
ADVOCATE ALLEY

Volume 4, Issue 11

November 2010

Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it. ~William Arthur Ward

Greetings advocates!

Somehow, it's November... Time seems to be flying by at CASA, probably because of all the wonderful and exciting things we've been experiencing. I'd like to share with you a few updates:

Our newest staff members, Sarah Altman (Administrative Assistant) and Andrea Scott (Director of Development) have already become invaluable members of the team. Three new interns have joined us as well, so don't be surprised if you see a few new faces when you visit us in our new office.

Speaking of new, Juvenile Dependency Court has found a new home at 240 Church Street, in the basement of the North Wing. Make sure to check in with your supervisor prior to heading to your next court hearing to make sure you're up to speed on parking options, security, etc. In case that wasn't change enough, court days are now Wednesday /Monday, instead of the previous Friday/Wednesday schedule. Any specific questions about changed court dates should be able to be answered by your supervisor as well.

Our current training class (Pi Class) is made up of 15 dynamic individuals, SIX of which are MEN! They will be sworn in on November 17th, and we are excited to add their time and talents to CASA.

Our annual Friends of CASA luncheon on October 21st was an inspirational day, featuring two wonderful speakers (one of our own CASA youth and author/radio show host Sandy Brewer) and showed an amazing outpouring of support for our program. We are so grateful for all of our supporters and look forward to a great fundraising campaign!

We will be hosting an Open House on December 1st at our new office. Details will be forthcoming, and we hope to see you all there! At that event, we'll be collecting gifts for our upcoming Gift of Giving event. In case you feel so inclined, a wish list is included later in the newsletter. As many of you may remember, our Gift of Giving event is a holiday event where we provide our CASA youth the opportunity to "shop" for gifts for special people in their lives. This allows them to experience the joy of giving gifts to others as opposed to just receiving them, and each year, we see some truly touching "a-ha" moments. The Gift of Giving committee is still being formed, so if you or someone you know would like to help this wonderful event, please contact me directly.

My final point is nothing new but bears repeating. With Thanksgiving just a few weeks away, we at CASA want to take a moment to remind you of how thankful we are to have such a talented, diverse, committed and caring group of volunteers who make our program what it is. Thank you is one of those wonderful phrases that you can't really wear out. So, that being said, "Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

With gratitude,
Michelle Arnold
Program Manager
CASA of Monterey County

*****CONTINUING EDUCATION THIS MONTH!*****

"The Particulars of Placement" w/ Vickie Iles has been rescheduled for **Thursday, Nov 11th** from **6pm to 8pm** at the CASA office.

Monterey Rape Crisis Center will provide a child abuse prevention training on **Tuesday, November 16th** from **5:30pm to 7pm**, also at the CASA office.

These topics and times were two of the most popular on our recent Continuing Ed surveys, so please RSVP as soon as possible to reserve your spot. You can call Michelle at 455-6800 or send an email to michelle@casamonterey.org. Hope to see you there!

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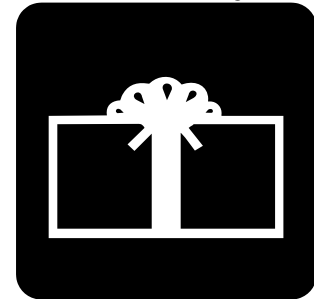
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Advocate Birthdays



We would like to wish the following advocates a very happy birthday during the month of November...

Yesenia Salvatierra	11/6
Anne Morris	11/9
Maureen McEachen	11/10
Karen Blackwell	11/11
Fe Nadine Leong	11/14
Alice Knapp	11/18
Bree Nakashima	11/19
Linda Kuhnz	11/20
Angie Torres	11/24
Patty Ross	11/26

“What Does CASA Mean to YOU?”

For our donor newsletter, we are adding a feature called “What does CASA mean to you?”, and we want both our youth and advocates to tell us their answers.

So, next time you and your CASA youth are off exploring the world, working out issues or just sitting down for a burger, we would really appreciate it if you would both think about how you would answer this question.

As we work to share the value of CASA with our donors, we want to be sure to provide more than just facts and figures, and include stories, quotes and special moments that better capture the essence of what we do.

You can share responses with us by contacting Andrea Scott, our Director of Development at 455-6800 or via email at andrea@casamonterey.org. Thank you all for all you do!

Working With Advocates by Kim Doan

It is 4:06 p.m. The buses have left, the student athletes are with their coaches, the hallways are clear, and the few students sitting on the benches in front of your school waiting for rides are on their cell phones texting their friends. You are now headed to Shawn's IEP meeting. You've met Shawn once during a meeting with him and his social worker, but you have never seen him for discipline issues and you've never met his parents.

