

“Current Trends in Volunteering with an Impact on CASA Programs”

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President, Energize Inc.

Everything in the world changes, and volunteering is no exception to that rule. As economic, social and cultural trends evolve at dizzying speed, organizations able to adapt will attract and retain paid staff and volunteers through both good times and bad. The CASA network has an enviable track record of quality volunteer involvement, but is it keeping up with today's issues? Let's examine a few of the challenges faced by volunteer efforts everywhere, consider questions these obstacles raise for CASA programs in particular and brainstorm how to deal with their impact on current and potential CASA volunteers.

To learn how programs in the CASA network are dealing with some of these trends, see this issue's "Program Spotlight." Sidebars that work hand in hand with this article are a list of resources on volunteer trends, a summary of National CASA's technical assistance bulletin on using non-advocate volunteers and brief profiles of two non-advocate volunteers. Also see the update on National CASA's "flex training" initiative now in development, which will provide web-based training of new advocates to reduce the number of required "live" training hours.

The Economy

Whenever the economy is bad, the mass media and politicians rediscover volunteers—for all the wrong reasons. They assume that volunteers are "free" labor ready and willing to make up for budget cuts. This uninformed and highly unrealistic belief materializes as rah-rah campaigns to "get people to volunteer," even though what is most needed is training and support for organizations to engage volunteers successfully.

How can a CASA volunteer recruitment campaign maximize this media attention while minimizing the wrong messages about volunteering? Consider these ideas:

Acknowledge the current attention to volunteering, but note that your program is not new to this subject—you've always been committed to the value of volunteers.

Confront the issue: "We are not seeking volunteers because we don't have money. For CASA programs, volunteers have always been our first choice for serving our children—whose needs were critical long before the economy tanked."

Unless you're engaging in fundraising at the moment, note that your CASA program is seeking time, not money.

Of course, the economy might also be affecting current CASA volunteers. Pay attention to whether some volunteers or their family members have lost their paying jobs, are having trouble making ends meet and so on. Is it time to offer reimbursement for expenses? Or to start a barter exchange of goods and services among volunteers so they can help each other out?

"I Don't Have Time"

There is good evidence, however, that the biggest obstacle to volunteering is not a lack of money but rather a lack of time. People are working longer hours, find themselves continuously on-call through email and smart phones and are so overscheduled that the family calendar is a complex jigsaw puzzle of pieces to fit into place. We all long for quiet time. So it is understandable that potential recruits are often unwilling to commit to long-term, ongoing volunteering and that veteran volunteers sometimes drop out to regain some sense of control over their lives.

In response to time pressure, we've seen a proliferation of single "days of service," such as Make a Difference Day, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service and even September 11 as the official National Day of Service and Remembrance. Ironically, there are now so many days of service that someone could engage in one almost every week of the year—so much for limited time!

A more extreme trend has evolved over the past year as even shorter bursts of volunteer activity have been organized under the name "micro-volunteering." Micro-volunteering is service that can be performed in only a few minutes at a time, very often by cell phone or smart phone.

The trend toward volunteering in small chunks of time can be baffling to CASA programs, whose work is definitely not quick or short-term. How can the network achieve its critical child advocacy mission while accommodating the time pressure volunteers feel? Consider these ideas:

First, don't apologize for the time commitment needed and don't minimize it! Just as the Marines seek only "a few good" recruits, CASA programs want volunteers who are looking for a serious challenge and who see the commitment as a badge of honor. You're the antidote.



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN
Central Kansas CASA, Inc.
Serving Barton, Ellsworth, Rice, Russell & Stafford Counties

CASA COMMUNICATIONS

A Publication of Central Kansas CASA, Inc.

Serving Abused and Neglected Children of Barton, Ellsworth,
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January-June 2011

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Director's Diary

I'm back! As you may have noticed, there wasn't a newsletter in the first quarter. We have had a busy 6 months, and I know you're waiting with bated breath to hear about all of it.

