



Making a Difference Memo

From the desk of Jayme Morris-Hardeman, Executive Director

Advocates Needed—Spring CASA Training

Do you have two hours a week to give to a child in need of a voice? Would you like to be the difference between abuse and hope? Then become a CASA volunteer!

We are holding both daytime and evening spring training classes at First Lutheran Church in Manhattan (930 Poyntz Ave). Evening training starts Monday, February 2nd at 5:30 pm and continues on Monday nights from 5:30—8:30 pm through April 6th. Daytime training will begin Monday, February 2nd from noon—1 pm and continue on Mondays and Wednesdays over the lunch hour through April 15th.



You must register by January 26th by emailing Bridget at bridget@sunflowercasa.org.



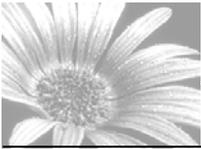
Welcome Aaron Estabrook!

Aaron Estabrook joined our staff in December as our Development Coordinator. Aaron is a veteran of the US Army and currently serves on the USD 383 Board of Education. Prior to coming to CASA, he served as the Field Director for Greg Orman's campaign for the US Senate and as Campaign Director for Jim Sherow's campaign for the House of Representatives. Aaron worked in social services as the case manager for the Supportive Services for Veteran's Families program, which he launched in Kansas, housing over 500 homeless veterans in just two years. We are thrilled to have Aaron working to raise funds and awareness for CASA!



Save the Date—Cycle CASA 2015

The 16th annual Cycle CASA bicycle tour will be held on Saturday, May 2nd. The route will include three rides of 10, 30, and 62 miles. Registration will be launched soon at www.sunflowercasa.org. We hope to see you riding your bike in May!



Sunflower CASA Project, Inc.

Our Programs

Core CASA Services

The Sunflower CASA Project, Inc. is a volunteer-based agency. Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) provide a voice for abused and neglected children involved in the court system through no fault of their own. These children have not only suffered from abuse and neglect, they often have personal experiences with domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness, poverty, hunger, and crime. Sunflower CASA Project serves children in Clay, Riley, and Pottawatomie Counties. In addition, our agency works to prevent child abuse and neglect through public awareness campaigns and prevention programs.

CASAs are trained community volunteers who take time each week to make a difference in the life of a child. The CASA volunteer develops a personal relationship with the child in order to advocate for the child's best interest both in the court system and in other areas of the child's life. The CASA conducts a thorough investigation into the circumstances of the child's life by interviewing all parties involved such as family members, foster parents, social workers, teachers, therapists, attorneys, and other professionals. The CASA volunteer serves as the "eyes and ears of the Judge" by gathering information and providing it to the Court in the form of a written report for each court hearing. This report also contains recommendations for the child's best interests in regards to placement, visitation, and services. The information gathered by the CASA allows the Judge to make the best decision possible for the child. The CASA has no agenda other than to represent the child's best interests.

Sunflower Bridge – the Riley County Child Exchange and Visitation Center

Sunflower Bridge opened in 2000 to provide a safe, neutral, and structured environment where children can visit their parents without fear of violence or conflict. For several years, CASA volunteers provided this service to children, conducting supervised visits at the mall. These volunteers were not trained to provide this service and security was not guaranteed. Safety of the volunteer and the children were concerns since there was always the possibility that the parent could flee with the child or there could be an altercation between the parents. Trained staff and on-site security personnel at Sunflower Bridge has reduced these risks and increased the safety of all participants.

Stepping Stones Child Advocacy Center

Stepping Stones Child Advocacy Center is a multi-disciplinary collaboration to provide services to child victims of sexual and physical abuse and their families. Children's Advocacy Centers stress coordination of investigation and intervention services by bringing together professionals and agencies as a multidisciplinary team to create a child-focused approach to child abuse cases. The goal is to ensure that children are not revictimized by the very system designed to protect them. Our partners in this project are the Riley County Police Department, Manhattan Department for Children and Families, the Riley County Attorney's Office, Pawnee Mental Health Services, the KSU Family Center, and the SANE/SART team from Mercy Regional Health Center (SANE/SART stands for Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner/Sexual Assault Response Team). The CAC began operating on July 1, 2008. All child victims receive advocacy services from our Family/Victim Advocate throughout the duration of their case.

