

#### NEW DCSD DIRECTOR SETS VISION

Caroline Lautt-Owens, Director, Dependent Children's Services Division



As the new Director of the Dependent Children's Services Division of the Administrative Office of the Courts, I recognize the efforts and progress that the division has accomplished and look forward to continuing the important work with which we are charged.

We are in a unique position of having the ability to positively impact the lives of children through the work of the Foster Care Review Boards. the CASA program, the Court Improvement Program, and the Parent Assistance Hotline, as well as through our collaborative relationships with the local courts, and other various state agencies and child welfare entities.

As we continue striving to meet the needs of Arizona's dependent children, we will be focusing on several areas over the next year that will better enable each program to meet our challenge. By increasing our volunteer base, improving our website and training resources, providing support to courts and volunteers, increasing the visibility of our programs, and focusing on system-wide collaboration,

DCSD will be moving forward in its efforts to protect children, families and communities and helping the Arizona court system achieve its strategic agenda by moving from "Good to Great."

Volunteers are a critical link in the child welfare system. Increasing the numbers in our volunteer-based programs will assist in ensuring that Arizona's children have the benefit of safer and more timely permanent placements. While it is unlikely that child abuse and neglect will ever be completely eliminated, the work of our staff and volunteers assists in ensuring appropriate services are in place and that children do not linger in the system longer than is necessary.

A vigorous community outreach effort will educate both the general public and the business community on the child welfare system needs and may lead to stronger advocacy efforts on behalf of children and families.

Our website and training resources have been very successful in providing easy access to continuing education for volunteers, court staff, and the community. Updating these tools and their availability will assist in our community outreach and volunteer support.

Through our work in these areas lays our belief that in order to effectuate change we must increase system-wide collaboration. The Dependent Children's Services Division is committed to this idea and has, through the court improvement program, begun building a foundation that is based on this belief.

We have many challenges ahead and a great deal of work to do, but we are off to a great start and have the benefit of a very committed staff and over 1.300 dedicated volunteers statewide.

# DCSD WELCOMES NEW PROGRAM MANAGERS

New managers bring enlightening energy to the Dependent Children's Services Division. Two of the three programs in the Division have new managers: CASA and the Foster Care Review Board.



The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program welcomes Bonnie Marcus as its new manager. Marcus joins the Division and the Administrative Office of the Courts from the Maricopa County CASA Program where she served as the Program Manager for five years. Marcus held positions in the Juvenile Justice Services Division of the AOC as an auditor and as a coordinator for CASA in Florence prior to moving into her most recent supervisory role.

"I'm very excited to continue to move the CASA Program forward. Having been in county positions, I understand the difficult and often stressful situations our Coordinators and staff face in trying to address the constant influx of dependent children who come into the court's care. It's a daunting job, and our role is to support the great work that's being done in those programs by very committed CASA professionals."

She joined DCSD in January 2006.

In addition, the Division has gained the services of Bill Callahan as the new Program Manager of the Foster Care Review Board. Callahan comes to us from the Maricopa County Mesa Juvenile Facility where he served as the Deputy Juvenile Court Administrator. Prior to his tenure as the Deputy Juvenile Court Administrator, Callahan has worked as a mediator and counselor for family and juvenile courts in Arizona and Connecticut. His experience will enhance the mission of the Foster Care Review Board.



"I am very excited about the opportunity to lead the Foster Care Review Board. We are committed to Arizona's children and want to ensure they each receive a safe, permanent, and nurturing home." Callahan joined DCSD in March 2006.

The Dependent Children's Services Division is striving to ensure that permanency for foster children is reached. The combined strengths of both Marcus and Callahan will help us reach our goals and maintain credibility with the court system and the community. "Rarely does one find such an incredible combination of experience, knowledge, and leadership in one organization. The Division is honored with two individuals who embody passion for the welfare of children," Lautt-Owens said of her newest managers.

