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# ADVOCATE ALLEY

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Volume 3, Issue 6

June 2009

Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer. ~Author Unknown

## CASA Corner

Greetings Advocates,

This month, Janna Seifert will be joining our team as an Advocate Supervisor. She comes to us with a wealth of knowledge in the education field, and we are very much looking forward to the many positive things she will bring to the CASA team. She starts next week, so be sure to come in and say hello if you're in the neighborhood.

Also, a couple reminders...

The Pesante Ranch outing is this Friday. The RSVP deadline came and went, but we'd hate for you and your child to miss out on the fun. If you realize you are able to join us, please let me know at your earliest convenience.

Advocate I.D. cards are currently being made. To be a part of this exciting action and get one of your very own, we need a passport photo from you. Feel free to mail it, email it, or drop it by.

Wishing each of you a very happy June and looking forward to a great summer ahead here at CASA!

Thank you for all you do,  
Michelle Arnold  
Program Manager

## Traffic School: Extended Education Opportunities

### Understanding Grief & Loss

Dates: Tuesday, June 16<sup>th</sup>  
Time: 6:30pm to 8:00pm  
Location: CASA Office

Join us as we continue our Group Home Liaison training. Open to all advocates, this session will be facilitated by Dr. Laura Robinson-Harbert.

### Peer Review

Date: Wednesday, June 17<sup>th</sup>  
Time: 12:00pm to 2:00pm  
Location: CASA Office

RSVP: to Michelle at 455-6800 or [michelle@casamonterey.org](mailto:michelle@casamonterey.org)

## Event Expressway

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### ● Pesante Ranch Outing- June 5

Bring your CASA kids and welcome the summer with an afternoon of fun at Pesante Ranch in Prunedale. We'll have a BBQ and lots of activities for all ages. A great opportunity to get sibling groups together, connect with new CASAs and have some good old-fashioned fun!

\*\*\*You must RSVP ASAP for this event! Call or email us!!!

### ● Informational Mixer for Potential Advocates- June 11

Tell your friends and neighbors to join us from 5:30pm to 6:30pm at Ol'Factory Café in Sand City. It's a great way for everyone to learn more about becoming an advocate. We also need current advocates to attend to share their experiences! Please RSVP to Michelle.

### ● CASA's Annual Golf Classic- June 15

Space is still available for interested golfers at Pasadera. Contact Edna for more details or to sign up to volunteer!

### ● Free Aquarium Admission- June 20

To celebrate their 25th anniversary, the Monterey Bay Aquarium waives the ticket price for county residents with ID and proof of residency (up to three children admitted free with each adult resident) on the 20th of each month until October. A good time to get reacquainted with the penguins, otters, tuna and now sea horses!

# WELCOME

We've got new Advocates!

Kappa Class was sworn in on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009.  
Please join us in welcoming them!

Jennifer Atwell  
Darlene Busby  
Sheri Jefferis  
Dan O'Brien  
Yadira Sandoval

## Summer Reading at the Monterey County Free Libraries

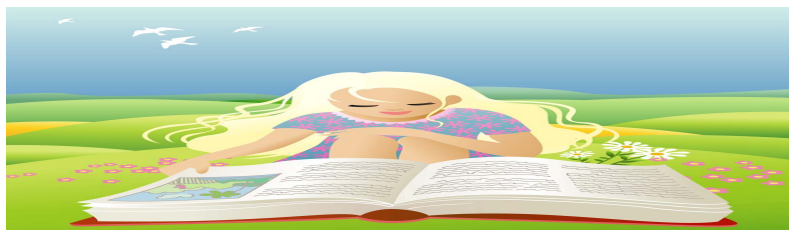
Students and their families may participate in more than 100 free activities at the Monterey County Free Libraries (MCFL) this summer. Children, teens, and adults may sign-up for the program beginning June 15, 2009. The theme encourages readers to “Be Creative” and “Express Yourself @ Your Library”. The program will run until August 1, 2009. Summer reading offers students the opportunity to maintain and even improve their reading skills over the summer.

During the six weeks, beginning with kick-off celebrations around Monterey County on June 27, 2009, MCFL will offer free performances by musicians, magicians, jugglers, storytellers, puppeteers, mimes, and youth bands, depending on the county library’s location. MCFL’s Kick-off Event and Final Reading Celebration both take place on Saturdays. Four other performances at libraries will take place on weekdays during the other four weeks. With this variety of performance times, we hope to encourage even more working parents to enroll their children in the program.

