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Ginny Moore

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The Advocate

The Newsletter of CASA—Jefferson & Gilpin Counties

SPRING 2009

2009

A Letter from the Executive Director and Board Chair

Greetings from CASA Jeffco/Gilpin! A new year brings renewed commitment on the part of the CASA board, our veteran volunteers and staff to the important work we do everyday for kids. It also provides an opportunity for new people to get involved. I am proud to announce that we are currently training 36 new volunteers! It is a time for us to reflect on our accomplishments in the previous year and to face the realities of the challenges we must overcome in the coming year.

We have included our 2007-2008 Annual Report for your review. In addition to this report, we'd like to provide some program highlights. CASA Jeffco/Gilpin began serving children eight years ago. That first year, we trained 23 volunteers who were assigned to 52 children. As of March 2009, we will have over 160 volunteers on our roster. Since the program began, our volunteers have

provided advocacy to over 700 children. Over the past eight years we have found that our extraordinary volunteers stay with our program an average of 2 1/2 years and that more than half of them are employed full time.

We are making great progress toward increasing the numbers of children for whom we are able to provide services. However, there is still much work to do. In 2008, Jefferson and Gilpin Counties ranked fourth in the number of abuse and neglect filings in the State. We are bracing for increased filings in 2009 due to the current economic crisis, knowing that families who are already experiencing tough times are pushed to the brink by the loss of a job or housing. Children are most vulnerable when their parents are in crisis. There is a sense of urgency as we try to recruit and train as many new volunteers as possible

this year.

We understand that this is a difficult time for everyone and especially now, we want to recognize the generosity of our many supporters. You will help us weather the storm. Through your willingness to get involved as a volunteer, to your commitment to supporting CASA financially, to your ability to make the public more aware of the crisis our children are in, you help us face the future with hope. We will continue to be resourceful and creative in the use of resources. Together, we will continue to do the work that makes us all proud to be affiliated with CASA Jeffco/Gilpin.

Leah Varnell

Jan Podoll

Save the Date:

Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month, April
National Volunteer Appreciation Week April 19-25, 2009
National CASA 28th Annual Conference, April 25-28, 2009, Denver
Volunteer Training June 8-26, 2009 (The next one will be in September)

**AMERISTAR
CARES**

A special thanks to Ameristar Casino Black Hawk for including CASA Jeffco/Gilpin in their Ameristar Cares Workplace Giving Campaign for 2009. Team members pledged to donate \$10,677, and with a match by Ameristar, the total amount contributed to our program will be \$16,320. We are so grateful for our partnership with Ameristar!



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Doris Waters Appreciates What CASAs Bring to the Table

As a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL), Doris Waters, a local attorney and resident of Jefferson County, finds the objective opinion and extra set of eyes that CASAs bring to the table invaluable.

Doris explained that CASAs help her with her cases, many times going far beyond expectations or requirements.

"Each party involved in an abuse or neglect case has considerations and concerns specific to their role, but the CASA's only concern is for the child, making them a completely objective advocate for the child," Doris explained.

"Because they really get to know the kids and what they are all about, they are able to determine their needs and really make a difference in their lives," Doris explained.

Doris described one case in particular where a female CASA has become a mentor of sorts to a little girl with a deceased mother. As the only consistent female in her life, her CASA

meets with her once a week after school and takes her to activities. And more importantly sometimes, her CASA makes time to just be together.

This little girl's CASA continuously advocated for her need for a therapist which was taking longer than expected due to



system circumstances. Doris explained that the judge in the case really listened to the CASA's findings and entered the orders to make therapy happen very soon after.

Another one of Doris' examples of how CASAs can make a difference was in a re-

cent legal-risk newborn adoption. The CASA assigned to the case was a very reassuring presence throughout the process for the couple hoping to adopt.

"I saw firsthand how compassionate CASAs can be, as well as the impact they can have. In the end, the couple even made sure to note how much of a difference their CASA's presence made for them throughout the arduous process – having someone genuinely helpful and concerned," Doris explained.

"I have tremendous respect for CASAs and what they do. I have confidence in their ability to provide solid information that I can rely on. It is also a real benefit that the CASA office is in the courthouse and available for the many different court hearings."

"I would love to see CASA of Jefferson and Gilpin Counties continue to grow to be able to serve all of the kids in our county system who need an advocate," Doris concluded.

2008 Giving Tree

Each year the County Commissioner's Office graciously invites us to put the names of our CASA children on the Holiday Giving Tree. This wonderful opportunity provides us a way to give gifts to the children we work with during the holiday season. Over time, this yearly tradition has grown to include many organizations and individuals who have stepped up and adopted our CASA kids as well. This overwhelming act of generosity by the community

has afforded CASA the privilege to open the giving up to include children served by other professionals in the system.

During the holiday season, our office was buzzing as

our volunteers gathered information from parents, foster parents and other caregivers for specific gift requests for each individual CASA child. As the gifts poured in, our volunteers picked them up and delivered each one. With help from

our donors and volunteers we were able to make the holidays a little brighter for children who might not otherwise have received anything. With your help we were able to distribute gifts to more than 200 children in the 2008 holiday season. Thank you!