You can reach Bonnie and Bill by email. Bonnie Marcus, <u>BMarcus@courts.az.gov</u> and Bill Callahan, <u>BCallahan@courts.az.gov</u>.

#### ATTORNEY GENERAL HONORS CASA

Eight hundred fifty Court Appointed Special Advocates from across the state were selected for recognition of their service to crime victims and honored by the Office of the Attorney General with the 2006 Distinguished Service Award in the category of Advocacy and Direct Service.

Presented on April 24<sup>th</sup> by Attorney General Terry Goddard during Victim's Rights Week, individuals or groups were recognized for their dedicated service to crime victims in our communities.

In her nomination letter, Arizona CASA Program Manager Bonnie Marcus wrote that apart from people who work in the child welfare field, "there is another group of individuals who see the need of the children in state care and respond to it, a group of people whose profession may not be in the child welfare arena, but whose hearts are drawn to the plight of children who have been our smallest victims. These people are CASAs."

The recognition ceremony was attended by CASAs and staff from several counties, and Pat O'Connell, a CASA from Phoenix, accepted the award on behalf of all CASAs statewide.

#### FYI...

**AOC Getting New Phone Numbers** 

The AOC is switching telephone services and will have new phone numbers activated in mid October.

FCRB (602) 452-3400 CASA (602) 452-3407



CASA Pat O'Connell accepting Distinguished Service Award on behalf of CASAs statewide from Attorney General Goddard

#### FCRB VOLUNTEER REFLECTS

Recently, I had the fortune to learn of the positive impact that the Foster Care Review Boards can have on the lives of the people we see. I attended a Drug Court on graduation day. The graduates were a married couple with seven children between them. Both had participated in a substance abuse treatment program and the Drug Court Program.

The judge asked the husband what was the most significant event that helped him to overcome his drug habit. His answer was the Foster Care Review Board because they were direct with him yet compassionate. I served on the board that reviewed his case.

I did not realize he recognized me, but after the ceremony, he came over to shake my hand and expressed thanks to me and the Foster Care Review Board. Occasionally, I wonder if we make a difference; after this event I know we do.

-Pima County FCRB Volunteer

#### FCRB VOLUNTEERS RECOGNIZED

The Foster Care Review Board recognizes outstanding volunteers each quarter. The volunteers selected for the First Quarter were George Bressler and Patricia O'Connell, both from Maricopa County. These two volunteers have given in excess of 600 hours of service to the children in foster care during the past year. They have routinely substituted on boards and participated in numerous trainings to better meet the needs of foster children.

Second Quarter volunteers were Barbara Pearson from Maricopa County and Dennis Bertles from Mohave County. Barbara has served on the FCRB since 1997. Dennis has served on the FCRB since 2003. Both are also members of the Removal Review Program.

Volunteers Paul Hoffman from Pima County and Michael James from Yavapai County have been selected to receive the Foster Care Review Board's Third Quarter Exemplary Service Award for their service on behalf of Arizona's foster children. Paul has served on the Foster Care Review Board since January of 2005 and is also a member of the FCRB's State Board. Michael has served on the Foster Care Review Board for almost 2 years. He too serves on the FCRB State Board and was recently elected to its Executive Committee. The FCRB is grateful for these volunteers' dedication and service.



George Bressler and Pat O'Connell

#### CASAs of the YEAR AWARDED

The Arizona Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program honored Pat O'Connell, a volunteer from Phoenix and Barbara Himebaugh of Tucson for its 2006 Arizona CASA of the Year Award. The CASA of the Year Award recognizes the outstanding dedication and commitment of an Arizona CASA volunteer for advocacy efforts on behalf of abused or neglected children. Nominees must meet minimum requirements and are nominated by county program coordinators.

O'Connell and Himebaugh are just two examples of the many community members who take positive action for Arizona's abused, neglected, and abandoned children. They embody the dedication, compassion, and leadership that inspire the work that they do.