Mrs. McCormick, a veteran teacher, is the special educator running the meeting, so you're hoping you won't have to stay the length of the meeting. When you walk in, introductions are made and you hear the phrase "court appointed special advocate" (CASA). The advocate reaches out to shake your hand. You scan your brain for information, but only the word "advocate" means anything. Your previous experience with advocates has not been good. Shawn's family has not made a single request of the school this year, so you're perplexed.

Why Have an Advocate?

CASAs are volunteers who represent abused and neglected children in the court system. According to a CASA case manager, approximately 80% of these children have special needs (L. Blythe, personal communication, November 11, 2003). David Soukup, a judge in Washington State, created the first CASA program in 1977 to gather more information about the children whose cases were appearing before him. Today there are more than 1,055 CASA programs and 700,900 volunteers nationwide.

According to Weisz and Thai (2003), the information in formal court reports that incorporate a CASA's independent reviews has more breadth and quality than information in reports that don't. Taussig, Clyman, and Landsverk (2001) revealed that 20% to 40% of children in foster care reenter the foster care system after reunification with their parents, sometimes due to re-abuse. The information that CASAs obtain can greatly aid the court in determining the child's placement and prevent such a recurrence.

The likelihood of meeting a CASA may be equal to the likelihood of meeting a family's lawyer. Not every teenager who passes through the court system is appointed an advocate. Several types of court cases will prompt a judge to ask for a CASA. In each, the advocate may serve in the roles of mentor, friend, counselor, and confidante to the child. Depending on the situation, he or she may also serve as an investigator, an advocate, a family educator, and a pseudo-probation officer. The CASA does not replace the services of a guardian ad litem or the child's court-provided attorney.

Child in need of supervision. Children who have been brought to the court's attention because of severe attendance and truancy issues may be assigned an advocate. It is not the responsibility of the CASA to monitor daily school attendance, but the CASA can work with the family and school personnel to encourage the student to attend school.

Abuse and neglect. A child who has been abused or neglected, removed from his or her home, and turned over to the department of social services may be appointed a CASA. Since 1980, when the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (P.L. 96-272) was passed, the court's goal has usually been family reunification. A CASA often "oversees" the case to assess the best living situation for the child, to help ensure that the parents follow court orders if applicable, and sometimes to supervise visits between the child and his or her parents. After gathering as much information as possible, the CASA can recommend to the court that the child stay in foster care or be returned to his or her parents.

Contentious divorce. Another situation that might prompt a judge to assign a CASA is an unusually contentious divorce case in which both parents want custody. In this situation, one parent accuses the other parent of an egregious trespass, such as sexual molestation, or an act of child endangerment, such as drug use. The CASA must determine whether the allegations made by one or both parties have any merit, whether the child is safe in their respective homes, or whether the child should be placed with other relatives or in foster care.

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Juveniles with court records. Another scenario in which a judge might ask for a CASA volunteer is a case in which a teenager has had multiple encounters with the law and would benefit from having a CASA as a mentor. The CASA in this role is similar to a big brother or big sister. The difference is that participation in Big Brothers Big Sisters is voluntary, but the student's participation in the CASA program has been mandated by the judge.

Working With a CASA

The rights of CASAs are extensive. The courts allow advocates to obtain extensive information to make appropriate recommendations. For example, the CASA has the legal right to contact school personnel, examine school records, interview people involved in the child's life (i.e., teachers, counselors, family, social workers, doctors, therapists, and community members), ask for copies of records; they may even attend teacher conferences and IEP meetings with the caretaker's approval.

CASAs work closely with parents, the guardian ad litem, and social workers to effectively advocate for the child and make recommendations to the court regarding the child's placement. CASAs not only serve as the eyes and ears of the courts, but they also develop a mentoring relationship with the child. Some families are receptive to having a CASA, but other families may feel ambiguous or even hostile to the CASA's presence. A CASA may be the most consistent person in a child's life because other service personnel (e.g., social workers or therapists) may change with a variety of circumstances, including relocation of the child.

The following list contains suggestions for how schools can work effectively with a CASA:

- Verify the CASA volunteer's courtappointed status by obtaining the court order from the CASA office and not from the volunteer. All CASA offices are listed online at www.nationalcasa.org.
- Return phone calls and e-mail messages from the CASA. Remember that the CASA is a volunteer and likely has a job and family responsibilities in addition to being a CASA.
- Share information about family and school situations when asked. This information helps the CASA make an appropriate recommendation to the courts.
- Notify the CASA of school events, such as back-to-school night, open house, and parent-teacher conference windows. Adding the CASA's e-mail address to your e-mail distribution group is an easy task.
- Provide copies of report cards, attendance, and discipline records when asked. The student's family members may tell you that they will share this information, but their willingness to follow through on their promise depends on whether they were open to having the court appoint a CASA.
- Notify the CASA of strange behaviors. The student's behavior at school reflects much about his or her home life.
- Be courteous and friendly when a CASA shows up to an IEP meeting or a parent/teacher conference.

