

# **CASA CONNECTION Newsletter**



## **Welcome to our new advocates and board members**

Congratulations & Welcome to our newest volunteer advocates: Lynsey Kime, John Weeder and Joan Smith. They were sworn in by the Honorable Frank J. Skorupa on July 6. This group of caring individuals started, pre Covid-19, with in-person training and concluded it virtually, via Zoom. This is the first class of volunteers to complete their 30 hours of pre-service training virtually, via Zoom. Kudos to them for sticking with us as we all learned this new technology.



[left to right] Hon. Frank Skorupa,  
Lynsey Kime, John Weeder  
and Joan Smith

We would also like to welcome a few new members to our Board of Directors: Scott Ditter, Kiara Ziemba, Nicole Saalfeld and Karina Perez. They join a board of hardworking & dedicated individuals that includes: Lisa McFarland, Robbin Cutsor, Doug Pauley, Travis Hill, Theresa Seipel and Zach Johnson.

# A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Susan Jarecki

## *Happy Autumn Everyone!*

*Looking for a topic to discuss is pretty much a moot point. No matter what we talk about, it seems that COVID-19 squirms its way into every discussion...so let's start with that.*

*Who would have believed in this day and age, that we would still be dealing with COVID-19 to this extent, six months after it all started? I hope you didn't waste your money buying a 2020 Day planner...everything I had in mine has been crossed out, postponed, or changed to a virtual meeting. I just never thought it would drag out this long, but it appears to be no end in sight just yet.*

*I wish I could say that CASA Connection has not been affected by the virus, but unfortunately I can't. We have been affected financially as we lost all 3 of our major fundraisers this year. However, and more importantly, we have had members of our local CASA family afflicted with the virus. Thankfully, they have recovered, but I don't think anyone knows the long-term effects of this disease. It is just so vitally important that everyone understand the seriousness of this disease and protect themselves, their loved ones and everyone around them.*

*The Holiday Season is just around the corner and that has ALWAYS been my favorite time of the year. Of course, due to COVID things will be different this year. There will be more online shopping, less traveling and smaller gatherings, but it is still important to make the season as normal as possible for the children, the elderly and well...for everyone! While I always enjoy this time of the year, it is a very sad time for many people, and depression increases for those that don't have families, or are suffering from mental health issues. Please look out for your neighbors, family and friends. No one should be alone throughout the holidays.*

*Before signing off, I want to mention that despite the pandemic and everything else that has gone on this year, CASA Connection is thriving! Our volunteers have done an amazing job at keeping up with their cases, virtual meetings, outside visits, whatever was needed to protect themselves and the children. As expected, as the schools and daycares open back up, we have begun to see more cases sent to us.*

*I hope this newsletter has found you all healthy and doing well. Thank you for all you do every day!*

*Stay Safe!*

*Susan Jarecki*

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## CASA Connection is looking for speaking opportunities

Do you have a business, church group, club or other entity that would like to learn more about CASA Connection? Our Outreach Coordinator, Lisa Rosendahl, would love to come speak and share more with your peers about CASA Connection and how to get involved! Please reach out to [casacoord@gmail.com](mailto:casacoord@gmail.com) and help spread the word.

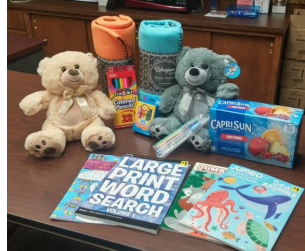
**ABOUT CASA** (Court Appointed Special Advocates) is a national volunteer movement founded in 1977. CASA Connection started in 1992 and is a member of the National & Nebraska CASA Associations. There are more than 1,000 CASA programs nationwide & 22 in Nebraska.

**2,046 children were served by 824 CASA volunteers in Nebraska in 2018** [Source: [nebraskacasa.org](http://nebraskacasa.org)]

*"We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives."*

**John F. Kennedy**

**THANK YOU** to Maggie Shevlin, Josie Larsen & Eastyn Luebbe who formed a group "Bringing Kids Comfort". This group of young ladies were awarded funds to help make Columbus a better community, through the Columbus Area Youth Philanthropy Project. Their project was to help youth in crisis with care packages that included such items as teddy bears, small blankets, coloring and activity books, crayons/pens & snacks. CASA Connection was one of the lucky organizations to receive these packages. They also presented packages to the Columbus Police Department, Center for Survivors, DHHS, Columbus Fire Department and the Columbus Hospital.