O'Connell has been a CASA since 2002, accepting appointment to a difficult case involving 3 boys. For her part, O'Connell says, "I think about them and what their lives are like, and I think about how fortunate I was in my life and realize that even giving back what I do, it's still just a small drop in a large pond," she said when interviewed for a community award sponsored by a local magazine.

Himebaugh became a CASA because children are special people who need a voice in court. Pima County CASA Program Supervisor Trish Biddix says of Himebaugh, "In her 18 years as a CASA, having been assigned to 16 cases and serving a total of 34 children, she has consistently been a diligent, tireless advocate for dependent children in Pima County."

Congratulations, Pat and Barbara! Thank you for all your work and serving as wonderful examples for the CASA Program.

## LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FISCAL YEAR 2006

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Regular Session of the 47<sup>th</sup> Arizona State Legislature was an active one. Over 1400 bills were posted. Of these bills, 438 passed and were sent to the Governor. Governor Napolitano vetoed 43 and signed 395 bills. The general effective date of those signed bills is September 21, 2006.

Some highlights of this session that are of interest to FCRB and CASA include:

**H2125** Foster Care Review Board Continuation – PASSED. This bill signed by the Governor on March 24 extends the Foster Care Review Board until July 1, 2016, retroactively effective July 1, 2006.

H2094 Dependency Hearing; Private Service Provider - PASSED. This bill was signed by the Governor on April 25. It states that "In a juvenile action, if the court makes a finding that a parent or child has the right to receive services from an agency or private service provider (defined), after giving notice and an opportunity to be heard, the court may order the agency or private service provider to appear and discuss the child or parent's service plan. If the child or parent is eligible to receive behavioral health services with Title XIX or XXI monies, the court may order only those services that an agency or service provider determines medically necessary. An agency or service provider may meet with the parent or child's representative prior to the hearing to coordinate services." (Title 8).

House Bill 2559 Jury Trial in Termination of Parental Rights This bill addressed the sunset provision of the jury trial statute that enabled parents in a termination of parental rights proceeding to request that their case be heard by a jury. This statute is due to sunset on January 1, 2007. HB 2559 sought to continue the jury trial provisions for three more years, and it passed both the House and the Senate. The Governor vetoed this bill in June, stating that jury trials for termination of parental rights proceedings cause disruptions in courts and increased costs. She also cited her concern that a provision that new case information would be required in a subsequent filing of a TPR on the same case would cause children to linger in foster care. The jury trial law will now sunset as of January 1, 2007.

#### NEW LOOK FOR CASA PROGRAM

The last few months have been busy for the Arizona CASA Program. Many new team members are in place, and new promotional materials have been created. A late spring community outreach work group developed a new look for the Arizona CASA Program. The new look includes a backdrop of the Arizona State Courts Building with a silhouette of a CASA and child walking toward court. Along with the motif is the tagline "CASA ~ Positive Action. Powerful Results." The new look was unveiled in July.

In addition, a re-design of the CASA website – <a href="www.azcasa.org">www.azcasa.org</a> – is almost complete. It's new, it's fresh, and it's user friendly! The website is one of the program's best tools for distributing information about CASA, recruitment, and volunteer support. In our efforts to renew the image of the CASA Program, the website is a gateway.

Continued on page 6

#### TRAINING CORNER

Both the FCRB and CASA Programs have been working to improve the quality and frequency of training for volunteers. Changes in the system and the growing need for volunteers have prompted these efforts.

## **Court Appointed Special Advocates**

Expansion of the CASA training includes increasing the number of Orientations that are held each year. In the past, CASA held six orientations per calendar year for new CASAs. Five were held in Phoenix and one in Tucson. In July of 2006 we increased the number of Orientations to eleven per calendar year. Orientation trainings will rotate between Tucson and Phoenix.

Six orientations will now be held in Phoenix and five will be in Tucson. It is hoped that this new process will attract and retain CASAs by providing more flexible and available options to them when making their decision to become a special advocate for children.

