

## **Executive Director's Report**

January 21, 2016

### **Governance and Operations**

#### **Program Issues**

##### **Volunteers**

Our Spring training begins February 23<sup>rd</sup>; our third information session is scheduled for the 20<sup>th</sup> with 12 people scheduled to attend. At present, we have four prospective volunteers who have scheduled interviews with 53 people total on our inquiry list – about half have signed up for an orientation session so far. Our goal is 15 in the class.

##### **Staff**

Once I learned that the VOCA grant application was accepted for a Volunteer Trainer, I posted the listing on Idealist.org. We've had several really outstanding candidates apply, from new MSW graduates to an attorney, an experienced Volunteer Recruiter/Trainer, and a training consultant and public speaker who is a former CASA volunteer. Five individuals were invited to interview for the position this week; I hope to have a selection by Friday afternoon with a start date of 01 February.

There is a possibility of us getting an intern this semester. She is working on an MSW, and she is looking for a macro focus – grant writing, fundraising, administration, etc. She could be a great help with CASAblanca. Normally, the supervision requirement is for an MSW; we only have one on staff, and she does not have time to do this. I submitted my credentials and was accepted as an appropriate supervisor. I'll keep you updated on the status of this.

##### **Peer Coordinator Update**

My focus is beginning to shift from grants and training to the recruitment of peer coordinators. I participated in National CASA's monthly "peer coordinator expansion" call this past week but did not find any particularly new or innovative tips. We have incorporated the PC position into our volunteer information sessions as a way to expand our recruitment options. Once the trainer is on board, I am hopeful that we can start recruiting from experienced pools like retired teachers, social workers, etc.

##### **Staff Meeting**

Our December staff meeting was the holiday luncheon at the Clinton House Inn. Everyone was able to attend except for Dottie Cassimatis, one of our PCs. We had a lovely time visiting together. The January staff meeting is scheduled for Thursday the 21<sup>st</sup>.

##### **CASA Manager**

The CASA Manager upgrade has been completed; it took a couple of days but is now up and running. The designer sent along a link for a tutorial, which all of us completed. That said, there are some new functions which are as yet undiscovered. It is going to take us all awhile to get back up to speed. Everyone has been issued new passwords and have so far been able to get into the program with no problems.

##### **CIC Meeting**

Beth and I attended a recent Children in Court meeting in Warren County, and ears perked up when we discussed the Traveling Tutor initiative. Two requests for tutors have already been made from the Warren local office; Judge Rahill was pleased with it and said that she will keep that in mind when she encounters children with academic support needs. The Hunterdon CIC is scheduled for February 8<sup>th</sup>, which Jen and I will attend.

### **State Issues**

#### **VOCA**

As previously announced, we received full funding for all three VOCA grants, which is absolutely awesome. With this funding, Jen is moving from half-time in Hunterdon to full-time, affording us with the opportunity to serve EVERY child in foster care in Hunterdon County. I have met with Judge Borkowski, who is moving to

the Criminal Division, about this. Judge Marino, who worked with us previously in Somerset, is moving to Hunterdon but was unable to attend the meeting. However, Judge Borkowski expressed her delight at the expansion, as has our liaison at DCPD. We will be the third county in the state, after Morris/Sussex, to have full coverage! We are currently recruiting in Hunterdon so we have enough advocates to make this a reality and have a meeting with Hunterdon local office staff in February to talk about referrals.

With Jen's move from Warren, we are actually downsizing from 1.5 to 1 (Beth only) there. I would like to get to 2 FTE with the help of Peer Coordinators. That's next on my "to-do" list. With Krista and Lynn, we are at 1.5 FTE in Somerset; I would like to see that get to 2 FTE as well.

One of the things that we will be discussing at our upcoming staff meeting is VOCA data collection. There is a lot of information that we must collect from our advocates like donated volunteer time as well as specific activities like phone calls, courtroom advocacy, facilitation of services, etc. which are all counted individually by VOCA as a required 25% "in-kind" contribution. While the grants total about \$190k, we contribute \$45k of that as an "in-kind" match. We should receive about \$153,000 in cash from them; it is a reimbursable grant.

