



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

PIEDMONT CASA

P I E D M O N T C A S A

Annual Report

2007–2008

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



For 13 years, Piedmont CASA has grown and thrived due to the extraordinary dedication and generosity of the many volunteers and donors who support our program and invest in a better future for our children. So often at CASA we are asked, "How can you do the kind of work you do?" In this report we bring you the perspectives of several individuals who, like you, share our belief that every child deserves a safe, permanent and nurturing home. This year has been particularly exciting as we focus on better serving teens, engaging volunteers who have a special interest in working with young adults and partnering with others in the community to make sure that our young people do not age out of foster care without family connections.

It is alarming that among the 50 states Virginia has the highest rate of children aging out of foster care without a permanent home. Sadly, our child welfare system has helped to create this situation. Congregate care (group homes and residential institutions) is the first placement for 50% of Virginia's children in foster care

continued on back

Why We Give

By Carolyn and Bill Achenbach

Giving is tantamount to believing in. I believe that our future depends on our children and our children deserve to grow up with the love and support that will equip them to be thoughtful, productive citizens of tomorrow. Sadly, this is a luxury that not all of our children receive; in fact, to the contrary, some become victims of abuse and/or neglect within the family structure that is supposed to support them. Before CASA, they had little hope of getting help or of being heard.

***“Giving is the role Bill
and I can play to be
part of the team that
helps these children.”***

Giving to CASA is the role Bill and I can play to be part of the team that helps these children. By contributing to the organization, we support the volunteers who support the kids. We support the very rigorous training program that equips the volunteers to be the very best advocates. We support the staff that carefully supervises these volunteers to ensure the highest quality advocacy and encourages their continued engagement in finding solutions for community problems. We support the innovations, such as the newly developed Teen Initiative, that have been developed to broaden the reach of the program. We support the past and future success of Piedmont CASA—it impresses us greatly that the quality of the program influenced the judges of both Charlottesville and Albemarle County to mandate that every case of child abuse and/



Carolyn and Bill Achenbach

or neglect be referred to Piedmont CASA for the assignment of a CASA advocate.

We support Piedmont CASA because our children need Piedmont CASA. Roughly 1000 children have been served by this effective and remarkable program over the past 13 years; until there are zero cases of abuse and neglect in this community, Piedmont CASA will be essential to our children's safety and well-being. ■

Why I Volunteer

By *Therese Elron*



I have contributed to many organizations during my adult life; I approached Piedmont CASA because I wanted to get involved with social issues in a different way. The opportunity for hands-on,

structured work with children and families who need help really appealed to me.

Being a Court Appointed Special Advocate also appealed to me as a way to combine my volunteer work with my legal education and previous experience as an attorney and the understanding I have gained as the mother of three sons, now 18, 14 and 11. In fact, being a CASA volunteer has provided me with a perspective on children's lives and a renewed appreciation of their resiliency and independence which

help me in parenting my own children.

After being a CASA for almost one year, I can honestly say that my expectations of this volunteer job have been fulfilled and surpassed. I love it. Piedmont CASA is a very supportive group; that support has greatly boosted my level of comfort in contributing to meetings, attending court hearings, and visiting the children. Most importantly, I feel that I am making a concrete and vital impact on the lives of the children I serve. At their young ages, they respond very positively to what we can do for them. In addition to the safe, stable home and the therapeutic services for which I advocate, the children benefit from the presence in their lives of an adult who models a high level of concern and attention. I listen, I visit regularly, I set the example of a responsible, reliable person who truly cares. That alone helps them. And because I interact one-on-one with them, I see with my own eyes their progress and their growth. That is very gratifying to me.

The hardest part of this job, for me, lies in knowing when to stop. The position of

child advocate is a well-defined role, which allows volunteers to attain a high degree of comfort fairly quickly. It is, however, also a limited role with clear guidelines which require me to accept that I cannot "fix everything" for these children. While I accept the boundaries of a CASA volunteer, I have also gained a renewed optimism about children's ability to heal and families' ability to change. Our society has a tendency to blame the parents and even the children in families where abuse and neglect occurs. Learning a family's stories and getting to know them as individuals has helped me see that some families repeat destructive behaviors simply because it is all that they have ever known. I volunteer as a CASA so that I can model behavior that inspires children to believe that they are worthwhile and valuable; I volunteer because as a CASA I can give a child a brighter future; I volunteer because CASA offers me my personal chance to break the cycle of abuse and neglect. ■

Why I Serve

By *Louise Dudley*



The literal explanation for why I serve is very simple: a radio ad on WINA about five years ago. From that 30-second message, I learned that a surprising number of children in our

community are abused or neglected in their own homes, many so seriously that the court decides they must live in a safer place.

