



In this issue:

Welcome

Program Highlights

Positive Moments

BOD Corner

Helpful Information

Links

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Welcome

It's finally spring! With the holiday season behind us and the hard winter months a thing of the past, we can look forward to new growth and possibilities.

I am ecstatic to see the GAL/CASA programs across the state growing and improving the level of advocacy like never before. Spring is a time of new and endless possibilities, and I see nothing but potential for the Idaho programs. I would like to welcome

two new executive directors. Cori Hadley and Chris Salstrom have recently taken up the mantle of the Sixth District CASA program, and I have no doubt the fresh ideas and wealth of knowledge between the two will continue to grow the Pocatello program.

I would also like to say a heartfelt thank you to longtime friends and champions of the GAL/CASA mission. Vicky Hadley and LeAnn Branson Manning are leaving their

positions as co-executive directors of Sixth District CASA program to spend more time with family. Their leadership will be sorely missed. Vicky will continue to volunteer and help advocate for all the vulnerable children in Pocatello.

No doubt, both Vicky and LeAnn will continue to offer guidance and support to the current co-executive directors.

Sincerely,
Nanci Thaemert

Program Highlights

Sixth District CASA has had amazing luck with getting attorney's to represent the CASA program. In fact, during one of my visits, a court staff member mentioned she often received grumbles from other non-profits because the CASA program corners the market on pro-bono attorney hours!

According to the program, several elements have come together to create good attorney representation. One of those elements is strong support from the local judges who canvass the local chapter of the Idaho

State Bar and ask for pro-bono services. Attorneys are also on the board and ask attorney friends to volunteer for CASA. Over the years, CASA and attorneys in the region have built a good rapport by word of mouth and used this good rapport to generate interest and solicit their services.

One method employed by Sixth District CASA is reading the Idaho Bar publication "The Advocate" to see who has recently taken the bar exam. If anyone is from its area, the program will call the individual and ask if he/she

is willing to serve as a GAL attorney. Since people often cite "I was never asked" as the number one reason for not volunteering, this is an excellent way to ensure everyone gets asked.

If you would like more information on pro-bono attorneys and the positives of legal representation, drop the Sixth District CASA program a line.



"There are 3 ways to get something done: do it yourself, employ someone, or forbid your children to do it."

Monta Crane

Positive Moments

Teenagers are often the hardest cases a volunteer can take. Teenagers in the system historically find permanent placements at a lower rate and have poorer outcomes than those children who find permanent placements at a younger age. This story is about a 15 year old teenage boy named Joseph fighting the odds.

The GAL/CASA program assigned Diana as Joseph's guardian ad litem. One of Diana's tasks was to advocate for the educational needs of Joseph. Joseph was only attending school a couple of days a week for a couple of hours, at this rate Joseph was going to fail and become the typical teenage foster care statistic.

Joseph, Diana and Joseph's foster mom researched and visited four different school's in two days searching for the best learning environment for

Joseph. After a lengthy search, someone suggested the Contract Based Education School. The first meeting with the Contract Based School principal was short. The principal asked Joseph questions as to why he wanted to go to school and determined this school would be good for him. The principal told this boy, as the foster mom and Diana were enrolling him in this new school, "everyone here has had a cracked heart and we have learned to get on with our lives so we can be successful."

After the paperwork had been completed, Joseph, Diana and the foster mom were walking to the parking lot. Joseph seemed ecstatic to be starting a new school and the foster mom was relieved to know the team had finally found a school setting that appeared to be the right fit.

It has now been a year since

Joseph has been enrolled in the Contract Based School. Joseph informed Diana that he hated school before but likes it now. Joseph mentioned his principal is cool and sticks up for his students. Joseph's advisor states that his attendance has been good and she has seen a lot of growth this year. Joseph's progress continues to improve.

Teenagers are often denied a CASA advocate because of lack of resources and the idea younger children benefit from an advocate more than an older child. This story represents the power a CASA advocate can have in the life of teenagers and the benefit a child can obtain from someone willing to go the extra mile to help.

Thank you to Diana Butland, a First Judicial District CASA volunteer for sharing this story.

Board of Directors Corner

The Idaho Child Protective Act and the Idaho Juvenile Rules clearly state all volunteers, staff, executive directors, and board members must pass a fingerprint-based criminal history check.

The background check requirements were enacted to protect the vulnerable children GAL/CASA volunteers serve. The background check procedures do more than that, they protect the individual programs and participants from liability for the far-

reaching consequences of when a violent person or sex offender attempts to volunteer.

Several programs in the country have had the misfortune of having a volunteer victimize one of the very children they were meant to protect. One such CASA program in Texas was able to inform the media and protect itself with the information it had completed a thorough background check on the individual. The Texas program could have done nothing else to protect the children from victimization. This background

check process saved this program from further damage.

The state organization understands the process is arduous and often time consuming. There is no better way to protect the children it serves and the program itself than to require everyone affiliated with the GAL/CASA program to complete a background check.

If anyone has suggestions or comments about how to make the process easier, please let the state program know.

CASA CONTACTS

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Helpful Information

3

Grants, grants and more grants! With the tough economic times, writing grants is becoming more important than ever. Here are some helpful hints on how to make your grant more likely to get funded!

- The most important thing for grant-writers to remember is that they might submit a perfect application and still receive a rejection. Most foundations have limited resources with which to fund projects. Do not get discouraged if you get a rejection from a possible funding source.
- READ the grantor's guidelines and instructions carefully. Do not try to make the grantor's program fit what you want to do - your program must be in line with the funding agency's priorities.
- Ideas should be innovative and creative. Grantors will rarely fund operating expenses - they usually invest in supplemental programs. Private foundations often seek creative solutions to problems/needs, but they usually do not wish to fund risky projects. Try proposing a project that puts a fresh spin on an existing idea.
- Keep your goals realistic! It is important to have an evaluation plan. Grantors want to know if the projects they fund are successful--that your project is meeting its goals.
- Is your project replicable? If so, tell the grantor how you plan to extend the project to other program areas.
- Have a reasonable, detailed budget. Do your homework on costs prior to submitting your application and be sure to explain your budget even if there are no requirements to do so.
- If possible, cite research that supports the program for which you are requesting funding. Clarity in communicating your ideas is very important. Have someone who is not involved in the project in any way read and critique your draft application.
- Proofread! Spelling and grammar errors do not convey a positive image.
- Follow the grantor's instructions to the letter. Applications are turned away when they do not exactly meet the funding agency's requirements.
- If your project is rejected, ask the grantor for reviewer comments. The comments can offer invaluable tips for improving your future grant applications. Never forget to write thank-you notes - even if your project is not funded initially!

Useful Links

<http://www.youthcomm.org/>

Youth Communication's website includes stories from "Represent—The voice of youth in care." These amazing stories are written by youth and foster youth alumni. It provides amazing insight into what children feel and think while in foster care.

<http://www.nationalcac.org/>

The National Children's Advocacy Center promotes

and delivers excellence in child abuse response and prevention through service, education and leadership. Check out the amazing free online training modules offered under the tab 'professionals.'

<http://www.uwvtv.org/programs/title.aspx>

The University of Washington offers free webcasts of classes, lectures and interviews on an abundance of topics. Look under social sciences

to find training on best practices in dependency, abusive relationships, early childhood development and many more.

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/index.cfm>

The Child Welfare Information Gateway, brought to you by the US Department of Human Services, provides access to information and resources to help protect children and strengthen families.