#### **Foster Care Review Board**

In Fiscal Year 2004, Governor Napolitano announced the Action Plan for Reform of Arizona's Child Protection System. The Plan identified several action items for various child serving agencies. Action 6.0 called for the expansion of the role of the Foster Care Review Board; the State FCRB was asked to advise CPS administrators regarding service gaps or system problems it, or the local boards, identify as part of their review of CPS cases.

Continued on page 7

New look for CASA Continued from page 5

It could be the first point of contact for many people, and the web designer continues to work with county programs on updating their county pages.

The next major project is to re-design the training modules so that they will be more intuitive and not require downloads to fully optimize the learning process. Alternative methods to view the training materials will be added, as well as additional training modules to the website.

Expertise from outside the AOC will be sought in creating the curriculum. This would potentially include a committee of professionals from the university and research communities. Our hope is to develop a curriculum that is beneficial to CASAs, FCRB members, and the community at large.

If you have training ideas that you would like considered, please contact us at <a href="mailto:jharrison@courts.az.gov">jharrison@courts.az.gov</a>. We value your ideas and commitment to improving our programs.



CASA ~ Positive Action. Powerful Results.

# Training Corner Continued from page 6

In order to meet this obligation, another item was added to the list of the findings that Foster Care Review Board volunteers are asked to make when they review the status of children in out-of-home care.

Finding 10 was designed to identify service gaps and system problems which may be inhibiting a child's path to permanency. There are several elements to be considered when making Finding 10, including but not limited to:

- Whether Child Protective Services (CPS) has referred the child to the Regional Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA) at the point of removal as required.
- Whether the CPS representative has abided by the agency's policy regarding supervision of children in out-of-home care.
- Whether visitation between the child and parents/siblings has been facilitated by the agency.
- Whether the child's medical and dental needs have been adequately addressed.
- Whether the placement is addressing the child's behavioral health needs.
- Whether recommended services are being provided if the child is dually-adjudicated (dependent and delinquent).
- Whether the child's educational needs have been assessed.
- Whether the RBHA has provided services or support needed by the child.

Most FCRB members statewide were trained on Finding 10 in May and June. It is expected that data gleaned from this new finding will assist policymakers, service providers, and child welfare professionals in rectifying the system problems and service gaps that delay permanency for foster children.

#### SIBLING REUNION DAY

Many children enter foster care along with their brothers and sisters. Because few foster homes can accept full sibling groups, these children are separated even further from their families. To alleviate the stress of separation, the Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation with the help of Child Protective Services, the Foster Care Review Board, and Court Appointed Special Advocates brings sibling groups together for a day of fun activities and lunch.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Sibling Reunion Day will be held at Margaret T. Hance Park on Saturday, October 14, 2006 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The day will center on a carnival-type atmosphere where the children can spend time with their siblings. Activities will include games, face painting, snacks, and lunch. Cameras will also be provided to sibling groups so they will have a memento of their special day together.

Case managers, CASAs, FCRB members, and court staff are encouraged to participate. Every person can play a role in helping make this day special for the children. Case managers are crucial because they help facilitate placement information and contact foster parents about the event. Individuals can help transport siblings while others may be able to assist with activities. If you are interested in volunteering for the event, please contact either Jonni Wolfe at 602.542.9406 or Brian Eggen at 602.542.9683.

## OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO THE COURTS AWARD

Foster Care Review Board volunteer Bruce Brannan was awarded the Outstanding Contribution to the Courts Award. Bruce Brannan has devoted more than 6,000 hours to reviewing the cases of children and making recommendations to the juvenile court on their since Arizona Legislature behalf the established the program in 1979.

In addition to volunteering on his local Foster Care Review Board, Mr. Brannan has served as chair of the local and state boards, and on the state board's Annual Report Committee, the Community Outreach and Awareness Committee, and the Executive Committee. He has also served on numerous ad hoc committees created to address specific issues within the Foster Care Review Board.

Because of his passion and dedication to Arizona's children, Governor Janet Napolitano appointed him to the Governor's Committee on CPS Reform, the Governor's CPS Oversight Committee, and the Committee on Juvenile Courts. He stays informed of child welfare trends and works to ensure the program is accountable to the children it serves.



