

## **Executive Director's Report**

November 19, 2015

### **Governance and Operations**

#### **Program Issues**

##### **Volunteers**

All but one of the new volunteers has been sworn into service; the one who was not available for the swearing-in will participate in her court observation on 12/8. Cases have been identified for all of the new advocates, and the case supervisors are working diligently to open them so they are all appointed before the end of December.

##### **Staff**

There are no staff changes to report.

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

With all of the other competing activities, the balance of the peer coordinator grant pieces have not yet been completed. They are in the queue for next week.

##### **Staff Meeting**

There was no staff meeting in October – it was just too busy. November's staff meeting is scheduled for 11/20. December's staff meeting, which is also our holiday luncheon, is scheduled for December 18<sup>th</sup>. We've decided to try the Clinton House this time around.

##### **Adoption Day**

Beth and Pam have been very busy with Adoption Day, which is scheduled for 11/18 at the Somerville Courthouse at 1 pm. We have again been able to provide food for the event thanks to our partnership with Shop Rite in Flemington, books and stuffed animals courtesy of Kohl's, and balloons and tablecloths thanks to Pam Harrington. We have 17 children being adopted tomorrow, many of whom are CASA kids. In addition, the head of DCF, Allison Blake, is expected to attend the event. We're all very excited and happy to see these children find their "forever families."

##### **CASA Manager**

We were notified the other day that CASA Manager, the database which houses all of our program, volunteer, staff, and case information, has been sold. The new owner reportedly comes from Microsoft and apparently has a deep love for the work that CASA does. What this means for the program is not yet known; more information is forthcoming. We do know that rather than provide patches, the new owner plans to upgrade everyone to the newest version of the program. No timetable is yet available for this action.

##### **Volunteer Appreciation**

I was able to attend the Volunteer Recognition evening at the Olde Mill Inn in Basking Ridge to honor Bill and Lisa Weber for their service. They could not attend, but I had the opportunity to talk about what CASA is and does and to share with those in attendance the contributions made by the Webers and other advocates like them. Bill picked up their award from me at Comedy Night.

### **State Issues**

#### **VOCA**

VOCA grants were completed for each of the three counties for a full-time case supervisor and 1/3 time for a volunteer trainer. The latter person would be a new hire who would oversee all aspects of volunteer background checks, orientation sessions, interviews, training, etc. so that it would not fall on case supervisors or the ED to coordinate. We would still have to assist as best practice standards require two interviewers, two training facilitators, etc., but there would be one point person to oversee volunteer recruitment, training, retention, and record keeping.

### State reporting

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

### ED Meeting

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

### PIP Outcomes

Deb and I met with Haley, Rita, and Liza from the state office to review outstanding PIP items, which included the staff handbook (a draft was just received from the attorneys who volunteered to work on it for us; we will review), a receipt to show that we got locks for the filing cabinets (I thought it had been sent but will re-send), a more robust strategic plan, and added recruitment strategies for board members. We have until February to submit these items, but it would be my preference to submit them by 31 December and get them out of the way.

### National Issues

National CASA is updating its preservice training curriculum. At present, we have about 100 preservice manuals which will be obsolete by next summer. Several local programs have moved to a "flex" training model where part of it is in-class and part is on-line. The feedback has been that they like it but it does not save the time they thought it would – staff members still have to be available on the message boards. We've discussed this as staff, and at present we prefer the in-class setting as it gives us more opportunities to assess and screen potential advocates.

### Public Relations and Marketing

#### Social Media

We have 470 Facebook followers as of this writing, up from 463 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 760 Twitter followers, up from 733 last count. Our Twitter address is [https://www.twitter.com/CASA\\_SHaW](https://www.twitter.com/CASA_SHaW).

#### Outreach

The newest Comcast Newsmakers interview is up on the website and was disseminated via social media.

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. She is based in Hamilton, so I cleared appearing on her show with the ED of Mercer County, Lori Morris, who was okay with it so long as I mention their local program. The show will be taped sometime in December.

Hopefully you had a chance to see the really great and expansive article about CASA SHaW in the Courier News. It was on the front page of the 11/15 Sunday edition. Of everything I've ever posted on social media, this had by far the greatest number of hits – nearly 1800 in two days. The word about who we are and what we do is getting out there!

#### Community Partnerships

We have assigned out wish lists for 160 children, most of them appointed to CASA but several are foster children without a CASA – we had more partners than kids, which was great. Our "pick up" party is scheduled for 12/11 from 12-2 and 6-8, so if you would like to come to the Washington office to see the volunteers and the donated gifts, you are most welcome. We'll have snacks! Many thanks to our many partners who helped this year – NY Life, Somerset County Library, Fulton Bank, Financial Resources, The Mull Family (near partner), The Pear Family (new partner), Waterloo United Church (new partner), Actavis (new partner), The Falcon Group, and J&J Supply Chain. It's fantastic to see so many people engage with supporting these children.

On an even better note, the owner of The Falcon Group is also donating ten new bikes to any child we think would need one. It's really awesome!

I attended a training through the Somerset County Business Partnership on marketing for non-profits. Based on what I learned there, we have a really good foundation, but the next step to consider might be having a marketing professional (Maria Semple comes to mind) evaluate what we have and see what holes, if any, exist.