We were also blessed with the donation of a beautiful handmade baby blanket made by Michelle Hahn of Cruise & Associates. **THANK YOU** Michelle!



**THANK YOU** as well goes to Ed Bogue of Guardians of the Children. Ed donated a pickup load of pumpkins to CASA Connection. Our volunteers can take pumpkins on their next visit to see their CASA kiddos to decorate for Halloween/Fall. We appreciate Ed's and his organization's generosity & for thinking of the children we advocate for. We know the children will really enjoy decorating their jack o' lanterns.



## **Festival of Trees**

CASA Connection has been invited to participate in the Columbus Women's Club Annual Festival of Trees November 19 through November 22. This event is held in the Columbus Art Gallery, lower level of the Columbus Public Library, 2504 14th Street. There is an admission charged for the event but we would love everyone to come check out all the fun trees decorated by various individuals, clubs & organizations from around the community. Come and be inspired for the holidays.



# Board Members

Lisa McFarland, President  
Robbin Cutsor, Treasurer  
Theresa Seipel, Secretary  
Scott Ditter  
Travis Hill  
Zach Johnson  
Doug Pauley  
Karina Perez  
Nicole Saalfeld  
Kiara Ziemba



# Volunteer Advocates

Mike Applegate Julie Anderson  
Rolaine Blaser Dan Britt  
Jean Britt Tom Cleary  
Dee Condon Robbin Cutsor  
Joy Dannelly Tracy Duncan  
Tricia Dusatko Mike Goos  
Renee Held Kaye Karmann  
Carrie Kreber Lynsey Kime  
Jeanne Quinn Kim Schmidt  
Theresa Seipel Joan Smith  
Casey Spitz Tara Svatora  
Karmen Thompson Carrie Trofholz  
John Weeder

## Staff

Susan Jarecki: Executive Director  
Email: [casacon@yahoo.com](mailto:casacon@yahoo.com)

Lisa Rosendahl: Outreach Coordinator  
Email: [casacoord@gmail.com](mailto:casacoord@gmail.com)

**CASA Connection is affiliated with  
the Nebraska CASA Association &  
the National CASA Association  
CASA Connection is a Columbus  
Area United Way agency.**

## **CASA Connection**

### Office Location:

1465 27th Avenue

### Mailing Address:

2610 14th Street

Columbus, NE 68601

**Phone:** 402.563.4944

Find Us | *We're Social*

### Website:

[www.casaconnectionne.com](http://www.casaconnectionne.com)

### **Facebook:**

CASA Connection, Columbus, NE

**Twitter:** @CASAConnectNE

### **Instagram:**

@casa\_connectionnebraska



Columbus Area  
United Way





### CASA Connection Volunteer Spotlight August 2020

At CASA Connection we are very thankful for all of our AWESOME volunteers! These men & women give their hearts & time advocating for children in Platte & Colfax counties. Join us in getting to know a little about one of these volunteers each month.

#### Rolaine Blaser

Rolaine Blaser has been with CASA Connection 19 years.

##### Why did you choose to volunteer with our organization?

*I always have liked working with children and when one is in trouble or troubled, even through no fault of their own they need someone to step up and I saw CASA as a way to maybe to do that.*

##### What do you like most about being a CASA advocate?

*Being able to see children get permanency and hoping I was able to help them in that journey.*

##### With so many worthwhile organizations to volunteer with, why should others choose to volunteer with CASA Connection?

*Being able to have the one on one with the child and being able to be his voice.*

##### What would you say to someone considering becoming a volunteer with CASA?

*At times it can be frustrating working with DHHS, the court, and parents but I think of how frustrating it is for the child and I can help him navigate it all. I have and you will learn so much about our systems that will help you if you are in doubt there is a team to help you.*

##### For something fun-do you have a favorite book or movie and why?

*I am not a big movie person; I would rather read. I don't have a favorite as I like to hop around to different types of books such as self-help, romance novels, biographies and such.*

**If you would like to volunteer with CASA Connection contact us at (402)563-4944, email Lisa Rosendahl at [casacoord@gmail.com](mailto:casacoord@gmail.com), or visit our website**

**<https://casaconnectionne.com/how-to-help/volunteer.html>**



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#### Renee Held

Renee Held has been with CASA Connection 12 years.

