



CASA of Coconino County issues a Call to Arms for volunteers in response to the predicted impact of COVID-19

CASA of Coconino County is in critical need to increase the number of dedicated members of the community to step up and become Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers, and help break the cycle of abuse and neglect, through supporting children and families.

There are over 14,000 children in out of home care (foster care, relative placement, group home, etc.) in Arizona as of January 2020. Currently there are 1,200 CASA volunteers serving 2,200 children in the foster care system, which means roughly 12,000 children are left without a CASA to advocate for them. There is still a tremendous need for CASA volunteers, and the need is most critical now, more than ever. Reports of family violence in China, where COVID-19 (coronavirus) originated, have reportedly tripled since the pandemic began. It is expected we will experience the same phenomenon in the coming months. During periods of natural disasters, financial stress or global panics such as viral pandemics, studies show that abusers become more violent in an attempt to feel a sense of control.

CASA of Coconino County is doing everything we can to encourage our community to take notice and report suspected abuse, but we need to prepare for a significant increase in case numbers in the wake of this crisis.

We are making the plea to our communities to suit up and prepare to be the voice for the most vulnerable among us.

CASA volunteers, or Court Appointed Special Advocates, are everyday people who are recruited and specially trained to advocate for children in foster care and provide a consistent, reliable adult presence for them during a difficult time in their life.

Training will be provided to prepare CASA Volunteers to answer the call in the aftermath of the current public health crisis. We are currently offering a new flexible pre-service training in an online interactive virtual environment. There will be multiple options for class times so you are able to pick the time that would work best for your schedule.

The online sessions introduce the participants to the key elements for CASA volunteer work, allowing you to interact with others, explore new ideas, and obtain tools for effective child advocacy. The virtual classroom sessions use case studies to introduce participants to a variety of dynamics including poverty, mental health issues, substance abuse, domestic violence, etc. By using this method, volunteers not only obtain experience with different types of cases but also learn how to gather information thoroughly.

CASA of Coconino County always hopes for the day when CASA Volunteers are no longer needed because all children are growing up safe, secure and supported with their families. Until then, we will continue to seek more members of the community to help grow our movement so that we can provide a CASA volunteer for every child who needs one.

Volunteers come in all shapes and sizes. No specific background or training is needed to become a CASA volunteer. Anyone 21 years of age or older, who can pass a thorough background check and complete 30 hours of free training, is encouraged to apply.

To learn more about becoming a CASA Volunteer, call us at 928-226-5420, email Jill Schuldt or visit our website at www.CASAofCoconinoCounty.org.



Going Outdoors While Social Distancing

Kathryn Sosbe
Office of Communication, USDA Forest Service
March 31st, 2020

The idiom 'be careful what you wish for' is likely coming to roost for those of us who love to show off 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands.

We are learning that in a time when space is needed, you are finding solace and satisfaction in the great outdoors. Except, so is everyone else, which creates crowded trails and parking lots.

"Just this weekend, I recreated on my nearby national forest," said Chris French, who is the deputy chief of the National Forest System, which oversees the 193 million acres of public land. "I was surprised by the crowds of people that were present. I realized that even for places that I love, that I would need to change my needs on behalf of the greater good."

Forest Service employees are proud of the lands we manage on behalf of Americans. Some like to refer to these national forests and grasslands as America's backyard. So do we. They serve a multitude of purposes, including timber for building, firewood for keeping warm, in-season hunting for a valued food source for many families, and a supply of clean water that 20 percent of the nation enjoys. We also help local economies, most especially rural communities, that rely on tourism and other work that emanates from the lands we manage. Forest Service lands connect communities through the roads we help manage.

"Our national forests and grasslands can be a critical resource for people in difficult times," French said. "Across our nearly 30,000 sites the Forest Service manages nationally, we want to ensure the safety of our communities, our employees, and visitors. We appreciate your understanding as we all manage through this challenging time."

Safety, of course, is critical. Like you, we are practicing an abundance of caution to help, as they say, flatten the curve. While we are business as usual, we, like the rest of the country, have altered that a bit to follow the guidance of our agency as well as local, county, state, and federal leaders and medical professionals.

"Our national forests and grasslands continue to be a safe place to visit and recreate," said Tracy Perry, director of the agency's Law Enforcement and Investigations corps of officers and agents. "However, visitors should be aware of state, county, and local health restrictions that may prohibit some activities or prohibit visiting some areas on public lands."

Perry said that while essential public services continue local partners and agencies that visitors should, "Remember that we are all busy and may not be available to respond to all situations. Please avoid high-risk activities. First responders are overwhelmed and may not have the resources to respond to remote areas."

More about the coronavirus: Coronavirus.gov

Keep in mind:



Child welfare workers
do not stop during a
pandemic such as
COVID-19.

Please continue advocating for children
They need you.
Volunteer as a CASA - stand up for
abused and neglected children, giving
them a voice in the courtroom.

www.CASAofArizona.org

