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Welcome

Summer Greetings!
As the temperatures rise and the dog days of summer begin, I'm hopeful the worst of the bad economic news is behind us.

I'm happy to report the Idaho legislature approved the same allocation for the GAL programs as it did last year, with a minor 3% holdback. While we must keep in mind there is a chance of future holdbacks if the economy continues to decline, I'm confident the programs can weather

any storm.

I continue to focus many of my efforts on searching and applying for diverse funding streams. One of my recent endeavors was applying for a large federal grant under the stimulus package. Keep your fingers crossed this exciting new funding opportunity comes through.

I am also preparing for a major transition in my life: parenthood. I will be on maternity leave in August

and September, but will return in time for the GAL subcommittee meeting and other exciting events in October.

Thank you to everyone who supports the GAL/CASA programs across this great state. I wish everyone a safe summer filled with family and friends.

Best wishes and warm regards,

Nanci Thaemert

Program Highlights

Lisa Elliott, the Second District CASA Program Executive Director, has developed and implemented a partnership with the University of Idaho Law School that will undoubtedly benefit the entire state.

Currently, Lisa has 14 Idaho law students who are trained and sworn in to provide GAL services. This partnership has allowed Lisa to go from having 60 percent of her cases assigned a volunteer to 95 percent.

According to one law student in the program, "being a law student is one of the most selfish experiences I have ever had. In order to stay on top

of your schoolwork, you have to commit an amazing amount of time. I have definitely fallen out of contact with some of the people and activities that are important to me. Becoming a CASA helps put perspective back into life.

It reminds me why I decided to come to law school: to become the voice for people...that don't have the same opportunities to be heard as others. That is a very real and very unfortunate aspect of our legal process, and it is why pro bono work is so important."

Lisa's program has ramifications for the entire state. Students currently

enrolled at the law school will likely travel throughout the state, bringing their knowledge of the child welfare system, and CASA in particular, to the entire state. One participant explains "Being a CASA has made me realize that I want to continue working with and for kids. Every child appointed a CASA also has a pro bono attorney assigned to his or her case. After law school, I hope to offer my services in that capacity."

Thank you, Lisa, for this unique partnership that will train future pro bono attorneys and volunteers to serve children across Idaho.



People who get nostalgic for childhood were obviously never children

Bill Watterson - Calvin and Hobbes

Board of Directors Corner

"I didn't sign on for fundraising"- There is often confusion and uncertainty surrounding the board's role in fundraising. The all-too-common scenario: the executive director is frustrated because she thinks it's the duty of the board to raise money—but some, if not all, are reluctant.

There are usually three reactions (1) board members resent being required to do something they were not informed of when invited to join the board (2) agreement but hesitation because of doubt about succeeding at raising money (3) feel guilty. It's as if the board members were invited to a potluck, arrived with lasagna, and then scolded for not having brought a chocolate cake.

It may be helpful to think of the board as having two roles: a

governance role where the board acts as a body to ensure accountability, and a support role where board members support the organization, acting as individuals, through volunteering their time and participating in various ways in raising money.

It is good to keep four critical guidelines for boards and fundraising:

1. As a body, the board is responsible for approving and monitoring performance of a revenue strategy that will sustain the organization's work;
2. In the context of that plan, as individuals, each board member must do something to help implement that strategy;
3. No one person has to be involved with every type of fundraising; and

4. Expectations must be clearly communicated to new board members during the recruitment process.

In short, the boards' governance responsibility is fulfilled in choosing and monitoring a revenue plan, while individual board members support the organization by participating in the plan's implementation. Clarifying the distinction, as well as the role expectation of board members will go a long way towards calmer, less emotionally charged, more productive discussions about fundraising.

Information provided by
CompassPoint Nonprofit
services.

Stories of child advocacy

From an article printed in the Idaho Statesman on 1-26-09 that proves children's advocates can come in many shapes and sizes.

For most of her life, Sera has advocated for the rights of grandparents raising their grandchildren. Photos in the living room show her with Sens. Crapo and Craig, and Rep. Simpson in Washington DC where Sera was a delegate to last year's grandparents rally. The

amazing part of the story, Sera is 7 years old.

Her advocacy comes from her own experience. "My real parents weren't taking real good care of me. I was in a boarding house for a while (foster home) and then I came to live here." Here is with her grandparents in Eagle.

Sera's grandparents are active in a local grandparent support group. They have

become adept at utilizing resources available to kinship caregivers, and actively lobbies for more legal and financial awareness. It's different living with grandparents. Sera says: "They used to be my grandparents, but now they're my mom and dad." Sera beams her smile on legislators and continues to advocate for grandparents and grandchildren "to help kids who aren't lucky enough to be adopted"

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The **Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act** (H.R. 6893/P.L. 110-351) will help hundreds of thousands of children and youth in foster care by promoting permanent families for them through relative guardianship and adoption and improving education and health care. The Act will improve outcomes for children and youth in the child welfare system by:

1. promoting permanent families for children in foster care with relatives and adoptive families through (a) notice to relatives when children enter care, (b) kinship navigator programs, (c) subsidized guardianship payments for relatives, (d) licensing standards for relatives, (e) incentives for adoption, (f) adoption assistance, (g) establish new family connections grants, and (h) keeping siblings together;
2. foster care for older youth who turn 18 in foster care without permanent families with continued federal support;
3. educational stability by requiring states ensure children, when placed in foster care, remain in their same school where appropriate, or, when a move is necessary, to get help transferring promptly to a new school;
4. health care coordination by requiring the state child welfare agency to work with the Medicaid agency to create a plan to better coordinate health care;
5. increasing support for American Indian and Alaska Native Children through (a) direct access to federal support for Indian Tribes and (b) technical assistance and implementation services;
6. improving the quality of staff working with children in the child welfare system through extended federal support for training of staff.

While the Guardian ad Litem/CASA volunteer will not have specific requirements under the Act, it will be especially important for the volunteer to understand the ramifications of this new legislation and ensure the youth in the system is receiving the outlined benefits. The volunteer will play an important role in asking the right questions and recommending appropriate services to the court.

If you would like more information on the Fostering Connections to Success Act, you can find resources online at the Children's Defense Fund website: <http://www.childrensdefense.org/>



Useful Reading Material

[Handbook on Questioning Children. A linguistic Perspective](#), 2nd edition Anne Graffam Walker, Ph.D. 1999.

◇ This book is about the linguistic complexities of questioning children. Ms. Graffam Walker wrote the book because of her concern that children in courts today are being denied a right that should belong to everyone: to have an equal opportunity not only to understand the language of the proceedings, but to be understood.

[The Myth of Best Interest: Why Good Intentions Are Not Good Enough](#), Jane Malpass, MA and Jane Thompson, JD. 2000.

◇ This book provides a blueprint for case building from initial investigation and assessment to the ultimate resolution of the case. It is multidisciplinary in nature, focusing on the roles and responsibilities of all those in the child welfare system in achieving a timely, appropriate, and permanent plan for each child. Chapter

topics include: What Children Need; Separation and Loss in Children; Daddies, Relative and Kin; Services to Families Before and After Court; Preparing for Court; Case building with Court Orders; Termination of Parental Rights; The Three Permanent Plans -- How to Decide; What About Long Term Foster Care; and The Role of the CASA/GAL.

Both of these books provide excellent, easy to understand information helpful to people working with children in the Child Welfare System.