



*"Unless someone like you
cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get
better, it's not." ~ Dr. Seuss*



2014 marks Our 10 Year Anniversary as an Independent Nonprofit

A Child's Story

Josh Kelchner did everything he could to keep his family together. But it almost wasn't enough. The oldest of four children, Josh and his younger siblings first came to the attention of Tennessee child protective services when he was 14 years old. Suffering from drug and alcohol addiction, their mother had been neglecting the children for some time. But it wasn't until a neighbor spotted Josh's baby sister playing on the swing set in her backyard, alone and unsupervised, that child protective services launched an investigation and the children were placed in foster care. Months later, Josh's mother convinced a judge that she was able to care for her children and regained custody of them. But the reality of the situation was troubling. Their mother's focus was still on drugs and alcohol, and again the responsibility of caring for his younger sisters and brother fell to Josh. "I was very single-minded in trying to keep my sisters and brother together. Even though I was still a kid myself, I was the one who raised them, and did everything I could not to lose them," Josh says. Josh succeeded for a while, until their mother moved the family to Florida. This was a violation of her probation, and she was arrested. Their mother went to jail and the children moved in with a family friend for nearly two years before formally re-entering foster care and being placed in three different homes. Soon after, a volunteer guardian ad litem* was appointed to represent the children. As Josh describes it today, it was the volunteer, John, who ensured that the family was not destroyed. "Because of John, we were able to stay in touch even though we were living with different families and had different social workers. He provided stability," says Josh. John made sure that Josh was able to maintain his role as a leader in their family. "I wanted to keep my family close, in my arms every day. Realizing that I could not do that was really hard. But John gave me the next best thing. He made sure my input was included when decisions

In fiscal year 2012/2013, CASA of Northeast TN served 409 children in Greene, Unicoi and Washington Counties with 75 dedicated volunteers. However, there were still over 200 children who were left without an advocate.

were made about the kids—including having a say in the families that eventually adopted them." Josh aged out of foster care when he was 18 and set his sights on an education and career that would enable him to have children of his own one day. In August, he graduated from West Point as a lieutenant. He is getting ready to head to Texas to begin five years of active duty. Josh acknowledges the role that his volunteer advocate played in focusing his natural drive and ambition. "John taught me how to use my head, how to think about the future. Without John I would be an angry person, probably still fighting for some control over my family's life. John helped me become the person I am today.



Lift up a child's voice. A child's life.™

How Do CASA Volunteers Help Children?

CASA volunteers are appointed by judges to watch over and advocate for abused and neglected children, to make sure they don't get lost in the overburdened legal and social service system or languish in inappropriate group or foster homes. Volunteers stay with each case until it is closed and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home. For many abused children, their CASA volunteer will be the one constant adult presence in their lives. Independent research has demonstrated that children with a CASA volunteer are substantially less likely to spend time in long-term foster care and less likely to reenter care.

Who Are CASA Volunteers?

Last year, more than 77,000 CASA volunteers helped 234,000 abused and neglected children find safe, permanent homes nationwide. CASA volunteers are everyday citizens who have undergone screening and training with their local CASA program. At CASA of Northeast TN, 55 dedicated volunteers, served over 400 children in 2013. That is nowhere near enough to advocate for over 600 children in our local court systems.

Who Are the Children CASA Volunteers Help?

Judges appoint CASA volunteers to represent the best interests of children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect. Each year, more than 600,000 children experience foster care in this country. Because there are not enough CASA volunteers to represent all of the children in care, judges typically assign CASA volunteers to their most difficult cases. CASA of Northeast volunteer served 409 children this past year in the juvenile courts of Washington, Unicoi and Greene Counties, and the Juvenile Court of Johnson City.



CASA Volunteer of the Year for 2013

CASA Volunteer of the Year for 2013 was awarded to Sue Holzschuh. Sue has been a CASA volunteer for 8 years. As a retired nurse since 2004, she enjoys giving back to the community by volunteering as a CASA advocate and at the Niswonger Children's Hospital. She is also involved with Honor Flight of Northeast TN, an organization that provides guardians for local WWII veterans to travel to the D Day Memorials. Sue's dedication to her community and to the children served by CASA is appreciated by all of us at CASA of Northeast TN.

This is just one example of Sue's relentless efforts to see that children are in a safe, permanent home as quickly as possible. In November of 2012, the Sheriff's Department filed a petition to have 3 children removed from a home for environmental neglect. The home was overrun with roaches. Feces were found throughout the home and it had been without running water for over a week. Even though Child Protective Services was involved, the children remained in the home. The judge appointed CASA to the case and asked for a home inspection immediately. Sue was in court for another case, when she heard the conditions of the home, she immediately volunteered to go see the children. She went that night to the home with the Guardian ad Litem. After reporting back to the judge the deplorable conditions that the children were still living in, the judge ordered them to be removed. The children were removed the next day. It was some of the worst environmental neglect seen by one of the captain's at the Sheriff's Department in over 20 years. They were placed in safe clean homes in foster care and Sue made sure that they did not go back to the home until every problem was fixed. Sue has advocated for 70 children.

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Community Groups

Young Professionals of the TriCities
Women's Counsel of Relators
Greeneville Women's Club
Tennessee Bar Association
Greeneville Exchange Club
Johnson City Community Theater

Kasey and Julie Marler
Mitch Manual and Stana Donnelly
Dave and Judy Johnson
John Abe and Vickie Teague, Volunteer
Guy Blackwell
Tony Howell
Susie Mitchell
Jeffery Hinton

Individuals

Phillip Baker, Board Member
Dan and Young Shil Bragg, Board Member
Adam Tate, Board Member
Homer and Regina G'Fellers, Board Member
Ashley and Ashlee Newland, Board Member
Sue Holzschuh, Volunteer

Johnson City Power Board Employees
Joe Grandy
Scott Jenkins, TN High
Harrison Hieb
Paige Mengel, Board Member

2014 Events

American Girl Fashion Show- March 22nd
Child Abuse Awareness Month- April
Motorcycle Ride- May 10th
Golf Tournament- August 18th
Red Shoe Masquerade- November 8th





I am for the child who's had seven addresses in a single year. Because she's in foster care. Because her father abused her. And because her mother couldn't believe her. That is the child I am for. And because I am, she will be half as likely to languish in foster care, and that much more likely to find a safe, permanent home. I am a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer.

I am you.



Lift up a child's voice. A child's life.

CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

MISSION STATEMENT

"The mission of CASA of Northeast Tennessee is to recruit, train, monitor and support community based volunteers who act as Court Appointed Special Advocates. These volunteer advocates 'speak up' for the best interest of abused and neglected children in the Juvenile Courts of Northeast Tennessee, striving to preserve the right of each child to have a safe, permanent home."

CASA of Northeast Tennessee

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