

Executive Director's Report

December 10, 2015

Governance and Operations

Program Issues

Volunteers

At present, we have 42 volunteers on the wait list for the spring training. I will be generating the information session and training dates in the next week or two and posting them on the website. I will also be emailing those on the wait list the information so we can begin scheduling them for information sessions and start the vetting process to be advocates.

Staff

There are no staff changes to report.

Peer Coordinator Update

There are no peer coordinator updates to report.

Staff Meeting

November's staff meeting was productive. We discussed expansion of the Traveling Tutor program, new case appointments, the holiday pick-up party, scheduled for 12/11 from 12-2 and 6-8, CASA Manager reports, upcoming inservice trainings, upcoming outreach presentations and grant applications, and new state requirements for closed case stories. Our December staff meeting is our annual holiday luncheon, to be held the 18th at The Clinton House in Clinton. We've invited our peer coordinators to attend as well.

Adoption Day

Both Adoption Day events, the court's and the Division's, were successful. In all, we had 17 children adoption, of whom 11 (I believe) were CASA kids. It was very gratifying to see them find their "forever families!" Many thanks to Beth and Pam - especially Pam! - who attended the meetings, gathered up the donations, and supported these lovely events. I had the opportunity to attend the Court's celebration and to chat with Judge Goodzeit, several of the attorneys, court personnel, and DCPD staff. In addition, several of our volunteers were represented at the event, which was absolutely packed with children, families, child welfare professionals, and friends. It was a good day!

CASA Manager

All staff attended the CASA Manager upgrade training. The upgrade should take place in early January. There are lots of great features in the new version, but it is still pretty convoluted, particularly in comparison with Optima. That said, we are hopeful that the new owner will streamline the software while enhancing the intuitive functionality of it as well.

State Issues

VOCA

We have not yet received word about the status of the VOCA grant applications or when we will know of the funding outcomes. I checked with Rita to see if she has heard a timetable for grant awards, but she has not heard anything. That said, representatives from VOCA are coming to CASA of NJ on Thursday to discuss the CASA network's ability to collect specific pieces of data for those programs funded by VOCA.

State Funding

As previously noted, our state funding receipts through October were based on the \$850,00 and not the actual funding award of \$1.15 million while the state and CASA of NJ determined what the increased funding will be used for this fiscal year. At the end of the day, it was decided that the funding would be used for sustainability with no special projects. This decision resulted in DCF releasing the withheld funds, which hit our bank account in November. We are now fully funded through DCF as their arrearage is current.

State reporting

All of the state reporting documents for November's expense reports have been submitted.

ED Meeting

Our next ED meeting is scheduled for December 9th at the Middlesex Fire Academy in Sayreville.

PIP Outcomes

I have re-submitted the receipt for the locksmith to the state. I also received a draft of the employee's handbook from DH Piper, which Joe and I reviewed. I incorporated his comments with mine, and I met with the senior attorney last week to go over all of the edits. She is updating accordingly and hopes to have a draft for us by the end of December. Once I receive it I will send it on to the board for its review and approval, after which I will submit it to CASA of NJ.

National Issues

National CASA's annual conference is scheduled for June and will be held in Washington, DC this year. They issued a request for proposals for presenters. I have taken the liberty of submitting one for the Traveling Tutor initiative and listed Patty Hernandez, who is one of our tutors and has had the greatest successes to date, as a co-presenter should it be selected for inclusion in the workshops. Patty is very happy to help and hopes to share the work that she has been doing so successfully with other CASA programs.

Public Relations and Marketing

Social Media

We have 472 Facebook followers as of this writing, up from 470 last count. Our Facebook address is <https://www.facebook.com/CASA-SHaW>. I would appreciate it if you could share posts with your network.

We currently have 771 Twitter followers, up from 760 last count. Our Twitter address is https://www.twitter.com/CASA_SHaW.

Outreach

I have been invited to appear on a radio show with Dr. Felecia Nash, who is a Leadership Somerset alum who was part of last year's disproportionality partnership with them. The show will be taped December 14th in Lawrenceville.

We have been selected by Janssen Pharmaceuticals to be the charity of choice for a team building project in January. They will be collecting either school supplies or medical supplies for school nurses. The event is to be held at the Marriott in Princeton on January 26th. More details will become available once we get closer to the event.

Community Partnerships

I have been collecting holiday gifts from our partners over the last several days with more to come later this week. Our office is filled! Fulton Bank took a lovely photo of their gifts; we'll be sending out another press release about the partnerships after all are collected.

Norris McLaughlin is again partnering with us this year on holiday cards. We had no new submissions of holiday drawings, however, and I thought we would have to forego the partnership this year. However, they made the decision to accept the drawing of the cottage that we had on our cards last year as they wanted their money to go to a good cause. We should be soliciting these types of drawings much earlier and from older kids – they want a higher level of sophistication than our younger artists can provide.

