



# CASA\* FOR KIDS

\* court appointed special advocate

The following is an excerpt from the book, "Someone There for Me. Everyday Heroes Through the Eyes of Teens in Foster Care", edited by National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association. This book is available at [shopcasa.org](http://shopcasa.org).

"It wasn't until Katie got a CASA volunteer that she realized people cared about what she has to say," says Jennifer Endicott with CASA for Children Inc. in Portland, Oregon. Through watching others advocate for her, Katie Rosenstein became unafraid to stand up for herself, participate in her court hearings, and be downright outspoken. She even pressed to address the crowd at a recent CASA fundraiser. "That's been a big change," says Jennifer. Before being removed from home, Katie was essentially caring for herself and her autistic brother, washing clothes in the bathtub and trying to keep the household together. Kerry Reynolds was a new CASA volunteer when she was assigned Katie's case. The two clicked, "I just love this girl," says Kerry. She describes Katie as mature and open to new experiences and says she has a great sense of humor and tremendous compassion for others. "Despite all she's been through, she's just a loving, caring person."

Kerry says Katie is now learning to live as part of a family for the first time and has gotten involved in dance classes and a soccer team, "She seems to excel at whatever she does."

The following essay was written by Katie. In it, the unnamed "Her" or "She" is Katie's birthmother.

## healing the heart

By Katie Rosenstein

I'm late again. I'll probably have to talk to a counselor again. It's not like talking with Mrs. Davidian would stop me from waiting up for Her. She is always late. When she is supposed to be home at nine, she is home at three A.M.

Even when Matt and I plead with her to come home on time, she just gallivants off to her other life leaving us without one.

When she is home, she's either smoking or sleeping. We tell her to quit or it'll rot her teeth, but she ignores our protests. She ignores everything, not even noticing that I have become the mother in the house in exchange for school.

It's not that I don't go to school; it's that I don't pay attention. I'm too tired from waiting up for her. Then I sleep in and am late for first period. I HATE MY LIFE!

I wish my friend Alina never moved away, then life wouldn't be as bad. I could always hide at her house when things went wrong. But she's in Oregon City now, an hour from Tigard, and She never drives me places.

Anyway, back to the present. The office lady said I could go to third period, Mrs. Schnell's reading class.



*We Advocate*

*For Abused*

*and Neglected*

*Children In Court*

f a c t

CASA For Kids has been in existence since January 2001.

Currently we have 37 active volunteers, who contribute an average of 83 hours annually. In 2003, CASA served 74 children.

Our program currently spends \$810/volunteer and \$405/child.

CASA For Kids is funded primarily by the United Way, the State of Montana, and private donations.

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## advisory council

Katherine Curtis, District Court Judge  
Penni Chisholm  
Kathleen Hayden  
Tabby Ivy  
Diane Kirk  
Connie Leistikio  
Bonnie Olson  
Randy Schwickert  
George Taylor  
Sherry Stevens Wulf  
Bugsy Yarbrough  
Peggy Drayer, Program Director

Newsletter:  
Jamie Campbell & Jordonna Dores  
Graphic Designer: Ilyse Sheppard

## casa judge of the year



CASA For Kids is fortunate to have all three of our District Court Justices—Curtis, Stadler, and Lympus—be supportive of the CASA program. Earlier this year, Judge Katherine “Kitty” Curtis was given the prestigious statewide award, CASA Judge of the Year, in recognition of her strong and continual support of our local CASA program. From the initial planning stages in 1998 to its actual inception in 2001, Judge Curtis has contributed to building a solid foundation for the Flathead Valley’s CASA for Kids Program. She vigorously supports the program and is a true example of the kind of leader it takes to make CASA flourish as an important adjunct to the court system.

## Continued from page 1

As I walk in the class, Mrs. Schnell and my homeroom teacher, Mr. Alvarez, motion me over to the desk.

“Kate, you need to do your speech next and then Mr. Alvarez says you have a visitor in the office,” says Mrs. Schnell. Mr. Alvarez nods, “Kate, Officer Eskew is here to talk to you,” he calmly states.

I nod numbly and walk over to the speech circle to give my speech. When I’m finished, Mr. Alvarez escorts me out of the room and into the office.

A few minutes later, Officer Eskew walks in and asks for me. I jump up, and he tells me we are going for a little ride.

As we walk out to his car, I notice Matt is in the back seat. My heart lurches into my throat as I think of what he might have done now. I close the door as I sit in the car. I can see Mrs. Davidian smiling and waving at me. What’s going on?

That night, our caseworker, Wendy, explained that the police got an anonymous call saying that we might be getting abused. The police came to our apartment to check it out and found Matt, 14, naked and laying in a pile of trash and rat poop. That was enough to send us to foster homes, Wendy explained.

“I’m not sure how long you will be in foster homes, but it won’t be for more than a year or so,” she finished. That made my day. Even though leaving my family was painful, I wanted a better life. As it ended up, I was put with a great foster mom, Sally.

In March of 2002, I was granted a CASA volunteer, Kerry, but I didn’t need her in court until I moved away from Sally. While I was with Sally, Kerry was just my best friend and confidante. When I told Her that I didn’t want to live with her anymore, Kerry was there to support me, and guide me to my goals. She was my shoulder to cry on.

