

❖ **CASA** matters ❖

Newsletter of **CASA of the Tennessee Heartland, Inc.**

November 2005

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

The Question

By **Julia Kraus**, reprinted with permission

It's a normal conversation, really. It's the first day of 11th grade. I've just met my biology-lab partner. He mentions his brother. Then he asks me The Question.

It isn't earth-shattering. It isn't even unusual. The Question is: how many brothers and sisters do you have?

After 10 seconds of silence I say, "I can't remember." I really can't. Does he mean how many siblings I have at this moment? Or does he mean every sibling I've ever had in my life?

When I left home this morning, I had three siblings. When I come home tonight, I could still have three. Or I could have only two. Or four. And for all the siblings I've ever had, the tally is nearing 250. Foster care is hard to explain.

Every time someone asks The Question, it ends up becoming a conversation. I could say "two" and have that be the end of it, because I do have two sons-of-my-parents brothers, but that answer is incomplete. I could say, "More than 200," but that leads to witticisms such as "What do you do, run a sweatshop?" I could just say, "We do foster care," and lead right into the inevitable conversation. Any way I truthfully answer The Question sparks scores more.

How long have we been doing this? Eight years. Yes, sometimes it's hard to give them up. No, I don't usually mind them— I like kids. No, I'm not a foster kid myself. No, I don't know your cousin Rosie who got put in foster care last year. I couldn't tell you even if I did know her. Why? Against the law. No, I can't tell you stories.

That last thing was a lie. I could tell you stories if I wanted to, if I left off the names of the kids. But you wouldn't want to hear.

There's the 3-year old girl who was stripped, doused with cold water and force-fed. In her front yard. In January.

There's the developmentally delayed teenage mother who doesn't know who her daughter's father is. The young woman's stepfather swears up and down that it can't be him because he's had a vasectomy. Not because he's never had sex with his stepdaughter.

There's the 6-month-old boy, eyes goggling almost sightlessly, hooked up to God-knows-what machine, whimpering. He's been sent to us because he was shaken at a previous foster home, shaken hard, shaken fast, shaken violently until his eyes popped out, whereupon his shaker pushed them back in with his thumbs. His vision will never exceed 20/100.

There's the 3-year-old boy with eyes swollen shut by a huge double shiner. His two bottom left ribs were broken. He had fist-sized bruises on his chin and cheeks. He complained only once, when he was eating. He said his mouth hurt. My mom looked. His teeth were rotten through.

There's the baby we had for just a day or two. Not long after she went home, her father flew into a temper and killed her. She was less than a year old, I do remember that.

Are you covering your ears? Are you screaming at me to stop? Good. That'll teach you to ask me to tell you stories.

I remember being 14 and at a sleepover. Everyone was talking animatedly about a TV show. "Fill me in, guys," I said, "I've never heard of this show."

A girl I didn't know well stared at me. "Never?"

I shook my head. "I don't really have time to watch TV ..."

"You're pretty naïve, aren't you?" she interrupted. "Pretty sheltered."

I just stared at her. "Naïve?"

"I can just tell," she said, "you are."



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Cyndy Bailes

I wanted to scream at her, tell her stories that made her cringe and cry and beg me to stop. Instead, I said firmly, "You've never seen a newborn addicted to cocaine. I am not naïve."

I'm not.

I think about them all. Pictures come, nonsequential pictures that tell no stories and give no names. My mother, sleeping in a rocker with our first foster baby. My father, checking the sprinklers in the yard with a toddler clutching his hand. A pair of sad, too-old eyes. A tiny hand curled

around my finger.

Sounds come. Cries mainly, terrified, or resigned, or painful, or hungry, or angry. Laughs, sometimes. The sighs of a newborn. Computerized toddler toys. Dryer sheets. Lemony air freshener.

And names come. Nique. Typani. Zana. Devonte. Isaiah. Kevin. Leticia. Rosa. Angel. Sometimes the name brings a picture, usually not. I am not naïve.

I stopped being naïve the day after I turned 9 years old, the day our first baby arrived. I will never be naïve again.

See what one question can do.

Penguin Plunge

Grab your bathing suit and beach towel for CASA of the Tennessee Heartland Scott County Program's first ever *Penguin Plunge*. This special event is being held on **January 28, 2006 at noon** in the **Oneida City Park**.

Event participants, also known as human penguins, will don swimsuits or costumes, bowties, and their courage to benefit CASA. Penguins will solicit donations from family, friends, and local businesses in order to have the privilege of plunging into the chilly waters of the Oneida City Park Lake and raising money for CASA.

Incentive prizes and creativity awards will be given in a number of categories. For a nominal fee, individuals can nominate someone else to plunge for them in which case "plunger insurance" may also be purchased.

All are welcome to participate in this inaugural event. So, gather your friends, family and anyone who is tough enough to brave winter waters to support a good cause. Of course, landlubbers are welcome to come and cheer our chilly friends on.

For sponsorship sheets or additional information about the Penguin Plunge, call the Scott County Program office at (423) 663-8943, the Central Office at (865) 425-0888, or go to www.casatnh.org.



