers that are available to help the children of our community.

Our volunteer child advocates are the “voice” of the child in court and help in determining the future of these abused children. While being a CASA volunteer is challenging, the reward of helping to mold the future of these abused children cannot be found in any other volunteer activity. Ultimately, the citizens of a community determine the community’s “health” and quality of life, which includes addressing the abuse of its children. Will you help? Call (865) 882-6111 for more information.

Anderson: A training class for new CASA volunteers was completed on November 15, 2007. Swearing in by Judge Meldrum took place on November 29, 2007. The new CASA volunteers are now receiving their new cases. This is the third training class in **Anderson County** this year. After a brief pause for the holidays a new class will be formed as soon as enough candidates have completed the screening process. Our need for new CASA volunteers has made training a continuous process. Call (865) 463-6850 and begin the application process.

Scott: What’s been happening in **Scott County**? In addition to providing advocacy for a number of children, the community continues to rally around CASA fund raising events. The colorful array of leaves made a gorgeous backdrop for the “No Mud, No Dirt, No Fun” ATV Event that benefited the Scott County CASA office. Human “Penguins” plan to gather at the Oneida City Park for CASA’s Penguin Plunge on Saturday, January 26, 2008. We hope to see you “waddling up” to the Oneida City Park on the 26th of January!!!

Presently we are in the middle of a training class for new CASA volunteers. And as always we are continuing to look for more interested volunteers. Children are waiting for their CASA. That special person could be you!! For more information or an application call the Scott County Office at (423)663-8943.



**Penguin Plunge
January 26, 2008
Noon
Oneida City Park**

Come join the fun!

It's a Barbeque... It's Bluegrass Music... It's a Live auction...It's a Party with all your friends!

It's CASA's 5th Annual Barbeque and Bluegrass Bash.

February 23, 2008

6 PM

Tickets go on sale on-line or in the Oak Ridge office January 1st.

Call (865) 425-0888.



Save the Dates:
Penguin Plunge
1/26/2008

Barbeque and Bluegrass
Bash—2/23/2008

Leprechaun Run
3/15/2008

Take a Chance for CASA's
Kids Drawing 5/3/08
(tickets go on sale 1/03/08)

Need the perfect gift for
that hard to buy for indi-
vidual? Consider a dona-
tion in their name to
CASA of the Tennessee
Heartland. A beautiful
holiday card will be sent to
notify them of this honor.

Where Are We?

Anderson County CASA Program
Anderson County Courthouse
Room 115 (865) 463-6850
Morgan County CASA Program
Morgan County Courthouse
Room 101, (423) 539-5959
Roane County CASA Program
Farnham Building, Harriman
(865) 882-6111
Scott County CASA Program
308 Court Street, Huntsville
(423) 663-8943
Administrative Office
POB 4426
161-D Robertsville Road
Oak Ridge, TN 37831
(865) 425-0888
director@casatnh.org
www.casatnh.org

AGENCY WISH LIST

A safe home for
every child
and
a joyous
Holiday Season
for all!

For more information about the
CASA program call:
865-425-0888
director@casatnh.org
Cyndy Bailes,
Executive Director

CASA of the Tennessee Heartland
P.O. Box 4426
Oak Ridge, TN 37831

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



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