



From the desk of Jayme Morris-Hardeman, Executive Director

Change in Leadership at Sunflower CASA Project

After 17 years with Sunflower CASA Project, I have resigned my position as Executive Director effective November 30, 2015. This is one of the hardest decisions I have ever made. I have been blessed to work with this amazing organization and am proud of the growth we have experienced. I will always serve as a CASA volunteer, but it is time for me to seek new professional opportunities. I have accepted the Coach position with Circles Manhattan, a national anti-poverty initiative designed to eliminate poverty by providing skills and building relationships.

Agency highlights during the past seventeen years include:

Growing the CASA volunteer base to over 100 certified volunteers serving an average of 140 victims of child abuse per year in Riley, Clay, and Pottawatomie Counties.

Addition of Sunflower Bridge Child Exchange and Visitation Center, where children can visit their parents without fear of violence.

Creation of Stepping Stones Child Advocacy Center, a multi-disciplinary collaboration to provide services to child victims of sexual and physical abuse and their families.

Increase of funding through grants, events, and donations to grow the agency budget from \$100,000 in 2003 to \$400,000 in 2015, allowing a significant increase in the number of children and families served.

Service of an average of 400 individuals per year through the three agency programs.

Recognition of the following advocates as Kansas CASA Volunteers of the Year: Jane Pelletier, Gayle Bennett, Barbara Crooks, Jack Hoagland, Jack Flouer, and Dallas Bieker.

Jennifer Anguiano, LBSW, will be serving as the Interim Director. Jennifer has been an Advocate Supervisor with Sunflower CASA Project since February 2003 and was named Professional Staff of the Year by the Greater Manhattan Community Foundation in 2014. You can contact her at 785-537-6367 or janguiano@rileycountyks.gov with questions.

Dallas Bieker named 2015 Kansas CASA of the Year

On November 5, 2015, Dallas Bieker was honored at the Governor's Conference for the Prevention of Child Abuse with the 2015 Kansas CASA of the Year award, a well-deserved honor! Here's what her supervisor, Jennifer Anguiano, had to say about Dallas in her application for the award:

Dallas has been a certified CASA with our program since April 2014. She has been serving her first and only CASA case since September 23, 2014. Dallas' case involves a sibling set of four with some very unusual circumstances. The case involves serious mental health and substance abuse issues with the parents as well as reported paranormal/supernatural issues. Dallas has never discredited, shamed, or reacted in disbelief when the parent has discussed these unique issues. Dallas is a very understanding, open-minded, and non-judgmental CASA. She creates an environment where her CASA children feel comfortable talking about what occurred in their home as well what they want their life to look like in the future. Dallas is also very honest, and when her older CASA kids, act the way teenagers tend to act, she is very upfront with them on how their actions and words affect all aspects of their lives. I asked Dallas to take on a very difficult case for her first CASA case, and she has never backed down from the many challenges that have come with this case.



In her work with the children, Dallas has done a great deal of facilitation and advocacy work. There was a time where one of the parents was refusing to give the older youth their clothes and belongings, things very important to teenagers! Dallas advocated through her court report and in her communication with parents and the foster care agency to ensure the children got their belongings. Another time one of the older youth needed some orthodontic work completed, but the medical office was no longer willing to work with the parent due to strange behaviors. Dallas stepped up and became the point person for the medical office to contact and coordinated the necessary appointments for the child to get the appropriate dental care. Dallas also maintains contact with all four children's schools/teachers, and helped one of the older youth in his goal to become enlisted in the Armed Forces. Dallas maintains constant communication between the foster home, foster care service provider, and the children. There have, at times, been communication issues between some parties, and Dallas has been able to help calm those situations.

Along with serving as a CASA with our program for the last year, Dallas also serves as a panel member for current CASA volunteers at new volunteer training. She is very good at providing a broad view of what being a CASA encompasses. Dallas also helps in our Child Advocacy Center, Stepping Stones, as an interview assistant. Her role is to help aid the Victim Advocate, by interacting with any extra children who may be attending because their sibling is getting a forensic interview. Dallas has been a fantastic addition to our CASA team. She has a great deal of enthusiasm for the work she does whether that be in her direct contact with her CASA kids, her support in speaking to new trainees, or her volunteer work at the CAC. Dallas, like many of our CASAs, has her own family, work, and life outside of CASA, but continues to make her volunteer work with our agency a priority.

We are so blessed to have volunteers like Dallas serving children in our community. Thank you, Dallas, for being an amazing advocate!

Jana Miller, Resource Development Coordinator, has been working on a project to photograph all of our CASA volunteers. We don't have pictures of everyone yet, but here's the first batch. Thank you, CASAs for all you do for the children you serve!



Thank you, Delta Eta Chapter of Kappa Alpha Theta!

2015 marks the 25th anniversary of a partnership between Kappa Alpha Theta and the National CASA Association that has provided tremendous benefit to both organizations. Locally, our Theta chapter has provided our organization with over \$70,000 over the past five years as well as multiple volunteers and efforts to increase awareness of CASA.

In September, Delta Eta Chapter held their annual WildKat Chase run to benefit CASA, raising over \$14,000.



In October, we held a fall activity night at the Theta house to increase interaction between volunteers and Thetas. Jana Miller planned some awesome activities including pumpkin carving and decorating, a cake walk, and coloring.



Thank you, women of Kappa Alpha Theta, for everything you do for CASA!

Regional In-Service Training

We held our second regional in-service training last weekend with volunteers attending from as far away as Phillipsburg! We focused on two topics—domestic violence and dating violence prevention and poverty.

Christie and Curt Brungardt, founders of Jana’s Campaign, spoke about their program and what can be done to prevent intimate partner violence. Their daughter, Jana Mackey, was murdered by an ex-boyfriend in 2008. Jana was a domestic violence and sexual assault advocate volunteer in Lawrence for six years and was a first year law school student when she was murdered. To learn more about the role you can play to prevent domestic violence, please visit www.janascampaign.org. One statistic they shared that really stood out for me is that 100% of those who perpetrate intimate partner violence were victims of child abuse or witnessed violence in their homes as children. Not every child who witnesses or experiences violence will go on to harm others, but 100% who do had personal experiences with violence.

We watched the documentary *Poor Kids* from PBS, which follows three children living in poverty in America. You can watch it here <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/poor-kids/> Poverty impacts every area of a child’s life—education, physical and mental health, nutrition, etc. Want to do something to help? Come join me in my new endeavor to end poverty through Circles Manhattan!

Circles believes that responsibility for both poverty and prosperity rests not only in the hands of individuals, but also with societies, institutions and communities.

Circles’ approach is a progressive model grounded in research that suggests families must have strong social capital and connections within their communities to improve their economic situation. After completing **Circles Leadership Training** to build financial, emotional, and social resources as well as **Economic Stability Plan** that sets goals unique to their own needs and dreams, graduates become **Circle Leaders**. Circle Leaders are paired with trained middle-to-high-income community volunteers, called **Allies**, who support their efforts to achieve economic stability. Want to learn more? Attend one of our monthly orientation meetings on the 1st Tuesday of the month at 7 pm at the Harris Activity Center at 530 Poyntz in Manhattan or visit www.circlesmanhattan.com. Volunteer options abound!

Sunflower CASA Project, Inc.

CASA • CAC • CEVC

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STEPPING STONES



Sunflower Bridge

Child Exchange and
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