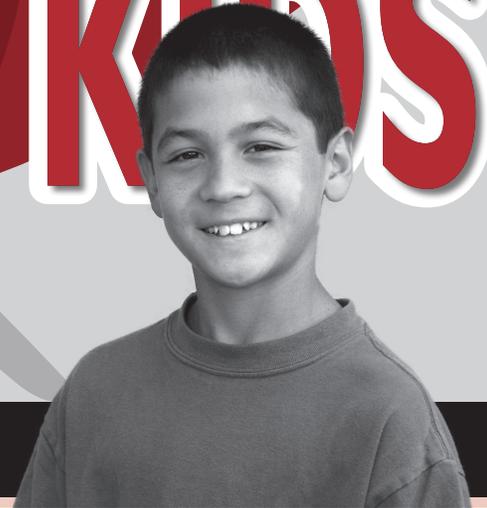


CASA FOR KIDS

FLATHEAD
COUNTY

LIFT UP A CHILD'S VOICE. A CHILD'S LIFE.



A **NEWSLETTER** ADVOCATING FOR ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN

JULY 2015



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA FOR KIDS FLATHEAD COUNTY

“Our mission is to recruit, train and supervise volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children.”

~ CASA for Kids

COLE'S STORY

Eleven-year-old Cole was picked up by the police when his father was arrested on outstanding warrants. With nowhere else to go he was placed in a foster home. The foster parent reported that he was covered with bruises and had melt-downs when it came time to shower. His sleep was interrupted with night terrors, and the stories he told about his life experiences sounded like a script from a poorly written drama – with so many outlandish occurrences that it could not possibly be true. For the most part, he and his father, an unregistered sex offender, had lived as transients for the majority of his life.

The father insisted he had been awarded sole custody of his son when the child was two. He claimed that Cole's mother, Veronica, was incompetent and dangerous. He even had a video of Veronica that reinforced this view. Cole expressed fear of her as well, although he was only able to recount stories his father had told him.

As Susan, Cole's CASA advocate, worked the case she discovered many inconsistencies and began to question whether the information about Veronica was accurate. Cole's social worker believed that she needed to work to reunify him with his father and did not have time to pursue an investigation of an out-of-state mother who had already lost custody of her son. Undaunted, Susan continued her work and located Cole's mom in Arizona. After a few conversations with her it became clear that the father had been dishonest. The advocate encouraged Veronica to send copies of the actual custody agreement to the social worker. Faced with new information, the social worker and advocate were able to help Cole build a positive relationship with his mom. This process took time, but after two years, Cole was happily reunified with his mother. This would not have occurred without the diligent efforts of a CASA advocate.

CASA for Kids of Flathead County, recruits concerned citizens to advocate for abused and neglected children involved in the court system through no fault of their own. In Flathead County, these volunteer advocates are appointed by the court to serve as guardian ad litem for the children they serve. (In fact, the term CASA is an acronym for Court Appointed Special Advocate.) The CASA program is part of a national movement to improve outcomes for foster children. Locally, a group of concerned citizens led by Judge Kitty Curtis, decided that more could be done to help these hurting children. They established CASA for Kids in 2000 and we have been advocating for the children ever since.

Since 2000, 172 CASA volunteers have advocated for 841 children from Flathead County. Join us in saying, I AM FOR THE CHILD. You CAN make a difference in a child's life. Volunteer. Donate. Spread the word.

MAKING PEDAL STROKES COUNT

Susen Marie is an amazing sports woman and long distance cyclist at 62.5 years old. Part of what makes her so amazing is that she is autistic with traumatic brain injuries. Her talents and accomplishments are numerous and show what incredible feats individuals with disabilities can accomplish.

“Riding long distances is not easy and it is the same for CASA children. Life is not always easy”, she said. Over the years, Susen has raised more than \$30,000 for CASA in fund raising Park 2 Park rides across Montana. She dedicates each pedal stroke to the children of CASA...235,200 pedal strokes in the average week ride!

Susen and her service dog, Purrl, will be raising money for Flathead CASA in an organized 7-day ride this summer, in southern Oregon. She is reaching out for donations to this worthy cause via a GoFund Me site at www.gofundme.com/nkrun0 At this point she has raised over half of her \$5000 fund raising goal. We hope you can help her and Purrl Pedal for CASA!



Susen and Purrl

CYCLING FOR CHILDREN

Breaking the cycle of abuse



*Looking for a great, fully-supported, bike ride this summer?
Ride in our Cycling for Children ride July 25th!*

Join us on Saturday, July 25 for a fully-supported bike ride to benefit CASA For Kids. The ride starts at 8:00am at the Saddle Club (next to Alpine Market) in Whitefish.

Riders can choose between a 20, 40 or 80-mile ride. The 40 and 80-mile riders travel along the foothills of the Swan Range. The 20-mile riders will turnaround at the Veterans Home in Columbia Falls.

Food and beverage stops, mechanical support and sag wagons will be offered throughout the route. All routes conclude at the Whitefish Saddle Club.

Registration for the 20-mile ride is \$25; 40-mile ride \$50; and 80-mile ride \$60. Find registration information on our website at www.flatheadcasa.org. Mail-in registration forms can be downloaded and mailed to CASA for Kids, P.O. Box 11195, Kalispell, MT 59904.

We extend a special thank you to our sponsors for their generous contributions: Park Side Credit Union, Glacier Bank, Great Northern Cycles and Ski, Daily Inter Lake, Whitefish Community Foundation, Don K Subaru, Whitefish Mountain Resort, Freedom Bank, Hammer Nutrition, National Parks Realty, Super 1 Foods, Whitefish Credit Union, NXGEN, Wrights Furniture, First Interstate Bank, Valley Bank of Kalispell.



