



To give a child a **CASA**
is to give them a **VOICE**,
to give them a voice is to
give them **HOPE**, to give
them hope is to give them
the **WORLD**.



CASA Spokesperson
Johnnie Gray

Johnnie Gray Becomes Spokesperson, Raises Awareness of CASA of Brown County

Johnnie Gray, member of both the Green Bay Packers Hall of Fame and Board of Directors, will serve as the official spokesperson for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Brown County to raise awareness of the organization and its mission of advocating for abused and neglected children in Brown County.

Johnnie Gray is well known in the community as a former Green Bay Packers safety and current analyst for Fox 11 Sports, but his work at Syble Hopp School is evidence of his equally strong commitment and advocacy for children.

“We are honored and excited to have Johnnie as our spokesperson,” said CASA Executive Director Marilyn Bennin. “He is passionate about children and is bringing his enthusiasm and commitment to CASA to help grow our program and raise awareness of our organization within our community.”

Johnnie has already served as a special guest at the CASA Classic for Kids golf outing and the Harlem Ambassadors basketball event, and he also appeared in television PSAs promoting those events. Watch for Johnnie in upcoming PSAs recruiting volunteers and at CASA events throughout the coming year.

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CASA of Brown County: Past, Present, and Future

By Marilyn Bennin, Executive Director, CASA of Brown County, Inc.

Turning the page from 2010 to 2011 prompted me to marvel at the tremendous accomplishments of the past year, savor the present, and look forward with great anticipation to the upcoming year. I cannot begin to express my appreciation to everyone who “gave their all” to our program in the past year.

In 2010, we were able to serve 251 children – that seemed like a fantasy when I came to CASA 5 years ago. We also added 15 corporate board members and trained 28 new advocates. The CASA Classic, Harlem Ambassadors event, cookbooks, and fundraising appeals were all very successful. Whether you have been with us “from the start” or are a recent supporter, we could not have accomplished this success without you.

As we begin 2011, Judge Marc Hammer has left his rotation on the Juvenile bench and begun a new assignment, and we are so very grateful for his service and heartfelt support. We also say

(Continued on page 2)



Executive Director Marilyn Bennin addresses volunteers at surprise 5-year anniversary party

“Thank you for allowing me the extraordinary opportunity to serve as Executive Director of CASA of Brown County...it has been my greatest pleasure.”

Outgoing Director Reflects Back, Looks Forward

(Continued from page 1)

goodbye to Shauna Lemieux as we thank her for her dedication and wish her the best in her new career. And we have welcomed back Lynne McKenzie from maternity leave with open arms.

The New Year will also bring a change that, initially, will likely not come easily for me. But I truly believe it will allow CASA to continue to grow and thrive for many more years to come. I have decided to transition into a part-time position at CASA, and the board is in the process of selecting a new Executive Director of CASA of Brown County. I reluctantly concluded that the job of “running the business” was so demanding that I could not spend enough time with our advocates and supervisors – and serving our children has been my passion and inspiration since day one.

Any doubts I had about this decision were diminished after attending this year’s Christmas party. I was overwhelmed by the number of people in attendance and their devotion to our mission. CASA of Brown County will continue to thrive in the hands of hun-

dreds of caring and capable people. I am committed to working with the new director to make the transition as seamless as possible. I would not have made this decision if I was not convinced it is the best way to continue our growth and serve our kids. While my hours will be reduced, my love for this program will never diminish.

What else will 2011 bring? We have a list of excited potential new volunteers and plan to continue to train advocates semi-annually. Our expanded Corporate Board is enthusiastically seeking financial support. We look forward to Judge Kendall Kelly joining Judge Timothy Hinkfuss on the Juvenile Court bench.

We not only need your continued support, but we also ask that you reach out to others in our community to make them aware of our passion and the children who are waiting for “their CASA.” Thank you for allowing me the extraordinary opportunity to serve as Executive Director of CASA of Brown County these past five years. So many of you have found a permanent place in my heart, and it has been my greatest blessing.

