



Court Appointed Special Advocates FOR CHILDREN CASA of LOS ANGELES

Winter 2010

Volunteers making a difference one child at a time.

323.526.6666

www.casala.org

A NEW YEAR, A NEW CHAPTER

BY BRUCE HERRON, CASA

As we begin this New Year, I would like to introduce myself to you and share some news about our program. Since retiring from my professional life four years ago, I began serving as a CASA, and I recently joined the Board of CASA of Los Angeles.

My first news item is that our Executive Director, David Melendez, has tendered his resignation. So, until we hire a new E.D., I will be serving as Interim Executive Director. I plan to be in the office four days a week for at least part of the day. Please find me, introduce yourself, and feel free to share your ideas with me.

As most of you know, the economic downturn dealt our program's non-profit budget quite a serious blow in 2008 and 2009. The good news is that we already have very good momentum moving toward reaching our fund raising goals for 2010. And we are continuing to establish new rela-

tionships with supporters all the time. Please know that the fact that CASA volunteers are financially supporting the program, in addition to their hours of volunteer service, greatly enhances the power of our ongoing financial appeals. Thank you!

The other new development here at CASA this year is our Strategic Plan, which grew out of long and intense discussions with staff, colleagues, and CASA volunteers. These sessions focused on the need we know so well: *we want to serve more children*. It was determined by our Board that by innovative use of the remarkable skills and strengths of our experienced volunteers as well as our exceptionally gifted staff, we can support an expanding number of CASAs to help meet that need in our county.

We are currently in the pilot phase of this plan, but in time, some of the newly graduated CASAs will receive

the support of both an experienced CASA (known as a CASA Coordinator) as well as a Program Supervisor. The CASA Coordinator will provide encouragement and routine case support for new CASAs. This will create more time for the Supervisors to advise, strategize, and deal with the challenging case situations and judgment calls that they are so excellent at managing. With the addition of volunteer CASACoordinators, our program will be able to expand the number of youth we serve and the program itself will be much more cost effective.

It is satisfying to me that I can bring promising news to you- our valued volunteers, friends and supporters. I believe we have the resources and drive to meet our budget goals and the strategy to make our dreams of serving many more deserving children a reality. I look forward to working with you this coming year.

OUR HEROES

AT

FRANDZEL ROBINS BLOOM & CSATO, L.C.

BY CAROL MARLOWE AND SUE THOMPSON

This year, we wish to give very special recognition to the Law Firm of **Frandzel Robins Bloom & Csato** for their long standing and unwavering commitment to the work of CASA of Los Angeles. CASA volun-

teers and donors who have attended our events in the past, will likely recognize the name **Bob Frandzel**, in whose honor Friends of CASA presents the Bob Frandzel Memorial Award to outstanding supporters of CASA of

Los Angeles. The award was established in recognition of **Mr. Frandzel's** many years of service and extraordinary dedication to helping children as a Member of the CASA Board of Directors.

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As the founding partner of **Frandzel Robins Bloom & Csato, L.C.**, Mr. Frandzel also created and nurtured in the firm a culture of support for CASA that continues to this day. For example, partner **Patricia Trendacosta** is just ending her term as President of the Board of Directors, and partner **Steve Bloom** is currently serving yet a second term on the Board, as well.

During this past Holiday season, members of the law firm may have surpassed their previous generosity:

The firm donated 54 very nice and gently used computers, not only for use in the CASA office, but also for our CASA youth, and they did not just deliver the computers to the office without considering the special needs and limited resources of CASA children. **Debra Gray**, Director of Administration for the firm, took the lead in organizing preparation of the computers, which included purchasing 18

“mice” and 11 new keyboards so that each computer was complete and ready for use. Ms. Gray also engaged the services of **Michael Kemps at Innovative Computing Systems**, who donated the 19 hours it took to wipe the computers clean and reload them with Windows XP, including the Office XP, Word, Excel and Outlook programs, which were provided by the law firm. Needless to say, our CASA volunteers and their supervisors were thrilled to help these computers find new homes with our CASA youth!