We also received a really interesting invitation from the Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce. We were once a member of the troubled Warren County Chamber of Commerce, which dissolved about two years ago. Rather than try to rebuild it, the business community decided to join the Lehigh Valley regional chapter; it is the 10<sup>th</sup> largest Chamber in the country. We were invited to come to a reception to learn about what they offer, which is very similar to the Somerset Chamber's offerings, but with a different demographic. We had some friends in the crowd, including representatives from Provident Bank and Hawk Pointe, both previous funders. The Chamber has offered us a year's free membership to see if we like it before we buy. Free is good! I plan to pursue membership on our behalf for 2016.

A representative from CASA of Texas will be in the Hackettstown area for Thanksgiving, and he would like to meet with me to talk about what we are doing here in New Jersey. He is also meeting with Liza at CASA of New Jersey to get a state-level perspective. He is scheduled to be in the office at 3 pm on 11/30.

## **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!

The Astle Alpaugh Foundation has accepted our letter of inquiry; we have been asked to submit a full application for funding by January 10<sup>th</sup>. It will be written for volunteer training.

As noted, the three VOCA grants have been written for a total of \$153,676 in funding; with our match the grant applications total \$192,085. Our match consists of volunteer hours, valued at \$25.68/hour, according to the Independent Sector. I hand delivered all three and got receipts for them.

### **On-line Funding Opportunities**

We received a request from the JK Group to set up an on-line matching grant site for businesses – someone tried to do a match for us but could not because we were not on their list. We are now registered.

We also received a request from Donate Well, an on-line fundraising portal where people who are looking for charities to donate to can search their database, to register with them. We've done that too.

### **Audit**

We've had a hard time connecting with the auditor, so I ended up taking our materials to his office for him to conduct the audit. He has produced a draft copy, which Joe and I reviewed. I have a call/email in to him to discuss our edits. In addition, we still have not received his peer review letter, which we will also address. We have learned that absent this letter, there is a possibility that the audit itself could be rejected by DCPD and CASA of NJ, which would mean that we pay for a second audit.

One area of concern in the auditor's draft was the discrepancy between what we projected as our net gain and what the auditor reported. Upon inquiry, an accounting error was found; the day after CASAblanca, I entered the balance of our PayPal account (about \$8500) into QuickBooks to transfer to checking but did not complete the transfer – I must have become distracted and forgotten about it. The transfer was completed in May, but the April deposit remained open, giving the impression that we had \$8500 more than we actually did. Joe and I are

working with June to remedy the issue and to enhance our internal protocols so the situation is not repeated. It should have been caught during bank reconciliations as well, but it was so close to the end of the fiscal year that it was not. I apologize for the inconvenience and any distress that this error has caused.

### Eleo

Joel Dorfman and I both attended independent training sessions with Eleo so we have a better handle on its functionality and capacity. Joe has volunteered to continue to enter our deposits for us, which will free up some time for me.

### Fundraising Efforts

#### Comedy Night

Comedy Night was a resounding success, with a net gain of nearly \$23,000, most of which came from Hero sponsorships and one large donor the night of the event. To me, this speaks to the need to cultivate and retain sponsors if we choose to continue to hold events. They are the key to making the cost to benefit ratio tip in favor of the work it takes to produce them.

#### Annual Appeal

Our annual appeal is scheduled to go out next week; we usually send it out the Monday before Thanksgiving.

### A Traveling Tutor's Report

Lynn,

I have met with Amy & Adeline 2 times so far. Both times I met with Amy, I needed to wake her from her nap. She is a young, adorable, on-track 4 year old who in my opinion doesn't need tutoring at this time. She is at daycare all day and it's a long day for her. I don't see any benefit to her at this time. I have not been able to reach her foster mom by phone to tell her this but I shared with the director of the preschool, and she agreed with my assessment.

Adeline definitely needs assistance in reading and math facts. As I shared today with her caseworker, I almost feel as if she is losing some ground in reading compared to where she was at the end of the school year last fall. At our next session, she and I are going to create math flash cards, work with a 100's chart to strengthen her math skills & emphasize number correlation & READ. She has weak decoding skills despite spending daily time on decoding workbooks- she can decode a word on its own but does not seem to recognize it or transfer it to written text.

If I can recommend anything....be sure she is reading aloud to someone every day! Adeline should not be left to read independently because she simply does not know enough of the words she is reading. She gets distracted when we read aloud together because I think she is embarrassed that she can't read well or possibly attention deficit? Hard to tell when I work with her after she's been in school all day. Do you know if she is in reading improvement? She says she sees a reading teacher? Not sure. But the decoding books alone she is doing is not enough (in my opinion).

Ok I know that's a lot of "stuff" but wanted to share. You are welcome to call me if you have any questions. By the way...what a lovely young lady! I really want to help her from falling farther behind in reading.

Patty

### Call-in number for meetings:

712/775-7000; 290038#

**Next Meeting: Thursday, December 10, 2015, PCC, 120 FINDERNE AVENUE, BRIDGEWATER**

**\*\*Following the board meeting, we will travel to Verve in Somerville for a holiday repast.**

**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