



# Boone County CASA

Volume 3, Issue 2

Summer 2011

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## From the Director, Sarah J. Ponitz

### Greetings CASA Friends!

I wanted to update all of you about what has been happening with our program since our last newsletter in the spring.

If you recall, one of my goals has been to implement a strong interpreter's program to better serve our Hispanic community. Last year, the number of Hispanic children we served increased.

While we are fortunate to have four bilingual advocates, we need more. During home visits, a child's sibling should never be forced to interpret for family members.

Volunteer interpreters would not have to complete the required thirty hour advocate training, but background checks would still be mandatory. If you know of someone who is bilingual, please pass along the information about this program.

Another new advocate orientation was held on April 14. I would like to thank everyone who participated and send a special thank you to Assistant State's Attorney Ann Switzer, attorney David Towns and Judge Engelsma for their insight and support.

Our spring training ended in May. I am pleased to announce that Joshua Dockins, Judy Meindl, Cindy Lou Dean and Julie McGovern were all sworn in as advocates on May 24.

We currently have 30 advocates to handle the 80+ cases we are assigned to each year.

If you or anyone you know is interested in becoming an advocate for these children, please have them contact me today.

Best regards,

*Sarah J. Ponitz*



**Make a difference in a child's life today**

To learn more about the CASA Program, please call (815) 547-6599 or visit our website: [www.boonecountycasa.org](http://www.boonecountycasa.org)

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## Thanks for Celebrating our 20th Anniversary!

For the past 20 years, CASA advocates have helped improve the lives of hundreds of abused and neglected children in Boone County by providing effective, compassionate advocacy.

Thank you advocates for all that you do to support the most vulnerable children in our community!



We also wanted to send a special thank you to everyone who attended this milestone event at the Baltic Mill on May 26.

We greatly appreciate the support that we received from community members that night.

**Thank you so much!**



**Boone County  
CASA Advocate  
Marva Tanner**

**“Remember that  
the desired end  
result of our work  
is to see the  
children in a  
permanent, safe  
and happy  
situation where  
they can grow  
into productive,  
healthy adults.”  
-Marva Tanner**

## **Volunteer Feature: Advocate Marva Tanner**

### **Please provide some general background information on yourself:**

*My life has been a kaleidoscope. I raised four children while moving from state to state. I started attending the Chicago School of Art Institute at age 39. I eventually entered college at age 50 and I worked as the Director of the Writing Center until I retired.*

### **Why did you choose to become a CASA advocate?**

*I have sheltered several homeless or runaway children over the years and I was thrilled to learn about an organization whose only purpose is to help children. In my three years as an advocate, I have worked six cases, two of which are ongoing.*

### **What has been the most difficult part about being a CASA advocate?**

*My most difficult tasks are not speaking my mind, being patient with irresponsible parents and watching the “wheels of justice grind slowly.”*

### **What advice would you give other advocates?**

*Don't give up! Feel free to ask another advocate to accompany you on a difficult mission. Remember that the desired end result of our work is to see the children in a permanent, safe and happy situation where they can grow into productive, healthy adults.*

### **What keeps you motivated?**

*The hope that I can make a positive difference not only in the life of an abused or neglected child, but to help change the system that so often fails them as well.*

## **Board Member Spotlight: Tasha Ferguson, Secretary**

### **Please provide some general background information on yourself:**

*I was born and raised in Boone County, I graduated from Belvidere High School and then I attended Rock Valley College for Business Management. I have two children, my daughter Taylor is 11 and my son Tyler is 8.*

### **Why did you choose to become involved with the CASA Program?**

*Being on the CASA board is my first “board” experience. I chose to become involved with this program because I felt it would give me the opportunity to give back to my community and a sense of peace knowing I could help better the future of a child in some small way.*

### **What are some of the rewards of being a CASA Board member?**

*Being part of the fundraising has been the most rewarding part for me. It is gratifying to see how the community responds so positively to our events knowing they are helping a great cause.*

### **What has been your most difficult challenge as a CASA Board member?**

*Attending hearings at the courthouse was the most difficult part for me. Having children of my own, it is hard to imagine the abuse some children are forced to endure at such a young age.*

### **What are a few of your goals for the Boone County CASA Program?**

*I would like to continue working on fundraisers and continue to increase community awareness.*



**Boone County  
CASA Secretary  
Tasha Ferguson**

## The Artale Wine Tasting Event Fundraiser

Much like our Celebrity Roast last year, we also had an excellent turnout for our wine tasting event at Artale Wine Company in Rockford.



