

The Lookout



The Nine

Lookout Mountain CASA recently graduated nine new volunteers that come from a variety of backgrounds.

*Newlywed, **Jenn Kammerer**, works as a business consultant for a large corporate travel management company.

***Linda Turner** is the proud mother of two boys and a registered nurse.

* **Bethany Carlton**, a former CASA intern, has recently completed a degree in sociology at Covenant College.

***Garnette Thomas** has a degree as a paralegal and has served as a missionary in East Africa, Haiti and Israel.

***Jane Everett** comes to us as a retired high school teacher and guidance counselor. She is also the former coordinator of the Catoosa Family



Collaborative and Teen Council.

***Bill and Margaret Hales**, our first married couple, have a background in Educational Administration and the medical field, respectively. They both share a love for traveling and helping children.

***Margaret Park** retired from the Division of Public

Health in Georgia after twenty five years.

***Marie Waldon** is a registered nurse at Memorial Hospital. She is also our most adventurous CASA having recently developed a love of skydiving!

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2007 STATISTICS

- ◆ 104 foster children advocated for
- ◆ Total volunteer miles: 24,055
- ◆ Total volunteer hours: 2,342
- ◆ CASA Volunteers donated a total of \$37,484 service!



Dear CASAs, juvenile court members and friends,

Welcome to the first Lookout Mountain CASA newsletter. Since our founding in November of 2005, Lookout Mountain CASA's mission has been to provide trained and supervised CASA volunteers to speak for the best interest of abused and neglected children in the foster care system. We are a program of compassionate, concerned individuals who work with all persons involved in a child's case to make sure that the child receives

the services they need and are on the path to a permanent, safe and nurturing home.

I invite you to learn more about the challenging work and dedication of CASA Volunteers, CASA's commitment to educating the community, and the important landmarks and events of 2007 by reading this newsletter or visiting our website, www.LookoutMountainCASA.org. I am confident that you will share my enthusiasm for Lookout Mountain CASA and helping us to one day provide a CASA Volunteer for every child in foster care.

Carleena D. Angwin, Program Director
Lookout Mountain CASA

The Volunteer Perspective

On the CASA website, it lists the qualifications to becoming a volunteer. The main qualification is a sincere concern for children. This is what brought me to the CASA program. I have always had a deep concern for the welfare of children. I worked in a school system for 16 years, 13 of those being in an elementary school working with children from all walks of life. When I read in the newspaper about the CASA volunteer program being started, I knew that was where I wanted to spend my time volunteering. I have not been sorry that I made the decision to do this. There were many volunteer opportunities available, but helping children in foster care seemed to be the most important one for me.

CASA training was intense. We heard stories that would make a lot of people run the other way. I was shocked at some of the stories I heard. Those of us who stayed in the program and became CASA

volunteers have now experienced those stories we heard about during our training. Instead of running the other way, we now run straight to court, to DFCS, to schools, to homes, foster homes, group homes, and even counselor's offices. Our first priority is our CASA children and we work to make sure their voice is heard and their best interests are met.



My first CASA case was a young man who had been removed from his home due to neglect. DFCS placed him in his grandmother's home while his mother worked her case plan. I made an appointment and visited. I was a nervous wreck. The more I talked with him, the easier it became and we established a rapport immediately. When I had to go to court to present my report to the judge, I thought my knees would not stop knocking or my heart stop racing. When the case was called and I had to stand before the judge, I kept thinking please don't ask me anything because I don't know if I can speak without my voice trembling. Luckily, after the judge read my report, he thanked me for such a comprehensive report and all I had to do was say thank you. He did take my recommendation and signed an order accordingly. After my first experience, it has gotten easier. It is a rewarding experience each time you visit your CASA child and their face lights up. They know you care and are there for them. Knowing you are making a difference in a child's life keeps you coming back for more cases.

There are many children in the foster care system. If you have a genuine concern for children and want them to have a voice and if you want to be an advocate for what is in their best interest, CASA volunteering is the way to go. You will not regret making the decision to make a difference in a child's life. —Denise Park, **CASA Volunteer and Advisory Board Member**



It is with great excitement that we announce Lookout Mountain CASA's new Volunteer Coordinator, Kristie Taylor. Kristie

has been a CASA Volunteer with our program since April 2006 and has been a strong advocate for 12 foster children in Dade County. Before becoming a CASA Volunteer, Kristie was a teacher in the Dade County School District. In addition to working with CASA, Kristie is an academic tutor through Sylvan Learning Center and mentors young adults who have aged out of the foster care system.