Left to right: Chief Justice Ruth V. McGregor, Mr. Bruce Brannan, Vice Chief Justice Rebecca White Berch



The Court Appointed Special Advocate Program commends all of the committed, passionate individuals who have spent many hours and traveled millions of miles seeking out services for their CASA children, attending CFTs, court hearings, and visiting the children.

The following is a chart showcasing year-to-date numbers about our advocates and cases. The numbers are impressive and serve as an indication of the dedication CASAs have to the children in foster care.

CASA Activity Report (as of July 31, 2006)	
CASAs	
Volunteers currently in program	827
All volunteers accepted to date	2,864
Volunteers trained this month	27
Volunteers trained to date in FY	27
Volunteers trained to date in calendar year	148
Hours/Miles Through 7/31/06	
Volunteer Hours	716,003
Volunteer Miles	6,284,263
Cases/Children	
Cases currently assigned	883
Children in assigned cases	1,485
All cases assigned to date	7,146
All children served to date	12,514
All closed cases to date	12,171
All children in closed cases to date	9,683

#### **DCSD WELCOMES NEW STAFF**

Several new members have joined the DCSD team within the past year. We are excited to have them on board and look forward to sharing their expertise.

#### **CASA**

**Delaine Davis** is the newest support staff for the Arizona CASA Program. She worked for the Maricopa County CASA Program for 3 years prior to joining the State Office.

**Sharron Griskowitz** joins CASA in Yavapai County as support staff. Verla Ruggio left to begin her own business. All the best to both!

**Karen Kramer** comes to CASA with a professional background in graphic design. She joins the Pima County CASA Program as a Coordinator.

Laurie Laughlin was promoted to Program Manager of the Maricopa County CASA Program. She previously served as the Assistant Program Manager. Judi Gross, a coordinator for the Maricopa County CASA Program, has assumed the position of Assistant Program Manager.

Jennifer Ortega joins the Pinal County CASA Program as its newest Coordinator. Ortega worked in Pinal County Juvenile Probation prior to CASA. Vanessa Ponce-Maez is a new Coordinator for the Pima County CASA Program. She replaces Gerardo de la Torre who left to pursue a graduate degree.

**Judy Turley** comes to us from Cincinnati, Ohio. She joined the CASA Program in Yavapai County as a coordinator.

**Nicole Stockett** and **Ramona Panas** have joined the Pima County CASA Program as the newest coordinators.

#### **FCRB**

**Kristy Gentile** was recently promoted to Supervisor and comes to us via Kansas City, Missouri.

**Luisiana Valenzuela** is an administrative assistant for the Foster Care Review Board. She joined our team in spring of 2006.

#### **Court Improvement Program**

**Diana Miramontes** is the new administrative assistant for the Court Improvement Program.

Welcome to all of our new team members. Thank you for all you do!





# Have a story to submit for the newsletter?

Send your articles for the upcoming issues of *Advocates for Children* to:

 $Jonni\ Wolfe,\ FCRB: \underline{iwolfe@courts.az.gov}$ 

or

Brian Eggen, CASA: beggen@courts.az.gov



# Trainings! Meetings! Deadlines!

Important Dates to Remember in **2006** (dates are subject to change)

## September

New Board Member Orientation, Phoenix

15-16 CASA Orientation Training, Phoenix

15 CASA Administrative Meeting, Phoenix

#### October

6-7 CASA Orientation Training, Tucson

13-14 New Board Member Orientation, Phoenix

14 Sibling Reunion Day, Phoenix

#### **November**

3-4 CASA Orientation Training, Phoenix

3 CASA Administrative Meeting, Phoenix



Have a change in your email address?

Please don't forget...

To contact your FCRB program specialist or CASA coordinator regarding corrections or changes to your email address!!

We want to keep you informed!

This newsletter is produced by the Arizona Administrative Office of the Courts Dependent Children's Services Division





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