



**Volume No. 1  
CASA for York County  
FALL/WINTER 2023**



Fall and Winter greetings from all of us at CASA for York County. It's time to catch up and let you know what we have been up to. Numbers of abused and neglected children who have been removed from their homes and placed in foster care continue to rise. At this time we have 19 active CASA volunteers giving of themselves to represent the best interest of 43 children ... and still we have children waiting for a CASA of their own. Numbers of children in need over the last three years are higher than have ever been seen in York County. Training will be taking place after the holidays, so if you are interested in becoming a CASA please call the office. A training is just around the corner.

As you will see from this newsletter, we have had a busy spring, summer and now fall! Of course, advocating for children is the most important thing we do. In addition, the Run Child Abuse Out of Town Color Run, first annual Don't Duck the Issue Duck Race, Nebraska State CASA Conference, Corteva Backpack and School Supply Giveaway, Halloween Trick or Treating, and lunch and learns have kept us hopping. It's all good, it's all necessary to provide the support and training our CASAs need to make a real difference for these kids who have been through so much.

*We are thankful and grateful for your continued support of our mission; we couldn't do this without you.*



**Wow! 80 Backpacks and Supplies!  
Thank you Corteva!  
Because of you the school year is off  
to a great start for York County kids**



# Coffee with Elizabeth

## JV56-14

Does that combination of letters and numbers mean anything to you? I would assume the answer is no. This is what a case number looks like. It's a number very similar to those that are used to label and classify the children CASA works with. For many children in foster care, this coded string of numbers is the entirety of their identity in the courtroom.

For so many involved in this case, JV56-14 is seen as a set of tasks to accomplish, an obstacle to overcome, and another case to be forgotten once it has been "handled."

One of the most important jobs of a CASA volunteer is to personify JV56-14. A CASA ensures that JV56-14 is given a voice, a face, and a story. The CASA on this case knows that JV56-14 is Hailey. The CASA knows that Hailey is 7 years old, loves mint chip ice cream, and sleeps with a stuffed sloth named Franklin. The CASA is in no hurry to rush Hailey and her case through the system. The CASA will take their time to get to know Hailey, understand her needs, and ensure that her needs and desires are heard in court. Ensure that the home she ends up in is safe, permanent and loving.

Behind every case number is a child with a story, dreams, and a future. Hailey is so much more than JV56-14, and her CASA will make sure that her story is heard.



**Everyone has a story.** We would like to share with you just one of the stories from CASA for York County. We all know stories have many purposes; this one is no different. So, if you have a spare moment, you are invited into the world of a foster child and their CASA ...

Cloe was a teen placed out of the home by the court when she found out she was getting a CASA to advocate for her. She says, "I wasn't exactly sure what to expect, I really didn't know what a CASA was, all I had been told was that I was going to be part of the program. But now I wouldn't change a thing.

"My CASA was and still is a very important part of my life. I made a lot of mistakes and she's been with me through all of them, and helped me get past them."


**Cloe says, "I feel like without the CASA program I wouldn't have been able to get through foster care. My CASA helped me in ways I can't really explain. She has been the best mentor I could've asked for; she gave me advice and helped me through a lot of situations. We talk every week ... have in person interactions at least once a month, even though I aged out in January."**

Hannah decided to take the 30 hours of CASA training after working in the child welfare world in several capacities for years. She understood the need for foster kids to feel supported and have a stable adult in their lives. She saw the importance of making sure cases were moving along and decisions were being made in the best interest of the children. She says, "I put off becoming a CASA for years due to my own children being young but once they were in school, I decided it was time and jumped right in."

And jump right in was what Hannah did. You see, CASAs choose the cases they take and Hannah chose a teen girl. "I really took on a teenager at the recommendation of CASA staff ... I thought I wanted a young foster kid and even a sibling group. But my CASA match turned out to be the right fit for what I was able to give as a volunteer and working mom! And I would take on another CASA case with a teen youth in a heartbeat! They can tell you what they are thinking (good and bad) as they are more aware of what's happening in their lives. And they need a strong, supportive, stable, non-judgmental person with all the chaos of the child welfare system and adolescence happening around them."


