

CASA PROGRAM OF ST. JOSEPH COUNTY, INDIANA

THE CASA MONTHLY

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LOCAL MEDIA REPORTS ON ISSUES IN JUVENILE SYSTEM

In the past few weeks, the *South Bend Tribune* has featured a special series of articles called [For the Love of Children](#). As a response to the tragic death of ten year old [Tramelle Sturgis](#), the *Tribune* takes an investigative look at the child abuse and neglect that exists in our community, and the articles give rise to some of the problems within the system itself.

From interviews of local citizens who are concerned about the safety of our community's children, to Judge Nemeth's input about the accountability of the Department of Child Services (DCS), various media outlets have been wrangling with the notion that abused and neglected children

fall through the cracks.

This series of articles has identified serious issues regarding the welfare of our community's children, including the apparent drop in abuse or neglect investigations since 2010. Because of the change to a centralized call center for the abuse hotline, the *Tribune* reports that more suspected abuse or neglect calls have been "screened out." As DCS Director James Payne states, "the screen-out rate before centralization was 16 percent; records show that rate was 39 percent from September through November 2011."

In addition to the worry

about an increased rate of screen outs, the *Tribune* remarks on the need for more transparency in child protection cases. Judge Nemeth argues that in keeping child protection cases confidential, you lose the accountability factor.

While the *Tribune's* stories are on a myriad of topics in the juvenile system, it is important that the CASA Program continue to remain neutral and stay focused on our mission. Each CASA's role is to be an independent, third party observer, and the volunteer should ultimately advocate for the best interests of the child.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- Peggy A.
- Rakea A.
- Jamie B.
- Angel B.
- Elizabeth B.
- Marijo K.
- Sharon L.
- Melva M.
- Sharon P.
- Silvia R.
- Jay W.

Happy Birthday!

CASA OFFICE INTERN SPOTLIGHT: TAIDE G.

CASA Intern Taide G. joined the CASA office in May 2011, and she has been a wonderful asset to the CASA team on Thursday and Friday mornings. Taide is a master of organization and she assists with day-to-day administrative tasks. Particularly, she creates and assembles case files, which has been a huge help for the staff.

The Monthly sat down with Taide to talk about her involvement with the CASA Program, and she talked about how she works full-

time as a financial advocate at a local hospital. And she "always longed to give back to the community, but with four boys it was not always possible." Taide explained that the "time was right" last year with all of her children in school, and she heard a CASA commercial on the radio and "loved what CASA was doing for our children." Taide wanted to volunteer as an advocate, but since she "couldn't take up such a big respon-

sibility" she contacted the office and expressed her desire to help out in whatever capacity that was available.

Taide admits that she had "no idea of the amount of children that were in need, and the extent of their need." But Taide believes her experience at CASA "has been a rewarding one."

The CASA staff is so grateful for Taide's help, overall optimism, and her incredible plan-making abilities.

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THE MONTHLY SPOTLIGHT: VICKI R.

The Monthly recognizes Vicki R. as the CASA of the Month! Vicki has been a CASA for almost three (3) years, and as CASA Supervisor Rakea states, “she has shown dedication and courage when advocating on behalf of the children to whom she is assigned.”

CASA Vicki’s strengths include her natural ability to bond with her CASA children, and she is able to speak her mind in court in a professional manner. CASA Vicki has respect-

fully fought for what she believed was in the best interests for her CASA children.

Most notably, Vicki’s communication skills are unparalleled. She is constantly in contact with all parties involved, listens to and treats the parents with respect, and she maintains professional relationships with the parties throughout her time on a case. And CASA Vicki is always in touch with her CASA supervisors, and she sub-

mits her monthly reports and volunteer hours on time.

Vicki’s hard work and dedication continues to pay off when advocating for her children. She has received very complex cases, and has helped many children in the court system receive services that would have been overlooked if a CASA was not assigned to the case.

The Monthly thanks Vicki for all that she does for the

CASA Program. The Program is grateful for all of her efforts in advocacy for her CASA children!



Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY

MARCH CALENDAR OF EVENTS

• SUBMIT YOUR **MONTHLY HOURS + REPORTS** TO YOUR SUPERVISOR

• **MARCH 2-3:**
SWING BY THE **CASA EXHIBIT** AT THE **WOMEN’S EXPO.**

THE EXPO WILL TAKE PLACE **FRIDAY, 4-8 PM AND SATURDAY, 9 AM - 6 PM** AT THE **CENTURY CENTER, SOUTH BEND:**

WWW.EXPOFORWOMEN.ORG

• **MARCH 5:**
CASA DAY AT THE STATEHOUSE IN INDIANAPOLIS, IN. CONTACT **STEPHANIE** AT **574.233.2272** FOR MORE DETAILS

BOOK CLUB RECOMMENDS *A BOY WHO WAS RAISED AS A DOG*

A good blend of technical and anecdotal information makes *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog* a quick and easy read. This book is full of information that makes the reader stop and think about the child or children for whom they are advocating.

Authors Dr. Perry and Ms. Szalavitz have a way of

weaving stories together to easily explain what happens to the brain when a child experiences trauma and how that trauma can be treated. Readers are easily able to see how even slight changes in a child’s history can affect the outcome of their lives.

Drop by the CASA Office Library and check-out one

of our many copies of this great book.

FIND CASA OF SJC

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WWW.SJCCASA.ORG

FACEBOOK:
[CASA PROGRAM OF ST. JOSEPH COUNTY](https://www.facebook.com/CASA-Program-of-St.-Joseph-County)

TWITTER: [@CASAOFSJC](https://twitter.com/CASAOFSJC)

NATIONAL CASA CELEBRATES 35 YEARS

In 1977, National CASA was founded in King County, Washington by Judge David Soukup, and the program is celebrating its thirty-fifth year of national advocacy work.

To commemorate the beginning of the CASA movement, National CASA’s *The Connection* Magazine re-published a

piece written by [Judge Soukup](#) that reflects upon the reason why CASA was created, and how important it is to continue to give back to the children who are suffering in the juvenile court system.

As Judge Soukup remarks, there are “tens of thousands of people like you speaking up for hundreds

of thousands of children” and he commends volunteers’ “extraordinary commitment to children and for your sleepless nights.”

The Monthly applauds the hard work of all of our CASAs in St. Joseph County. We are grateful for each of you who commit yourselves to the children day in and day out.