I met with Dave Anderson of Texas CASA, and we discussed how things are the same and how they differ between our state programs. They also have a "friend of CASA" organization which functions much like the CASA Crew, but they call "Code Red" for volunteering needs. They have a significantly higher level of

engagement as they cultivate these volunteers with get togethers, newsletters, spotlights, etc. They also put their mission statement on the back of all business cards, which I thought was a great idea.

Other practices which they have which I liked was an annual “homecoming” party for all former board and volunteers as a way to keep them engaged and to oftentimes reactivate them – their motto is “Once a CASA, always a CASA.” They also have a group of professionals which support CASA by providing things like school supplies, holiday gifts, etc. – they provide resources but don’t volunteer. Lastly, they have a robust “Ambassador” pool of current and former volunteers and in some cases aged out youth who speak about what CASA is and does in the community. We had a very productive visit.

I got a call from Susan Gibbons regarding an idea which she has had for a friendraiser/fundraiser event. She has a friend who designs jewelry and is a former CASA volunteer from Bergen County. Susan wants to host a jewelry party for her – perhaps in February – with coffee and donuts (daytime) or wine and cheese (evening) with a portion of the proceeds going to CASA. She will forego her hostess gift in favor of the program. She wants to be sure the board is supportive before moving forward with this.

I told her about the upcoming Dine Out at the Olde Mill Inn, and she thought it might be a good place to do it. We had tentatively planned a friendraiser beforehand, so we’ll need to work out the details of 1) do we want to participate and 2) when and where are the best time and venue?

I am scheduled to participate in a Non-profit Council meeting with the Somerset County Business Partnership the morning of Monday the 14th.

Finance

Grants

If you have not yet done so, please log in to the Hoosie Martin Foundation training. I have not yet had the chance, and I don’t want them to think we do not want the training opportunity. I have to provide a report to them at the end of December. Thank you!

On-line Funding Opportunities

I received a call last week from a representative from Network for Good, which wants us to leave PayPal and move to their funding portal. I did an on-line tutorial with them, and it is slick – the funding page carries over the non-profit messaging, has a spot for a little story, videos, etc. However, the cost of this fabulous marketing and fundraising tool is about \$79 a month. I told the somewhat persistent representative that I thought that was too much for us to pay for an unknown outcome, but he “guarantees a 20% increase in funding – their studies have shown it to be true!”

I’m sure it is a great tool, but my recommendation would be not now. However, I told the young man in question that I would bring it to the board for their consideration. I am scheduled to follow up with him on Monday afternoon.

Audit

The Executive Committee opted to engage our previous auditor, Dave Williams, to re-do our audit. I met with him Friday and Monday, and he is finished with everything in-office. We are waiting for his draft, which Joe and I will review and then send out to the full board for its review. I am hopeful that we can approve the audit in December, via email if necessary, so we can submit the Charitable Registration paperwork before the December 31st deadline. The 990 will be late, but not significantly so if we can get all of it done quickly.

Fundraising Efforts

Annual Appeal

The annual appeal went out a few days later than anticipated, but it was the earliest possible date – the printer got it to us as soon as he could. I was able to recruit two CASA Crew members, Pat Young and Patty Ruano, to

help with the mailing. We have already seen donations come in, including one long-time donor who doubled his annual gift from \$1000 to \$2000!

I took the opportunity to send our 100 largest donors, all of whom have given more than \$1000 over the last three years, a thank you letter for their support while we were without VOCA funding. It was because of their generosity and support that we were able to get through a difficult and challenging funding deficit. I just wanted them to know how much we appreciated it.

CASAblanca

Deb and I had lunch with Tom Dilts and spoke with him about being this year's honoree. He was very happy to fill that role and thanked us for the honor. He was very clear that he did not think that he would be a big "draw" in terms of sponsors, so he encouraged us to consider a second honoree who could bring in more revenue than he can.

One Child's Story

I recently came across this archived email from an adoptive parent about one of our former advocates, Annette Shelton, who sadly moved back to Dallas last year. I share it, though old, because it encapsulates the best of what CASA volunteers do:

Hi Beth! I apologize for the delay; here is a summary of our excellent experience with Annette:

The first time we met Colleen was at the Children's Aid group home in Ridgewood December 2010. We went to visit with the girls and to see if there may be a potential match for us. We decorated Christmas tree ornaments and Annette was there visiting Colleen.

We went to the visit not being told to look at any child in particular yet. We enjoyed meeting all of the kids but had an immediate special fondness for Colleen. I remember teaching her how to play hot cross buns on the piano and Bill helped her rollerblade in the driveway. Annette was very friendly and was helping Colleen decorate ornaments.