JANUARY Along with the lovely ladies of the Chocolate Auction Committee, I spent most of January finalizing details for our 6th Annual CASA Chocolate Auction, which was a huge success! (More details inside...) I also spoke to the Ellinwood Rotary Club and the Great Bend Noon Optimists.

FEBRUARY *My Birthday, The CASA Chocolate Auction, and BAD WEATHER.* I think that covers it.

MARCH Auction recovery period. We had a productive post-auction meeting and have come up with more ideas for next year, so keep your calendar clear for Saturday, February 4, 2012! Also, Spring Break for school kids, and I spoke to the Great Bend Pilot Club.

APRIL I led my first meeting of the Kansas CASA Program Council as Co-Chair with Kristin Hines from the Dodge City CASA program. Spring 2011 CASA Volunteer Training got underway. On top of all of those commitments, I submitted our annual United Way application and helped the United Way director make presentations to local 5th Graders. I attended the first session of a new Child in Need of Care (CINC, the type of court case we help with) Curriculum with staff from SRS and St. Francis. We also hosted a Bikers Against Child Abuse Awareness Ride with around 60 motorcyclists participating! (See inside for more information...)

MAY Volunteer training continued. Also, the hubby and I took a "second honeymoon" to Las Vegas and had a blast! May also brought the end of the school year for kids in town. Summer is here!!

JUNE We had another KCPC meeting in June, and I also welcomed our summer intern, Kyla Reinhardt from Russell. (You can read all about her inside...) I am attending the 2nd training session of the CINC Curriculum training. Our annual CASA Director's Training in Wichita is also in June, where I will have two night in a hotel room with NO CHILDREN interrupting me and the bed all to myself. Ahhh...

That wraps up my run-down of the first half of 2011. It's been a productive year so far, and I'm looking forward to the rest of it!

As always,

Aidan Loveland Koster, Executive Director



Find ways to “job share” among volunteers when it makes sense (it may mean getting permission from the court first). For example, consider partnering two or more advocates so that they can be available to stand in for each other occasionally with the other’s assigned child. Or do what many programs now do, which is assign a husband-and-wife team to serve on a single case.

Recruit new volunteers not to become advocates but instead to become an advocate support team, taking some of the load off the advocate for tasks that are time consuming and not face to face with a child, such as scheduling appointments.

Keep brainstorming, and do not stop yourself because an idea seems like a radical change. Find ways to address the time it takes to be a CASA volunteer and to give advocates an occasional break.

Internet Technology and Social Media

Social media refers to communication tools available to everyone that facilitate sharing and exchange of information and ideas with anyone interested. These tools have transformed the internet from a place that allows some people to disseminate information and others to find information—pretty powerful in itself—to an even greater platform for interaction and exchange. Social networking is the use of social media tools to interact with people you know and then the people they know—and on and on. What’s most remarkable about all this is that almost everything is free. Since volunteer-involving organizations rarely have a lot of money to invest in technology, having such great tools at no cost is pretty amazing.

Last year, Everyone Ready offered an online seminar called “Social Networking and Volunteer Involvement” (it is still available to CASA staff in the archive accessible from your Everyone Ready main page described at CASAforChildren.org/Trends). Trainer Michael Gilbert used the analogy of a forest fire:

We want our volunteering message to catch fire, we want it to spread beyond our control, but somehow we want to control it at the same time. A forest fire doesn’t spread based upon how big a match you toss into it; it spreads based upon how interconnected the trees are. And that’s the paradigm shift: we have to pay more attention to the relationship between potential and active volunteers than to our relationship to them directly. The latter is the broadcast model, the former is the social volunteering model.