The national VOCA administrators offered a data collection webinar, but we were unable to participate as the site kept crashing on our server. According to Jephens, we have a firewall that viewed it as an intrusion or spam and would not let us proceed. I checked with Rita, who said that other programs had the same issue, as well as the providers of the website, who said it will not be offered again. Rita is working on pulling together a data collection protocol for everyone who missed it.

#### State reporting

All of the state reporting documents for December's expense reports have been submitted, as has our Title IV-E report on new advocates from the fall training and our required demographic reports.

#### ED Meeting

Our next ED meeting is scheduled for February 10<sup>th</sup> in Shrewsbury. At our December meeting we discussed the state's National PR/Marketing grant application, a significant error by one of the programs on the National CASA Survey (it wasn't us!) that had to be corrected, next steps with the settlement agreement winding down, information about the Winter Forum, and some policy updates. Rita and I discussed best practice for audits to include timeframes for rotations, auditor credentialing requirements, and what to do when the auditor is not performing in an acceptable manner. There was also a robust discussion regarding staff benefits, holidays, vacation schedules, sick/personal time, etc. As an aside, the Winter Forum is scheduled for January 30<sup>th</sup>; all board members are welcome to attend.

As the head of the ED network this year, I also attend state level meetings with Rita and Liza. I attended one on January 5<sup>th</sup> with several DCF representatives, which was most productive. The meeting resulted in CASA of NJ staff being integrated into the training of new DCPD local office managers and administrators as well as a discussion about state-funded treatment bed availability for kids in care. CASA of NJ will also be developing an outreach video giving an overview of what CASA is and does statewide for dissemination at the local level.

#### PIP Outcomes

As previously noted, the employee handbook has been completed and is awaiting board approval. Once that has been accomplished, I will submit it to the state office in fulfillment of our PIP. Here is the list of items sent by the state as still outstanding absent the employee handbook. I do not know the status of the board's portion of these, so if they are completed and previously submitted, I apologize for their inclusion:

- Strategic Plan:
  - Use submitted PowerPoint file as a building block for the final Strategic Plan using Microsoft Word or equivalent. Strategic Plan needs to be more comprehensive and detailed, with specific goals, objectives, and activities/tasks/tactics designed to achieve the objectives and goals. Be

sure to draw meaningful and clear connections between detailed/specific goals, objectives, and activities/tasks/tactics, and the mission. It may be helpful to utilize the accompanying CASA of NJ Strategic Plan template.

- Incorporate Inclusiveness and Diversity Plan as part of the Strategic Plan.
- Add target dates for each goal/task.
- Include analysis of data leading up to the creation of the goals, etc. There must be specific research/reasons behind every goal, etc.
- Helpful hint – National CASA Association Standard 9. B.: Program Planning
  - The CASA/GAL program engages in ongoing and systematic planning to determine the scope of need for its services and how its services can most effectively be delivered.
  - During the planning process the CASA/GAL program seeks input from their governing body, staff, volunteers and local community, as appropriate to the program's structure.
  - The planning process includes:
    - Identifying advocacy needs of the child population served by the CASA/GAL program.
    - Developing long and short term measurable goals for 1) child outcomes, 2) volunteers and 3) resource development.
    - Determining objectives related to the goals.
    - Assessment and tracking progress.
    - Carrying out tasks with related timeframes and specified person responsible
    - Listing resources needed for achieving goals.
    - Assessing management's capacity to carry out the planning effort.
- Inclusiveness and Diversity Plan:
  - Add to Strategic Plan (see above).
  - Address socio-economic focus as discussed at site visit and noted on PIP.
- Addition to Board Recruitment and Screening Procedures outlining detailed and specific recruitment strategies.

### Bonding

It came up in an EC meeting that we are not bonded – never have been. Deb asked me to check with Rita on the question, and she advised that we should be bonded if only to make funders and the board feel better. I checked with several bonding companies, most of whom were not interested in talking to us – too small I guess! One company was willing to take an application, and as I was completing it I had a question and contacted our insurance company for the answer. Our agent advised that because we already have coverage against criminal activity so she did not think bonding was necessary. I've reached out to Rita, and she's checking with the pro bono partnership for further guidance.

### State raffle

We are again participating in the state-wide raffle. Tickets are \$10 each, and each board member is assigned one packed of 10. Your help in sharing them with your contacts is most appreciated.

