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Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of what I hope will be a quarterly newsletter covering information important to the Guardian ad Litem/CASA programs in Idaho. My intent with this newsletter is to enhance communication among the local programs across the state. Ever wonder how your peers might have handled something your program recently experienced? Curious

about what is happening at a program on the other side of the state? That's what this newsletter is designed for, to keep us all connected.

With some executive directors leaving us, and new ones taking their places, this is the opportune time to share our knowledge with each other. Each of us in the state has a unique set of skills and

strengths, and everyone brings a breadth of knowledge to their program. Let's utilize this knowledge and skill to help one another with our worthwhile work. The goal is for this to be an informative and useful tool, and your feedback is most helpful.

Sincerely,
Nanci Thaemert

Program Highlights

The Fourth Judicial District CASA Program recently received a grant to provide on-line training. So far, the program has recorded and edited five training videos which users can stream directly from their website, free of charge.

The goal is for the program to link all CASA training provided by fourth district, along with any documents used in the training. What a great way to share training ideas and methods. Be on the lookout for future updates and more training opportunities.

The Third Judicial District CASA program has started a book club for volunteers, staff and board members. The concept of the book club came about as Sarah, the staff leading the book club, attempted to identify training in the community that would be accessible and affordable to all of the program's guardians. Sarah was also aware of the difficulties that advocates were expressing regarding the lack of community that they felt with one another.

The first book Sarah assigned was "Three Little Words" by Ashley Rhodes-

Courter. Sarah printed up hand-outs that included a brief description of the book, as well as a variety of locations and prices. The discussion on the first book was very progressive and thought provoking for everyone involved.

As a follow up, Sarah assigned "The Women Who Raised Me" by Victoria Rowell. At the first meeting, the guardians brought up a book that they would be interested in reading and discussing at the third meeting, "I Speak For This Child" by Gay Courter.



"How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these."

George Washington Carver

Positive Moments

Since child welfare work is often full of stories about children who slipped through the cracks or had a negative outcome based on a broken system, I want to share a positive story about why we do what we do.

The court system recently placed Jane, a six year old girl, in a foster home because of abuse and neglect. Jane had not seen her dad for years and her mom had bounced in and out of jail. Jane suffered from attachment issues as the result of several placements in the community. Nevertheless, Jane was much more than a billboard for attachment issues, she was beautiful inside and out and loved to dance and sing.

Jane's foster mom, Vicky, placed her in dance class and she loved every moment. Her class was having a recital and had made invitations during class. Vicky was unaware Jane

could invite people to attend. The day of the recital, Jane was distressed because she didn't have anyone to send her invitations to. When Vicky mentioned she would attend, Jane commented, as many children do, that her foster mom had to go it wasn't the same as wanting to go.

Vicky was in a bit of a panic and trying to think of someone else that could come on Jane's behalf. At this point, the recital was an hour and a half away. Out of the blue Jane mentioned her special friend, Debbie, whom she had met yesterday. Debbie was a CASA advocate and had told Jane if she ever needed anything to call. Debbie had also told Jane how special she was and Jane knew for once in just a short time that this person really meant it. Vicky told Jane she would try and contact her CASA friend.

After some quick phone dialing, Vicky managed to get

Debbie on the phone. Debbie had been gardening and was dirty, but said she would take a quick shower and be at the recital. In case things didn't work out, Vicky didn't tell Jane about her other invited guest. Oh, the excitement when Jane saw her new CASA friend in the audience, just to watch her. The girls did their little dances and then everyone had tea and treats. Pictures were taken and it was a delightful day. Wow, what a huge impact Jane's CASA friend had that day.

There are countless stories just like this one. It is not momentous change that keeps us going, it is small and seemingly insignificant events that make it worthwhile. A small event where one little girl looked into an audience and saw a face who was there only for her.

Thank you to Angie Derting, Second Judicial District board member, for sharing this story with me.

Helpful Information

I was recently asked about child protection benchcards and thought others may also want information. Judges in the state use benchcards as a resource for up-to-date information on child protection proceedings and best practice recommendations. Idaho child protection benchcards include topics on: [removal of](#)

[the child; shelter care; adjudicatory hearing; planning hearing; planning options; 12-month permanency hearing; permanency hearing-aggravated circumstances; review hearing; educational needs checklist; Title IV-E; termination of parental rights; adoptions; Indian Child Welfare Act.](#) Follow the link:

<http://www.isc.idaho.gov/childapx.htm> and use the information for training or to understand what information your judge is using as a resource. This would be great information to share with you GAL/CASA attorney's.

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Board of Directors Information

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With the recent economic downfall, finances, especially finances for non-profit organizations and government agencies are an especially important topic. The Governor issued Executive Order 2008-03 asking for agencies to implement a 1 percent holdback and to hold in reserve another 1.5 percent. While the Governor's order does not include the Legislative or Judicial Branches, the Judicial Branch has agreed to participate. The holdback will continue through the remainder of the fiscal year. Information about the holdback for fiscal year 2010 will be provided to the programs as it becomes available.

The holdback impacts the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) as well as the Guardian ad Litem programs. The holdbacks have also impacted the State Guardian ad Litem office since the holdback was effective for both the pass through funding from the courts and the budget for the state office. Due to the reduction in funds, the state office will limit the twice yearly GAL subcommittee to one day rather than two. To limit travel expenses, the GAL subcommittee will be limited to the Executive Directors, rather than both a board member and the Executive Director as originally planned. Travel will be closely monitored to ensure cost effectiveness and my twice yearly site visits will not include a day of training as initially planned. As the year progresses, other cost reducing goals will be implemented.

To address the reduction in funds, one of the AOC's priorities is to find and apply for large grants. With AOC and staff's knowledge of technical writing and ability to apply for substantial statewide grants, it is the goal of the AOC and this office to not only make up for the budget shortfalls, but to supplement the current funding levels. I invite everyone to contact me with questions, concerns or suggestions about the reduction in funds.

Useful Links

<http://nonprofitrisk.org/>

The Nonprofit Risk Management Center offers free or minimal cost resources geared to non-profit organizations. It has great publications that cover everything from employment practices to volunteer risk management.

<http://www.dol.gov/>

The U.S. Department of Labor offers free advice for organizations that have questions concerning compliance with federal employment laws. Make sure to check out the *elaws* corner for help in drafting employee policies.

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

The Idaho Nonprofit Center provides a toolbox to build strong and accountable nonprofits and a platform to rally public involvement and gain support for the nonprofit sector.

<http://www.grants.gov/>

If you need information on government grants, this is the place to look!