CASA Grows by 28 Volunteers In 2010

CASA of Brown County was fortunate to welcome 28 new volunteers in 2010. Each new volunteer successfully completed an initial 40-hour training program and was sworn in as a “friend of the court” and active CASA volunteer. The spring class of volunteers was sworn in by Judge Marc Hammer on April 20, 2010, and the fall class was sworn in by Judge Timothy Hinkfuss on October 19, 2010. Of these new volunteers, 4 have joined the board of directors or corporate board, and 26 have become active volunteer advocates.



The following community members became CASA volunteers in 2010: Kristyna Williams, Michele Stein, Morgan Sortek, Jamie Skenandore, Barbara Sobel, Ashley Salentine, Elodee Kroll, Michael Hermans, Mary Gronnert, Sallee Gould, David DePeau, Eric DeJardine, Nan Bush, Joanne Athey, Rachel Verheyen, Mary Jane Selinsky, Lori Sparapani, Tracey Bolinger, Mark Johnsen, Kathy Takahashi, Julianna Guyette, Sandra Stokes, Lisa Wagner, Joan Brusky, Rachel Riske, Meghan Hellmann, Lyndsey Schoelzel, and Nicole Tegtman.

CASA Events Raise Funds, Bring Smiles

CASA Classic for Kids

The CASA Classic for Kids golf outing took place August 23, 2010 at Thornberry Creek at Oneida. The event was once again a tremendous success, raising more than \$16,000 to support the CASA program. We would like to thank the golfers, dinner guests, event sponsors, and all those who donated items for the raffle and auction. We would also like to thank the dedicated volunteers who make this signature event possible every year.



Our gratitude also goes to Special Guest Matt Bollant, UWGB Women's Basketball Coach, and our local CASA Spokesperson Johnnie Gray, Green Bay Packers Hall of Famer, for helping to give our golfers a memorable and entertaining experience.

Mark your calendars for the 5th Annual CASA Classic for Kids – Monday, August 22, 2011 at Thornberry Creek at Oneida.

Harlem Ambassadors

On September 28, 2010, CASA of Brown County hosted the Harlem Ambassadors basketball entertainment troop who faced off against a team of local celebrities, including Green Bay Fire Chief Jeff Roemer, Brown County Executive Tom Hinz, Green Bay Chamber of Commerce President Paul Jadin, St. Norbert's College Men's Basketball Coach Gary Grzesk, Heritage Hill Executive Director Charles Pelky, and many others.

We would like to thank our Major Event Sponsors—Wisconsin Public Service, Schneider National Foundation, and Nicolet National Bank—for making this event possible. We would also like to thank Mackinaw's Grill & Spirits who provided a post-game meal for the two teams and our volunteers, and to Country Inn & Suites who provided lodging for the Harlem Ambassadors.

Additionally, we would like to thank all the individuals, businesses, and service clubs who purchased blocks of tickets to donate to community organizations such as the PALS programs, Boys and Girls Club, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and area schools. The generosity of all those who attended and supported this event helped raise more than \$7,200 for CASA of Brown County.



Coming Soon—Green Bay Gamblers Raffle

CASA of Brown County will receive the proceeds from the 50/50 raffle during the Green Bay Gamblers v. Waterloo Black Hawks hockey game on Sunday, February 27, 2011 at 3:05 p.m.

Get your friends together to enjoy an afternoon of great hockey while helping raise funds for CASA. If you're interested in selling raffle tickets during the game, please contact the CASA office at 920-437-2272 or casabc@tds.net.

Greetings from Juvenile Court

By Elizabeth Case, Brown County Human Services Juvenile Case Manager

It isn't too often that Juvenile Court workers have a CASA advocate assigned to a case they are working on. Recently, I have been assigned to manage a case that involves a young lady who is under a Child Protection order. This case is one of those infrequent opportunities for me to work closely with CASA.

While working this case, I have been reminded of how difficult child protection cases can be. I don't mean difficult as in too much work; I mean difficult as in work that pulls at your heart strings.

I find myself worrying about this kid even when I am not at work.

