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# 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 2008

## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Readers,

As I write this letter on an unusually warm December day, I can hear the happy voices of the children playing in the yard of the day care across the parking lot. What a joyous sound during this holiday season. Sadly, my thoughts then turn to the voices of the children with whom our agency works. They too should be able to make gleeful noises as they play, but they often cannot. The abuse our CASA kids suffer robs them of their happy childhood.

The good news is that our CASA volunteers are out there every day working hard to make things better for these special children. In addition to bringing the juvenile judge more information about their children's situations, they are also advocating daily to ensure that their CASA children are receiving what they need and are placed in permanent, safe, nurturing homes as soon as possible.

As I think back over the more than sixteen years that I have had the honor of serving as Executive Director of our agency, I reflect on the many children that we have been able to help. On another level though there is always that undercurrent of knowing there were those we did not have enough volunteers to help. My vision has always been that someday we would be able to provide a volunteer for every child who needed one.

The CASA volunteers, non-court volunteers, and staff of CASA of the Tennessee Heartland do a phenomenal job in this unique form of service in which we are involved. All of us are fortunate to have you, the supporters of CASA, to help us with our work. Your donations, your attendance at special events, and all the other ways you help,

make it possible for the agency to be so successful in carrying out its mission to help abused and neglected children.

And now I want to let you know of a major transition that is in progress for the agency. Last year in late June, after learning that I was most unexpectedly going to be a grandmother (around January 9th), and knowing that I was about to be 65, I decided it was time for me to give the Board of Directors the one year notice I had always promised them. It was a difficult decision in some ways, but in other ways because of all of the wonderful people who make up this agency it was easy to say, "I am ready to let go," because I know there are others who will continue the work and strive to accomplish the vision.

Since that time the Board and I, with support from a partnership with the Knoxville Leadership Foundation, have been hard at work on transition issues and making sure that my leaving will be as seamless as possible. The Board has decided that there will be a period when Russ Morel of our staff will serve as Interim Executive Director. They will begin the search process sometime after I leave next year.

It has been an incredible sixteen years, and I am so lucky to have been able to walk into that closet office in the Anderson County Courthouse on September 21, 1992. Little did I know how important that morning was to be in giving me a job where I could awake each day excited to be going to work and excited to know what an incredible difference our agency makes in children's lives.

I look forward to seeing you over the next six months and beyond. I will remain in Oak Ridge and plan to stay involved with the agency as appropriate.

Cyndy Bailes, Executive Director

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### From the desk of our board president...

Throughout the past we have witnessed the stress and strain that economic recessions cause. Stress on individuals. Stress on government resources. And most certainly, stress on non-profit organizations such as CASA. Of course, CASA's mission depends on funding from several sources, none more important than the financial support we receive from caring individuals who understand and appreciate the critical work done by our CASA volunteers day in and day out. Today's worrisome economic news is more distressing than we've seen in previous recessions. And it has almost everyone tightening their purse strings. It's times like these when we need your support most.

Consider the kids that CASA has helped in the past and those who are currently being served by a CASA volunteer. These unfortunate children are caught up in circumstances over which they have no control. CASA can make a real difference in their lives. But that's possible only if we are able to raise the necessary funding. Please look into your heart and include CASA in your charitable gift plans this season. And be sure to check out our events schedule. Our upcoming Bluegrass and Barbecue Bash is an excellent opportunity for you to have a good time and help raise money to support CASA. Also, don't forget the many great Heartland Products that are for sale online and at our office in Oak Ridge. They make great gifts for the holidays and throughout the year.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to the many individuals who make up CASA: from our amazing advocates to our hardworking staff and dedicated volunteers. And certainly, I am grateful for the many generous supporters and donors who help make our work possible. Thank you! Larry Jones

#### **President of the Board**

Larry Jones

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Cyndy Bailes

#### **New Volunteers Welcomed**

Over the past few months, CASA staff have been busily training new volunteer advocates in all four of our counties. We welcome these new volunteers and are happy to report that they are all actively working on their first cases.

