

# MONTANA ADVOCATE



## CASA Promotes Child Abuse Awareness with April Events

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April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month and a good time to highlight the services provided by CASA to children and families. More than 400 Court Appointed Special Advocates volunteers are speaking out for 900 children who have been removed from their homes because of alleged abuse and neglect. Around the state, many CASA programs are holding special events and fundraisers to promote awareness of their advocacy efforts and the continuing problem of child abuse.

#### **GREAT FALLS**

Twenty cardboard displays of foster children that serve as part of National CASA's Forgotten Children Campaign will be set up during the week of April 19. Cut outs of Forgotten Children and blue and silver pin-wheels, donated by the local Exchange club and symbolizing Child Abuse Prevention, will be at attention on the Cascade County courthouse lawn. On April 20, during National Volunteer Week, volunteers will be honored at the home of guardian ad litem Linda Mettam and the Cascade County Volunteer of the Year will be announced.

#### **HELENA**

In Helena, school children participated in a coloring contest and winners were announced in March. Helena CASA recruited sponsors to shine a light in their windows for the whole month of April! Your support will help meet the needs of many local children. This light signifies hope for each child who continues to wait in the foster care system for a permanent home. Local businesses sponsor individual lights at \$25 each. You may purchase a light for your family or business by contacting CASA-Advocates for Kids at 406- 457-0797.

#### **KALISPELL**

The CASA for Kids annual dinner at Capers and Champagne Reception at the Noice Gallery is Monday, April 26. The reception begins at 5:30 p.m. followed by dinner at 6. Tickets are \$100 per person or \$180 per couple. Artwork

from Whitefish High School students and other items will be auctioned at the event. The CASA for Kids' Light of Hope event is planned for either May 18 or 20 with entertainment provided by choral groups from two Kalispell High Schools. For details call 406-755-7208

#### **HAMILTON-CORVALIS**

The Bitterroot CASA program has set a Light of Hope fundraiser for April 23 at the Bitterroot River Inn. A fabulous evening will include great food by Caffe' Firenze, full bar, live entertainment and dancing to Cabin Fever and very special guests.

#### **MALTA**

Prairie CASA/GAL sponsored a team at the local Chili Cook off and provided information on the need for advocates and the issue of child abuse. The program is also promoting April as National Child Abuse Awareness Prevention Month in

the local communities of Blaine, Phillips and Valley Counties. In addition to posters, the local program created "sandwich" cards for local businesses to display on tables and desks to share the purpose of CASA volunteers and the opportunities to help children.

#### **MILES CITY**

CASA of Eastern Montana will place the Forgotten Children on the lawn of the Custer County Court house on April 5<sup>th</sup> in Miles City and the cutouts will be placed on the highway in Colstrip on April 9. On April 10, the Annual Auction in Colstrip will feature the band "MoJo Catz" from Billings performing from 9am-2pm.

#### **LIVINGSTON**

The 6th Judicial CASA program in Livingston plans to reach out to local communities in Big Timber and Livingston with a media campaign and Forgotten Children images in local businesses.

**Program contact information and a calendar is available online at [www.casagal.org](http://www.casagal.org).**

*(Continued on page 2)*

April is



**Prevent Child Abuse Awareness Month**

### CASA of Montana

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and

Park-2-Park Montana

## Native American Youth Pow Wow in Missoula Draws Area Families

For the first time, CASA was part of a youth Pow Wow sponsored by the native American Studies Program at the University of Montana, Missoula. CASA VISTAs Laura Fremeau and Kirsten Vorreyer provided information at a CASA table and worked concessions. Native American youths and adults participated in an all-day event that featured traditional and fancy outfits and dance.

Families from the Missoula area crowded the stands at Big Sky High School March 26.

Many local CASA programs are working to recruit more native American volunteers. Native Americans make up 6 percent of Montana's population but represent more than 20 percent of the children in need of court appointed advocacy. Native American volunteers represent only 2 percent of the more than 400 volunteers speaking up for children.

CASA is reaching out to the youth community to generate interest and recruit a younger and more diverse volunteer base. CASA of Montana is in the fourth year of a project working with local

CASA programs to increase diversity of volunteers throughout the state. Efforts include outreach to community groups, tribal churches, university professionals, and various Indian Alliances.

Montana State Board member Elrae Potts has been a key figure in collaboration. She and Mike Jetty from the Office of Public Instruction, provided training entitled "Tips for working with Native American Children".

The training was videotaped and sent to local programs. Other diversity materials are available online at "resources" on [www.casagal.org](http://www.casagal.org). A Native American Cultural Literacy Guide was compiled to promote cultural literacy for all volunteers.