I am a Juvenile Court worker, so I worry about my delinquent clients and sometimes I worry about them when I am not at work. The worrying about my delinquent clients is more often about them making poor choices and ending up in the back seat of a police car.

But the worrying about this young lady under a child protection order has nothing to do with the choices she has made. It has to do with the many unfortunate circumstances she was born into.

As I face each decision with this case, I am contemplating what her parents might want if they were alive, as well as what

placement they would think is best.

Thanks to the CASA volunteer assigned to this case, I have an advocate who is culturally sensitive and caring, and who enables me to effectively communicate with the extended family by providing language interpretation. She provides me with an insight and understanding that I would never have without her.

I am deeply appreciative of the service CASA advocates are able to provide to the families in need in Brown County.



“The CASA volunteer... provides me with an insight and understanding that I would never have without her.”

Service Providers Benefit from CASA's Collaboration

By Fred Lightner, Family Training Program (FTP) Director

As a fellow service provider in Brown County working with families and children who are affected by issues of child abuse and neglect each day, the Family Training Program (FTP) commends the efforts of CASA volunteers and greatly appreciates the collaborative relationship our agencies enjoy.

As issues such as alcoholism, mental health, poverty, juvenile delinquency, domestic violence, and other social problems impact our community, it has become increasingly clear that it truly does “take a village to raise a child.”

The collaboration between FTP, CASA, and many other service providers in the Brown County area help represent that village. The information, advocacy, and team approach CASA volunteers display is extremely beneficial to FTP's work with families who are at risk.

CASA volunteers assist FTP in sharing their perspectives, court advocacy, and their work with the children in these at-risk families, which FTP uses to identify and address family needs and teach parents protective skills and behavior management skills in order to raise their children in a safe and healthy manner.

FTP has found CASA volunteers to be communicative, open, and of the utmost integrity in their work as child advocates. CASA volunteers are committed to giving a safe, strong voice to children that are vulnerable and are at risk of being maltreated.

The time and energy CASA volunteers put into their role as child advocates is invaluable, and their willingness to serve the best interests of children in Brown County is admirable. FTP and CASA are a collaborative partnership that works well for Brown County.

CASA Volunteer Eases Foster Parent's Journey

By Deb Patterson, Adoptive Mom and Brown County Foster Parent

Can one person impact the trajectory of someone's life? For children in foster care it takes a whole team of dedicated individuals working together, but every member of that team is an integral part of making a difference for each special child. In our family, one crucial member of the team was our CASA volunteer.

In the summer of 2006, my husband and I became foster-to-adopt parents anxiously awaiting our first placement. When Kyle came to us as a five-day-old baby, he was precious. As we gently set the car seat on the floor of our living room the morning he arrived, a tiny sigh came out of his lips as if to say, "I am home."

I loved him the moment I laid his little head against my chest and held him in my arms. It was critically important that I kept telling myself, "we will love him forever, but care for him only as long as he needs us." We weren't sure how the next few months or years would go, but we knew that day that we loved this little boy.

Waiting for the legal process to unfold was a test in patience even though we trusted the process to deliver a future based upon what was in Kyle's best interest. When we were told a

CASA volunteer had been assigned to our case, we knew it was a positive move by the judge, but we weren't sure how it would affect our situation. We soon learned that having a CASA volunteer would make a big difference in the communication between what was happening in our home, in the home of Kyle's birth parents, and what was shared with the judge in the courtroom.

"When we met our CASA volunteer...our journey changed. It became lighter, a little easier, and we felt more comfortable in the process."

A CASA volunteer can see the whole situation surrounding a child and make observations that can be conveyed to the courts in a way that is different from the birth parents, the foster parents, or the social workers.

Our CASA volunteer was able to articulate important information that allowed the judge to make the decisions necessary to provide Kyle with a safe, permanent, and nurturing environment.

When we met our CASA volunteer, we knew she would be a strong advocate for Kyle and work in his best interest. In that moment our journey changed. It became lighter, a little easier, and we felt more confident in the process. We are forever grateful to our CASA volunteer, her perspective on difficult issues, and the way she impacted the trajectory of our family's future.