#### **Forgotten Children to Visit CASA**

On January 15th, we will welcome 100 life size cutouts of children representing foster children. They come to us through a project of the National CASA Association where 850 of these children first appeared last June on the Washington Mall. They began their Tennessee trip when the Tennessee CASA Association brought them to visit as part of the presidential debate this fall. While they are here they will appear at our fundraisers as well as various media opportunities such as placing them on courthouse lawns. (For further information, please go to [www.nationalcasa.org](http://www.nationalcasa.org), type "forgotten children" in the search engine, and click on the #4 item.) If you would like to help us with displays during the six weeks the children are here, please call 865-425-0888 or your local CASA office.

#### **Heartland Products for the Holiday**

Please visit our Heartland Products shop or online store for your holiday cards and gifts. This venture provides 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. 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.

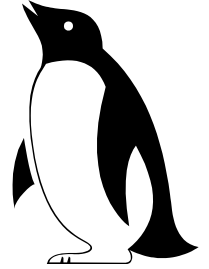
Go to <http://heartlandproducts.org> or call 865-425-0888 for further information.

## County Updates from the Tennessee Heartland

Scott: On your mark, get set, PLUNGE! The Penguin Plunge Committee has been working hard on finalizing the specifics of CASA's 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Penguin Plunge to be held on January 31st at the Oneida City Park Lake with registration beginning at 10:30 am and the Plunge to occur at noon. Please see the enclosed sheet.

Before plunging, penguins solicit donations. This provides them with the privilege of plunging into the chilly waters of the Oneida City Park Lake and raising money for a good cause. Incentive prizes and creativity awards will be given. Alternately, for a nomination fee of \$50, individuals can nominate someone else to plunge for them. In this case, the nominated individual may choose to purchase "plunger's insurance" at the cost of \$50 per policy that allows the plunger the option of not plunging and becoming a member of the "Chicken Coop." So get your nomination in now – What a great Christmas present for you to give a family member or friend!!

All are welcome to participate in this unique and exciting event. So, gather your friends, family, colleagues and anyone who is tough enough to brave winter waters and weather to support CASA in Scott County. Of course, landlubbers are welcome to come and cheer their chilly friends on. We already know that Paxton's Penguins will be making an appearance this year as well as Judge Cotton, the Scott County Clerk's Office (wait until you see their costumes), and many more! Don't miss out on all the fun and laughs!



Morgan: The second annual Chili Cook-off will also be held on January 31st at the Central Middle School Gym. Citizens First Bank is the title sponsor along with WECO and the Morgan County News. A live remote kicks off the event at 3:00 pm with celebrity judges and lots to eat! Judges for the event included Sheriff Dennis Ledbetter, Judge Mike Davis, County Executive Becky Ruppe, and a celebrity disc jockey. The Forgotten Children will be on display during the event.

Roane: CASA's Run for the Child will kick off a Family Fun Day on May 9, 2009, at the Roane State Community College in Harriman. The certified 5K run will begin at 10:00 am with the county judges giving out the awards for the race winners. The Roane County United Way Family Fun Day for the community will include more than twenty agencies setting up displays, a "healthy tasters lunch," and will conclude with a bluegrass concert—a fun day for all.

Anderson: The Anderson County Juvenile Court Judge, April Meldrum, invited a Guardian ad Litem and a CASA Program Coordinator to accompany her to Nashville on November 13, 2008, to testify before the Children's Family Affairs Committee of the Tennessee General Assembly. Three separate issues were brought before the Committee: a funding problem affecting mental health evaluations for children, an internal control problem affecting the closure of inappropriate foster homes, and a problem affecting the timely permanent placement of children in State's custody. The Committee was quite attentive to the issues and CASA would like to thank Judge Meldrum for inviting CASA to participate and speak out for our children in yet another way.

**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 6th Annual Barbeque and Bluegrass Bash.**

**February 21, 2009 6 PM**

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

Call (865) 425-0888 for further information, to become a sponsor  
or to donate to the auction..



**Save the Dates:**

**Penguin Plunge**  
**1/31/2009**

**Chili Cook-Off**  
**1/31/2009**

**Barbeque & Bluegrass Bash**  
**2/21/2009**

**CASA Runs for the Child**  
**5/9/2009**

**Take a Chance for CASA's**  
**Kids Drawing 5/30/09**

**Need the perfect gift for that hard to buy for individual? Consider a donation 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



Member of the National CASA Association  
 and the Tennessee CASA Association