One of the biggest roadblocks to this approach is the mind-boggling array of constantly emerging social media websites. Who can keep up—or find the most useful tools? The first thing is to stop worrying about “brands” (to Facebook or not to Facebook). It’s not necessary to know every site out there but rather to understand the basic social media tools they represent. Trainer Jayne Cravens offers this advice:

Here’s one way to think about internet tools—dividing them into asynchronous, which are those tools where users do not have to be online at the same time in order to interact with each other; and synchronous, which are those tools where users do have to be online at the same time in order to interact with each other.

Anyone under age 25 is a “cyber-native,” unable to picture a world without computers and internet communication. This means, among other things, that the children you serve are fully networked. Is your program?

Online networking is a huge topic, but consider a few of the actions you might take to utilize the web productively and safely:

Recruit “cyber deputies”—volunteers with solid knowledge of various online tools and the interest to help you use them. Cyber deputies never have to meet a child; they provide administrative support with special expertise.

Learn to use the many websites established to help organizations recruit volunteers. Post interesting and appealing messages, targeted at the populations you most want to recruit.

Recognize the critical importance of your own program website. Does it give detailed information about how to become an advocate and about the other volunteer roles available? Is the information current? Can someone apply online?

Build an online community among current volunteers. Start an online discussion group for advocates to share experiences, ideas and tips (of course, they are trained not to reveal a child’s or family’s identity). Create a Facebook group open only to current volunteers—and another one for anyone who wants to learn more about the program. Get your cyber deputies to teach you how.

Explore ways that current advocates can add internet communication to their contact with their assigned children. For example, if a teen has internet access, encourage Skype calls using video; it’s much less time consuming than a personal visit, and yet it is a personal visit in the mind of the young cyber-native. Such calls can be an addition to, rather than a substitute for, regular in-person visits. Consider also whether you can use tools such as Skype to stay in touch with volunteers.

Develop virtual volunteering opportunities for people who want to help the program on their own schedule, even in their pajamas. Online service is no longer an oddity. And as with pro bono volunteers, you can apply all the principles of real-world volunteer management. What can someone do virtually? Write a grant proposal, proofread materials, translate information into another language, search for discounts on needed supplies, set up online surveys, design new web pages for you, do web research on any topic. Get the idea?

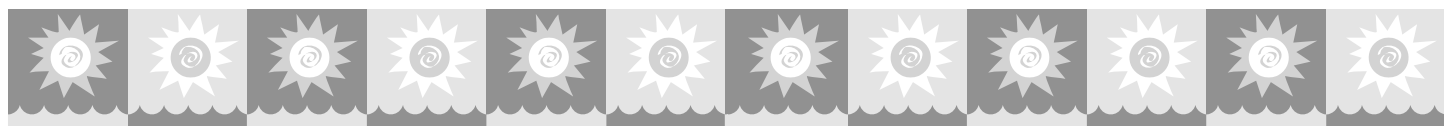
What Is Really Possible?

This article is meant to be provocative. The trends identified are documented and only scratch the surface of the many issues percolating in our communities right now. The proposed actions, however, are intended as discussion starters. You may find that each has merit but some are way off base for your program. On the other hand, look for the seed of an idea that gets your creative juices flowing. And invite current volunteers to help you debate the pros and cons.

The article "Current Trends in Volunteering with an Impact on CASA Programs", excerpted on pages 2-4 can be found in its entirety at:

http://www.casaforchildren.org/site/c.mtJSJ7MPISb.7475945/k.A463/Cover_Story.htm

It appeared as the cover story, Spring 2011 issue of "The Connection Magazine" publication from the National CASA Association.



Bikers Against Child Abuse Awareness Ride

Central Kansas CASA, Inc. was honored to host the members of the Kansas Chapter of Bikers Against Child Abuse on April 30, 2011 for



an awareness ride through Great Bend. Approximately 20 motorcycles (22 riders) came from as far as



northern Oklahoma with BACA, and were joined by 30-40 local motorcycle

enthusiasts for an escorted parade ride through town. Most of the local bikers who joined were from Bikers of Central Kansas and the American Legion Riders. The parade ride included the best parts of Great Bend, including the blooming redbuds on Broadway, Vet's Lake and Park, ending at Eazy



Street for burgers and fries. To top it off, the weather was perfect! Many thanks to the Great Bend Police and Barton County Sheriff officers who escorted the parade and stopped traffic, and to the Great Bend Public Works department for loaning traffic cones. We couldn't have done it without their help!