Amazingly, there was yet another chapter in the law firm’s generous holiday plans for CASA children. Under the coordination of paralegal **Eleane Pang**, gift cards totaling more than \$8,000 were also donated by the firm and its individual staff members. As CASAs, we know gift cards are a highly prized source of holiday joy for the children. Being the owner of a gift card creates the opportunity for autonomy for the children: they actu-

ally get to focus on choosing exactly what they would like to have, rather than passively absorbing whatever comes to them through foster care. And, it is truly a special moment for CASAs to watch this happen, too.

This is just a short summary of one Holiday season’s gift-giving to CASA kids and to our program from **Frandzel Robins Bloom and Csato, L.C.** We are thankful and grateful for their steadfast support over many years, which has made better lives possible for the children we serve and contributed immeasurably to the quality and strength of CASA of Los Angeles.



October 2009 CASA Graduates

From left to right:

Marty Spear
Karen Travis
Lisa Bail
Ginny White
Chantel Paniagua
Delphia Jones
Jeanette Williams

Mary Lynn Richmond
Arlene Forester
Janice Goodman
Mary Winger
Barbara Work
Nancy Casden
Amy Crowley

Nancy Lyon
Susan Brown
Blanca De Lao
Jennifer Coscart
Denise Friedman
Allison Bonburg
Karin Fielding

Richard Redman
May Arakaki
Rosemary Stocksdale
Cecilia Raymundo
Ashley Loeb
José Mesa
Bert Argo

IT'S THE HOLIDAY SEASON... THE HOLIDAY SEASON



L to R: CASA Board Members Sue Marshall and Joanne Solov, who is also a CASA!

We would like to give a special thanks to CASA Board Members **Sue Marshall** and **Joanne Solov** for putting on such a marvelous Holiday gathering. From food to toys and books, everyone enjoyed each other's company and good stories.



L to R: CASA Board Member Jacquie Dolan, CASA Patricia Geoghegan, and CASA and Board Member Roger Ridlehoover.

Mixed Greens with Nuts and Dried Fruit

- 1 cup walnuts
- 1 cup pecan halves
- 1 large shallot, minced
- 1/2 cup sherry vinegar
- 1/2 cup balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt & freshly ground pepper
- 5-ounce bags washed salad greens
- 1 cup dried pears, julienned
- 1 cup dried cranberries

1. Preheat the oven to 350°. Spread the nuts on a large baking sheet and bake for 10 minutes, or until golden and fragrant. Let cool, then coarsely chop.
2. In a large bowl, combine the shallot, vinegar, and mustard. Whisk in the olive oil and walnut oil in a thin, steady stream. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Add the mixed greens, nuts and dried pears and cranberries to the bowl and toss.



Top Row: L to R: CASA Steve Rothenberg and Supervisor Melinda Murphy
Bottom Row L to R: CASAs Toska Garner, Antionette Oliver, and Gina Erwin.



L to R: CASAs Mary Lynn Richmond and Blanca DeLao



L to R: CASA Lynn James, Supervisor Lauri Halderman and CASA Maithe Harispe



L to R: CASAs Christine Beilinson, Eileen Sheiniuk, and Supervisor Carolyn McGee



L to R: CASAs Barbara Bruner, Sue Redman, and Richard Redman



Thanks To Some of Our Generous Donors

The Rose Hills Foundation
 The Mark Hughes Foundation
 Frandzel Robins Bloom & Csato, L.C.
 Ziering Family Foundation
 Thomas & Dorothy Leavey Foundation
 Atlas Family Foundation
 Watson Land Company
 The Dillon Henry Foundation
 J.B. & Emily Van Nuys Charities
 Carrie Estelle Doheny Foundation
 Anthony Shaw
 Selman & Breitman LLP