### National Issues

We should know the status of our "Traveling Tutor" application for presentation at the National CASA Conference in June by the end of February. I have calendared attendance at the conference either way.

Our 6-months National reports have been submitted. Out of curiosity, I checked their arrearage lists – programs which have not submitted the required reports. To my surprise, we were on it! I followed up with National because we have always submitted our 6-months and annual reports in a timely manner. I spoke with the administrator of this, and he acknowledged that we had indeed submitted everything. I've asked him to get us off the "naughty" list. He will take care of it.

## **Public Relations and Marketing**

### **Social Media**

We have 474 Facebook followers as of this writing, up from 472 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 788 Twitter followers, up from 771 last count. Our Twitter address is [https://www.twitter.com/CASA\\_SHaW](https://www.twitter.com/CASA_SHaW).

### **Website**

We received an inquiry from a new web-hosting company that is working with National CASA. You may recall that our current company, EZ Site Launch, also came to us through National. Gayle has long been dissatisfied with some of the functionality of our current site – one example is the lack of a calendar – so I asked her to explore the options and see if this is anything we want to consider. Here are her findings:

### **Background:**

20 years ago IES built sites for schools and educators. Then about 7 or 8 years ago they started working with local non-profits. About 6 years ago started with National CASA in various states but so far not New Jersey.

### **Service offered:**

Their mention of 'mobile responsiveness' means that the site will integrate with any device so it is easy to use. I had them check our current site and explained how it interacts with tablets and phones and he determined that we are mobile responsive, but could work better with their integration.

- they offer hosting of the site which means keeping on a secure server.
- secure content management system which makes it easy to go into the website.
- we would still be responsible for the day to day management of the site, but they would always be available for assistance when needed.
- unlimited technical support including hands on training.
- 100% unlimited training through a web ex for multiple people. Training typically takes 1 hour. This training would continue until a comfort level is reached. Training needs would always be available and we could train as many as is needed.
- they would integrate our current site into their platform.
- would build the base and work with us to enhance the site for whatever new features we want and how we want it to look.
- we could include any of the features indicated above
- check out their calendar function at [mcpls.org](http://mcpls.org) it is really cool. Click the More Events. This opens the calendar. Click any of the events and see what opens. You get descriptions, maps, locations other information.

### **Pricing:**

Depends on features we may want:

- \$2,000 to \$6,000 one time upfront cost for a fully functional site
- \$59 monthly hosting fee
- \$3,000 to \$4,000 estimated range if we just wanted the calendar and the fillable forms features instead of the fully functional
- 20% discount on the upfront cost for new projects

### **Our current site:**

I checked the support section of our site. In the Help Center there are two site setups Mobile website builders and Responsive website builders. Our site is built on the responsive. Actually this is the first time I've looked at this information. Still does not have a calendar feature which is something I asked about when the site was first migrated.

I can attempt to contact EZ Site to get any information on site enhancements that I am not aware of, as well as any hands on training that may be available, including if there is a change in fee do to these additional requirements.

Tracey again – I checked out when I saw the pricing section. I leave any further consideration up to the board.

### Training

I took advantage of a training with Constant Contact to learn some tricks of the trade to developing more engaging, polished, and professional mass emails. I've developed a few emails using them – let me now if you notice a difference!

### Outreach

As previously noted, I appeared on a radio show with Dr. Felecia Nace in December to discuss the issues of academics and children in the foster care system. Since that time, our relationship with her has evolved. She also works with the Somerset Home for Temporarily Displaced Youth, a non-profit which provides shelter beds for children age 13-17 as well as transitional housing for youth 16-21. In her discussions with their executive director, Dr. David Walker, she shared our Traveling Tutor initiative, since his kids, too, are struggling with academic deficits.

I was invited to meet with the both of them as well as case manager Carlotta Spence at their headquarters in Bridgewater last week. In short, they are interested in partnering with us on the Traveling Tutor initiative. There is often overlap between our programs as we have young people in their homes, and they want to know if there is a possibility of us sending Tutors on-site to help strengthen more kids' academics. I told them that I would confer with you, the board, and that if it were something we could do, we would have to discuss joint grant applications and delineate who would do what – we could not carry the liability and the financial responsibility for funding the program alone. Any thoughts on this potential partnership? Upside: we serve more kids in need, strengthen the fabric of society by helping kids to be more self-sufficient, we make new connections, and we raise CASA's cache; Downside: increased funding needed, increased potential liability, and it siphons away from the kids we are already serving.

