

# COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE

## McDonough County, Illinois

### November 2017 Newsletter

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*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.*

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**12 abused and neglected children received their CASA volunteer in October!**

**These children now have a voice!**

**Thank you to volunteers and to the community which, through generous donations and support, make our important work possible!**

### ***The Role of the Caregiver (Foster Parent) In Reuniting the Family\****

Permanency planning toward reunification is an approach to reducing the trauma of separation for children, building safe and stable families and achieving permanency for children with their parents. The focus on reunification is not new. The safety of children and strengthening of their families is the two-part mandate of the department (Department of Children and Family Services). Families are strengthened so that children can go home.

#### **How Can the Caregivers Help with Reunification?**

- Meeting the parents as soon as possible
- Exchange of information about the child
- Shared parenting
- Family visits in a family setting
- Mentoring and modeling with parents

When a foster caregiver accepts the placement of a child new to foster care, he or she should come to the table with a good faith intention to be supportive of the parents' relationship with the child and to be helpful to the reunification process. Building a relationship with the child's parents can be done in many ways.

For all caregivers, their role should include:

- encouraging parents in their improved parenting skills and relationship with their child;
- and, supporting the transition of responsibility from the caregiver to the parent.

**What is "Shared Parenting?"** Shared parenting opportunities that can be repeated over and over again as long as the child is in care include: school events, performances, sports activities, church events, community activities, social and family gatherings, meals, etc. The type and extent of shared parenting activities will grow as the parent is successful in changing the conditions that brought the child into care. A family or community setting provides the best opportunity for a parent to engage in ordinary parenting tasks with their children. Shared parenting may continue after the child returns home until case closure if the caregiver and parent agree.

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*Role of the Caregiver, cont.*

**Shared parenting helps the child.** A child in foster care continues to need the care and attention of her parent even while in the home of the caregiver. Shared parent tasks and responsibilities reassure the child of the parent's role in her life and reinforce the child's continued membership in her family.

**Shared parenting helps the parent.** Shared parenting tasks provide opportunities for the parent to remain in the "parent" role, to grow in the relationship, to learn from the caseworker and caregiver and to practice new skills.

**Shared parenting helps make the reunification decision.** Parent participation in "normal" parent activities helps to predict how well the parent will handle responsibilities when the family is reunited.

\*To see this article in its entirety, please refer to the DCFS Foster Parent Handbook:  
[https://www.illinois.gov/dcf/lovinghomes/fostercare/Documents/FP\\_Handbook\\_Section\\_3\\_2014.pdf](https://www.illinois.gov/dcf/lovinghomes/fostercare/Documents/FP_Handbook_Section_3_2014.pdf)

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*We, as CASAs, may not see foster parent support to this extent as we advocate for our abused and neglected children. However, I believe we, as CASAs, can advocate for this type of parental support when it is in the best interest of the children we represent.*

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*Happy Birthday Eunice Lutz  
November 23<sup>rd</sup>*

*Eunice has been a CASA volunteer since October of 2013!  
Thank you for your dedication Eunice!*

### Legal Terms of the Month

**Take judicial notice:** to consider the evidence contained in earlier proceedings or in court files, without having to go through the process of having files copied as exhibits.

**A putative father "sat on his rights:"** The putative father failed to exercise rights he was entitled to.

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## **CASA – Calendar of Upcoming Opportunities!**

**November 8 – Evening In-Service.** 5:30 – 7:00 pm at the First Presbyterian Church in Macomb. Scott Cameron, Permanency Achievement Specialist for Illinois Department of Children and Family Service, will talk about his program, Family Finding. Scott will discuss the importance and benefits of finding immediate and extended family willing to provide support for abused and neglected children just as soon as they are removed from the home. **Baked potato bar available at 5:00 p.m.! Please RSVP your attendance no later than close of business on Monday, November 6th to Vicki Duba, 309-544-0003 to assure enough food!**

**November 15 – Interagency Council.** 9:00 am to 10:30 am at the McDonough County Health Department. Guest speaker is Becky Derry, McDonough District Hospital Behavioral Health. Becky's presentation will be "Taking Care of Yourself as you Serve Others".

**December 12 – Holiday Open House, sponsored by Advocacy Network for Children.** 4:00 – 5:30 pm in the parlor of the First Presbyterian Church, Carroll and Dudley Streets. Welcome CASA volunteers, the Children's Advocacy Center team, and friends in the community!

**December 14 – Opioid Overdose Awareness, Education and Prevention.** A McDonough County Town Hall Meeting held at Macomb City Hall from 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. (1 ½ hours continuing education credit for CASA volunteers.) **RSVP your interest in meeting for an early dinner at 5:00 p.m. at Chubbys. Please reply no later than December 13<sup>th</sup> to Vicki Duba, PH: 309-544-0003.**

**March 9, 2018 – Advocacy Network for Children Fundraising Dinner.** Save the date . . . Details follow.

**April 7, 2018 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Run for CASA's Kids.** Save the date! Details to follow!

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**"Events in the Making"**  
Understanding the Integrated Assessment