2014 Program Highlights

CASA Core Services

- 78 CASAs advocated for 137 children in 2014
- Volunteers contributed over 2,300 hours of service and drove over 24,000 miles
- CASA volunteer and board member Jack Flouer received the Distinguished Volunteer award and Jennifer Anguiano, Advocate Supervisor, the Professional Staff award given by the Greater Manhattan Community Foundation



Sunflower Bridge Child Exchange and Visitation Center



- Sunflower Bridge provided services for 37 family groups in 2013 including 62 children
- 344 visits and 108 exchanges were conducted. The number of visits increased by 32% and exchanges by 39%.
- The primary reason for referral was partner abuse (60%) followed by child abuse (28%)

Stepping Stones Child Advocacy Center

- We served 59 alleged victims of child sexual abuse and their non-offending caregivers
- 80% of the children served were female and 20% were male
- 46% of the children served were 6 years old or younger
- 83% of the children served knew their alleged perpetrator and 71% were allegedly abused by a family member



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Bridget Larkin, CASA Advocate Supervisor
Amanda Yenser, CEVC/CAC Program Coordinator
Claudia Luthi, CAC Family/Victim Advocate
Aaron Estabrook, Development Coordinator
Jana Miller, Support Coordinator
Laura Alexander, Brett Clark, Don Kurtz, and Kathy Ryan, CEVC Security Officers
Barbara Crooks, Nicole Dodson, and Claudia Luthi, CEVC Observers

Volunteers of the Month—October, November, & December

Sunflower CASA would like to recognize **Christina Hurtado** as volunteer of the month for **October 2014**.

Christina was certified as a CASA in August 2013 and is currently serving her third case. Christina is able to provide consistency for the children she serves, and visits them as much as possible. She frequently takes them on outings in the community so she can spend time with them one-on-one and focus on their needs. Additionally, Christina has established strong relationships with the families of the children on her cases. Christina does an excellent job collaborating with the case workers involved with her cases, and provides them with regular updates. Outside of her role as an advocate, Christina supports CASA by attending CASA functions throughout the year. We appreciate Christina's commitment to CASA and the children she serves!



We are proud to announce that **Celeste Snyder** was selected as volunteer of the month for **November 2014**. Celeste was certified in July 2014 and is serving her first case, which is a complicated case involving two young children. Celeste's warm and friendly personality has made it easy for her to form relationships with the parties involved in her case, including the children. Celeste visits the children on a regular basis and often engages them in fun activities. Celeste does a great job meeting deadlines, and conducts herself in a very professional manner. CASA is lucky to have Celeste as a member of our team, and appreciate her dedication to the children she is serving!

Sunflower CASA would like to recognize **Lisa Last** as volunteer of the month for **December, 2014**. Lisa was certified as a CASA in April, 2014 and is currently serving her second case. Lisa is extremely reliable and dedicated to the children she serves. Lisa maintains contact with the children's placement and visits the children frequently. Lisa is knowledgeable with the children's needs and does an excellent job communicating with the Court through her court report and recommendations. Lisa is an asset to CASA. Her dedication to the children she serves is greatly appreciated!

Sunflower CASA Project, Inc.

CASA • CAC • CEVC

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STEPPING STONES



Child Advocacy Center



Sunflower Bridge

Child Exchange and
Visitation Center



Everybody Counts 2015

*Held in conjunction with the Manhattan Town Center Mall
Community Fair on **Saturday, February 7, 2015***

Donations and volunteers needed!

Everybody Counts is a grassroots community event that takes place with the help of people in the community who want to better know and support their neighbors. If you would like to get involved, here are some ways you can help:

Donation Needs:

Donate your clean winter coats, gloves, hats, and scarves for men, women, children, and infants. We are only accepting new or gently worn items. When dropping off items, please specify they are for the Everybody Counts distribution.

Where: Bring your items to
Salvation Army
310 Poyntz Ave.
539-9399

Time: 9am– 5 pm Monday-Friday now through Friday, February 6, 2015

Volunteer Needs:

- Drivers to provide rides between Manhattan Town Center Mall and the Riley County Seniors Center (where medical services and community meal will be provided)
- Assistance with the community meal
- Assistance with Harvester's food distribution
- Donations of reusable bags

For details about volunteering at the event please contact Rev. Patrick McLaughlin at 785-776-8821 x 27 or pastorpatrick@fumcmanhattan.com