This is one of the groups which participated in the "Rockin' Raritan" day at J&J in 2014. Their senior case manager, Carlotta Spence, wanted me to check on the possibility of doing this again in 2016. She said her kids loved it and got a lot out of it. If anyone wants to take on a career day, let me know. One idea which I had was a hospital, which has lot of entry level positions in addition to college and post-graduate positions.

Janssen Pharmaceutical is putting together backpacks and school supplies for all of our kids next week. I have been invited to come and speak at their gathering in Princeton on the 26<sup>th</sup>. They will be showing the "I Am for the Child" video from National as well as passing out brochures and information packets for prospective volunteers.

### Community Partnerships

Our holiday partnership was very successful this year; we were able to provide gifts for a record 170 children – we had so much we were able to share with each of the local area DCPD offices. Our partners this year included the Somerset Library, Fulton Bank, New York Life, J&J Supply Chain, Financial Resources, Waterloo United Methodist Church, the Pear Family, the Mull Family, Falcon Engineering Group, and Actavis of Bridgewater. It was truly wonderful to see so much generosity, kindness, and care given to our kids! We had our annual "holiday pickup party" where volunteers came to visit with one another and get their gifts.

Norris McLaughlin donated \$410 as our portion of their holiday card purchase this year.

At the Somerset County Annual Meeting, I met a woman named Michelle Boronowski who is the head of vocational educational training at RVCC. I spoke with her about the possibility of referring older CASA youth

to her program. Since then, Dr. Nace, with whom I have been speaking about the Traveling Tutor program, has already contacted her to ask for a meeting for us and for the Somerset Home to see if a partnership can exist there. Dr. Nace recently retired from the state Department of Education and is confident that she can make these relationships work for the benefit of the children we serve.

## **Finance**

### **Audit**

The audit is complete and was previously distributed and approved by the board via email. The charitable registration filing for the state was completed before the December 31<sup>st</sup> deadline, and our auditor, Dave Williams, submitted the 990 electronically. We are up-to-date on all of our filings. As per our grant requirements, I've sent copies of the audit to DCF, CASA of NJ, and the CDBG office; I've asked Gayle to post them on the website as well. June's representative, Jacqui, did the tie-out with the adjusted journal entries from the auditor as well as the trial balance. Everything is now in line with the audit findings.

### **Traveling Tutors**

We have seven people signed up to be tutors, although only five are currently appointed. While we have children to be served, some are too far away for the tutors. Gillen and Johnson have prepared 1099s for them, the cost of which is coming out of the grant – there should be no net impact on the budget.

### **Hunterdon County grant**

As noted via email, we have been awarded \$17,500 in funding from Hunterdon County. Rather than turn it down, I conferred with Rita who gave me some creative verbiage to accept. We'll see if it gets kicked back or if it is too much trouble to return.

## **Fundraising Efforts**

### **Annual Appeal**

We've extended our annual appeal through January 18<sup>th</sup>, Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. Our stretch goal was \$28,500, which would allow us to serve 10% more children next year. At last count, we were up to \$27,000 in received and pledged donations, stock, and matching gifts. The stock which we received (30 shares of J&J and 14 shares of Northrup Grumman) have been sold, although the proceeds have not yet been received.

### **CASAblanca**

I have requested head shots from the two honorees, Tom Dilts and Rick St. Pierre of Verve. I have received Tom's and sent a second request to Rick. Gena, the CASAblanca chair, has set up regular Friday meetings to keep everyone on task. I think that will help to ensure that the preparations are organized and productive.

I have signed the contract for the Imperia and have sent them a deposit. We're set for 29 April. Ebony has been working on some really impressive save-the-date drafts. We'll send them out once they are finalized.

### **Dine Out for CASA**

The next Dine Out is scheduled for February 12<sup>th</sup> at the Olde Mill Inn in Basking Ridge. It's a nice opportunity to take your honey out for Valentine's Day while supporting CASA's good work. A save the date has been developed and is attached – please share with your network. Thank you!