Paul Bleau—Primetime

Paul Bleau was sworn into the CASA of Jefferson and Gilpin Counties program on April, 24th, 2006 and has been a valuable asset to the program, the children served and to the community at large. Paul is a retired school teacher who witnessed first hand the devastating affects of child abuse. Paul says he became an advocate for children who are neglected and/or abused because he has a de-



sire to help kids. By joining CASA he has been able to make a positive difference in their lives.

For Paul, the benefit of being a CASA volunteer is to see the child grow and mature during the time he is involved in the case. Paul has the ability to help children relax, become self-confident and maybe most importantly feel better about themselves. Paul is currently working on his second case which has been open for about a year. By being a positive influence in the lives of these children, Paul helps them overcome obstacles that might seem impossible to them without his help.

As a CASA volunteer, Paul has shown the utmost integrity and honesty as he advocates for children's best interests. He spends countless hours talking with teachers, doctors, thera-

pists, law enforcement personnel, family members, friends, neighbors, case workers, and attorneys. He makes sure the judge has all the information possible to make the difficult decisions for the eventual placement of children in safe, permanent homes. He is truly a model volunteer for our organization.

The biggest lesson Paul has learned while being a CASA volunteer is that one person really can make a difference. Paul encourages anyone interested in helping children to consider becoming a CASA volunteer. Previous experience is not necessary, just compassion for children and the desire to make a difference in our community.

Welcome New Staff!

Please welcome volunteer coordinator, Lisa Patterson. Before joining the CASA Jeffco/Gilpin staff, Lisa spent three years with the American Red Cross in Jacksonville, FL where she worked with volunteers, trained students and administered two Service Centers. Lisa was educated at CU and Regis and is a trained professional counselor. Previous to her move to Florida, Lisa lived along the

Front Range and Western Slope of Colorado for twenty years. Now she is located in Golden with her son and husband. Lisa says she's happy to be back in the mountains (no hurricanes or tornadoes) enjoying skiing, camping, and all the area has to offer.

Also joining the Team is Jill Gimbel, part-time office manager. Jill went through CASA volunteer training in the fall of 2008. "Working on the in-

side I have since learned how much passion and work goes into the entire organization", Jill says. Jill was born in Buffalo, NY and her family moved to Colorado when she was 10. She married her high school sweetheart and they have an eight year old son. They enjoy all that Colorado has to offer especially camping, fishing and hiking.

2008 Magical Mile Gala

The night was truly *magical* at CASA's 1st Annual Magical Mile Gala. The Wizard of Oz himself would have been enchanted by the charming performers from the Westwood Performing Arts Center and the ruby red slipper and lollipop centerpieces. Lively bidding at the silent auction started the evening and was followed by a sit down dinner and live auction. Auctioneer Paul Behr did an amazing job encouraging and energizing the crowd and we had spirited bidding on everything from a luxurious trip to Paris to an opportunity to be fighter pilot for a day to a catered dinner by award winning executive chef Chris Ipanis. The night was an all-around success leaving everyone present touched by our mission and moved to generously contribute. We raised **\$170,000** to help the abused and neglected children of Jefferson & Gilpin Counties!! The amazing support and generosity of our guests truly overwhelmed the Board, staff and volunteers of CASA

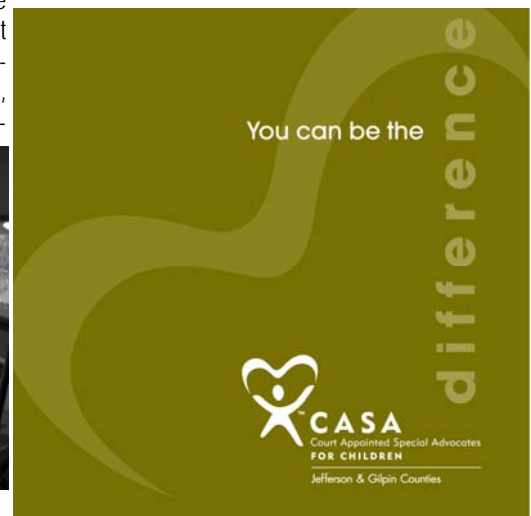
Jeffco/Gilpin.

We would like to extend a special thanks to those who helped to make this event such a success: **Lori Hirose with MSNBC**, our Master of Ceremonies, **Paul Behr Auctioneer** extraordinaire and the sponsors who graciously donated to the first annual Magical Mile Gala: American Geological Services, International Electric, Inc., Ameristar Casino, Berkshire Homes, Buck-

ingham Ventures, LLC, Hugh & Michelle Harvey, Events Unlimited, Schoolhouse Communications, Jacqueline Greer, Patricia Patoskie, Jan Podoll, Yanari Watson McGaughey PC, Micro Motion, and Shannon Marquist.



Photo courtesy of blacktie.com





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"CASA of Jefferson and Gilpin Counties mission is to provide trained volunteers to advocate in court for the safety and well-being of abused and neglected children."



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Please accept our sincerest apologies if we have forgotten to list your contribution.

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