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CASA of Los Angeles Seeks Dedicated Volunteers To Make A Difference One Child at a Time

Los Angeles, CA. – June 7, 2006 – CASA of Los Angeles, a non-profit public/private partnership between the Los Angeles Superior Court and Friends of CASA, seeks dedicated volunteers to advocate on behalf of foster children trying to navigate the often confusing and sometimes frightening court system.

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) volunteers are the bridge between the often-bleak reality of a foster care existence and a brighter future. After training and subsequent appointment by a judge, volunteers become strong vocal crusaders for children whose futures rest in the hands of Dependency Court judges. CASA volunteers work one-on-one with judges and children, biological and foster parents, teachers, therapists and others involved in the childrens' lives. They conduct independent investigations of a foster child's circumstances. Findings are reported to the court by the volunteer who then advocates for the child's best interests – how to best serve them in education, health care and other important issues.

"Imagine yourself losing your parents and family, and not because of anything you did," said Bryan Borys, Executive Director of CASA of Los Angeles. "Despite the best intentions of everyone in the foster care system, it is often difficult for a child to have one person who can voice his or her needs, desires and interests. A CASA volunteer helps a child be heard, helps them have a say in his or her life, and helps the child feel cared for and loved."

Interested candidates must be at least 21 years of age and willing to commit at least one year to the program. Potential volunteers attend an orientation meeting, are interviewed, undergo a criminal background check and complete 36 hours of training before being sworn as a CASA volunteer. "CASA volunteers are ordinary people who achieve extraordinary things," says Borys. "You'd be astounded by what a difference a single person can make in the life of a foster child."

Established in 1978, CASA of Los Angeles, which operates under professional standards and California law, was one of the first of 900 CASA programs across the country. It is a public-private partnership between the Los Angeles Superior Court and Friends of CASA, a non-profit organization. CASA of Los Angeles recruits, trains and supports nearly 400 volunteers, who help more than 600 children each year.

"The CASA volunteer is the voice of the community in the court," says Borys. "If the measure of a community's compassion is how it cares for those least able to care for themselves, then volunteering to help a foster child is the best indicator of that compassion."

For more information on CASA of Los Angeles or to become a volunteer, please call 323-526-6666 or visit www.casala.org.

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