

# CASA OF SOUTHWESTERN ILLINOIS NEWSLETTER



Proud Member

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July 2015



“Every child needs a hero,  
but abused children need superheroes.”

This mantra is what motivates CASA organizations throughout the country to use superheroes as our annual theme for walks, runs and fundraising events.

*“What does it mean to be a superhero? We’re all fighting for the better good. But, at the same time, I think what stands out is, as superheroes, you don’t give up; you don’t surrender. I think that’s what makes a superhero.” - Ellen Wong*

To us, the dedicated volunteers who devote their time to becoming a Court Appointed Special Advocate are the very best kind of superhero.

Without asking for notoriety or a glamorous mask and cape, these CASAs selflessly

speak for children who might otherwise have no voice.

Alongside our CASAs, we have our donors, our staff and our community supporters on our team of mighty superheroes.

Without each and every one of you, we couldn’t complete our mission of advocating for abused and neglected children.

Thanks to you, we have had two very successful fundraising events so far in 2015.

*Continued on page 2.....*

## Our Mission

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) of Southwestern Illinois advocates for the best interest (safe nurturing home, and timely resolution) for abused and neglected children by recruiting, training and supporting volunteers to function as a voice in juvenile court systems at St. Clair, Monroe and Madison Counties.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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*Virginia Kerr and Judge Milton S. Wharton*

On April 11, the CASA of Southwestern Illinois Board of Directors hosted our annual dinner at the Four Points Sheraton in Fairview Heights.

Virginia Kerr served as mistress of ceremonies and Thomas Gibbons, Madison County State's Attorney, served as honorary chairperson. More than 270 guests were treated to a fantastic dinner and music from the Twilight Band.

Patrons supported CASA not only by purchasing tickets to the dinner, but by bidding on oral and silent auction items, which included Cardinals tickets, weekend getaways and a hot air balloon ride.

The dinner raised \$57,734 to help CASA continue to advocate for abused and neglected children in St. Clair, Madison and Monroe counties.

### **A Night for Superheroes**

Superheroes of all sizes came out to GCS Ballpark on June 20 to support CASA of Southwestern Illinois at our first-ever Superheroes Night with the Gateway Grizzlies.

Our new partnership with the minor league baseball team resulted in a fantastic fundraiser that not only generated money, but also spread awareness about CASA's mission to the 3,500 people in attendance at the game.

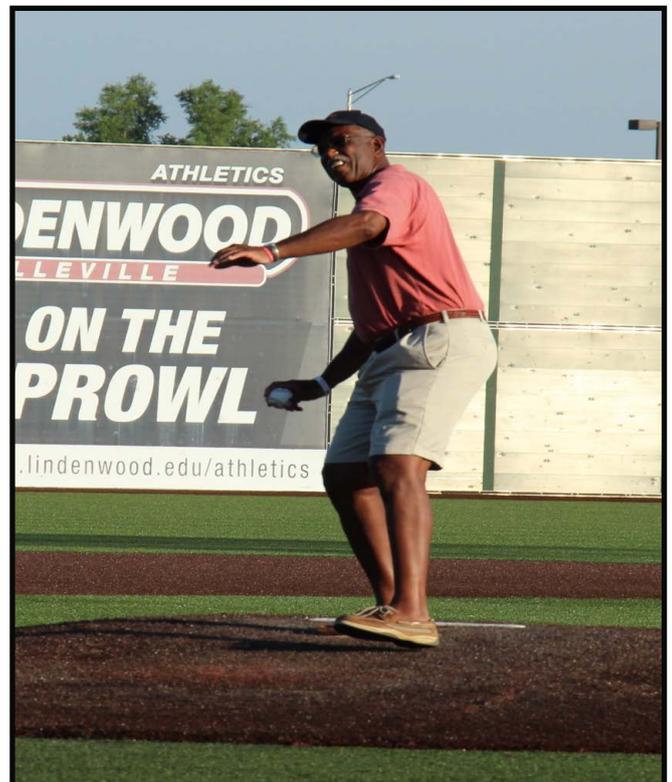
CASA founder Judge Milton S. Wharton and Eric Trentman, son of the late CASA founder Gary Trentman, threw out the first pitches at the game with help from Izzy, the Grizzlies mascot.

