

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE

McDonough County, Illinois

July 2017 Newsletter

Advocacy Network for Children Mission Statement: To protect and uphold the rights of children when wrongs have been committed against them; to help abused or neglected children have safe, permanent homes where they can thrive; to act as a powerful voice in these children's best interest and to educate the public about the plight of unrepresented children within the child welfare system.

Last month we began to explore the subject of *adoption and guardianship*. We looked at the legal differences between the two; now we will examine each option in more detail.

ADOPTION

“Adoption means making a lifelong commitment to a child. The court makes you, or you and your spouse (if you are married), the legal parents of a child. In certain circumstances, if you are separated from your spouse, you can adopt without your spouse’s participation. As the adoptive parent/s, you have the same rights and responsibilities for your adopted child as you would have had if the child had been born to you. Once a foster child is adopted, DCFS is no longer involved in or responsible for the care, supervision or custody of the child. As an adoptive parent, you assume all rights and responsibilities to make important decisions for your adoptive child, including the right to consent to major medical care and treatment, to marriage, to enlistment in the armed services, etc. Additionally, adopted children automatically are entitled to survivor’s benefits such as pensions and inheritance upon the adoptive parents’ death.

A child becomes “legally free” for adoption when his/her birth parents’ rights are severed, either voluntarily through the parents signing adoptive surrenders or consents, or involuntarily through termination of parental rights by the court. The court considers the unfitness of the parent and the best interests of the child when rendering a decision to terminate parental rights.” *

GUARDIANSHIP

“Guardianship means that the court appoints you as the child’s legal guardian. It differs from adoption because the birth parents’ rights do not have to be terminated in order to appoint a guardian. When you are appointed guardian of the child, DCFS will not be involved in the care, supervision or legal custody of the child. However, the court will retain jurisdiction until the child reaches the age of 18. As guardian you assume the rights and responsibilities to make decisions in matters having an effect on the life and the development of the child. Families becoming guardians of children in the care of DCFS may receive subsidies that include financial assistance as well as services and resources. Guardianship lasts until the child reaches the age of 18 years. The permanency options of return home and adoption must have been ruled out for a child to be considered for guardianship. The child’s parent(s) may consent to the guardianship arrangement and if they do not consent, they will be given notice of their opportunity to object in court unless their parental rights have been relinquished or terminated.

Guardianship – con't

DCFS must first determine that guardianship is in the best interest of the child. Many factors go into that decision including the wishes of the child, who must give consent if 14 or older. The wishes of the prospective guardian and the relationship and interaction with the child are also considered. Thought will be given to the child's need for stability and adjustment to the present home, school and community. To insure a safe and suitable placement, the physical and mental health of all individuals involved will be taken into account. Additionally, DCFS will conduct a home study and criminal background check." *

CASA volunteers advocate for, and speak in the best interest of, their CASA child(ren). We understand that varying circumstances, of course, lead to different outcomes. It is CASA's goal to assure that every abused and neglected child have a safe, permanent home where he/she can thrive, whether it be a return home, adoption or guardianship.

Taken from Making the Adoption/Guardianship Decision, IL
Dept. of Children and Family Services

CASA Volunteers!

Thank you for letting me know of "life circumstances" that might keep you from seeing your CASA kids and families once a month. Together we can "think outside the box" to develop a plan of coverage for your kids! Please call anytime!

Vicki Duba

*Volunteer Coordinator
CASA of McDonough County*



Pictured left to right, George Dixon,
Judge Patricia Walton and Jan Tronvig-Greenwood.

Welcome new CASA volunteers!

Judge Patricia Walton, on June 15th, swore in two new CASA volunteers, **George Dixon** and **Jan Tronvig-Greenwood**. George and Jan completed CASA training and, following an afternoon of juvenile court observation, took the oath declaring them certified Court Appointed Special Advocates. Both volunteers have accepted their first case and are planning how they will advocate for their abused and neglected children. Please wish them the best as they assume these important volunteer duties.

Illinois State CASA Conference

The Illinois State CASA Conference was held June 9th in Peoria. I had the opportunity to attend a day filled with opportunities for learning and a variety of topics for break-out sessions. The key-note speaker was Shenandoah Chefalo. Ms. Chefalo overcame a “dysfunctional journey through childhood” and became one of the 3% of foster children to attend college and the 1% who graduate. She is a successful businesswoman; however, still suffers from the long-term effects of neglect and the coping skills she developed to survive. She wrote ***Garbage Bag Suitcase***, her memoirs of her dreadful childhood.

We have added the ***Garbage Bag Suitcase*** to the library at the office in Macomb. We also added another book recommended at the conference, ***The Body Keeps the Score; Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma*** by Bessel van der Kolk, MD.

Please, stop by the office and “check-out” a book. When done, fill out a Continuing Education Credit form. Each book is worth 3 hours of continuing education credit.



CASA – Calendar of Upcoming Events

July and August – No Brown Bag Lunch meetings. Summer break.

July 14 – Medical Aspects of Child Maltreatment.* (Flyer sent as separate attachment.) 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. At the Spoon River College Outreach Center in Macomb. Key note speaker: Dr. Channing Petrak, MD, Pediatric Resource Center, University of Illinois College of Medicine – Peoria.

August 16 – Interagency Council.* 9:00 am to 10:30 am at the McDonough County Health Department. Guest speakers, Representative Noreen Hammond and Senator Jill Tracy. This is a popular event, especially in this time of Illinois’ budget crisis!

November 15 – Interagency Council.* 9:00 am to 10:30 am at the McDonough County Health Department. Guest speaker is Kate McGruder, Director of Early Beginnings. Kate will present on childhood trauma.

Toní Ainslie . . . Happy Birthday on July 18th!
Thank you for being a CASA volunteer!