The Best Information

The CASA-school relationship may seem strange at times. Although schools are court-ordered to divulge information about a student to his or her advocate, the advocate is forbidden to share information with school personnel. This can be frustrating to school administrators, teachers, and other staff members, who often feel that they can better serve the child if given a little more information.

But school personnel should know that CASAs take the information they obtain from the schools very seriously. CASAs act as investigators, seeking information by listening and interviewing. They use this information to recommend to the court the best placement of and services for the child. The best recommendation is one that is based on accurate information. And that is something that all educators can support.

References

- Taussig, H. N., Clyman, R. B., & Landsverk, J. (2001). Children who return home from foster care: A 6-year prospective study of behavioral health outcomes in adolescence. *Pediatrics*, *108*(1), e10.
- Weisz, V., & Thai, N. (2003). The Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program: Bringing information to child abuse and neglect cases. *Child Maltreatment*, *8*, 204–210.

Kim Doan (kdoan@wcupa.edu) is an assistant professor in the Department of Special Education at West Chester University in West Chester, PA.



Gift of Giving Wish List

CASA of Monterey County provides children in foster care with the opportunity to take part in the spirit of the holiday season.

Help us present “Santa’s Workshop” at the CASA of Monterey County office for more than **150 CASA children**. In addition to picking out something for themselves, these children “shop” for gifts to give to siblings, foster families, and relatives who are supporting them through a difficult holiday season separated from their home. The joy these children feel as they surprise others with gifts is a true reflection of the spirit of the season!

Consider providing Gift Items such as:

Clothing Items

Scarves
Knit caps
Baseball caps
Socks

Toys & Sporting Goods

Games, Stuffed Animals, Toys
Books, Bookmarks
Coloring Books, Sticker sheets
Sporting Balls
(football, basketball, soccer ball)
Sports Memorabilia, Collectable Items
Duffle bags, Backpacks

Gift Cards

Target, Kohl’s, Old Navy
Jamba Juice, Starbucks
Toys R Us
Restaurants

Home & Personal Items

Picture Frames, Candles,
Vases
Soaps, Lotions, Toiletries
Blankets, Pillow Cases
Wallets, Key Chains

Kitchen & Food Items

Cookie mixes, Cake mixes
Frosting, Sprinkles
Coffee Mugs, Water Bottles
Teas/Coffees

Stationery & School Supplies

Pens, Notebooks/pads Journals,
Calendars
Notecards/Envelopes
Sketchbooks
Coloring pens/pencils

Donations can be delivered to 945 S. Main Street, Suite 107 in Salinas. Or, to arrange pick up, please contact the CASA office at 455-6800 or Amanda Ferguson at Amanda@casamonterey.org.

The First Tee Monterey County Programs & Instruction

AUSD Lesson Plans

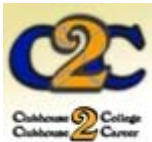
The First Tee of Monterey County has partnered up with the Alisal Union School District and currently has 11 elementary schools coming to Golf & Life Skills classes during the day as part of their P.E. credit. Each school chooses six classes 3-6th grade to come to the course and participate in programming for the entire school year!

[LEARN MORE](#) ▶



Program Overview

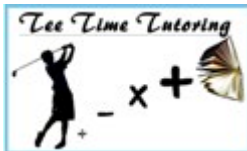
The First Tee Golf and Life Skills Experience (G&LSE) is divided into five levels, starting with PLAYer for new participants and progressing through PAR, BIRDIE, EAGLE and ACE. Each level of the Life Skills Experience can be taught seamlessly with all golf skills curricula. Completion of each level is defined as a participant's ability to meet nationally instituted certification guidelines. The program is self-paced, encouraging participants to explore and assess their abilities and set corresponding goals to meet national certification requirements. Certification is conducted periodically throughout the year during class and may also be setup outside of class by appointment.



