

Executive Director's Report

October 15, 2015

Governance and Operations

Program Issues

Volunteers

Our fall training class has 15 advocates, all of whom seem very good and engaged in the training. We haven't lost any yet! Training is scheduled to end on 10/22; we have not yet solidified a court observation/swearing-in date yet.

Two of the new trainees have expressed some interest in becoming a peer coordinator, but both also wanted to work a case first. Once we get through VOCA and Comedy Night, I plan to focus on PC recruitment outside of CASA advocates.

Staff

There are no staff changes to report.

Peer Coordinator Update

The final report of the Peer Coordinator planning grant has been submitted. The implementation phase has yet to be written but is in the queue to be completed.

Staff Meeting

We had a full agenda for our September staff meeting, including the parameters and goals associated with the PC expansion grant, review of potential PCs, a discussion of advocate issues (most of which have been resolved), and a discussion about the Traveling Tutor program. The funder wants us to serve 10 children in Warren and Hunterdon Counties by 31 December. The case supervisors are currently surveying volunteers now that kids are back in school to try to identify children in need; I have been recruiting new tutors from among our existing volunteer pool.

Part of the new requirements for this year's CASA of NJ affiliation agreement is that they want a closed case story where we've made a difference at the end of every quarter. Beth is providing this quarter's story. Closed case story where we've made a difference at the end of every quarter to be submitted with NJ Legislative financial reports. We've also received a new termination order and a memo from the state office on how subpoenas are to be handled.

Other issues from the state level – we were provided with highlights of DCPD's gains and deficits from the federal lawsuit's progress report as well as updated federal race and ethnicity definitions. Also, new National standards state that advocates who have lived out of state within the last seven years need to have child abuse record checks from those states' child welfare agency. Pam is following up on that for the four new advocates who fit that criteria. We also had a discussion about the state's prohibition regarding care and supervision cases – cases where child abuse has been substantiated but has not risen to the level of removing the child from the home. We don't take those cases per AOC standards, but there is some discussion from the AOC about allowing us to since so many judges around the state are requesting it.

Our holiday wish lists are currently being solicited from advocates. One long-time partner, Hackettstown Regional Medical Center, cannot participate this year due to staff cuts.

We also discussed the proposed volunteer support group, which did not get off the ground as planned in October. That said, there is advocate interest in this, so we'll follow up with Julia and Lisa, the two volunteers who are coordinating it. One of the ideas that we discussed for volunteer retention is a closed case honor role in the newsletter and on Facebook honoring those advocates who have successfully completed cases.

There were several trainings scheduled, including the Pro Bono Business Partnership Legal Clinic, which I attended – I sent the outcomes to the EC committee. I missed the Strategy and Marketing for Nonprofits training as I was finishing the Hunterdon County grant application, and I could not find anyone to go to the Best Practices for Nonprofits training. I did attend the VOCA application training instead, which was quite useful. All staff is scheduled to attend the Peer Coordinator training being offered by CASA of NJ with a state trainer on October 22nd and 23rd.

CASA SHaW staff continues to participate in county meetings such as HSAC, CIACC, CCAMC, and YSCC.

We were able to take advantage of Warren County's community shredding day and destroy closed case files that were more than 2 years old, per AOC standards.

Equipment

We had a problem with the server not communicating with the printer. We could not resolve it on-site, so our IT guy, Jeff Knapp, came out to check on it. He found that we had a bad router, but while he was there he also found that we had a bad segment on our server. As it turns out, we have had no back ups for nearly a year, even though I had been replacing the cartridge every week or two. We had "angels on our shoulder," according to Jeff, and he was able to order and replace the part without issue. It will be about \$250, still within our equipment budget.

State Issues

VOCA

CASA of NJ met with VOCA staff to discuss a state application for all local programs. VOCA was not opposed to this but agreed that there was no time this year to coordinate. It will be considered for next year's application. The Feds have provided 3x the amount of funding over last year's allocation, so there is no reason that all CASA programs should not be funded unless their grant applications have significant deficits.

