



# CASA MATTERS



CASA of the Tennessee Heartland, Inc.

Court Appointed Special Advocates for Abused and Neglected Children

Summer 2010

## Summertime in Tennessee...

Summertime for many children means going to the pool, getting ice-cream, watching fireworks and enjoying family picnics at the park.

Unfortunately, It's not that way for all children. It's heartbreaking to know that right now, here in our community, over 160 innocent children are in the juvenile court system, with no one to speak on their behalf. These children have been removed from their homes by no fault of their own. They have been abused and neglected. No one has been standing up for them. No one has been advocating for them. No one has been a voice for them.

As devastating as this is, there is a light of hope. Since January, 80 abused and neglected children in this same overwhelming situation have had an advocate. A friend. A voice. A CASA volunteer.

Seeing the difference a CASA volunteer makes in a child's life – a child who feels lost, confused and hopeless – is why I believe so whole-heartedly in this work and mission. When highly trained CASA volunteers step in, they make positive differences in the lives of children. Advocating on the child's behalf, a CASA volunteer works to ensure that the child is placed in a safe, nurturing and permanent home as quickly as possible. Volunteers also advocate for beneficial services to help the child recover from the trauma of abuse they have suffered. Over the last two and a half years working for CASA, I have made the commitment to ensure the continuation of such an important mission. Seeing first hand the reports of children here in our own backyards that have been pulled from homes where they have been burned, slapped, locked-up and not fed, then left in a system with no clue what is going on or who they can rely on, has put a mission in my heart to do whatever I can to help as many of those children as possible.

I am truly honored to be stepping into the position of Executive Director for CASA of the Tennessee Heartland and am focused on our mission of giving a voice to these children, who so desperately need one. Please partner with us in helping to guarantee that children, right here in our community, can count on having an advocate as they recover from their abuse and seek a safe, permanent and nurturing home. - Naomi Asher



**Number of children currently waiting for a CASA volunteer:**

**Anderson County: 100  
Scott County: 40**



## From the desk of our retiring Board President...

This has truly been an eventful, transitional year for this agency. We have been fortunate to relocate our Scott County Office and Administrative office into spaces which have greatly helped us during this still struggling economy. We have added several vibrant and new board members, and have elected a fantastic new Board President, Valerie Smith. We have capped the year off with the selection of a new Executive Director, Naomi Asher. Naomi is an excellent fit for us with almost three years agency experience, much enthusiasm and strong fundraising skills. We are thrilled to have a dedicated, energetic young Executive Director as we face the next decade.

On a personal note, I am grateful for the opportunity to have served with so many fine people on this Board and in this agency. I know that the future of many children will be much brighter because of this agency's work and dedication. My thanks to each of the caring and giving people involved for what we have been able to accomplish for the children this past year.

Please continue to volunteer, support and give for the children.

Theresa-Vay Smith

## A final message from our retiring Interim Executive Director

For the past year I have had the privilege of serving the children of our communities in a different capacity and seeing our agency from a different perspective. While all non-profits seek to change lives, whose life and how it is changed define the organization. Working for abused and neglected children to restore their belief in the promise of their lives after the basic promises of safety and nurture have been broken is the hardest yet best work available. I am honored to have been a part of that effort over the past six years. And now I need to deliver some well deserved thanks. It has been properly noted that the best and most dedicated people are...volunteers. I salute our volunteers including court volunteers, Board members and supporters, who give of themselves and their resources to gently touch these children's lives. Special thanks are owed to our talented staff who, in addition to all their normal backbreaking job pressures, had to put up with me as well. Our incoming Executive Director, Naomi Asher, will now get to see and experience the joys and occasional disappointments of this job. Please show her the support I felt and continue your support of our agency but most importantly the children we serve. Thank you. - Russ Morel

## Stories from the front lines...

### Anderson County:

On July 6, CASA along with Community Mediation Services hosted a Judicial Forum, featuring the two candidates for Juvenile Court Judge. Both candidates responded to prepared questions from the CASA and CMS boards, as well as a number of questions submitted by the audience. Approximately 86 people were in attendance for this very informative and lively interchange.

**SAVE THE DATE:** CASA will be holding an Ice Cream Social on August 10 from 6-8 pm. This will be an informative and informal get-together for potential volunteers interested in CASA. We want ALL CASAs to come and BRING A FRIEND! Stay tuned for the location and more details on this yummy event!

As of July 12, the Anderson County program has 25 active cases where CASAs are at work. This equals 80 children who are being represented by CASA. Unfortunately, we also have approximately 100 referrals for children who need CASAs.

As always, CASA needs your support! We love to get recommendations and referrals for new potential volunteers from our current family! Please keep us in mind! - Lisa and Ashley

### Scott County:

The Take a Chance for CASA's Kids Annual Raffle was very successful thanks to our wonderful sponsors: FNB of Oneida, ORNL Federal Credit Union, Grand Vista Hotels & Suites, Precision Printing and the numerous individuals who purchased chances.

Now that the raffle is over, we are focused on what means the most to the children - a well trained CASA volunteer. Along with continuing financial support, what CASA needs now more than ever are volunteers, volunteers, volunteers! — and not the orange and white kind!