These reading enrichment performances give families a wonderful reason to visit the library and participate in the summer reading program. This year we are asking children up to age twelve to read one hour per week or be read to for one hour per week over a six-week period, to earn weekly prizes. After successfully completing six weeks or six hours of reading, children up to age twelve will receive a free pass to MyMuseum in Monterey, good for one child and one adult. Teens are invited to read ninety minutes per week for a total of nine hours to win a mug at the end of the program.

The Adult Reading Program is being offered by MCFL for the first time this year. A special event to launch the program, and to reward adults, will be held at McShane’s Nursery & Landscape Supply at 115 Monterey Salinas Highway in Salinas, from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 18<sup>th</sup>. Herald gardening columnist Tom Karwin will be the guest speaker, and entertainment will include music, and free food and wine.

As we are awaiting our final promotional materials, MCFL has put together a bookmark announcing the summer reading program at all 17 MCFL locations that you can distribute to your students’ families. The bookmark provides general information about the summer reading program at the seventeen branches of the Monterey County Free Libraries. This bookmark is attached to this document for your reference. If you would prefer hard copies, please contact their Youth Services Librarian at 883 - 7542 for information.



## Advocate Avenue



We would like to wish the following advocates a very happy birthday during the month of June...

Lou Doll	6/1
Sasha Koster	6/5
Lexi Ludovina	6/5
JoAnne Boulger	6/6
Chris Farmerie	6/6
Diane Diaz-Hopkins	6/11
Carlos Ram	6/11
Linda Randall	6/16
Al Murphy	6/20
Mari Arreola	6/22
Lisbeth Dermody	6/22
Carolyn Moody	6/25
Sandra Quintana	6/27

For those of you who missed the Dr. Phil show last Monday, it discussed foster youth and CASA. You can view it by clicking on the following link:

<http://www.drphil.com/shows/show/1290>

Did you know that ALL school aged children in Salinas should have received a library card this spring? Ask your CASA children to check to make sure they have received their library card.

This was spearheaded by the Library Director Elizabeth Martinez after Major Donohue challenged her to have every third grader get a library card. She took it to the top and made certain that every student in public school in Salinas district schools received a library card.

[http://www.ci.salinas.ca.us/services/library/library\\_director.cfm](http://www.ci.salinas.ca.us/services/library/library_director.cfm)

<http://www.ksbw.com/asseenon/19540867/detail.html>

## Santa Cruz County Stories, Elicia Hammond: She gives sweet support to children whose lives are not always a piece of cake

By Ann Parker



Elicia Hammond wanted a really special party for her 40th birthday last year -- but not for herself.

"I wanted to find some way to give," she says. "And I had an idea about having birthday parties for needy kids." Hammond sent e-mails to friends and raised \$1,300 in donations. But when the first party she hosted wasn't as successful as she had hoped, Hammond looked for another way to make a difference using the rest of the money.

"Then I read a article in People magazine about a woman who had started a group called Free Cakes for Kids," recalls Hammond. "I thought, 'This is perfect' and e-mailed her. That article changed everything for me."

The People story described a Georgia woman, Toni Poulos, who took a foster child into her family shortly before the little girl's 8th birthday. Poulos made an elaborate cake for the occasion -- and the child burst into tears. She had never had a birthday cake before and said she didn't think she deserved something so pretty. A one-woman campaign was born, based on Poulos' simple premise that "every child deserves a special birthday cake," including children in challenging life circumstances, financial need or foster care.

"When she started, she was all on her own," says Hammond. But after the article came out, the organization spread across America and to Canada and England. "Now if you go to [freecakesforkids.com](http://freecakesforkids.com), you'll find people from all over. I'm the Santa Cruz County chapter contact."

Hammond has made cakes or cupcakes for a half-dozen children so far, mostly referrals from CASA Court Appointed Special Advocates, although she's also connecting with churches and groups such as the Gandhi House in Watsonville.

She tries to find out what type of cake each child would particularly enjoy. "Princess cakes are the most popular, but my favorite is the butterfly," says Hammond. "Right now, I'm working on a Star Wars' cake and a Twilight' cake." She laughs, "It's exciting because I'm a total Twilight' fanatic."

Hammond's other charitable projects include sending a care package to Iraq and volunteering with the Flying Doctors by traveling to Coachella and using her professional skills as a dental hygienist to clean teeth and do free dental checkups.

"We have a good life, and I want to do something to share, to give back." Hammond's smile lights her whole face. "I'm happier now than I've ever been in my life."

## Permanency Article – The CASA as Advocate for Lasting Emotional Connections Part 2 by Libby Colman

**Note:** This is the second of two articles examining the importance of emotional connections, and what CASAs can do to insure continuity in a child's long-term relationships.