Most of the EDs around the state also attended the VOCA application training, and we decided to coordinate our applications in a few ways – CASA of NJ will create the Goals, Objectives, and Activities so that we are all offering exacting the same service. Only the timelines will be different to accommodate each program's training and hiring schedule. I proposed and will finalize plans at the ED's network meeting for a peer review process for us to read over one another's applications to ensure readability, comprehension, and flow. I also developed a timeline so we all stay on track. I'll have more information after the EDs meeting on 10/14/15.

State reporting

All of the state reporting documents for the new affiliation agreement were submitted on time with the exception of the new auditor's quality review letter, which has been requested repeatedly but not yet received. October's expense reports and Title IV-E reports have been submitted.

DCPP

I attended the meeting with DCPP with Rita and Liza. In short, DCPP wanted to direct the funding stream which we received from the legislature. Specifically, they wanted to focus on expansion of the Family Search and Connect model, which is not what the monies were earmarked for – it was supposed to be for sustainability of child advocacy. We discussed the fact that not all programs were offering this service and that not every program wished to. We also discussed the gains made in the expansion of services last year and the need to maintain those gains. At the end of the day, DCPP backed down from this idea and agreed to the plan for the monies to be used for sustainability. It was cordial and respectful throughout.

PIP Outcomes

I provided the state office with the PIP outcomes which I had; there are a few items still outstanding. They really liked our volunteer email policy and asked if they could use it as an example for the rest of the state. The EC and I are working on the last few items and will submit them as soon as they are completed.

National Issues

There are no national issues to discuss.

Public Relations and Marketing

Social Media

We have 463 Facebook followers as of this writing, up from 457 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 733 Twitter followers, up from 715 last count. Our Twitter address is https://www.twitter.com/CASA_SHaW.

Outreach

I am scheduled to do a Comcast Newsmakers interview on 10/20.

Community Partnerships

I was invited to attend a Janssen “Picnic in the Parking Lot” as one of their community partners. I set up a table and was able to talk about CASA to employees and to share information and giveaways.

Olivia Hunter, a CASA supporter at J&J’s Supply Chain, has submitted an internal grant application for winter coats, backpacks, and school supplies to benefit CASA kids. I reviewed the application prior to submission. It was very kind of her to think of other ways to support the needs of the children we serve.

One of our CASA volunteers, Shannon McKiniry, has a daughter named Charlotte who is a Girl Scout. Charlotte got 30 new and gently used costumes donated for our kids to use – they are at the office waiting to be picked up and taken home.

Here is a copy of the email which I sent to the EC committee regarding the Pro Bono Partnership event:

I attended Verizon’s “Clinic in a Box” regarding the Traveling Tutor initiative. As it happens, they do a 360 review of the organization, from soup to nuts. Overall, we received high marks for the sophistication of our program’s policies – we’ve covered a lot of the bases. Here are some takeaways:

Traveling Tutor

- 1) Consider revising our mission statement to reflect the traveling tutor component.
- 2) Check to see if we need a license in the state of NJ to facilitate the service – the licensure would not be for the tutors but for us as a referral service that matches kids with tutors.
 - a. If licensure is needed, amend the by-laws to include the initiative and file it with the state.
 - b. Report any changes to the IRS via the 990 and to the NJ Charitable Registration Office via the CRI-3000.
- 3) Make sure we assess the distinction between contractors and employees for the tutors. Since we are only matching them with kids and not directing the scope of work, they think it’s okay but recommend double checking. They recommend asking DLA Piper, which is the law firm that is currently creating our employee handbooks.

Program Issues

- 1) Raise the issue of Marie as a board member and the PCC executive director (landlord) with the board as a whole to vet any conflict of interest.
- 2) Ensure that we add to volunteer, board, and staff agreements a policy that states that any writing, photos, contributions, etc. become the property of the organization. This will ensure that court reports, event materials, policies, etc. remain with us even if someone leaves or becomes disgruntled, recommended checking with DLA Piper

Branding

- 1) Trademark the name CASA SHaW at the state level, recommended checking with DLA Piper;
- 2) Do not publish annual reports with donors' names without their written consent or at least notification with an opt-out option – it's a privacy issue;
- 3) Develop a policy regarding the declination of gifts, i.e. the porn industry gives us a cash donation, recommended checking with DLA Piper
- 4) They recommend posting our 990s to the website in order to be more transparent.