Special thanks for holiday gifts

Frandzel Robins Bloom & Csato, L.C.
 Sarah Campbell & RELAC Camping Club
 USC Kappa Alpha Theta
 St. Benedict Parrish
 South Bay Quilters Guild
 Giroux Glass, Inc.
 Rhea Pearlman and Danny DeVito
 Occidental College Kappa Alpha Theta
 St. Pius X Religious Education Program
 Self Realization Fellowship
 Maria Briseño
 Camille Gomez and Friends
 Marilyn Bloom
 Delta Sigma Delta
 Ellen B. Klugman
 Alexis Oliver
 Louie & Laura Elisaldez



Glamour Gowns 2010

*Saturday, March 13
 at the
 Los Angeles
 Convention Center*

For the ninth year, CASA of Los Angeles will participate in this special event. Any high school age girl in foster care in Los Angeles County will receive a free formal gown for her prom or other special event.

If you have not participated in this event before, we invite you to save the date and come help make a foster girl feel like a "princess for a day."

Girls must be registered to participate. Details to follow.

Volunteers are needed to set-up, serve as personal shoppers on the day of the event and clean up.

*If you are interested in helping out, donating items, or would like more information, please contact **Chantel Paniagua**, Volunteer Support Associate in the CASA Office at 323.526.6316 or Cpaniagua@lasuperiorcourt.org*



Rosalie Cauley

By Lauri Halderman, CASA Supervisor

Rosalie Cauley, a CASA since 2001, accepted the responsibility of being the CASA for Ted in August 2007. Ted, age 14 ½ at the time, had been voluntarily placed in a foster home after his removal from his legal guardian due to physical abuse. After voluntary reunification services were not successful, Ted was suitably placed by the court in foster care. **Rosalie** was appointed by the Court to gather information about Ted's academic difficulties and a possible injury. For the first nine months of **Rosalie's** appointment, Ted was not very communicative or welcoming of her involvement. Some of his answers were only one or two word responses. **Rosalie** persisted.

When former family friends were contacted as DCFS tried to find Ted's family of origin, the picture slowly began to change. The friends had cared for Ted, had important original documents of Ted's and wanted to be involved in Ted's life (they had lost track of him when

DCFS got involved prior to the legal guardianship). When told at Court about this contact, Ted remembered these friends. He had spent a lot of time with them when he was younger and he wanted to reconnect with them. **Rosalie** quickly contacted the family to get more information for the Court about the situation and to clarify their intentions. With encouragement of DCFS and **Rosalie**, the family rapidly got their home fixed to meet standards and Ted was placed with them. Finally, Ted began to talk with **Rosalie** a little more about what was happening but he was still guarded. The CASA visits were still only happening in the home or in the yard.

Then, one day about 1 ½ years into her appointment as Ted's CASA, **Rosalie** took Ted out to lunch at a restaurant (not fast food). Two hours of conversation later, the ice had melted and Ted began to welcome **Rosalie's** presence and trust her. As Ted had expressed interest in auto mechanics, **Rosalie** decided the next

visit would occur at Peterson Automotive Museum in order to expose him to the automotive world. On the day of the visit, Ted got up an hour early because he was so excited to go the museum and he could not decide what to wear. What a 180 degree turn from the one/two word answers of the year before. Now, **Rosalie** and Ted talk about school, transitioning youth issues, service to the community, and his concerns about his family. Ted has even volunteered to participate in community service projects along side **Rosalie**.

Legal guardianship was granted to the family friends in the Fall of 2009. The case could have been closed but Ted did not want the Court to end its jurisdiction because **Rosalie** would no longer be his CASA. **Rosalie** truly exemplifies the patience and persistence needed to be a CASA.

Fruits of our Labor

Three heart warming events have come to our attention that reflect the long term value of our volunteers' work and commitment:

- ★ A young woman attended an Orientation to learn more about becoming a CASA, and while chatting with her after the presentation, **Sue Thompson** learned that the reason she had decided to pursue joining our program was that when she was in foster care, she had been helped by a CASA volunteer herself.
- ★ **Rene Casarez** fielded a call from a young man back East who said that he had just learned that his sister had been taken in to

foster care. He told **Rene** that he had had a CASA when he was younger and was living in Los Angeles. He wanted to find out if his sister could have help from a CASA just as he had been given help by his CASA. **Sue** found the courtroom where the sister's case would be heard, and she went up and asked for the referral. The brother remembered and valued his CASA and his sister has now been assigned her own CASA.

