



**Summer
2015**

“CASA for York County supports and provides volunteer advocacy for abused and neglected children, enabling them to thrive in a safe, permanent home.”

The Tale of Two CASA Advocates

We are blessed with many great supporters as donors, advocates, and board members. Here are the stories of two of our volunteer advocates, Jane Jensen and Tom Schmid, who also support the CASA program as a board member and as donors. Incidentally, Jane is Tom’s daughter and they joined CASA for York County around the same time.

JANE JENSEN — I first became active with CASA for York County in November 2011 as a member of the board. At the time, I was interested in advocating for children, but wasn't sure I would be able to make the time commitment needed to be a volunteer. I thought that involvement with the board would be less of a commitment, but would still enable me to be involved and support this important program. The Board of Directors meets monthly and the board members are also involved on committees which oversee different aspects of necessary board activity. As part of my board membership, I have also enjoyed working on the PR and Fundraising committee to help raise awareness in the community about CASA for York County and to help recruit additional volunteers. Through this role, I became more aware of the need for volunteers and really began to feel that it was something I could possibly do. I thought about attending the volunteer training to learn more about what volunteers do, and I felt it would be beneficial to my role as board and committee member to complete the training.

My father had recently retired and was asked by another board member to consider becoming a CASA advocate. I learned that he was planning to go through new volunteer training, so I decided to join his class. I'm not sure that my involvement with the CASA program actually had anything to do with my father also becoming involved, except that he might have been more familiar with the program because of my role on the board. It was fun to work through the 30 hour training class alongside him, and we were both sworn in along with the other class members in April 2013. We learned about the role of CASA volunteers who are appointed by a judge to be the voice for abused and neglected children in the court system.

At that point, I realized that there were more children needing CASA advocates in York County than those with an advocate, so I decided to go ahead and ask to be assigned to a case. I still wasn't sure if I would be able to commit enough time to do the job well, but I figured that any advocate was better than none. While there have been times I wished I could check in more often or commit more time, it hasn't been more difficult than any of the other calendar juggling all of us do on a regular basis. Once I met the child and family, I realized it was important enough to make time for, and it didn't feel like a burden. That case has since closed, and I am working on another case which is nearing its completion. I find it rewarding to see the positive improvements that families can make with proper support and resources and to be a familiar face to the child as they go through the court process. I knew that I would enjoy working with the children, but I have been surprised how much I have also *(continued on next page)*



Jane watches as her CASA child draws a picture.

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enjoyed getting to know their families and watching them grow and make the necessary changes to provide a safe and stable home for the child.

A CASA advocate/volunteer meets at least monthly with the abused or neglected child(ren) they advocate for and also gathers information about the circumstances in the child's life and why the child was brought into the court system. The volunteer writes court reports to speak out for the child in court and to advocate for the best interest of the child. Our intention is to see the children thriving in safe and permanent homes.

This is an important program that can't exist without regular people like you and me stepping up to help. That help can come in many forms: donations, assisting on a committee, board membership, or volunteering to be an advocate.

By Jane Jensen

TOM SCHMID — has been a volunteer for about 2 ½ years now. Even though his first case is closed and behind him, he has taken on a new case because he says, “There is a continuing need for volunteers and it is something I can do to help others in need.” Being a part of positive outcomes for these kids is one of the most rewarding parts of volunteering for Tom, along with meeting other staff and volunteers who are also dedicated to helping children and learning new things.

When Tom retired, another CASA volunteer suggested that he become an advocate as something positive to do with his time. Meanwhile, his daughter was being recruited to the Board of Directors. It was not their intent to both volunteer at the same organization but it has allowed them the option to occasionally share the situations they are working with, though Tom says this is rare. It has also helped Tom to better understand some of the issues and behaviors of his adopted grandchildren. The biggest surprise for him as been learning the variety of situations, kinds of problems, laws, complications, and resources all involved in the cases.

Regarding the families that we work with, Tom wants you to remember that people are just people. Most of all, the families have various problems that they are dealing with that contribute to the situation. Most of them want to solve their problems and they have good intentions. Some of those problems are of their own creation. Sometimes the problems are mental illness or drugs or poverty. Whatever has brought the families to this point, it's usually something complex and the responsibility of more than one party. This means that more than one party is necessary in the resolution. If it is not corrected, these problems have a tendency to repeat with each generation until adequate assistance is received.

So what can you do to help? Tom says that more people could advocate, but if that is not for you, then you could also help out by making a financial donation as well as becoming informed and speaking up when you see a suspect situation. Looking away from bad situations and remaining ignorant of the problems or the need to report them does nothing to stop abuse. If you are thinking about becoming an advocate, Tom describes the role as meeting with the child, foster parents, parents, and everyone else in the case to help determine and recommend the best outcomes and plans for the child. Don't hesitate to volunteer. Even though the situations are difficult, no one is forced to take a case he/she is not able to handle. You don't have to be an expert. Advocates observe and report to the court what they believe would be in the best interest of the child. They also report anything that the child or another related party may want the court to know. Most of the time, all you need is common sense and to remain open-minded about the family situations and cultural differences. Even if you may not like what you see, it is not always a good reason to keep a child from the home. Kids need permanency. Most of the time reunification is the best option if the family can keep the child safe and meet the child's needs.

By Melody K. Coehoorn



Tom talks with his CASA youth after a hearing.



*Your GIFTS are
much appreciated.
Send a check to:*

**CASA for York County
510 N Lincoln Ave.
York, NE 68467**

**Or give online at:
www.casaforyork.org**

Clients at Epworth Village made 1000 Origami Cranes, underwritten by Tom & Suzanne Vanous, then donated half of the money to CASA for York County.

YOU can help make a difference - Here are ideas

Kopsa-Otte, Midwest Bank, Youth Leadership York, and York State Bank raised money by holding Jean Days, where their employees can wear jeans to work if they do-

***BECOME A VOLUNTEER
call the CASA office
#402-362-5454***

We also accept gifts of :

- *Educational toys/books
- *Blankets
- *Coloring/Activity Books and Crayons
- *Gift cards or Chamber checks for the purchase of office materials and volunteer training supplies.

To Unsubscribe from this newsletter please call the CASA office @ 402-362-5454



Volunteer Sue Cordes and her CASA child pick out a toy donated during the drive hosted by Grand Central Foods.

CASA for York Co.
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www.casaforyork.org

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CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN



To report Child
Abuse or Neglect
call
1-800-652-1999

We've moved!

Don't worry. We haven't gone far. In fact we're just a couple floors up from our previous location in the York County Courthouse. As of August 18, we are on the second floor in Room 200.

Thank you to York County Department of Roads, Denny Crowell, Penny Larson, Sherry Tonniges, Joel Coehoorn, and Don Keelan-White for your assistance!

*"It's never too late to be what you
might have been."
~ George Eliot*