Native American foster families are also needed. Child and Family Services has hired VISTA Alise Scheeler to develop and



Fancy dancers perform at Missoula Youth Pow wow on March 26 at Big Sky High School.

coordinate a foster family recruitment campaign with a focus on Native American families. Alise is collaborating with several organizations including CASA to help promote awareness of the need. For more information, e-mail [info@casagal.org](mailto:info@casagal.org).

## Meet CASA's New Board Members

Two new board members joined the CASA of Montana State Board in January. They are Mary Ann Rangitsch of Bozeman and Rebecca Swandal of Livingston.

Mary Ann is a detective with the Bozeman Police Department and a member of the local Gallatin County CASA/GAL board. She's an enthusiastic bike rider who has cycled more than 1,200 miles for CASA in Park-2-Park Montana fundraiser the last three years. This year she is part of the volunteer Park-2-Park

committee helping to organize the ride.

Rebecca is a recent graduate of the University of Montana law school. She served one year as a law clerk for Justice Warner on the Montana Supreme Court. She recently began work as an associate with the Crowley Fleck Law Firm in Bozeman.

"I am extremely motivated to get involved in the legal community, including great programs with CASA," Rebecca wrote in her application.

The two women join a board of 14 board members from around the state with various talents and abilities. Treasurer Schylar Canfield is a former foster child and Senior Enrollment Representative for Montana Technology of the University of Montana in Butte. He is President of the National Foster Youth Advisory Council. He credits his work with Foster Club for teens in foster care for giving him many of the skills he needs for his work.

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### Statewide CAN Conference

The 2010 Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) Conference is April 28-30 at the Red Lion Hotel in Helena. It will feature keynote speakers from the Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect in Denver. Justice Jim Rice will present the CASA of Montana CAN Awards at the beginning of the Conference. As is the tradition in Montana, awards are given to an exceptional Volunteer, Program Director, and Judge. Nominations must be received by April 5 and award winners will be notified by April 17.

The goal of the conference is to bring together and educate CASA staff, volunteers, and board members, as well as judges, attorneys, and interested social services workers around topics and research current to their field. Featured Kempe Center speakers include Donald Bross, JD PhD, the director of Education and Legal Counsel and Terri James-Bank, the Director of Social Work and co-director on state team Crimes Against Children (START). Bross will speak on Why We Are in This Together: Interagency and Interdisciplinary Teamwork in Response to Child Abuse and Neglect.

To register for the CAN Conference, find nomination forms for CAN Awards, and read more about conference speakers, go to the CASA website at [www.casagal.org](http://www.casagal.org).

# Former Foster Child Plans Mentoring Program

**By Ellen Bush, Executive Director**

I recently talked with a former foster child who just turned 18 in February. Kristeana Macefield-Brawn wants you to know her name because she has some big plans. She wants to stand up and speak for other foster children, so she's already appeared on panels and at meetings.

First, she's working on graduating from high school – the first in her biological and her adoptive family to graduate. She's enthusiastic about the help she gets at Helena's alternative high school, called the Place for Alternate Learning in Helena. She wants to start a mentoring program for foster children. It's part of her senior high school project showing others the steps to adoption.

Kris, a former foster child, has walked those steps. She was removed from her birth family at age 11 because of abuse and neglect in her family. She was adopted by her single foster mother in November 2008

"I moved around a lot," Kris said about her early life with her birth family. "I lived with mom, sometimes with Dad. I learned how to raise myself and take care of my brother. Going to school was hard. I didn't make friends."

After Kris came to live with foster mom Kathy Macefield, she went through some tough times adjusting to middle school and a new home. She still hoped to go home to her biological mother. In her freshman year, she was sent to a wilderness program that helped her improve her attitude at school and home.

After Kris' biological mother died suddenly at 38, she struggled with the demands of her extended family, and a dad who was in and out of jail. Kris decided to look more seriously at adoption. Permanency is the goal of the federal and state legislation that guides the courts in making decisions for children removed from their homes. Kris decided it was time to make a commitment to Kathy and a new family.

"We crave stability even though we fight it," Kris said about foster children. And the stability she found has made her want to connect with other foster teens to improve their lives.

"I want to make sure foster kids find someone who really cares, and who they can really lean on."

For Kris, the person she learned to lean on was her foster mom. For others, it may be a CASA volunteer or a mentor who meets

regularly with an older child or teen to help keep them on track. She is working closely with Rebecca Hargis, her mentor and clinical supervisor at the Dan Fox

Family Care program, to start a Helena program for mentors. For more information, call Rebecca at 406-443-4730.

Foster mom Kathy spoke enthusiastically about watching the growth in her daughter. "It's been really awesome to watch her blossom," Kathy said. "Thank goodness for therapy and helping friends."

Kathy started out as a Big Sister first and then became a respite parent in 2000. Respite parents are trained to provide a break to the foster parents. Her first foster daughter was a 17-year old who left at 18, but who came back to live with her a few years later.