We then spoke with the CAFS therapist, Rena, and she said that she thought we could be a match for Colleen. We then had an "accidental" meeting at Barnes and Noble with Colleen and Rena that went really well. Rena then asked Colleen if she would want to live with us and Colleen told her yes and was crying with happiness. We were thrilled too.

We started to have weekly visits with Colleen, first at the group home, then supervised by staff in the community, then unsupervised in the community, then supervised at our home, then unsupervised in our home, and then overnight visits.

Colleen officially moved in on 4/28/11. Annette would visit Colleen at our home regularly and we could see how important it was for Colleen to have Annette follow her to our home and make sure she would be treated well. I tended to participate in these visits since CASA workers can't take the children too far on foot and can't drive the child in their car. I didn't want to get in the way, but Annette included me and wanted to help Colleen and I become bonded.

Colleen shared with us that she was in a neglectful and abusive foster home that Annette helped save her from. Colleen said she told her DYFS worker about the neglect and abuse but that they didn't do anything. Colleen credits Annette with believing her and getting her out of that home and into the group home.

Annette also was instrumental in helping Colleen re-establish contact with her two younger half siblings, Fiona and Liam. They were adopted by the same family and Annette set up a lunch date with myself, the adoptive mother, Elizabeth, and herself. This was a get together to see if Elizabeth and I felt comfortable with each other

and with the kids seeing each other again. Elizabeth was amazing and we set up a visit with Colleen and the kids. Annette attended this visit which also helped the meeting go smoothly. Colleen has continued to see her siblings regularly and we have forged a strong relationship with their adoptive parents.

Annette has attended very important milestone events such as a dinner celebrating the adoption and the actual adoption. Annette has explained that once a child is adopted her role as a CASA worker ends. Thankfully Annette said that if we initiate contact with her she can respond and even visit. We invited Annette to Colleen's first horse show in West Orange later this month and Annette said if she can be there she will be there. Annette has always been so reliable so if she said she would be visiting she would be there. Colleen needed a reliable, nurturing, and protective adult in her life from the time she entered the child protective services to when we adopted her. Annette went above and beyond what was required of her and she was Colleen's guardian angel until we were connected with her.

Colleen's life would have been different without Annette and most likely in a negative way. Annette helped Colleen find a permanent home and taught her about how to trust and rely on adults which will serve her in all of her future relationships. Thank you CASA from the bottom of my heart and we especially appreciate Annette because we know she volunteered her time and energy. Annette was so professional, reliable, and helpful that we had a hard time believing that she was doing this work free of charge. She conducted herself like all DYFS workers should be expected to.

With thanks to CASA and Annette - Bettina (Colleen's adoptive Mom)

Call-in number for meetings:

712/775-7000; 290038#

Next Meeting: Thursday, January 21, PCC, 120 FINDERNE AVENUE, BRIDGEWATER

FY 15.16

ACCEPTED

FUNDER	PURPOSE	COUNTY	AMOUNT	STATUS
NJ Legislature	General Support	Somerset, Hunterdon, Warren	\$112,672 (net amount after PC grant penalty)	Approved, paid monthly upon submission of receipts
FinPro, Inc. via Children's Hope Initiative	Traveling Tutor	Somerset, Hunterdon, and Warren	\$16,000	Approved, will be paid in \$5000 increments
CDBG	Case Supervision	Somerset	\$32,007	Approved, must submit receipts upon spending down grant award; begins 10/1/15.
Provident Bank Foundation	Peer Coordinator Model	Somerset	\$2,500	Approved, payment received
CASA of NJ	Peer Coordinator Model	Tri-Counties	\$23,800	Approved, payment pending
Hoosie Martin Foundation	PR/Marketing	Tri-Counties	Technical assistance only	Approved. No payment pending-training only

PENDING

FUNDER	PURPOSE	COUNTY	AMOUNT	STATUS
Astle Alpaugh Foundation, LOI	Volunteer training	Tri-Counties	\$5000	LOI accepted; full application due in January
Tyler Foundation	Case Supervision	Somerset County	\$11,500	Pending
J&J ICID application	Back to school initiative-school supplies and winter gear	20-25 children in the tri-counties	\$3500	Pending
Hunterdon County	Case Supervision	Hunterdon	\$25,000	Pending
VOCA	Case Supervision Volunteer Training	Somerset	\$49,260	Pending
VOCA	Case Supervision Volunteer Training	Hunterdon	\$51,616	Pending
VOCA	Case Supervision Volunteer Training	Warren	\$52,800	Pending

DECLINED

FUNDER	PURPOSE	COUNTY	AMOUNT	STATUS
Impact 100	Outreach	Tri-Counties	\$102,000	Declined