Program Director, Carleena Angwin, attended a three-day **Gulf States Victim Witness Conference** in Florida this Fall. Inspired to share information learned, she prepared and presented a workshop on Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking to the CASA Network. Topics discussed during the workshop included the following:

- Nearly 2,000,000 trafficked persons are in the United States today. Children and women are brought over on false pretenses and some are forced to have sex with men 30-50 times a day. Other victims are forced into slave labor and beaten and threatened.
- 25 % of all child sex tourists around the world are U.S. citizens.

- An estimated \$9.5 Billion is generated in annual revenue from all trafficking industries.
- The idea of "Online predators" is more complex than the Dateline NBC show portrays. This workshop discussed a new virtual online world where a youth's Avatar is exposed to sexual conduct and sex acts along with 10,000,000 users worldwide.
- Children with webcams are easily able to make money in their Paypal accounts from home by exploiting and exposing themselves to predators in the virtual world.

Since Lookout Mountain CASA believes that the topics of Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking are such important issues to be aware of, we will present this workshop to other groups if requested.

Year in Review

January-Lookout Mountain CASA Website was created by Volunteer Webmaster, Steven Llorca. The website was created as a recruiting and informational source. www.LookoutMountainCASA.org

February-CASA Volunteers, Diane Pelt and Denise Park spoke at the Baptist Pastor Association of Catoosa County about the CASA Program.

March-WRCB-TV Channel 3 reporter, Jamie Hancock, invited Carleena Angwin and Denise Park to talk about CASA on her television show, "Trends".

A CASA informational table was set up at the Chattanooga Outdoor Expo in North Shore's Coolidge Park. Advisory Board member, Vickie Mason, CASA, Ryan Vroegindewey and Carleena Angwin talked to the crowds about CASA and the need for more volunteers.



April-Juvenile Court Judge, Bryant Henry presented a workshop at the Georgia CASA State Conference on (ICPC) Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children.

May-Lookout Mountain CASA learned that we were one of 12 CASA programs from across the United States awarded a \$40,000 New Program Development Grant.

Carleena Angwin spoke with radio host, Jamie Hancock on her show "Issues Chattanooga" which aired over two weekends on 96.5 and 92.3. A sample of the show is available on our website.

June-Lookout Mountain CASA Advisory Board planned an event to appreciate the CASA Volunteers and the work they do for the foster children of Northwest Georgia. CASA, Ron Reese, and his wife, Lynn, hosted the event.

Ryan Vroegindewey, a Covenant College graduate and CASA Volunteer left the area and traveled to Benin, West Africa to begin a two year service as a Peace Corps volunteer.

July-CASA board members, staff and volunteers from across Georgia attended Governor Sonny Perdue's bill signing of CASA House Bill 270 in Atlanta. The bill clarifies and clearly defines the role of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) in Georgia's law.

August-Kristie Taylor was hired as Lookout Mountain CASA's first Advocate Coordinator.

September-9 individuals were selected to participate in the 10-week CASA Pre-Service Training Class.



October-Carleena Angwin and Kristie Taylor spoke at the Walker County Retired Teacher's Association in Rossville, GA.

November-A graduation ceremony was held and 9 new citizens were sworn in as CASA Volunteers. Juvenile Court Judges, Bryant Henry and McCracken Poston spoke.

Carleena Angwin spoke at the Catoosa County Retired Teacher's Association in Ringgold, GA.

CASA Birthdays

Bethany Carlton—January 8

Donna Christol—January 17

Marlene Clopton—January 22

Bob Thompson—March 12

Bill Hales—March 21

CASA, Margaret Park, was recently awarded the **James Alley Award for Outstanding Lifetime Achievement in Rural Health**. This award is presented to the practitioner, educator, public health employee, or other individual who has excelled over a lifetime in service to rural people, either directly or indirectly.



Margaret retired from the Division of Public Health after 25 years. She then served as Executive Director of Georgia Public Health Association for 6 1/2 years. She has dedicated her life to serving others and Lookout Mountain CASA is proud to have her join us as an advocate for children.

Congratulations on your recognition for a lifetime of service in public health!



**It's about helping abused
and neglected children
find a place of safety.**



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Join us for **CASA** and Foster Youth Day at the Capitol

CASA and Foster Youth Day at the Capitol will be Tuesday, Feb. 12th, at the State Capitol in Atlanta. The event provides the opportunity for CASA staff, volunteers and advisory board members to meet with legislatures and inform them of the importance of the CASA program and the impact CASA has with foster children in our communities.



New this year, Georgia CASA has arranged for an optional guided tour of the capitol after the luncheon. Staff and volunteers may be interested in hearing more about the history of the Capitol from a knowledgeable guide. If you are interested in participating in this event, please contact us at 423-255-6146.