##### Why did you choose to volunteer with our organization?

*What initially drew me to look at CASA was the legal system aspect in working with children of neglect or abuse. Once I learned the need to help these kids, I signed up.*

##### What do you like most about being a CASA advocate?

*I enjoy the end of the case the best! When the parents understand what is as risk in losing their children and put in the work to overcome their struggles and put their kids first!*

##### With so many worthwhile organizations to volunteer with, why should others choose to volunteer with CASA Connection?

*CASA requires the volunteers to step out of their routine lives and enter into real world situations where they learn about how children are affected by those they trust. I've learned the harsh reality of seeing the effects on innocent children by those that should be loving and caring for them.*

##### What would you say to someone considering becoming a volunteer with CASA?

*Being a CASA volunteer allows a person to help those children that are most vulnerable. Helping these children will have a lifetime impact for you and the children.*

##### For something fun-do you have a favorite book or movie and why?

*One of my favorite movies is "Baby Boom". It is a story about a self-absorbed corporate woman who ends up being selected as a guardian for a baby. She realizes that taking care of the child must become her priority and transforms her hectic life to one of a family woman and is still able to work!*

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**<https://casaconnectionne.com/how-to-help/volunteer.html>**



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#### Robbin Cutsor

Robbin Cutsor has been with CASA Connection 6 years as an Advocate as well as Board Member.

##### Why did you choose to volunteer with our organization?

*I had never heard of CASA until I saw it on a flier in town. Once I found out what they did for kids in unfortunate situations I felt like this was the place that I could make the most impact.*

##### What do you like most about being a CASA advocate?

*Being a POSITIVE part of a child's life during a time where they are getting mixed emotions from all of the people that are involved in their lives. From parents to foster parents to grandparents there are a lot of things going on that are confusing. If I can be a positive, consistent part of their life right now I want to be that person!*

##### With so many worthwhile organizations to volunteer with, why should others choose to volunteer with CASA Connection?

*There are a ton of organizations that need volunteers for sure. CASA Connection is a great organization as the others are too, that you get a chance to be someone there for kids. What sets us apart is that we are there when they have been removed from their homes and parents for a reason that they had little or no control over. The children are our future and all too often these patterns repeat themselves. I would like to think that I could help stop that cycle.*

##### What would you say to someone considering becoming a volunteer with CASA?

*Go For It! You will look at life in a whole new light. You will parent differently and it will open your eyes to what is going on in our world, to these kids that need that one constant person to listen to them and stick up for them when it matters.*

##### For something fun-do you have a favorite book or movie and why?

*That is a tough question, I can name a few movies that I watch every time they come on even if I have seen it 100 times. *Sweet Home Alabama*, *The Blind Side*, *Home is Where the Heart Is*. I guess I am a sucker for a happy ending!!!*



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#### Jean Britt

Jean Britt has been with CASA Connection 5 years as an Advocate

##### Why did you choose to volunteer with our organization?

*We had done foster care for 16 years. After deciding not to do foster care anymore due to some health issues I had, I knew that I still wanted to work with kiddos.*

##### What do you like most about being a CASA advocate?

*I love the fact that I am working just with the child.*

##### With so many worthwhile organizations to volunteer with, why should others choose to volunteer with CASA Connection?

*I wanted to work with kids...not parents like you do in foster care.*

##### What would you say to someone considering becoming a volunteer with CASA?

*I would say..DO IT! The time investment isn't great but the reward is satisfying to know you did your best for the child! Don't be scared....you will end up liking what you are doing!*

##### For something fun-What would the title of your autobiography be?

*She tried to be enough for everyone!*



**CASA Connection sends a huge THANK YOU to the following for all of their past support, funding and in-kind donations**

Platte County, Nebraska  
Colfax County, Nebraska  
Columbus Area United Way  
Nebraska CASA Association  
National CASA Association  
Nebraska Crime Commission  
Cornhusker Goodwill Fund  
Linda K. Price

**Current 2020 Program Statistics**  
**January 1 to September 1**

68 Children referred to our program  
46 Children served with an advocate  
42 Family groups

18 Cases Monitored  
26 Active Volunteers  
20 Cases Closed

CASA Connection is looking for more volunteers to advocate for children in Platte & Colfax counties. If you or someone you know is interested in finding out more about volunteering with us please visit our website:  
[www.casaconnectionne.com](http://www.casaconnectionne.com)

"We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say 'It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.'  
Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes."  
-Fred Rogers