But I also learned that an organization I'd never heard of – Piedmont Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) – trains dozens of volunteers to speak up for those children's interests when their cases come to juvenile court. These volunteer advocates get to know the children and their families, do

research, coordinate with other agencies, and make recommendations in a detailed report that goes directly to the judge.

The work did not sound easy, but the need for these advocates was clear. I decided to apply.

Coincidentally, though, at about the same time I was asked to consider becoming a member of Piedmont CASA's board of directors. Having recently retired, I knew I had the time. I also felt honored by the invitation.

But what would service on the board really involve? What were the expectations? Could I be on the board and serve as a volunteer at the same time? (The answer to that turned out to be No, though I completed the training anyway.)

Having now served on the board for nearly five years, currently as Chair, I understand its role much better. We are responsible for setting policies, exercising financial oversight, participating in strategic planning, assuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations, evaluating the

executive director, emphasizing diversity outreach, and helping to find the resources necessary to support CASA's mission – all very important tasks.

Essential as they are, however, those are not the reasons that inspire me to serve on CASA's board. My main motivation is the same as when I first thought of becoming a CASA volunteer: the desire to help more abused or neglected children live in safe, nurturing and permanent homes.

As board members, we can strengthen the organization, enabling Ruth Stone and the rest of the staff to expand their efforts when a need emerges, as with the new Teen Initiative. We can support the volunteers, whose direct and dedicated work with the children is at the heart of our mission.

And we can tell CASA's story to our friends and neighbors, so others will understand the need in this community and, we hope, will join with us to address it. ■

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July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008

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Statistical Summary: July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008

Last year 97 CASA volunteers spent 8,097 hours serving 188 child victims.

CASA Makes a Difference

Piedmont CASA tracks the well-being of children served by the volunteers. Of the 64 children whose cases were closed last year:

- 99% of children remained free from new incidents of abuse or neglect;
- 100% of children with health needs received the medical care they needed;
- 100% of children with mental health concerns benefited from improvement in emotional well-being and/or received appropriate therapeutic services; and
- 96% of school age children with educational concerns demonstrated grade-level academic performance, or received remedial services.

Spring Training Starts in March 2009!

Please call Piedmont CASA at (434) 971-7515 or email acpcasa@embarqmail.com to request an application, or apply on-line at www.avenue.org/casa



CASA VOLUNTEERS ARE ORDINARY PEOPLE WHO DO EXTRAORDINARY THINGS FOR CHILDREN.

over the age of 12. It is a myth that most teens in foster care institutions are there because they have “flunked out” of family homes. And, as they grow up in institutional settings the opportunity for lifelong, permanent connections fades away.

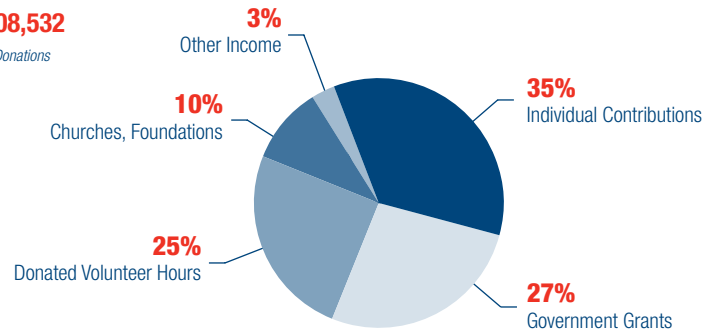
Why do we at CASA do what we do? Perhaps the answer lies in the fundamental question many of our children ask, “To whom do I belong?” As Dr. John Seita, a self-described former at-risk youth who beat the odds puts it, “Every child and young adult deserves to have someone who is irrationally crazy about them.” Our goal at Piedmont CASA is to help abused and neglected children find lifelong connectedness and belonging. We want young people to know they are worthy and can succeed, and we are so grateful to you, our many volunteers, donors and friends for helping make this goal a reality. Helping children connect with that someone who is irrationally crazy about them – a rehabilitated parent, a beloved aunt, a foster parent – what a wonderful gift to share.

Ruth L. Stone, *Executive Director*

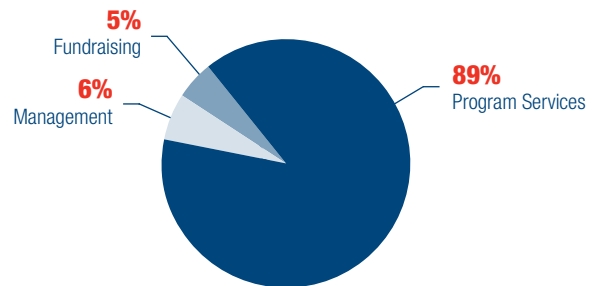
Financial Summary: July 1, 2007–June 30, 2008

Total Income: \$608,532

Includes \$151,898 Non-Cash Donations



Total Expense: \$533,847



PIEDMONT CASA

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Annual Report

2007–2008

