

CASA FOR KIDS

FLATHEAD
COUNTY

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



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

JULY 2016



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

VALUE OF A CASA

by Sean Carlin, Advocate/Outreach Coordinator

As I reflect back over the past year of working with the Flathead County CASA for Kids program, I am humbled by the generosity that our CASA volunteers display to the children and families they serve each day. I am honored to work for an organization that strives each day to end child abuse and neglect. I have a deep respect for the CASA volunteers who sacrifice their own time with loved ones, so that they can become the voice for a child that has been abused or neglected and now faces the uncertainty of the foster care system.

In December of 2013 my family relocated from Omaha, Nebraska to Whitefish, Montana. I had just completed my master's degree in Clinical Counseling and we had just adopted two beautiful little girls. We had relocated to Montana to be closer to family. Previously, we had been foster parents to our girls and their two younger brothers. It was an extremely long and tumultuous three plus year period for my wife

and me. I can only imagine the pain, suffering and confusion that the children were dealing with over that time.

We were the children's second and last placement. During that three and half years they went back and forth between visits with birth parents and grandparents. Sometimes those visits would happen and sometimes they wouldn't. My children had four caseworkers and at least a dozen visitation specialists. When you factor in attorneys, doctors, counselors, in-home workers, teachers and more, the children didn't know up from down. During the first six months of the case, the children were being told by their birth parents that they would be coming home at any time. Soon after that the birth father went to jail and the birth mother disappeared completely. Three years later we adopted the girls and the boys went back to a marginal situation with their father. As I look back upon that period of my life, I wish the children would have had a CASA in their life. All

the children were under the age of four when they entered foster care. There was no reason for it to have taken over three years for them to find safety and permanency. The kids needed someone to listen to them and be their voice in court, they needed someone to advocate for their mental health needs, they needed someone to monitor the birth parents, and they needed someone to monitor Child and Family Services to ensure they were working towards permanency for these children. That someone is a CASA.

After moving here I joined Child and Family Services as a Child Protection Specialist. I was the fifteenth worker in the Kalispell office when I started. I really enjoyed my job over the course of the first year. I felt like I was making a difference in our community. I was keeping kids safe and having a positive impact on the families that I worked with. As time went on at CPS, my case load began to increase and I was not able to give the individualized attention

BECOME A CASA

**CASA University
begins this Fall!**

September 1st to mid-October

*This is one cause
where the actions
of a single person
mean everything.
One volunteer,
trained and
empowered to
ensure that every
child can thrive in
the safe embrace of
a loving home.
Please consider
volunteering today!*

**If you are interested or
know someone who is
interested in becoming
an advocate, please contact
us for an application
and instructions at
406-755-7208.**



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to the children and families that I worked with. In the first three months of 2015, ten CPS workers resigned, leaving only five workers to carry the case load of fifteen. It was also during this time that child abuse and neglect calls were coming in at a record pace. I was losing sleep worrying about my cases; realizing that I did not have the time or resources to effectively do my job. In March 2015, without another job lined up, I resigned. I knew that the incoming social workers wouldn't have the time to learn all the ins and outs of the cases that I was leaving to them. Luckily I had great CASA's working some of my cases. I knew that the CASA advocates held the history to the children on my cases. It was the CASA worker who would be the one constant in these children's lives and would continue to advocate for their best interests.

During my time here at CASA, I have seen countless miracles performed by our team of dedicated volunteers. I could share numerous examples of the excellent advocacy but due to space, I will limit it to one.



Carol B. refused to let a child on her case settle for mediocrity. The young girl had been in the foster care system for several years and had experienced a number of unsuccessful placements. She was in a home that met her basic physical needs, but was void of love and support. This was the best home that this child had experienced in her lifetime, so she was going to settle for being adopted by her foster mother.

Carol knew that this young girl needed to be in a home where she felt loved and cherished. Despite push back from multiple sources, Carol insisted this child deserved a safe, supportive and loving home. Eventually an excellent adoptive home was located and this girl is thriving. This placement change would not have occurred without Carol's persistence. The children in our community need your voice. They need someone to stand up for their rights and help them find the safe and loving home they deserve.

This past April 2016 we graduated 12 new CASA advocates. Our next CASA University training will begin the first of September and will run through mid-October. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming an advocate or would like to learn more about our program, please contact us at 406-755-7208. We continue to see a record number of children coming into care because of abuse and neglect. Please join our team and end this cycle of abuse and neglect in our community.



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

Presents



**SUPERHERO
FUN DAY**

**ADMISSION
\$35 PER FAMILY**

**FOOD
MUSIC
PRIZES**

**FUN
FOR ALL THE
FAMILY**

**SUPERHERO
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CONTEST
WITH PRIZES!**

**DUNK TANK
MINI GOLF
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AND MORE ...**

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SUPERHERO
GUESTS FROM THE
FIRE &
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DEPARTMENT**



Sunday, July 31, 12pm to 4pm, Flathead Lake Lodge, Bigfork.
Proud Sponsors



DAILY INTER LAKE



**First Interstate Bank • Valley Bank of Kalispell • Super 1 • Bigfork Harvest Foods
Kalispell Regional Medical Center • Whitefish Credit Union • NXGEN**

Visit flatheadcasa.org for more details.

GREAT FISH COMMUNITY CHALLENGE

We are very excited to be a part of the Great Fish Community Challenge again this year! Whitefish Community Foundation hosts this 9 week community fundraiser from July 12th through September 16th. Donations given to CASA for Kids through the community foundation during this time period will come straight to us and be matched! Maximize your gift with the community foundation's matching grant and watch your donation grow!

MAKE A DONATION
JULY 12 - SEPTEMBER 16

AND MAXIMIZE YOUR DONATION WITH A MATCHING GRANT

ANY AMOUNT IS MATCHED UP TO \$15,000

\$1_{YOURS} + \$1_{OURS} = MAXIMIZES YOUR DONATION

100% OF YOUR DONATION WILL BENEFIT ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN

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

CASA for KIDS recruits, trains and supervises volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children. We currently have **75** advocates serving **202** children.

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



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