Clubhouse to College/Career (C2C)

The Clubhouse to College/Clubhouse to Career (C2C) is a team comprised of teenage participants from The First Tee of Monterey County. The goal is to provide resources to our members for college prep, tours, help with SAT/financial aid, and scholarships. In addition, we would like to inspire members to explore the many fields of design in the technology industry. We plan to meet monthly, including parent, to discuss projects and field trips! Visit our Facebook page to see [regular updates](#), [pictures](#), and best of all their very first original song; "[More Than Me](#)"

[LEARN MORE](#) ▶



Proudly Announcing: Tee Time Tutoring

Tee Time Tutoring (TTT) is taking off and we would like you to join us! TTT is a growing program available to all The First Tee of Monterey County participants who have the opportunity to work one-on-one with members of our staff, college students from CSUMB & Hartnell, and high school mentors. Don't miss out on the opportunity to provide your child with one-hour tutoring sessions once a week. Tee Times are going fast-So sign up today! [Click here to download the application](#). Turn in your application, and we will contact you with the next available Tee Time.

Once a date has been set with our tutors, your child can begin to meet each week for an hour. Subjects include: Reading, Math, Science, English, History, and more! Also, participants have full use of the JZ Computer Clubhouse for homework, developing presentations, essays, and research projects. For further questions, please contact Jacob Ayon at (831) 444-7200 x207



The Latest National CASA News and Information

POWERFUL VOICE

Now Available Online

Highlights from the Fall 2010 *Powerful Voice*:

- Older youth meet their “possible selves” through National CASA’s Fostering Futures initiative. [Read more.](#)
- National CASA CEO Michael Piraino talks about turning the tables, as foster youth become the teachers at a National CASA staff meeting. [Read more.](#)
- This holiday season honor someone special while helping children in foster care. [Find out how.](#)
- CASA volunteer and former Marine Frank West fights for a better life for kids in foster care. [Read more.](#)
- At a Jewelers for Children event in Las Vegas, CASA volunteers and foster youth offer facets of hope. [Learn more.](#)

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November 2010

Don't Miss the Fun!

November						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Hours:

10-5 Monday-Saturday
(Closed Wednesdays)
12-5 Sunday

Holiday Hours!
Closed Thanksgiving

Admission:

Adults: \$7.00
Children: \$7.00
Children under 2: Free

Address:

425 Washington Street
Monterey, CA 93940

Phone:

831.649.6444 (phone)
831.649.1304 (fax)

Email:

info@mymuseum.org

\$2 Tuesday! - Tuesday, November 2nd all day

Sponsored by Enterprise Rent-a-Car Foundation

In an effort to make the Museum accessible to our entire community, \$2 Tuesdays are offered on the first Tuesday of every month to all Monterey County residents. Please bring current identification to verify your residence.

MY Members Only Mornings! - Sunday, November 7th 11:00-noon

Join us for our monthly members only playtime at MY Museum!

MY Music Series Thursdays, 10-10:30am

Join us every Thursday morning for singing, dancing and more! Free with admission, don't miss it! (Museum closed November 25th)

Playtime in the Party Room - Thursdays, 2:30-3:30pm

Wish you could play with three pounds of Play-Doh? Feeling like your fingers would like to finger paint? Come to our drop-in play time and check out the day's activity! Fun for all ages and free with admission.

Playtime in the Party Room - Fridays, 11:30 am-12:30 pm

Did you miss playtime on Thursday? Drop in on Friday morning instead for a second chance at that Play-Doh and a new activity. Free with admission.

Passport to Play! - Tuesday November 2nd 9:15-10:00am

Ever wonder what children from the world over learn and experience? Here's a chance to get your Passport to Play stamped at MY Museum! Join us as we travel to our final destination and learn about the customs and lifestyles of France. \$5 open to ages 3 and up.

MY Little Chatterbox: Spanish - Tuesdays, November 2nd - 30th 10:30-11:15am

(Ages 3 to 5) Learn Spanish with your little one in this play-group style interactive environment. Play games, sing songs and have fun! Members \$40/\$20 sibling non-members \$60/\$30 sibling. Please call 649.6444 to reserve your spot.

Ariel Theater presents Goldie Locks & the Three Bears

Saturday, November 6th 1:30- 2:00pm

Ariel Theater will be bringing a group of young actors to perform at MY Museum. The monthly performances are in conjunction with Ariel productions at their home theater in Old Town Salinas. Free with admission.

Hands-On Lighthouse Workshop - Tuesday, November 9th 3:30-4:45pm

Learn all about Lighthouses with the Monterey History and Art Association here at MY Museum! Imagine the life of a lighthouse keeper, learn about the special lens used to build the very first light house and make your own nightlight lighthouse too! MHAA and MYM Members only. Recommended for ages 5 and up.

