We carry our kids in our hearts

When I tell people about the work we do, a common response is “Oh that must be so sad.” I usually say that our sadness is matched by our sense of justice. Piedmont CASA kids didn’t ask for, and certainly do not deserve, the experiences that brought them to us, or the experiences they have while in the system. We spend a lot of time ‘fighting the good fight’. We are clear-eyed, objective and resolute - except when we’re not.

The truth of the matter is that we carry our kids in our hearts, and sometimes the burden of their stories is heavy. Recently other Virginia CASA Directors were talking about the increase in cases involving heroin, particularly those in which babies are born drug-addicted. Almost invariably there is evidence that the mom was severely victimized as a child.

There are times when these layers of trauma become too numerous to count, causing us to ask, “What can CASA possibly do to make this situation better?” But we are not alone. Our program is blessed with a wealth of wisdom, as is the CASA Network that helps sustain us all. Joyce Moran, one of our longest serving members, wrote this.

“I need you all to still get up in the morning and come in to the office and realize you only have the ability to impact this case from this moment forward. You didn’t make the choices moms did for these children, but you can be the voice, the passion, the person who believes in the value of those wee ones. You can only impact this child in the capacity that the law and our culture allows and that’s an extraordinary gift we can all give. I know you give and work and pray and advocate every day, but you are all gifted with a tenacity that is fierce, so once again today … tomorrow … and the next day … fight for justice and believe in the impossible. Don’t give in to the hurt, the anger, or the injustice. You are not alone and you DO make a difference in the lives of children - we just don’t always get to pick which ones.”
Thank you for supporting our mission with the Jimmy Miller Bracket Breakfast

Fall Volunteer Induction
November 17, 2015
Left to right: Kathy Floyd, Diana Villalobos, Rachael Givens Johnson, Shelley Collett, Debra Bryant, Tim Chillers, Chris Poe, Sabrine Tribie, Joseph Payne. Judge Edward Del. Berry is seated behind them. Not shown: Elaine Chapman, and Emily Smith.

Spring Volunteer Induction
May 10, 2016

You did it again! Ralph Sampson, Barry Parkhill, Antonio Rice, Jay James, Rick Carlisle, David Koehn, Rachel Ryan, plus 29 sponsors and friends - including ACAC and the Miller Financial Group - raised over $30,000 for abused and neglected children in our community at the Jimmy Miller Bracket Breakfast for Piedmont CASA!

BRACKET BREAKFAST COMMITTEE
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Jess Achenbach
Josh Arbaugh
Bob Sayler
Marty Sayler

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TOP ROW  CASA Supervisor Randy Nolt loaded with some of the 100 backpacks donated to Piedmont CASA kids by GE Intelligent Platforms (8/14/15)  CASA President Alicia Lenahan at Women United in Philanthropy presentation (9/22/15)  Senator Creigh Deeds at Piedmont CASA’s 20th Anniversary Reception hosted by Marty and Robert Sayler, Julie Christopher and Marge Connelly, and Jennifer and Frank Winslow (10/15/15)  Piedmont CASA Trauma-Informed Care Workshop (5/13/16)

SECOND ROW  Kids draw for CASA kids at the WVPT Children’s Book Festival (9/26/15)  Junior League of Charlottesville pitches in to help get our fall appeal letters out (10/15/15)  United Way Day of Caring: Alicia Lenahan with Cathy Train, George, Chris Campbell, and Michael Geismar (9/16/15)  Cherney Amhara of CBS19 interviews Alicia Lenahan (11/12/15)  THIRD ROW  Jane Foy and Rick Daniels of WINA Morning News interview Alicia (11/12/15)  CASA Volunteer Lindsey Munson received the Ruth Stone Advocate of the year, and is congratulated by James Munson and Alicia (10/15/15)

BOTTOM ROW  GE Intelligence Systems brings holiday presents to CASA kids (12/11/15)  Jennifer Winslow, Chair of the Piedmont CASA Board of Directors, prepares to speak at the 20th Anniversary reception (10/16/15)  Piedmont CASA Co-Founder Carolyn Achenbach at 20th Anniversary reception (10/16/15)  UVA’s Project SERVE hand-addresses envelopes for appeal letters (8/28/15)

More photos on Pinterest  pinterest.com/pcasa13
Eddie had been through a lot, and there was a chip on his shoulder the size of a redwood. His CASA Volunteer had been working on the case for five years, but he could not see that he was making much difference. He did not feel like he had established a meaningful connection to this troubled teenager.