Yes! I want to support the mission of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children of Brown County, Inc.

- One-time donation: \$ _____
- Monthly donation: Bill \$ _____ to my credit card each month for 12 consecutive months, for a total donation of \$ _____

Name (s) _____ Business/Organization _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

- I/We would like this gift to remain anonymous, please.
- Charge my gift to my credit card: Card No. _____ Exp. _____
- Signature _____ CSC _____

- Check enclosed (make checks payable to CASA of Brown County, Inc.)

Please mail your gift to CASA of Brown County, Inc., 414 E. Walnut St., Ste. 281, Green Bay, WI 54301

My Experience with CASA From the Bench

By Judge Marc Hammer, Brown County Circuit Court Branch V

I have had the pleasure of working with CASA of Brown County for the past two years as a Juvenile Court Judge. My first impression of the CASA organization was as a group of stay-at-home mothers who really liked to babysit. Then I had my first opportunity to meet the children within the child protection system. I learned that these children are confused, angry, lonely, and scared. These children needed more than court-ordered services and a place to sleep.



Then I began to understand a critical need in our community for constant, stable, caring, and responsible adults who would actually listen to the concerns these children expressed. CASA volunteers provide attention to children who have only been “serviced” through our legal system. Most importantly, I learned these children needed appropriate role models who would provide hope.

Then I began to use the incredibly valuable information provided within the CASA reports to make critical decisions as to children’s needs and parents’ abilities. I saw the full impact of the CASA program here in Brown County. CASA provides these kids unconditional and unmeasured support. The CASA volunteers in our community have no specific motive, no identified time line, and no specific conditions that are placed on their willingness to serve as children advocates.

My first impression of the CASA organization was incorrect. I have come to realize CASA volunteers are people who are willing to provide advocacy and support for children who have never experienced these critical characteristics at home. Some people would call that effort a labor of love. I wish all of you success in the New Year and I look forward to a return to the juvenile system in the upcoming years.

CASA Recognizes Local School for Support of CASA Family

By Chris Bivins, CASA Volunteer Coordinator

School can be a struggle for many CASA kids who are often facing even greater struggles at home. In one CASA family, the children had been in three different schools over three years, and their family struggled with a host of other issues including addiction, abuse, domestic violence, homelessness, poverty, and lack of transportation.

The children had been assessed as having both learning and behavioral issues significant enough to warrant IEPs (Individualized Education Plans). Fortunately, the third school they attended was Chappell Elementary, where the teaching team stepped forward to dramatically improve this family’s situation. The teachers got to know the children and their care provider, they recognized and respected the family’s strengths, and they put supports in place to assist the family in overcoming some of their challenges. For example, when the kids came without

homework completed, their teacher helped them work on it before school. And when the care provider couldn’t stay in her home, the school social worker helped locate new accommodations and provided some transportation assistance. The teaching staff also learned to play to the strengths of the children and make accommodations that worked for each child.

The combined efforts of the Chappell team, CASA, the courts, and human services resulted in improved attendance and a total change in attitude; the children went from hating school to wanting to be there. They showed so much academic improvement that one of the children is now functioning at grade level for all subjects and was able to graduate from the IEP. Kudos to the team at Chappell Elementary for making such a huge difference in the lives of these children and their family!

CASA Grateful to Community for Tremendous Support in 2010

Champion (\$25,000+)

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From Our CASAs to Your Casa—Cookbooks Now On Sale

Looking for a new recipe? Looking for a perfect belated holiday gift? Then, look no further. The CASA cookbooks have arrived! With tremendous help from one of our dedicated volunteers, Kristel Hawley, and printing support from Schneider National Foundation, the "From Our CASAs to Your Casa" cookbooks are ready for sale at the bargain price of \$10 per cookbook. Cookbooks may be shipped for an additional \$2.50 for one cookbook and \$2.75 for two. We accept both cash and checks (payable to CASA of Brown County). Contact Lynne McKenzie at 920-437-2272, ext. 102 or lmckenzie.casabc@tds.net to place an order.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Brown County, Inc.



CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

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