Throughout the evening, patrons were reminded of CASA's mission with posted facts and stats about our organization, and multiple showings of our I Am for the Child video on the big screen.

CASA staff collected donations from the crowd, and sold raffle tickets for some fantastic prizes, including two TVs, DVD players and a pool!

Thanks to some generous sponsors, the first 500 children who attended the game received a cool baseball backpack filled with coupons, toys and goodies!

Midway through the game, all the kids followed our Wonder Woman, Michelle Mynx, (daughter of our own Donna Lindsey) in a costume parade through the stadium.



*Judge Milton S. Wharton*

**A Big Thank You  
To Our  
Wonder Woman  
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*Make sure to check out all our photos of the events on the following pages and on Facebook.*

Prior to the event, CASA staff sold sponsorship packages to individuals and businesses to generate revenue for the event. In total, the event raised \$21,349 to help CASA continue to advocate for abused and neglected children.

Though simple words could never be enough to express our gratitude, we offer our sincerest thanks to every volunteer, patron, sponsor (see boxes for special thank you) and supporter for helping us make our events a success.

**We offer a special thank you to the Gateway Grizzlies for this partnership.**



# BIG MAMA'S CHAIR

A DIVERSITY CONFERENCE

On April 16, CASA sponsored a diversity conference at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville.



Roughly 100 people from across our region attended the conference, which was presented by LaDonna Wattley of the Wattley Institute.

Wattley used humor and personal stories to present “Big Mama’s Chair – Getting from the ‘Company’ Furniture to the Kitchen Table.”

She engaged the crowd in discussions about cultural differences and ways to gain the trust of those who come from different backgrounds.

Attendees were treated to breakfast and lunch. CEUs from Northern Illinois University and DCFS were available.

The conference was funded by the Administrative Offices of the Illinois Courts – State Court Improvement Program.



CASA of Southwestern Illinois, Recognized Mission  
 United Methodist Church, Illinois Great Rivers Conference  
 Advance Special #6045 Adopt our Mission

# ANNUAL DINNER

BE A GAME CHANGER





**Thank You  
Volunteers and Superheroes**



*Every child needs a hero but  
abused children need superheroes*





# Leaps and Challenges

Thank you to Adam Latham and Sylvia Sadler for standing fast on their case that was supposed to close, and ended up coming right back into care. They have decided that they will remain appointed to their children to ensure their safe return home.

Kayla Watson finished CASA training in June. She has willingly accepted the challenge of a case with six children.  
Thank you Kayla!

CASA staff received a call informing us that our volunteer, Terry Sitze, was very friendly, professional, appropriate, and very concerned about the child he was assigned to. We always love getting calls like this.  
Way to go Terry!

# CASA News



We would like to thank the St. Louis Cardinals and Cardinals Care for the generous grant they awarded to CASA of Southwestern Illinois in May.

We were honored to take part in the awards ceremony at Bush Stadium.



CASA of Southwestern Illinois took part in kickoff events for Child Abuse Prevention Month in early April. Numerous agencies gather at the Madison County Courthouse every year to commemorate the event and bring awareness to child abuse.

This year, CASA of Southwestern Illinois worked with the Violence Prevention Center of Southwestern Illinois to organize a similar kickoff event in Monroe County. Legislators, social services agencies, clergy members, educators and law enforcement officials attended the event, which aimed to spread awareness on the issue of child abuse in our community. Speakers encouraged all individuals to support organizations that protect our children, work to prevent abuse and help victims heal.

Many thanks to the Waterloo, Illinois City Council and Mayor Tom Smith for signing CASA's proclamation declaring April as National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

## New Volunteers

This quarter, we trained and welcomed the following volunteers to the CASA of Southwestern Illinois family. Thank you one and all for your time and commitment.

Monica Baxton  
Shelly Boland

Willie Foots  
Whitney Knipfer

Lisa Skioldhanlin  
Stevie Smith  
Kim Van Wormer

Helen Csik  
Annie Rieken  
Britney Reed

Susan Reed

Rebecca Martin

Kayla Watson



CASA of Southwestern Illinois  
1801 North Belt West  
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Here**

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of Greater St. Louis