Community Colleges

Gayle and I had a CASA table at Warren County Community College and spoke with a handful of students about what CASA is and does. We were also invited to attend an outreach event with Youth Leadership on 10/13, but did not have the resources to attend. I passed the opportunity along to the network, and Middlesex County CASA was able to go.

Shoe Drive

We gathered 2,500 pairs of shoes, raising \$1100, of which we had to pay \$250 for shipping since we fell short of the 5,000 pairs needed to waive that fee. We net \$850 and gained a lot of good press and good will. It was worth doing.

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. Thank you!

I completed the Hunterdon County grant application and submitted it by the due date. It was big!

Audit

Our wonderful volunteer, Gayatri Amaratunga, came by to help us prepare for the audit. Everything is in place. The audit was scheduled for 9/28 and 9/29. However, the auditor did not arrive until mid-day on the 28th and was unable to come on the 29th. He rescheduled for a half day on 10/6, which he made, and for 10/7, which he did not. I spoke with him recently, and he asked for a copy of our QuickBooks via email, which was too large to send. His admin is trying to figure out how to get him a copy of it.

Eleo

One of our Somerset volunteers, Joel Dorfman, has been very kind as to learn about Eleo and to re-enter all of our FY 13/14 and 14/15 deposits as the bug in Exceed did not record them when I entered them. Joel is in contact with Eleo and is setting up a training for both of us. I have hopes that it will also be a great resource in helping us to manage not only donor relationships but also community partnerships.

Fundraising Efforts

Dine Out for CASA

The 3-day Dine Out at Stoney Brook Grille brought us a donation of \$450 from the owner, Simos. If you go, please thank him for his generosity – he's willing to do it again next year and to set up a bin for Christmas gifts. Many thanks to Gayle for facilitating this relationship.

Comic Fusion

The Superhero Weekend event was a great success, raising \$4300 for CASA. I phoned the raffle winners, and one of the ladies with whom I spoke had read "Three Little Words" and made a \$50 donation on-line after our chat. Another is a children's author who is donating books for the holidays. You never know what talking about CASA's child advocacy mission can bring to us!

5k Run

Though small, the 5k run turned out well. We had 55 runners/walkers, the day was lovely, the course was well marked thanks to Mariann's friend, Joe, we had lots of volunteers, and it went swimmingly. We net \$3977 from this event after expenses. Many thanks to all those who supported this event, including the Tewksbury Girl Scouts who volunteered to help, my friends from church, and the many board members who came out to take pictures, help with the event, and to participate. Everything went off without a hitch.

Devils

No word yet on how many attended the Devil's game – I have not received feedback from any of the other programs as of yet.

Comedy Night

Comedy Night is coming up next – bring your friends! A friend of mine from church mentioned that she and her husband are attending – he works for J&J and heard about it from friends there. He did not realize that it was to benefit CASA when he heard about it initially and made the connection while at the 5k!

One Advocate's Story

Kim Bahnsen volunteered with CASA because of her love for children and her desire to help bridge the gaps in the lives of foster children. Kim was assigned her first CASA case in January of 2010, a situation where abuse and neglect forced these three children's removal from the home. At the time of Kim's appointment, the siblings had already been moved to their second home and separated. One of the three children suffered with some mental health issues and was placed in a residential treatment facility after two placements and a stay in a Psychiatric Hospital. To date, the two younger siblings have been moved six times each and have only been placed together most recently. All three children suffered immensely with issues including bedwetting, fighting, sexualized behaviors, outbursts, etc.

Kim has been the only constant for the children through this experience as they have had multiple caseworkers, therapists, and caregivers. Throughout her time with them she has been able to advocate for extracurricular activities, mentors, and sibling visitation, helping the children to have some normalcy in their lives. Kim was also able to establish a trusting relationship with the children's mother, encouraging her to be independent and strive for her goals to reunite with her children. The children's mother has since left an abusive and controlling relationship, obtained and maintained employment, and established housing for herself. She has begun to remediate the problems that caused the children's removal in the first place. Having a CASA has made a difference in the quality of life for these children and their family as a whole.

Call-in number for meetings:

712/775-7000; 290038#

Next Meeting: Thursday, November 19, 2015, 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	Pending
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

DECLINED

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