## **One Child's Story**

You may recall that the state has asked us for a closed case story quarterly. Here is one that just closed that we have submitted:

Peter Childs (alias), age 2 at removal

Date of Removal: February 2013

Date of CASA appointment: Veronica was appointed in September 2013 and then the case was taken over by staff in December 2014.

Peter was removed due to concerns of domestic violence and substance abuse that led to a violent altercation between his parents. The case was opened for Care and Supervision in May 2011. Then in February 2013, an investigator from the law guardian's office visited the home and noted several safety concerns for Peter. Peter was then removed from the home. Peter was placed in four different resource homes within his first year in the Division's custody.

In February 2014, a permanency hearing was held during which the Division asked the court for a three month extension in the hopes that mom would be able to maintain her sobriety so that the goal could be reunification with his mother.

In May 2014, a permanency goal was put forth by the Division to transition Peter to the adoption unit, with the goal of TPR followed by adoption, due to mom's inconsistent substance abuse treatment and positive urine screens. The Law Guardian agreed. However, at this time, dad had maintained his sobriety for approximately one year, was engaged in substance abuse treatment, AA/NA, anger management and therapy, and was complying with all other recommendations. All reports from Catholic Charities regarding visitation between Peter and his father were positive in nature. Veronica asked the court to consider reunification with dad as a possible option. Only a couple of days later, the Division submitted a letter to the court asking to change Peter's permanency goal to reunification with his father. The Law Guardian did not agree with this plan.

Between May and December 2014, Veronica encouraged the father to comply with services and helped him to identify community resources and utilize these resources whenever possible. She helped him to take charge of Peter's care and keep track of the many necessary appointments for Peter's special needs, which included IEP meetings, neurological exams, and routine doctor appointments. Eventually dad was granted unsupervised visits, overnight visits, and then weekends. The Law Guardian contested every step, but dad remained committed to complying with all court-mandated services and providing the best care possible for his son. Finally in September 2014, Peter was reunified with his father.

The Division kept Peter's case open for another 10 months. In July 2015, litigation was officially terminated.

**Call-in number for meetings:**

712/775-7000; 290038#

**Next Meeting: Thursday, February 18, 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. and Dombal Vogel 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
VOCA	Case supervision and volunteer training	Tri-Counties	\$153,676	Approved. Reimbursable grant
Hunterdon County	Case Supervision	Hunterdon	\$17,500	Terms currently under negotiation
Tyler Foundation	General support	Somerset	\$5000	Approved, paid in full

**PENDING**

FUNDER	PURPOSE	COUNTY	AMOUNT	STATUS
J&J ICID application	Back to school initiative-school supplies and winter gear	20-25 children in the tri-counties	\$3500	Pending, submitted Nov 2015
Dombal Vogel	Connie Fund renewal	Tri-Counties	\$5000	Pending, submitted Jan 2016
Provident Bank Foundation	CASAblanca sponsorship	Tri-Counties	Gave them sponsorship options to review	Pending, submitted Jan 2016
Astle Alpaugh Foundation, LOI	Volunteer training	Tri-Counties	\$5000	Pending, submitted Jan 2016

**DECLINED**

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



CASA of Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren Counties



dine



out

FOR

CASA SHaW

February 12, 2016

5:00 PM - 10:00 PM

The Olde Mill Inn and Grain House Restaurant  
225 Route 202, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920  
(908) 221 - 1150

— Present this Flyer when you Dine —

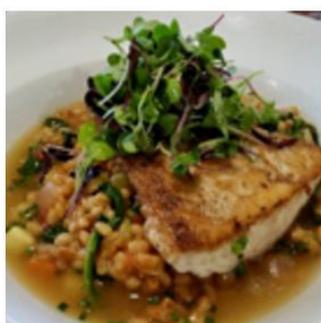


**ONE NIGHT. ONE CAUSE**

**THE MORE YOU EAT, THE MORE YOU DONATE!**

In effort to support children in foster care, Grain House Restaurant has graciously agreed to donate a portion of sales throughout the evening to CASA SHaW.

Check out the scrumptious Menu and invite friends and family to help CASA SHaW in its important work on behalf of abused and neglected children.



**I am for the child™**