- ★ During a detention hearing for an infant, the young mother – a former foster youth – asked the judicial officer if her child could have a CASA. Somehow, she knew that asking for a CASA was an act of caring for her little child who was just entering the world of foster care.



A Review by
CASA Mary Lynn Richmond

A must-read for all CASAs should be Cupcake (yes, this is the author's real name!) Brown's riveting memoir, *A Piece Of Cake*. Cupcake's story begins as she enters the foster care system as a young girl. In a stark, direct, and shocking narrative, she chronicles her many years of physical and mental abuse at the hands of a variety of perpetrators- sadly, often her caregivers- and her involvement in prostitution, drug-use, gangs, violence, and crime. Yet, along her way, a smoldering spark in Cupcake slowly ignites a nascent self-understanding that she could have a life better than the one she seems pre-destined to lead. Paramount to Cupcake's journey is the goodness of fellow-human beings in her work place and in her loosely defined social circle who provide her flashes of unconditional support, compassion, tolerance, and understanding. While initially wrenching to read, in the end, *A Piece of Cake* is truly a most inspirational and spellbinding personal account. For CASAs, the importance of embracing a book such as Cupcake's can only be accentuated as we go about our work in advocating for children. As Cupcake's memoir proves, the spark to overcoming hopelessness may be there all along; it just needs a bit of fanning and attention to make it come alive.

Recommended Reading
from our Library

Legal Issues in Child Abuse and Neglect – “Familiarizes health professionals, social workers, etc. with the innumerable legal implications in this day to day work with abused and neglected children.”

Children of Immigration – “In the midst of the largest wave of immigration in American history, this book addresses how immigrant children fare in America.”

The Out of Sync Child – “Recognizing and coping with Sensory Integration Dysfunction.”

The Out of Sync Child has Fun – “Activities for kids with Sensory Integration Dysfunction.”

Reviving Ophelia – Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls– “An eye opening look at the everyday dangers of being young and female, and how adults can help.”

Listed provided by **CASA Kay Van Horn**.

**CASAs Helping
CASA of LA**

Thanks go to CASAs **Delores Judge, Betty Freitag, Alice Horevitz, Sue Redman, Renne Bilson, Jan Barcus, and Barbara Bruner** who helped Chantel make follow up calls inviting CASAs to attend our Holiday Party. As a result, this year's event was very well attended even though it rained again on party day!

While being honored at a large luncheon spotlighting ten Grandparents as parents, **CASA Erma Glover's** work with CASA was explained during her introduction. Many attendees were made aware of the importance **Erma** places on finding time to volunteer with foster children in addition to her role as a relative caretaker. CASAs **Marlene Rapkin** and **Carol Marlowe**, and Supervisor **Carolyn McGee** attended the event and spread the word about CASA.

CASA **Rita Giamaniaro** moved our library to its new location in the front area of the office.

The Glamour Gown Holiday Boutique featured a table where CASAs **Irene Cordoba** and **Barbara Bruner** assisted Chantel and Board member **Jacquie Dolan** to introduce CASA to the boutique shoppers.

CASA **Michelle Oyler** wrote an article featuring CASA which was published in the Palisadian-Post on October 28, 2009. In eloquently responding to the *Los Angeles Times*. Times coverage of the endless issues with children in the dependency system, **Michelle** identified herself as an active CASA volunteer. And she challenged the greater Los Angeles community to get involved and do the right thing for these kids.



mark your calendars!

upcoming court holidays & closures

Fri, Feb 12 *Lincoln Day*
 Mon, Feb 15 *President's Day*
 Wed, Feb 17 *Court Closure*
 Wed, Mar 17 *Court Closure*
 Wed, Mar 31 *Cesar Chavez Day*
 Wed, Apr 21 *Court Closure*