Here in Scott County, we are currently serving 34 children, each with an assigned CASA volunteer. However, there is a continuing minimum of 40 children who have been placed on a waiting list. These children are waiting to be assigned an advocate who will stand up for them and be their voice in court. You may not feel you could be a CASA court volunteer, but maybe you know someone who would be perfect - please help us by passing along our information. Help us give a child hope by giving them a CASA Volunteer!! Call us today at 423-663-8943! - Christy and Jimmie Sue

**It costs us about \$600 a year to provide an advocate for one child.**

**Please consider making a pledge of just \$50 a month to change a child's life forever.**



## A note from our incoming Board President

As the incoming Board of Directors president I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to the board for bestowing this gracious honor upon me. When I think about the upcoming year, the word that comes to mind is new. We have a new Executive Director, Office Facilities and Board of Directors.

As we continue to improve our operations to better serve the children of Anderson and Scott County, we will be in the process of developing a new strategic plan which will define our goals and objectives for the 2010- 2011 year to identify ways to more efficiently fulfill our mission, explore opportunities for improvement while maintaining solid growth and stability for the agency. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of Theresa-Vay Smith, the outgoing President of the Board, the Board of Directors, the interim Executive Director, Russ Morel and staff in Anderson and Scott County, CASA of the TN Heartland has accomplished much this year to bring about greater financial stability, improve operational efficiency and provide a smooth transition to a new Executive Director. As we focus on the future, I look forward to working with this year's board, volunteers, staff and supporters to make this upcoming year the best that CASA of the TN Heartland has seen.

Sincerely, Valerie D. Smith



# What's coming up?

## **Does your family enjoy tubing?**

If they do, pencil in the week of July 24-31 to head up to Sevierville and take a ride down the river at Smokey Mountain River Romp! The proceeds from that week will be going to provide a day of fun and free tubing for area CASA kids July 28th. This generous company is run by Diane Renfroe (Anderson County volunteer) and her family. Check them out at [www.riverromp.net](http://www.riverromp.net). They will be doing several special things for us throughout the summer to help us raise awareness and funds.

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## **Ice-Cream Social**

If you would like more information about becoming a court or non-court volunteer with the CASA of the Tennessee Heartland Anderson County program, please join us (and get some free ice-cream!) August 10th at Razzleberries Ice-cream in Oak Ridge from 6-8pm.

Please get additional information and  
RSVP to: [Ashley@casatnh.org](mailto:Ashley@casatnh.org)

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## **Upcoming Training Classes**

If you are passionate about helping children and have been thinking about volunteering with us, please contact our administration office. We can answer any questions you might have and get the application process started. Our next training classes for both Anderson and Scott counties are set for August (times TBA) if the set times don't work for you, we can set up an alternative individualized training program. There are currently over 140 children waiting for YOU to speak up for them. Please consider standing up for these precious children.

Call us: 865-425-0888 e-mail us: [Trainer@casatnh.org](mailto:Trainer@casatnh.org)

## **How can I get involved?**

- **Become a court volunteer to advocate for abused and neglected children**
- **Volunteer to help us with special events and mailings**
- **Tell your friends and neighbors about CASA**
- **Provide financial support - at any level**
- **Invite CASA to speak to your church, community groups or workplace**
- **Hang CASA posters or distribute literature in your community**
- **Host a CASA fundraiser (call us for ideas)**

## **Welcome Ashley!**

In July, CASA welcomed Ashley Bryant Cheney as a new volunteer supervisor. Ashley is a recent graduate of Eastern University with a degree in Urban Studies and Community Development. Ashley is trained in cross-cultural leadership and volunteer management. In her spare time, she likes to garden and go hiking with her husband, Matt, and her dog, Nina. She is very excited to meet and work with the CASA volunteers in Anderson County.

## **Who's Who?**

### **Board President**

Valerie Smith

### **Vice President**

Karen Crutchfield

### **Treasurer**

KC Wright

### **Secretary**

Janis Williams

### **Board Members**

Gary Brandon

Camille Hall

Erika Schmelter

### **Board Members**

#### **Emeritus**

Kay Brookshire

Chris Hayes

Don Jared

Bob Wilkinson

### **Executive**

#### **Director**

Naomi Asher

### **Anderson County Program**

Lisa Givonetti

Ashley Bryant-Cheney

### **Scott County Program**

Christy Harness

Jimmie Sue Strange

### **Newsletter Editor**

Naomi Asher



**Where are we?**

Administration Office:

12 Van Hicks Rd.  
PO Box 4426  
Oak Ridge, TN 37830

Anderson County

Program Office

Anderson County  
Court House, Rm 115  
PO Box 833  
Clinton, TN 37716

Scott County

Program Office

575 Scott High Drive  
PO Box 158  
Huntsville, TN 37756

[www.casatnh.org](http://www.casatnh.org)

**How to stay updated on  
CASA of the Tennessee Heartland**

**We have an upcoming new website launch!!  
Check back with us our same web address: [www.casatnh.org](http://www.casatnh.org)**

**Look for us on:**



If you have questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact us, or stop by one of our offices. We are available by phone, fax, regular mail or email. We would love to speak with you!

**Contact Information**

<u>Administrative Office:</u>	<u>Anderson County Program Office:</u>	<u>Scott County Program Office:</u>
865-425-0888(P) / 865-482-9977(F) Naomi - Naomi@casatnh.org	865-463-6850(P) / 865-463-9197(F) Lisa - Lisa@casatnh.org Ashley - Ashley@casatnh.org	423-669-8943(P) / 423-663-8945(F) Christy - Christy@casatnh.org Jimmie Sue - Jimmiesue@casatnh.org

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

