



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact:

Karen DeRosa, Director of Community Development
CASA for Children of Atlantic and Cape May Counties
(609) 601-7800

karen@atlanticapecasa.org

www.atlanticapecasa.org

**COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES (CASA) FOR CHILDREN OF ATLANTIC AND
CAPE MAY COUNTIES CELEBRATES 15 YEARS OF SERVICE
TO ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN**

SOMERS POINT, N.J.: Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children of Atlantic and Cape May Counties celebrates 15 years of service to abused and neglected children in Atlantic and Cape May Counties. To celebrate, CASA announces two special Community Awareness fundraising events on Thursday October 20, an 8:30 a.m. breakfast at the Stockton Seaview Hotel & Golf Club in Galloway, N.J. and a 12:30 p.m. lunch at the Sand Barrens Golf Club in Cape May Court House, N.J. Both events are free to attend, but a reservation is required. Those interested in attending should visit AtlanticCapeCASA.org or call (609) 601-7800.

CASA was founded in 1995 by a woman grieving the death of a foster child who once resided in her home. Having seen first-hand the shortcomings of the system, she was compelled to do something to save other children from similar fates. CASA became an independent 501(c)3 organization and expanded the program to include Cape May County in 2001.

When CASA expanded into Cape May County, the organization had only 3 volunteers and was struggling to serve just 2 children. That same year, the Board of Trustees received a grant from the National CASA Association and hired its' first Executive Director, Angie Waters, who still holds the position today. By

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September of 2001 the first class of 13 volunteers for CASA of Atlantic and Cape May Counties was trained and by the end of that year over 30 children were being served. That number continued to rise over the years and last fiscal year CASA served 550 children and with an active volunteer force of 237 diverse individuals from across the two-county region.

“Those early days were lean, it wasn’t easy,” says Executive Director Angie Waters, who has lead the organization since 2001, “I was young and had little experience running an entire organization, but the Board put their faith in me and together we have grown into an organization that truly makes a difference in the lives of abused and neglected children. Our goal and mission is the same as it was 15 years ago – to facilitate a safe, permanent homes for children living in foster care as quickly as possible and I’m proud to say that this past fiscal year we helped find permanent homes for 146 children, bringing the total number of children that have realized a safe home over the last 15 years to 1,162. Next fiscal year our goal is to serve 625 of the over 1,000 children living care in Atlantic and Cape May Counties.

“In our society, the stewardship of a child’s rights rest with the family. Today, too many families are in crisis. And too many children lose the stability and care they deserve. Unfortunately, the foster care system is severely overtaxed. In some courts, 10 to 20 cases of children in peril come before a single judge each day. Children are shuffled to several different homes in the span of just a few years. With every move, these at-risk children lose friendships and fall behind in school. Siblings are separated. For some, a ‘forever home’ is never found. Sadly, they end up navigating the world with little education, little money and little or no support. They often lack even the most basic life skills or even a sense of worth.

A single volunteer and your support create a better life for these at-risk children. Your commitment makes it possible to ensure that every child in foster care has a CASA volunteer. With that volunteer comes the knowledge that they will fight for their child’s rights and needs until they are in a safe, loving, permanent home.

“We are humbled by the generosity and work that has been done over the last 15 years,” said Board President E. David Hieb. “We are grateful to the people and businesses who have dedicated their lives, time and donations to children in need. With that support, our budget is now over \$800,000 and we support 237 CASA volunteers and a staff of 10 serving 550 children. We have reached every milestone with the community right beside us. We will continue this journey until every child living in foster care has a CASA volunteer by beside them.

“I hope that everyone reading this story will take a minute to think about those 1,000 children living in foster care. These children are part of our community, not far removed from our own lives – they are our neighbors, our child’s class mate and our co-worker’s child - and they deserve a loving, safe family.”

About Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children of Atlantic and Cape May Counties

Trained CASA Volunteers speak in family court on behalf of abused and neglected children in the foster care system and are dedicated to ensuring these children are placed in safe permanent homes as quickly as possible. In Atlantic and Cape May Counties, over 1,000 children are placed in foster care annually. Last fiscal year, CASA served 550 abused and neglected children with over 200 CASA Volunteers and helped

place 146 children in permanent homes. For more information about CASA visit www.AtlanticCapeCASA.org. CASA is a United Way Partner Agency.

About National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association

The National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association is a network of almost 1,000 programs that recruit, train and support more than 76,000 citizen-volunteers who advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in the courtrooms of their communities. The only program of its kind, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers are empowered by the courts to provide children with one-on-one advocacy. CASA volunteers see their assigned children regularly and interview all the adults who impact their lives. Volunteer advocates offer judges the critical information they need to ensure each child's rights and needs are being attended to while in foster care, staying with the child until she is placed in a loving permanent home. For many abused children, their CASA volunteer is the only constant adult presence in their lives. For more information about the National CASA Association, readers are encouraged to visit www.casaforchildren.org.

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