

New Advocate continues to learn



By Julie Pasowicz, CASA Advocate

When I think of the many students I had the privilege of working with throughout my career as a high school teacher, I am aware of the extremely difficult challenges many have had to face. My academic responsibilities made it difficult to find enough quality one-on-one time with these young people as I would have liked. I began researching CASA after hearing about the program from a former student. Thank you to the 100 plus people who volunteer through CASA of Brown County. I am well aware of the courage it takes to be a voice and advocate for children and adolescents when they are unable to do so for themselves yet, especially when being that advocate can be quite unpopular with some of the parties involved. You inspired me to begin my own training in CASA.

Originally, I was a bit apprehensive about whether or not I would be good at this. My concerns were put to rest after receiving a considerable amount of training from the professional staff at CASA, outside community members, and courtroom observations. The training was educational, informative, and fun. I have to admit I looked forward to our training sessions because of the remarkable people I was getting to know and the hope that was festering within us. Our diverse training group consisted of people of all ages, personalities, careers, and life situations. The one thing we all had in common was a sincere passion to make a positive difference in the lives of children and adolescents in our community. After each session, I left inspired by both the CASA staff and future volunteer advocates because of the concern and enthusiasm they exuded. As court appointed advocates, our training culminated with a special swearing in ceremony. This ceremony reminded me that being a CASA advocate is more than volunteer work—it is a legal, ethical responsibility involving the care of the youth of our community.

I was a bit nervous about meeting my first “CASA kids.” However, my volunteer advocate supervisor, Kristel, calmed my fears by going along with me on my first visit to the home of these energetic and appreciative children. We played a few board games as we got to know each other a bit. We have since met weekly playing games, building gingerbread houses, snowshoeing, and throwing a football around—even I, in the eyes of a middle schooler, can still decently toss a football! Through our game playing, I am starting to see a rapport develop with some sharing of thoughts.

Recently, I had the privilege of attending a court hearing with Judge Hinkfuss regarding the home placement of these children. It was refreshing to see that some in the legal profession are able to make difficult decisions regarding what is right for children in spite of the unpopularity of that decision for some of the parties involved. It is rewarding to know that CASA volunteer advocates play a part in these tough decisions via our monthly reports.

As life would have it, I began my journey as a CASA volunteer to make a difference in the life of others. In the few months I have been involved, I have determined it is me who is the lucky one. I am fortunate to be working with real and genuine people who have a real and genuine passion for doing what is right and just. Even more importantly, I continue to learn about life, courage, and resiliency through the eyes of two amazing kids! Thanks CASA!