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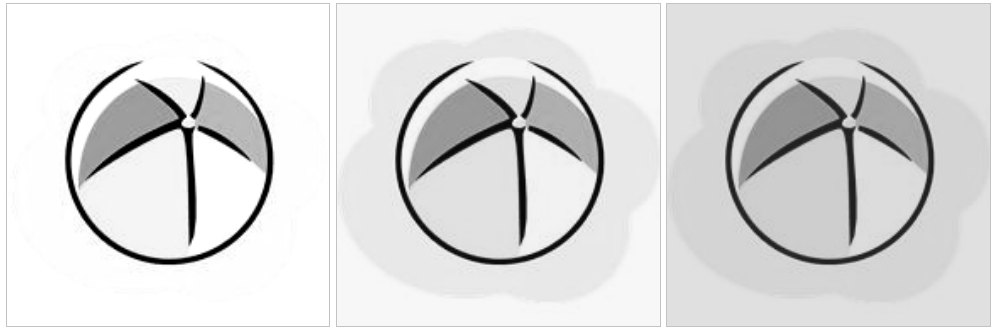
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“A child can ask questions that a wise man cannot answer.”

Author Unknown

Coming Events

- June 22-24* Kansas CASA Directors Training, Wichita
- July 4-5* Independence Day—Office Closed
- July 12* Board Meeting, Noon
- July 29* United Way Agency Meet-and-Greet
- August 1* KCPC 10am-3pm, Salina
- August 10* Board Meeting, Noon
- August 20* United Way Fundraiser, Buccaneer Bash

INSERVICE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CASA VOLUNTEERS

NAME *DATE*.....

By turning in this voucher with your monthly report, you will receive 20 minutes of in-service



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 Nancy Lang
 Lyles Lashley
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 M&F Plumbing
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 Bill & Angie Maddy
 Esther Maher
 Karen Marcum
 Mark's Custom Signs
 Jerry & Linda Marmie
 Martina McBride
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 Jami Lynn McVay
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 Alan & Gail Moeder
 Montana Mike's Steakhouse
 Cristie Morgan

Murray Chiropractic Center
 Musical Theatre of Wichita
 MyTown Stores
 Nex-Tech Wireless
 Northview Nursery
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 Panther Boys Basketball Team
 Panther Football Team
 Papa Murphy's
 Jennifer Parr
 Pizza Hut, Hoisington
 Platinum Style Salon
 Pro Green Lawn Service
 Pro Tint
 RedBarn Pet Products
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Highlights from the 6th Annual CASA Chocolate Auction

VIP Table guests from CKMC enjoyed special treatment



Auction Committee Recognition



Volunteer Recognition—they do all of the hard work, and deserve much more reward!



Our beautiful centerpieces!



Dressing auction prizes for display



It was a full house! We brought out extra tables!



Live Auction Items

CENTRAL KANSAS CASA, INC.
1125 WILLIAMS
GREAT BEND, KS 67530



6th Annual CASA Chocolate Auction Wrap-Up

Thanks to all of the businesses, individuals, and volunteers who donated items, time, or cash and those who purchased auction items that evening. Because of your support, we were able to raise over

\$40,000

to continue serving abused and neglected children in the 20th Judicial District. Please see inside for donor lists. **THANK YOU!**



VOLUNTEERS CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS

BARB POLZIN, FEB. 11—LEWIS JONES, FEB. 23

BILL HAFNER, MARCH 4—ANGELA SCHEPMANN, APRIL 4

JONI HAFNER, MAY 1

*Happy
Birthday*