

Cumberland County CASA Program
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PRESS RELEASE

May 1, 2019

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Cumberland County CASA Advocates Sworn In To Help Aid Children In The Court System

Carlisle, PA – Seven new Cumberland County residents will now be able to advocate for the children involved in the Dependency Court System. Cumberland County Judge Edward Guido swore in seven new Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) today, and recognized four volunteers for their years of service during the 18th Annual Light of Hope Ceremony.

CASA volunteers advocate for the best interest of children involved in the Dependency Court System, which includes children who have been abused and/or neglected. The volunteers work to gather information on the child and family situation, advocate for the child, facilitate communication between those involved with the child in order to best support the child's needs, and monitor the case until the child is in a safe and permanent home.

“In our 18 years of operation, the Cumberland County CASA program has trained 238 volunteers, who have represented 502 children,” said Anita Brewster, director of CASA. “Our volunteers collectively have dedicated hundreds of hours and driven thousands of miles to present their findings and recommendations to the Court; offering the judges and hearing officer pertinent information in order to make those incredibly difficult decisions.”

CASA volunteers are appointed by a judge to work with one child or sibling group. They focus on the child for the duration of the child's court involvement, until they are deemed to be in a safe, permanent home. Often children are able to return to their homes of origin or sometimes they may be adopted.

The new volunteers are Larry Boresow, Hope Comeau, and Carlesha Halkias, Carlisle; Debra Bilous and Joy Nixon, Camp Hill; Darya Kharlamova, Enola; and Maureen Beltrandi, Mechanicsburg.

The CASA volunteers recognized for their years of dedication to the program, included Cindy Garfinkel for 10 years of service and Kathy Kelly, Kim Meals, and Natali Rosado, each for 5 years of service.

After the swearing-in, those in attendance lit candles as a symbol of the hope that one caring adult can bring to a child's life.

The women of Kappa Alpha Theta of Dickinson College hosted a reception after the ceremony, and the Cumberland Valley Bluegrass Boys, also from Dickinson College, provided musical entertainment.

The Cumberland County CASA Program requires all potential volunteers to complete more than 50 hours of pre-service training, and they go through a careful screening process. The training, which uses materials from the National CASA Association, introduces the trainees to the Children and Youth Services and the Dependency Court Systems, and to topics such as cultural diversity, child development, confidentiality and ethics, the role of the CASA volunteer, and community and social service resources.

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The CASA Program recruits, screens, trains, assigns and supports CASA volunteers in their work on behalf of abused and/or neglected children whose cases are in the Cumberland County Dependency Court system. CASA volunteers gather current and background information for each child assigned; advocate for the child's best interests in court; facilitate communication between the parties involved in the case; and monitor the situation in order to develop and present their recommendations to the Court to aid in establishing a safe, permanent and nurturing home in an expeditious manner. For more information visit www.ccpa.net/casa