Owner Tony Artale has been gracious enough to allow us to hold another wine tasting event this year. Tony is a strong supporter of local organizations and most importantly, he believes in helping children.



**PLEASE JOIN US!**

**Friday, June 3  
5:00-8:00 PM**

Over 50 wine varietals will be featured and hors d' oeuvres will be prepared by Josef of Barbados.

**Tickets are only \$15.00 and will be available at the door!**

*(Cash or checks only please)*



## Illinois CASA State Conference

Every year hundreds of CASA advocates and staff members gather together at the state conference to learn more about representing abused and neglected children in court.



This year, topics will include effective testimony practices, trauma and adversity in youth and the emotional impact of foster care on children.

There will also be a Q & A session with a panel of judges.

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Friday, June 10**

**I Hotel & Conference Center  
Champaign**

A great way to network and learn!



## The Celebrity Roast Fundraiser

Last year we had a wonderful turnout for our "red carpet" roast of attorney Curt Tobin.



This year we will be "roasting" Michael Houselog, the Superintendent of Belvidere District 100 schools.

We hope that you will join us and help support our program again this year!

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Thurs., Aug. 18  
Doors open at 6:00**

**The Community Building  
Belvidere**

More event details will be announced soon!

Tickets are \$30.00 in advance



**Belvidere District 100  
Superintendent  
Michael Houselog**

# BOONE COUNTY CASA

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[www.boonecountycasa.org](http://www.boonecountycasa.org)

You can also join  
us on Facebook!



Court Appointed Special Advocates  
FOR CHILDREN

## Become a Powerful Voice in a Child's Life....

### From the Case Manager, Shannon E. Marion

I think that it is important for everyone to remember that the stories you hear about abused and neglected children are real and they are happening right here in Boone County. I would like to share with you the story of Amber. Amber was born premature and drug exposed to heroin. She was taken to the NICU where she stayed for three weeks. She also had to be placed on methadone for her withdrawal symptoms. As she grew older, her mother began to physically abuse her with belts and wire hangers. Amber eventually became part of the system and she was placed in relative foster care with her grandmother. At that point, she also received a CASA. Her advocate made sure that her special needs were addressed at school so that she could excel, not simply exist. She made sure that counseling services were in place so that Amber could begin to effectively address her issues with the abuse she endured. Now Amber is eight-years-old and she plays sports and has a B average at school. She has adjusted well to her new life and she is on her way to healing. Without her CASA, this would not have been possible and she would not have had a voice in court. She thanks her advocate all the time for her help, love and support. Thank you advocates! You make a difference in children's lives, children like Amber, everyday!

**Volunteer hours for the last quarter total 2,364 saving taxpayers \$165,480!**

### CASA Birthdays

Shelli Y.	April 8
Sindy M.	April 28
Collatta W.	May 23
June E.	May 25
Joe B.	June 1
Diane K.	June 12
Berta G.	June 29

Happy birthday to all of you!

### History of the CASA Program

In 1977, a Seattle judge realized that the children involved in the Juvenile Justice System needed help. He conceived the idea of using trained community volunteers to speak for the best interests of abused and neglected children.

Today, the National CASA Program consists of over 900 programs nationwide with over 50,000 volunteers who serve more than 225,000 children annually.

In 1991, Boone County CASA became an active program and our advocates have served as Guardian ad Litem to hundreds of children since that time.

Advocates are appointed by the Court to thoroughly



Boone County  
Courthouse

investigate each child's situation by conducting home visits and by speaking to anyone who could have relevant information about the child's situation.

From there, the advocate prepares recommendations to the court in written report form.

However, before an advocate can take a case, he or she must first complete a background check, an application, a personal interview as well as thirty hours of training. Training gives each advocate the tools they will need to speak for the best interests of these vulnerable children.

If you are interested in becoming an advocate, interpreter or a member of the Board, please contact the CASA office today.

"Children are our most valuable natural resource."

-Herbert Hoover