

CASA Weekly Happenings

Dear CASA Volunteers:

I hope you all had a great holiday! The following are some updates for the CASA program. Please let us know if you have any questions.

- **Lana Dingman.** Due to a family matter in Russia, Lana will be out of the CASA offices until January 29, 2010. During this time, Andrea will be assisting CASA volunteers who are assigned to Lana. If you have any questions, please contact Andrea at ahowell@klamathfallscasa.org.
- **Save the Date.** You are invited to attend a CASA Soup Luncheon at the CASA offices, 3rd floor conference room, on Thursday, January 28, from 12 to 1 pm. Please RSVP by January 21 to sberger@klamathfallscasa.org. This is an opportunity to network with other CASA volunteers. CASA volunteers are allowed to discuss their case with other CASA volunteers to gain their perspective, encouragement and recommendations.
- **January 18, 2010.** In observation of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the CASA offices will be closed on January 18, 2010. January 18 is also the National Day of Service. Thank you for your volunteer service as a CASA.
- **Judges Luncheon.** You are invited to attend the Judges Luncheon with our new volunteers on Monday, January 25, from 12 to 1 pm. Please RSVP by January 18 to sberger@klamathfallscasa.org.
- **Weekly Happenings.** Weekly Happenings are posted on the CASA website. If you would like to refer to previous Weekly Happenings, click on Volunteer Resources or go to <http://www.klamathfallscasa.org/volunteer/resources>. You can use this for training hours.
- **Incredible Years Parenting Classes.** If you have CASA children between the ages of 1 – 3, there is a free resource for parents. Parents receive a Certificate of Completion following the 8 week course. Classes begin on January 14. To register, contact the instructor, Jill Linebarger, Commission on Children & Families at 883-5117.
- **The main role of the CASA is to be the Voice of the Child.** CASA is a proven means of strengthening the voice of children in dependency courts. Thank you for visiting with your CASA children at least once a month so you can relay the child's wishes and needs to the judge. The following is a list of steps from National CASA to engage children in a friendly, supportive conversation.

- 1. Do Your Homework.** Empathy is the most important step in your preparation. Before you meet the children, review what you have learned about them so far. Pay special attention to anything that will help you understand their personalities, developmental level or past experiences. Ask yourself, “How is this child likely to feel right now? How might he or she feel about meeting me?”
- 2. Find a Peaceful Space.** When you meet children for the first time, find a calm setting where they can feel safe, and join them on their level. Avoid rooms with blaring televisions or other electronic distractions.
- 3. Keep It Light.** Find a game or toy so that the children have a neutral focus for their attention when nervous. Coloring books work well with younger children, while outdoor activities and card games such as *Uno* work for a variety of ages.
- 4. Start Small.** Begin with the safest topics. Compliment their shoes or a picture they have drawn, and ask them about their likes, dislikes and interests. With older children, it is helpful to know something about the latest entertainment personalities, music or movies. Engaging children in small talk will help you make quick assessments of their developmental levels so that you can select the most appropriate level of language to use.
- 5. Know Your Limits.** Be mindful of your boundaries. You are not a therapist, attorney or forensic interviewer. It is not your job to find out more about the conditions that brought the children into care. As a CASA volunteer, you want merely to learn more about the children and help them understand your role.
- 6. Acknowledge Feelings.** As the conversation progresses, children may begin to express their feelings and perceptions about the events in their lives. Be aware that something you intend to be comforting may instead sound like a contradiction and will shut down further conversation. Acknowledge feelings explicitly. Instead of, “I’m sure your new teacher was only trying to keep the class on task,” try “That must have been embarrassing. What happened next?”
- 7. Don’t Just Say “No”.** Children may make requests that you are unable to fulfill. Pause to consider all requests, even if you know you have to say “no,” and think through your reasons out loud so that they can understand the reason for your denial. Follow up by suggesting an alternative .
- 8. Listen. Listen. Listen.** Above all, listen more than you talk. Listening to children demonstrates respect and builds self-esteem.

Sincerely,
Sandy Berger
Executive Director
CASA for Children of Klamath County
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