Hannah and Cloe navigated the court and child welfare systems together for three years, from May of 2020 until January of 2023. During that time CASA for York County provided Hannah with training and the support of a CASA supervisor. She says, "The CASA training was a wonderful refresher for me. Of all the information and content provided one thing that stood out to me was a video of a former foster youth telling how much of an impact having a CASA in their life had.

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for York County**

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## From the desk of Dan

When it comes time to put together my humble portion of the CASA Newsletter, I always look forward to the possibility of my thoughts motivating the reader in a positive manner. I also enjoy the challenge and see it as an opportunity to influence others in some small way. Despite this, I must admit that privately I always want to hit a "homerun". Not just because it is baseball season, but rather because I want my portion of the newsletter to be profound, meaningful and nothing less than brilliant. A masterpiece and a homerun hit clear out of the ballpark; setting the bar high every step of the way. Setting the bar high, although seemingly admirable, has its disadvantages. By setting the bar too high there is potential for frustration when things fall short of the goal. Homeruns are not always realistic. It can be tiring and can even contribute to feelings of failure when expectations are not met or, back to baseball, a double or a triple can be pretty rewarding. What does this have to do with CASA? Everything! With CASA kids we should have high expectations for them, need to set the bar at an appropriate level. That is easier said than done, because the stakes are high, and their futures at risk. Setting the bar too high can create perceived failure. How realistic our goals are, how we handle the small challenges along the way, and what we communicate to kids when things are not going well are all important. Factoring in their stage of development (age or chronological age) and all the unique differences in our kids is huge. Change can be scary for kids. Their perceptions relating to potential failure can be even more scary for them; particularly those who have experienced trauma and need to feel safe. Setting the bar too low is equally risky.



With my allotted space running out I would like to mention a couple things. First, if you are reading this as a CASA Volunteer don't be surprised if our next quarterly event involves us continuing with what I started above; i.e. appropriate goal setting with our kids and increasing the odds of their success when setting the bar. Second, if you are reading this as someone interested in hearing about volunteering at CASA please give us a call. Would love to have an opportunity to answer any questions you have. Lastly, anyone else with any questions about the program please feel free to call.

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NEBRASKA

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“... Unconditional support, love, care and hope ... I wanted a foster kid to feel these things and know them to be true.” And Hannah did just that; by connecting each week through phone calls, texts, she wrote letters and sent inspirational quotes and greeting cards in addition to face-to-face visits. Sometimes Hannah and Cloe headed outdoors for a walk. Now-a-days they stay in touch with weekly calls, they meet up for dinner, or even an occasional Walmart trip. “She’s doing well as adult living on her own with a stable job and she even took initiative to continue therapy services for herself. I’m quite proud of this young adult,” reports Hannah.

Yes, stories matter; and Cloe and Hannah’s story is just one of many. CASA for York County staff and volunteers work tirelessly to provide area youth ages birth to 19 with a voice because they are in foster care through no fault of their own. A safe, permanent home for these children is the goal. The need is great and the time to help is now. Please help us change a child’s story.



### *It’s Giving Tree Time!*

The very special elves at York State Bank are at it again, working their holiday magic in the lobby of York State Bank’s main office. And they haven’t been the only ones; CASA Advocates have been busy collecting lists which are hanging on the tree.

***From November 13th through December 13th the community is invited to pick a wish-list from the tree and purchase gifts for one of the children CASA volunteers advocate for.***

York State Bank points to the following quote to explain the organization’s reason for giving, “He (Santa) may not be the one that puts the presents under the tree, but his spirit works through us each time we give freely without expectation and each time we spread joy, love and light to another person.” Since 2017, CASA for York County kids have benefited from the York State Bank Giving