2015 Spring Graduating CASAs

TRAINED AND READY TO BE A VOICE FOR ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN

Congratulations to our 2015 Spring training class of new CASA Volunteers!

We had graduation May 27th at the court house with all four district judges present, as well as family and friends of the graduates. Seven volunteers went through 50 hours of training in order to properly advocate for abused and neglected children in the court system. These amazing volunteers will now be assigned to children who have been waiting for a CASA Volunteer. They will impact children, being the one consistent adult in the turbulent lives of children who need consistency.

A CASA volunteer provides a judge with a report based on an independent investigation of the child's circumstances. Each child's case is as unique as the child involved. The CASA monitors the child's case, meets with key people, researches and helps coordinate services to determine what is in the child's best interest.

If you are interested in becoming a CASA Volunteer, call the office 406-755-7208 or visit www.flatheadcasa.org with questions. We will be holding another CASA training starting in September.

EVERY CHILD NEEDS A HERO, ABUSED CHILDREN NEED A SUPER HERO

You Can Be That Super Hero

We currently have over 60 advocates working tirelessly advocating for abused and neglected children throughout the Flathead Valley to ensure a safe and permanent home for our community's most vulnerable population.

With your support, these children can become more than just a statistic. With a CASA volunteer these children can thrive, receive services they deserve and be given a voice in the Court System. Every child needs a hero; abused children need a super hero. They need a CASA volunteer to make sure they receive what every child needs, a safe permanent home and the promise of a bright future.

You can be a Super Hero! CASA for Kids relies on donations from concerned citizens like you. Your help makes it possible for us to train and support CASA volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children in the Flathead Valley:

1. Give a donation - fill out the reply piece in this newsletter and send it back to us!
2. Become a member of our Powerful Voice Society - it costs \$1,200 to match a child with a CASA volunteer for a year. With a donation of \$1,200 you join a group of people who believe it is vital for every abused or neglected child to have a CASA volunteer.
3. Give through the **Great Fish Community Challenge** - if you give to Whitefish Community Foundation and designate CASA for Kids during June 9th-September 18th your donation will be matched! **See ad below.**
4. Want an easy way to help sustain CASA for Kids into the future? Give monthly!
5. Support CASA by purchasing a CASA for Kids license plate.
6. Are you attached to technology? You can donate online www.flatheadcasa.org.
7. Want to know more information, we'd love to talk to you! Call the office at 406-755-7208, or stop by at, 1203 Hwy 2W in the Gateway Community Center.

MAKE A DONATION JUNE 9 – SEPTEMBER 18 AND MAXIMIZE YOUR DONATION WITH A MATCHING GRANT

IT'S EASY TO DONATE ONLINE:

- 1) Go to: greatfishchallenge.org
- 2) Click on: **CLICK HERE TO DONATE NOW**
- 3) Choose: Gift Amount
- 4) Designate: CASA for Kids GFF
- 5) Press: Add donation

ANY AMOUNT IS MATCHED UP TO \$15,000

\$1 YOUR + **\$1** % MATCH = **MAXIMIZES YOUR DONATION**

100% OF YOUR DONATION AND MATCH WILL BENEFIT ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN.

CASA for KIDS recruits, trains and supervises volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children. We currently have 60 advocates serving 120 children. There are 23 more children on a waiting list.

MAIL-IN DONATIONS can be made by downloading the official Great Fish Challenge donor form at www.greatfishchallenge.org. Complete the form and designate CASA for Kids for your donation. Checks **MUST BE** made out to Whitefish Community Foundation and mailed to: Whitefish Community Foundation, P.O. BOX 1060, Whitefish, MT 59937.



Whitefish Community Foundation

GREAT FISH
community challenge

GOLF SCRAMBLE

The 2nd Annual CASA for Kids Golf Scramble was a great success thanks to our 66 participants and 19 hole sponsors! Our golf scramble took place June 12th at Village Greens Golf Course.

We not only raised funds, but also awareness of child abuse and neglect and the need for children to have a reliable adult speak on their behalf, their CASA Volunteer.

BECAUSE OF YOU

We call our volunteers and supporters super heroes, and because of you great impact is being made in the lives of abused and neglected children.

Children with a CASA Volunteer:

- Spend less time in foster care
- Receive more targeted services
- Are more likely to graduate high school
- Are more likely to be adopted
- Half as likely to re-enter foster care



There were 66 people golfing in support of CASA for Kids. It was an afternoon full of fun and competition all with the purpose to impact the lives of abused and neglected children.

'Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.'

~Dr. Seuss

COMMUNITY ACTION—ABUSE PREVENTION IS POSSIBLE

You can make a big difference in preventing child abuse through small acts of kindness! You can help protect children, strengthen families, promote traits that help protect families and, ultimately, prevent the abuse and neglect of children within our community.

Here is a list of simple tips that can have a positive effect on the well-being and healthy development of children, families, and communities:

- Tell the children or youth in your life how much you care for them and appreciate them.
- Offer your time to babysit for the child of a friend, neighbor or family member
- Do volunteer work for a youth, or family serving organization in your community.
- Introduce yourself to your neighbors. Caring and connected neighborhoods can be powerful in reducing neighborhood violence and supporting struggling parents.
- Volunteer at or donate resources to a local preschool or daycare center.

• Contact your local child welfare and family-serving agencies and ask about volunteer opportunities. Each of us has a role to play in creating safe and healthy communities for children.

CASA for Kids has many ways to volunteer, call us to find out how 406-755-7208!

If you have reason to believe a child may be at risk of harm in their home, please call the Child Abuse Hotline: 866-820-5437.

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