Special Reading & Book Signing - Saturday, November 13th 2:00-3:00pm

Join illustrator Erin Hunter and discover the wonders of mountain habitats through the new book, *A Day on the Mountain* written by Kevin Kurtz illustrated by Erin E. Hunter. Erin will share her techniques and sign every copy purchased at MYM. Free with admission, books available for \$16.95 plus tax. Call to reserve your copy 649.6444.

Ariel Theater presents Winnie the Pooh - Saturday, November 20th 1:30- 2:00pm

Ariel Theater will be bringing a group of young actors to perform at MY Museum. The monthly performances are in conjunction with Ariel productions at their home theater in Old Town Salinas. Free with admission.

Special Drop-In Story Hour - Monday, November 22nd 10:00 - 12:00pm

Join our very special guests from the Monterey Institute for International Studies for a story hour just for you! Our guest story tellers will share a selection of tales from their home countries. Free with admission, ages 3 and up recommended.

To Become a Member, visit our website at www.mymuseum.org

MY Museum is a 501(c)(3) organization, for information on supporting us please visit to our website - www.mymuseum.org

Don't forget, CASA has a membership to MY Museum, so admission to these events is free!
Call to arrange pick up of the membership card.

Seaside nonprofit refurbishes computers for needy

By DANIELLE VENTON, Herald Staff Writer 10/07/2010

Christian Mendelsohn is ensconced among stacks of computers, motherboards and hard drives. On the upper shelves nearby, rows of flat screen monitors are stored sideways, like an encyclopedia set of computer screens. The shelves below hold neat plastic bins labeled "ethernet cables," "power cords" and the like. Mendelsohn is surrounded in his Seaside office by computer equipment. He is eager to distribute it to those who usually couldn't afford it through his nonprofit company Loaves, Fishes & Computers.

"Right now we have about a two-month turnaround time," said Mendelsohn, 32, while he leafed through a binder full of applications for the computer systems. "We have the supply to take care of the demand. But we're lacking manpower, we're lacking space and we're lacking funds."

Mendelsohn started the nonprofit in April 2009. The charity takes unneeded computers from organizations and individuals, refurbishes them and sells or gives them to the needy and computerless. Those who qualify get a computer, monitor, printer, mouse, keyboard and, if needed, set up and training. Depending on their income, recipients can pay \$50, \$60 or \$70 or, if they like, they can spend six hours in volunteer work. Loaves, Fishes & Computers is funded primarily through Mendelsohn's work repairing computers for clients. The group is an incorporated nonprofit, Mendelsohn said, and expects to receive tax-exempt status from the IRS in four months to nine months.

Refurbishing work is done by volunteers, two of whom come in every day during the work week. "Like me, they love computers and like to do good," Mendelsohn said. Mendelsohn would like to see Loaves, Fishes & Computers expand. In the Seaside office, they restore and turn out three to five computers a week. Two years from now, Mendelsohn would like it to be 20 computers a week. "I have a vision of LFC expanding in to a larger area, where we'd have more repair space, space for volunteers and a computer lab open to the public," he said.

In their current space, there is only room for two people to work. "Library labs get filled up and time on their computers is limited," said Mendelsohn. "Some students would like to volunteer as refurbishers. This would be a way for them to give back to the community and learn how to fix computers for themselves or for work." Mendelsohn is starting a recycling and decommissioning service to remove e-waste of local businesses. "We have a lot of computers in the area going to e-waste," said Topher Mueller, K-8 technology coordinator at the Carmel campus of Stevenson School, who helped donate 12 computers.

"Half of those might be too old to be useful, but the other half should be kept out of e-waste, which is becoming a huge environmental problem. They can be put to good use. There is a gap in opportunities between people who have computers and those who don't. He is bridging that gap," Mueller said.

"It's best to keep these computers in the hands of students and out of e-waste dumps," said George Ball, property coordinator at CSU Monterey Bay, who aided in the donation of 80 computers.

"The work he is doing is phenomenal," said Mueller. "He's filling a niche in the community that to my knowledge no one else is doing." While Mendelsohn's work might fall short of miraculous, it is nonetheless appreciated by recipients. On the wall of his crowded office, Mendelsohn looks up at a painting given to him from an artist who received the second computer he refurbished. In the picture, Jesus is feeding the masses with loaves of bread, baskets of fish and, down in the corner, a little collection of laptops.

Loaves, Fishes & Computers

A nonprofit in Seaside offers refurbished computers to those who normally couldn't afford them.

- A computer setup (including monitor, printer and setup and training) costs from \$50 to \$70, depending on the consumer's income.
- Consumers can also get computers in exchange for six hours in volunteer work.
- The wait time for a computer is two months.
- To apply for computers or make donations, call 383-0412 or see loavesfishescomputers.org. Printers are especially in demand.