In August 2002, I moved to another foster home. The Monroes were and are great advocates for their children, but, being foster parents, they are limited. Cindy Monroe, my mom, guided my caseworker and attorney to a permanency hearing, while Kerry guided me to my goals and gave me advice. She also guided mom through the process of permanency when my caseworker was “temporarily unavailable.”

Kerry was and still is my security. She is the one I go to when I am having problems. From the start of our relationship, she was the only one I felt comfortable telling everything. For some people, the changing situation was hard to deal with and they took it out on me. Then, I would vent to Kerry. She never minded it. She would just talk me through it and tell me how wonderful and amazing I am, giving me smiles and encouraging me to start my dreams and face the world.

She and Jen, her supervisor, arranged for me to speak at a CASA fundraiser, with my permission. We recorded my speech and they played it at the formal dinner. Here is a portion of it: “Seven out of 13 children, neglected and abused, get a CASA. But all 13 need a CASA. Kids like me, we need compliments and smiles to help us through the bad times. We need guidance and support. All 13 of us.”

I don’t know what I’d ever do without Kerry. I love her dearly, and I am very glad that she came into my life.

# thanks to our community!

## The CASA dinner at Café Max was a huge success!

Thanks to all 40 of you who attended this fundraising event in May. And a special thank you to Doug and Vonnie Day, owners of Café Max, for all of their hard work, use of their beautiful restaurant, and their fabulous cuisine. With your support we were able to raise over \$3,000. This money will be used to recruit, train and support volunteers to work as advocates on behalf of our communities' abused and neglected children.

## Help a Child Dream

CASA for Kids has recently received several beautiful new children's books from CASA Volunteer Sharon Miller and the Kalispell Soroptomists. Books can inspire us, educate us, and give us a respite from the cares of our present condition. The Soroptomists' effort has prompted us to start a new endeavor—providing books for abused and neglected children. You can become part of this vision by donating a new book, for toddlers to teens, to CASA for Kids.

## Windemere Realty Supports CASA For Kids

Though all CASAs are volunteers, it still costs an average of \$810 per volunteer to train, support and supervise volunteers. CASA For Kids is funded primarily by the United Way, the State of Montana, and private donations.

Pete Putzier, owner of Windemere Realty, and his real estate agents recently donated \$1,000 (a portion of their commissions) to CASA For Kids. CASA volunteer Suzanne Johnson is a loan officer who frequently works with Windemere Realty, and suggested CASA for Kids as a recipient of their charitable giving. "Children in foster care will directly benefit from this contribution" said Peggy Drayer, Program Director for CASA for Kids. "Its really great to see community members supporting the future of children." To find out how your organization can support CASA for Kids, please call 755-7208.

## active CASAs

Deborah Anderson	Joanne Knutson
Rex Boller	Connie Lasco
Katie Boyd	Lila Leuning
Kareen Bratt	Sharon Miller
Francis Breidenbach	Shari Roubinek
Cindy Brown	Linda Sauer
Kathy Burch	Cheryl Sausen
Jamie Campbell	Randall Snyder
Charlene Duncan	Beverly Tombarge
Karen Ellingson	Barbara Truckner
Joan Gates	Dolly Vallieres
Terry Hamik	Sharon Ward
Suzanne Johnson	Susan Williams

thanks for all that you do!



The 5th CASA Volunteer class graduated on May 18, 2004. From left to right, **back row:** George Brown, Alex Bokor, Dean Heck, Mike Kinne, Lorien Johnson; **middle row:** Charlie Manning, Melissa Meznarich, Theresa Magers, John Brakefield, Carol McElwain, Bonnie Altig; **front row:** Lee Manning, Wendy Rhodes and Kathy Friedman. Charlie and Lee Manning are from the Polson program.



## Support CASA\* for Kids, A Child's Voice in Court

### SPONSORSHIP:

**Philanthropist** - Support a child - \$810\* and up

\*CASA for Kids spends \$810 per year, per each match of volunteer and abused/neglected child

**Benefactor, \$500**

**Patron, \$100**

**Mentor \$50**

**Supporter, \$25**

Enclosed is a check payable to **CASA\* for Kids** in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### VOLUNTEER:

**Yes, I am interested in learning more about becoming a CASA Volunteer (Information will be mailed to you.)**

**You may use my name as a supporter of CASA\* for Kids**

### OTHER:

**Use your imagination and let us know what you can do**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Please do not publish my name as a financial supporter of CASA\* for Kids**

All contributions are tax deductible. Mail to: CASA\* for Kids, PO Box 271, Kalispell MT 59903

## fall casa volunteer training fast approaching!

Last year more than 83 children in Flathead County had their fate decided in court, even though they had not done anything wrong. They were in court because alleged abuse or neglect made it unsafe for them to stay in their homes. Each one of these children is deserving of their own Court Appointed Special Advocate, or CASA, who becomes an advocate for the child's best interests. The CASA researches the child's circumstances, gets to know their wishes and needs, and presents these findings in a report to the court. The judge is then able to make a better-informed decision regarding that child's future.

CASA For Kids is currently seeking community members to be CASAs for children in Flathead County. This requires 30 hours of initial training, working on the child's case for its duration, and complying with the regulations of the CASA program. A qualified volunteer will have excellent written and oral communication skills, the willingness to work with a team, and most importantly, a heart for children.

The next training begins October 12. To be considered as a CASA volunteer, completed applications must be submitted by September 10. This allows sufficient time for an interview, reference checks and background screening. To request an information and application packet, please call 755-7208.



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Court Appointed Special Advocates