More respite families and more foster families are needed all around Montana – a focus of collaboration efforts. We need more CASA volunteers too – especially in our rural areas and in Billings. For more information on CASA, call 866-863-2272.



## Child/Family Resource Fair Planned for May

April is Prevent Child Abuse month and May is National Foster Care month. Helena area agencies are pulling together to create community awareness about child abuse prevention, the need for foster and adoptive homes, and resources available for families.

More than 20 area agencies will hold a "Family Find" fair on May 22 to raise public awareness about child abuse prevention and provide resources to families. Groups involved include but are not

limited to Helena CASA, Child and Family Services, Intermountain, Dan Fox Youth Homes, Catholic Social Services, Youth Dynamics, Big Brothers and Big Sisters and Montana Student Assistance.

The highlighted services include mentoring programs, case management services, support services for parents, Court Appointed Special Advocates, Foster Care, and Adoption.

"Family Find is about the big picture. It's not just about finding families," explains Rebecca Hargis of Dan Fox Youth Homes. "Child abuse is preventable but it takes everybody."

The Fair will take place from 11am-3pm at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Helena. It is free of charge and will include activities for children, discussion forums, and refreshments.

## Other CASA Happenings Around the State

**State Training** -- A statewide training is planned June 24 and 25 at the C'mon Inn in Bozeman for CASA staff and volunteers.

Special topics include information on the state CFSD Program Improvement Plan and issues surrounding Medical Marijuana use. Contact Jerie Roberts at: [jerie@casagal.org](mailto:jerie@casagal.org) for more info.

**Livingston**---The 6th Judicial CASA welcomes Joe Hansen from Big Timber and Lisa Phelan from Livingston as two new board members. Judge Nels Swandal is running for a position on the Montana Supreme Court.

**Dillon**-- The Fifth Judicial Voice for Children welcomes Aaron Griffin from Twin Bridges and Sarah Eyer from Boulder as two new board members.

**Great Falls**--CASA CAN welcomes new board member Emmy

Olson, Target Executive Team Leader--Human Resources. In addition, Kim Gagnon, Owner of Gagnons's Reprographics, joined the Board as the Guardian ad Litem Liaison. The 2nd Annual CASA-CAN Golf Tournament is planned for July 11 at Anaconda Hills Golf Course. Contact Lisa at [lgoff-casa@gtfalls.com](mailto:lgoff-casa@gtfalls.com) or 406-454-6738 for more details.

**Billings** —The Yellowstone CASA Garden party Dessert and Auction is set for June 13. Contact [Shirley@yellowstonecasa.org](mailto:Shirley@yellowstonecasa.org) for details. The CASA golf tournament is set for June 18 at Lake Hills Golf Club.

**Polson** - - Golf Tournament April 24 at Polson Bay. 406 883 8230. See more events online at [www.casagal.org/calendar/asp](http://www.casagal.org/calendar/asp).

## Newsletter now available by e-mail

Send us your e-mail address and we will add you to our list for electronic delivery of this newsletter. The change will save CASA postage and printing costs.

We'll also enter you in a drawing for CASA t-shirts, bags, and other goodies. Send your e-mail to: [pam-casa@qwestoffice.net](mailto:pam-casa@qwestoffice.net)

We appreciate your ideas, events and special people for future newsletters.

## Registration starts for Park-2-Park Montana

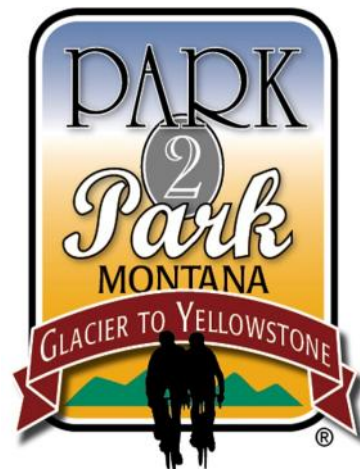
Riders are signing up for Park-2-Park Montana 2010—an event set for September 6-10. Park-2-Park is a five day supported bike ride from Glacier National Park to Yellowstone National Park that serves as CASA of Montana's fundraiser each year. Riders cover a daily distance of 55 to 108 miles each day for a total of 400 miles.

All forms, as well as posters and news stories from last year's ride can be found at the Park-2-Park website:

[www.park2parkmontana.org](http://www.park2parkmontana.org)  
866.863.2272

If you or your organization would like to be a Park-2-Park sponsor, contact Pam at [pam-casa@qwestoffice.net](mailto:pam-casa@qwestoffice.net) or call 406.443.2448.

Major sponsors are JCT Construction, Jim and Janet Charbonneau, ALPS liability insurance.



CASA of MONTANA

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