CASA Needs Volunteers

In 2004, CASA of the Tennessee Heartland served 484 abused and neglected children but another 220 children referred to the agency went without a Court Appointed Special Advocate because of a lack of volunteers. We are asking for your help in seeing that all children referred to this agency get a CASA.

Please let your family members, friends, colleagues, and neighbors know that CASA kids need their help. CASA of the Tennessee Heartland is planning on holding new volunteer training classes for both our northern counties – Scott and Campbell- and our southern counties – Anderson, Morgan, and Roane – in early 2006.

Encourage all interested individuals to call (865) 425-0888 or their local program office for additional information. Together we can work to ensure that all children who need one have a voice in court.



FIVE COUNTY UPDATE

Anderson County welcomed Sabrina Marsee to the staff as the new part-time volunteer supervisor working out of the Clinton office. Also, Michelle Smith, an AmeriCorps VISTA, has joined the Oak Ridge office for her year of service. This fall Anderson County teamed with Roane County to participate in volunteer training led by Russ Morel.

Under the leadership of its steering committee, **Campbell County** hosted a musical "Homecoming" evening in October. The committee is now working on the 2006 Bluegrass Breakdown. In August, Campbell joined with Scott County for volunteer training sessions in a joint program. Campbell County also welcomed Toni Hass to the position of volunteer supervisor; she works out of the Jacksboro office.

Scott County would like to thank local residents Senators Howard and Nancy Baker who hosted the *Balloon Fiesta No-Go Gala*. Also, Christy Harness will be leading the new volunteer training program coming up in March 2006. Call Christy at (423) 663-8943 if you are interested in becoming a CASA.

In August, **Roane County** welcomed Lou Devillon as its new volunteer supervisor. The same month, Lou and Christy Adair held an open house for all the CASA volunteers, judges and attorneys at their Kingston office. Keep on the lookout for more information about upcoming events to be held in this county.

Morgan County is still seeking volunteers. If you are interested, please call (865) 425-0888 for more information or to request an application.

CASA Loses a Friend

It was with sadness that we learned of the untimely death of **Janie Deering** in September of this year.

The former CASA volunteer leaves behind her husband of almost 33 years Rudy Deering. Our condolences go out to him and the rest of Janie's family and friends for their tremendous loss.

Says Cyndy Bailes, "Janie was so committed to her CASA kids and was a strong advocate for abused and neglected children. When she was on a case, that child had an adult who would really work to see the child's needs were being met. I, like so many others, am saddened by the passing of this generous person."

Holiday Shopping with CASA



Chanukah, Christmas, Kwanzaa - it is the season for sharing. Many of you will be searching for the perfect gifts. CASA can help. The Heartland Products shop is open and filled with gifts for giving.

Carol Loucks' unique stained glass pieces are available. Browse the selection of tree decorations, wind chimes, business card holders, and wall hangings in the Oak Ridge office or call (865) 740-1302 for information about special orders.

Treat yourself to the CASA of the Tennessee Heartland cookbook, Cooks for CASA Kids while you pick up a copy for a friend.

Holiday cards and gift labels, note cards and pads, natural soaps, and nightlights are some of the other treasures found at the Heartland Products shop located in the Oak Ridge office at 161-D Robertsville Road. Call your local program office to find out about its gift selection.

Christmas Around the World Bazaar



CASA of the Tennessee Heartland will be a beneficiary of the 8th *Christmas Around the World Bazaar* hosted by St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. The Saturday, December 3rd event will run from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. in the Parish Hall at 212 N. Tulane Avenue, Oak Ridge. Gourmet foods, framed art and gifts from around the world will be featured. All are invited.

National CASA Services

Service levels provided by the 937 CASA programs in 2004:

Volunteers supported.....	50,801
New volunteers trained.....	13,363
Abused and neglected children served.....	188,620

A tremendous thank you to all of our supporters! The formal listing and thank you will appear in our May Annual Report issue.

Barbeque & Bluegrass

CASA of the Tennessee Heartland will be hosting the 3rd annual BBQ & Bluegrass Bash on February 25, 2006 at the Elks Lodge in Oak Ridge.

This special event will feature live bluegrass music, silent and live auctions and a fabulous supper.

Thanks go to Jane Palmer and Becky Rushton, event chairs, as well as auctioneer "Bear" Stephenson.

If you are interested in sponsorships or contributing auction items, please call (865) 425-0888.

Last year was a sellout. It is not too early to reserve your tickets now!

Where Are We?

Anderson County CASA Program
Anderson County Courthouse,
Room 115 (865) 463-6850
Campbell County CASA Program
165 East Street, Jacksboro
(423) 562-7111
Morgan County CASA Program
(866) 777-0020
Roane County CASA Program
Farnham Building, Harriman
(865) 882-6111
Scott County CASA Program
Scott County Courthouse, Huntsville
(423) 663-8943
Central Office
POB 4426, 161-D Robertsville Road
Oak Ridge, TN 37831
(865) 425-0888
director@casatnh.org

ADDRESS CHANGES

Please help us keep costs down by letting us know of address corrections.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

AGENCY WISH LIST

*Happy Holidays
and a
Joyous 2006!*

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

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

