

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CASA OF JEFFERSON AND GILPIN COUNTIES BRINGS FOSTER CARE ISSUES TO LIFE THROUGH THE FORGOTTEN CHILDREN CAMPAIGN

*Forgotten Children Campaign Recognizes the Growing Number
of Foster Children in Jefferson and Gilpin Counties in Need of a Voice*

Jefferson County, CO — Every year, more than 1,250 children remain a part of the Jefferson County foster care system, due to parental abuse and neglect. CASA of Jefferson and Gilpin Counties, is a local nonprofit organization that trains community volunteers to speak for the best interests of abused and neglected children in court. To raise awareness and support for these vulnerable children, life size cut-outs representing foster children will be placed throughout Jefferson County, including outside of the Jefferson County Court House. National sponsors of the Forgotten Children campaign are the Dr. Phil Foundation, the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation and Jewelers for Children. Their support of this event will help the national effort to bring communities together for foster children throughout the month of April, National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

The event features life size stand-up displays that bear actual messages from foster children, all gathered from a recent national study commissioned by the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association. In the words of one youth: “If you want the foster care system to get better, if you have compassion in your heart, don’t stop doing whatever you can to make it better — even if it’s just by providing an ear. Be someone we can talk to. *You* are the one that can create the change.”

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“Nothing touches your heart more than helping to change the life of a child from one filled with hurt to one full of hope,” said Ginny Moore, Program Manager, CASA of Jefferson and Gilpin Counties. “Let’s stand up for our foster children, so they can stand a chance for the future.” CASA encourages the community to support solutions for these children who desperately need a place to call home.

CASA of Jefferson and Gilpin Counties is a member of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association, a network of nearly 950 local community programs that recruit and train citizen volunteers to advocate for the rights of abused and neglected children. On average, foster children spend more than two years in the child welfare system, and can be moved as often as 15 times, negatively impacting their education, friendships and sense of belonging.

CASA volunteers help to alleviate the constant upheaval faced by foster children. Research shows that:

- Children with a CASA volunteer are substantially less likely to spend time in long-term foster care, defined as three years or longer.
- A child is less likely to move from home to home when a CASA volunteer is involved,
- A child with a CASA volunteer is 95 percent less likely to re-enter the foster care system.

The CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) program of Jefferson and Gilpin Counties trains, supports and supervises community volunteers who advocate for the best interest of innocent child victims of abuse and neglect. Each year, in Jefferson and Gilpin Counties there are over 1,000 children who have been physically, sexually or emotionally abused or neglected, and who are in desperate need of a caring, committed CASA volunteer to speak up for their best interests. In Jefferson and Gilpin Counties, there are over 175 CASA volunteers, and we are in need of more great community members to become advocates for children. CASA conducts volunteer training classes three times a year. The next class begins in June 2009. For more information on how you can become a CASA supporter or volunteer, please contact Melissa Hellmuth at (303) 271-6535 or visit www.casajeffcogilpin.com.

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About The Forgotten Children Campaign

The Forgotten Children campaign kicked off May 19, 2008, with a dramatic display of 4,250 life size cutouts of children placed in the shadow of The Washington Monument, representing each child who entered the foster care system in that week alone. The campaign will continue throughout 2009, helping to raise awareness on a local level for the need for support and volunteers with CASA programs across the nation.