But the CASA Volunteer cared deeply about the boy, and wanted what was best for him. After long reflection, he decided to resign from the case. If he stepped aside, perhaps another Volunteer could be more successful.

After discussing it with his supervisor, the CASA Volunteer met with Eddie and told him that he would no longer be working on the case. A new Volunteer would be taking over.

To his enormous surprise, Eddie turned to him with wide eyes and exclaimed, “No, please, you can’t leave me now.”

So he didn’t. The CASA Volunteer knows this case won’t have a perfect ending, but he also knows that Eddie needs him. Eddie needs him to listen, to understand, and to be his advocate. Eddie needs a CASA Volunteer so that he has a better chance.

The children had been abused and neglected for years. Thirteen-year-old Amber was the oldest, so she got the brunt of it. Nonetheless, when the courts put her in foster care, it was hard. Amber missed her dad and she missed her siblings. Thankfully, she had a CASA Volunteer. With his help, Amber got the services she needed to get through the loss of her family. This included moving to another foster home closer to her old school, so she could keep her friends.

Her CASA Volunteer became the trusted adult in her life - the person to call when Amber had a problem. Her foster parents relied on him, too. In time, the foster home became her permanent home, and Amber thrived. She did so well in school that she started working part time to save money for college.

Over the course of five years, this CASA Volunteer dedicated over 1,200 hours in advocating for Amber. He attended 11 court hearings, and visited her close to 80 times. This fall, Amber will start her first semester at the University, and it’s hard to say which of them is prouder.

CASA Volunteers can’t count on epiphanies and thank-you cards. Some of the seeds they plant may not bloom until long after their child has moved on. But there are also moments when they know, irrevocably know, that their child’s life has changed for the better because they were there.

As many of you know, the number of children referred to Piedmont CASA during the last year has increased exponentially. Many belong to large sibling groups and some of the family situations are simply horrific.

As we learn more about trauma-informed care, we must include ourselves on the list of people who are affected. Volunteers and staff can be stressed by regularly hearing detailed reports of trauma about children, dealing with the powerful emotional responses of people directly involved in their cases, and with the impact of abuse and violence on the children. A system with limited resources is not always responsive to the needs of young victims who must navigate it, and it can also be stressful for Volunteers and staff. We have to be vigilant and proactive in order to avoid compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma. All so we continue to “fight for justice and believe in the impossible.”
Piedmont CASA Facts as of May 1, 2016

237 children from 128 families are being served this year
46 children are on our wait list
101 children are in foster care
44% of CASA children are girls, 56% are boys
110 Volunteers are active
79 cases have been closed so far this fiscal year
Piedmont CASA turned 21 years old this year

POVERTY SIMULATION

On Saturday, April 23, 2016, nearly 80 men and women participated in Piedmont CASA’s Poverty Simulation at Charlottesville High School. Each participant was assigned the role of a low-income family member living on a limited budget. The goal was simple: keep a roof over your head and pay your bills. Turns out there was nothing simple about it. More photos and information on Pinterest.com/pcasa13

Left photo: a family tries to stretch their budget enough to cover their bills. Middle photo: lining up to make mortgage payments. Right photo: kids have to go to school or the truant officer puts them in detention.

Thank you!
This newsletter only captures a small portion of the difference your support makes to the abused and neglected children in our community

More photos?
PINTEREST.COM/hcasa.13

More info?
PCASA.ORG

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Draw What Makes You Happy

When we set up our Kids4Kids studio at events around the community, we ask children to draw what makes them happy. They draw blue skies, flowers, trains, birds, rainbows - but mostly they draw their families and their homes, which many donate to our Kids4Kids gallery. You can see their work in almost everything we do, including this newsletter, our annual report, and social media. Artwork from the Kids4Kids Gallery is a great help in telling the story of our mission. If you’d like us to set up the studio at one of your events, call us at 434-971-7515, or email kids4kids@pcasa.org.