Wed, May 19 *Court Closure*
 Mon, May 31 *Memorial Day*
 Wed, Jun 16 *Court Closure*
 Mon, Jul 5 *Independence Day*
 Mon, Sept 6 *Labor Day*
 Mon, Oct 11 *Columbus Day*

February 2010

Wed, Feb 3

Coastline CASA Book Club
 11:30 a.m., Los Angeles
 Book: *G-Dog and the Homeboys*
 by Celeste Fremon
 RSVP freitagfamily@verizon.net

Mon, Feb 22

CASA In-Service
 Role of the Public Health Nurse
 Presented by Betsy Blankfield,
 RN, BSN

NEW CASA WINTER TRAINING SESSION (Days 1-3 of 5)

8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. daily
 Monterey Park
 Tue, Feb 23
 Thu, Feb 25
 Fri, Feb 26

March

NEW CASA WINTER TRAINING SESSION (Days 4-5)

8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. daily
 Monterey Park
 Tue, Mar 2
 Thu, Mar 4

Sat, Mar 13

San Gabriel Valley Book Club
 11:30 a.m., Los Angeles
 Book: *G-Dog and the Homeboys*
 by Celeste Fremon
 RSVP sueredman@att.net

Mon, Mar 15

Orientation for Prospective CASAs
 12:30-2:00 p.m. Monterey Park

April

Tue, Apr 6

Orientation for Prospective CASAs
 12:30-2:00 p.m. Monterey Park

Fri-Mon, Apr 16-19

National CASA Annual Conference
 Atlanta, GA

Mon, Apr 26

Orientation for Prospective CASAs
 2:00-3:30 p.m. Monterey Park

Thu, April 29

Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon
 11:30—2:00
 California Endowment

May

Thu, May 13

Orientation for Prospective CASAs
 2:00-3:30 p.m. Monterey Park

June

Thu & Fri, Jun 3-4

Beyond the Bench XX:
*Collaboration Works! Improving
 Outcomes and Achieving Safety and
 Stability in Challenging Times*
 San Diego Marriott Hotel and Marina

NEW CASA

SUMMER TRAINING SESSION

8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. daily
 Monterey Park
 Tue, Jun 22
 Thu, Jun 24
 Fri, Jun 25
 Mon, Jun 28
 Wed, Jun 30

CASA of Los Angeles

CASA of Los Angeles recruits, trains, and supports volunteers who advocate for abused and neglected children in court and the community.

Main Office

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<i>Program Assistants</i>	Tanisha Brown Uriel Ocampo Bree Taddwilliams Alice Yu
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<i>Consultant</i>	Sue Thompson

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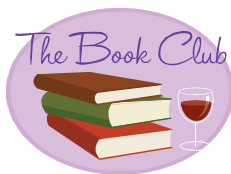
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 Hal Brown, Founding Chairman, Friends of Child Advocates
 (Deceased)

Please consider attending the
National **CASA** Conference

CASA Book Clubs

Have fun and earn continuing ed hours!



San Gabriel Valley's book club will meet on **March 13**, at **12:00 p.m.**, at Homegirl Café in Los Angeles. The selected book is *G-Dog and the Homeboys* by Celeste Fremon. To RSVP for this meeting, e-mail sueredman@att.net.

The **Coastline** CASAs will meet on **February 3**, at **11:30 a.m.** at Homegirl Café in Los Angeles. The selected book is *G-Dog and the Homeboys* by Celeste Fremon. To RSVP for this meeting, e-mail freitagfamily@verizon.net. All are welcome!

To receive a copy of the book club guidelines, contact Chantel Paniagua at cpaniagua@lasuperiorcourt.org.

Start a CASA book club in your area!

Contact **Sue Redman** at sueredman@att.net.



www.casaforchildren.org

CASA IN-SERVICE

Public Health Nurse

“Role of the Public Health Nurse
with children in foster care”

Monday, February 22, 2010

12:00 p.m. to 1:30p.m.

Presented by **Betsy Blankfield,**
RN, BSN
Public Health Nurse

Available Online!

To view the *current issue* of the CASA news-
letter, go to the website at www.casala.org
and click on the “Current Advocates” link.