### **Permanency questions for a CASA to ask during reunification.**

The previous article examined sustained emotional relationships as the foundation for healthy human development. Knowing the importance of these lasting connections, CASAs often confront difficult decisions with regard to placement, especially when planning for different kinds of permanent placement must be done concurrently.

During the reunification phase of a case, as a CASA, you should make sure that all aspects of the concurrent plan are being aggressively pursued. To check the status of things, here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- Are the services to the parents realistically preparing them to be able to care for the children and guarantee successful reunification?
- Has someone carefully evaluated the child to determine which relationships are most important to him?
- Are all of the important emotional connections being sustained – not only with parents, but also with siblings, friends, and important family members?
- Is the social worker seeking out all possible family and friends from the past a potential long-term caregivers, in case reunification is unsuccessful?

### **Sustaining relationships with the parents as part of a Permanent Plan.**

What if a reunification is not successful, and the permanent plan is either Legal Guardianship or a planned alternative placement, such as long-term foster care? Your advocacy role may become even more

critical than before. Here are some questions you should ask:

- Has there been an evaluation to determine that it is in the child's best interests to continue to have a significant emotional connection with her parents?
- Are the visitation plans realistic for the parents, for the child, and for the new caregivers?
- Will the new caregivers maintain the child's ties with his parents and help him understand why he can't live with them?
- Are therapists and/or mediators available to help out when challenging issues come up for the parents, the child, or the caregivers?

### **Assuring lasting connections by supporting the new caregivers.**

Foster care, legal guardianships, and adoptions can sometimes fail. As a CASA, you want to do everything possible to create a case plan that provides services to assure success. Here are some important questions to ask:

- Are the new caregivers aware of all of the child's special needs?
- Do they have enough support to deal with the challenges that may come up in the future?
- Do they understand that their commitment to the child will continue beyond the time they are supervised by the Dependency Court?
- Are they willing to offer the child the social status of full family membership?

### **What to do when a long-term placement is not creating lifelong connections for a child**

Children are sometimes placed in group homes or residential treatment centers that simply do not provide sustained emotional connections. Foster homes do not always provide a true family connection. Additionally,

some children will resist connecting with a foster family because they maintain a fierce loyalty to their family of origin. In any of these situations, as a CASA, you can advocate for three possible solutions:

- 1) **Family finder programs.** These programs use advanced computer searches to find connections from the past that might provide a true family placement for a child.
- 2) **Mentorship programs.** A significant relationships with a responsible adult outside the home can help a young person by providing a role model, a lasting relationship, and involvement in constructive activities.
- 3) **Peer activities.** Young people often feel that relationships with peers are the most important in their lives. A CASA can make sure that a child is involved in constructive activities that help them develop such relationships. Organizations like the California Youth Connection and local Independent Living Skills Programs are particularly good at helping foster youth create personal ties that bring meaning into their lives.

It pretty much comes down to this: sustained emotional connections are vital at all ages, from infants, to school age kids, to young people about to age out of the system. Every person – especially every foster child—needs a matrix of support to help him through life, now and in the future. As a CASA, it is your job to help make sure that every case plan includes effective strategies to create long term relationships for the children to whom you are assigned.

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## 2. Helpful Resources:

(click on each **blue topic** below to download the complete report)

### [Foster Youth Educational Planning Guide](#)

California College Pathways has developed the *Foster Youth Educational Planning Guide* which contains checklists, tips and information to support foster youth from 7th grade through 12th grade who have a dream of a college education. They hope foster youth, caregivers, social workers, educators and advocates can use this guide to monitor and track the educational progress of foster youth.

### [Permanency or Aging Out: Adolescents in the Child Welfare System](#)

The focus of this issue is permanency and the aging out of foster care for adolescents. This issue, which has 28 articles and an extensive resources list includes articles by Bob Friend, Claudia Miller, Madelyn Freundlich, Mark E. Courtney, Lauren Frey, Ben Kerman and Leah Glasheen, Adrienne Fernandez, Moira Szilagyi, Jennifer Ehrle Macomber, Anita Larson, Robin McHaelen, Sania Metzger, and many others.

### [Sexual Health Challenges of California's Foster Youth](#)

A new Public Health Institute study finds that California's foster and transitioning youth face substantial sexual and reproductive health challenges. These challenges include the acceptance of early pregnancy in their families of origin and by their peers, a strong longing for love and a sense of belonging among many foster youth, and a common belief that becoming pregnant can be an effective way to hold onto a partner.