



Reaching Out

The newsletter of the Family & Youth Services Bureau May 2017 volume 6 • issue 2

CASA Program gives hope to neglected and abused kids

By the time you finish reading this article, more than 30 cases of child abuse will have been reported to authorities nationwide. By the end of today, that number will swell past 9,000. And four of those children will die at the hands of their abuser. All in a single day. **We in Porter County are not immune to this kind of statistic; every day the volunteers and staff in our CASA program see children like this who are victims of abuse and neglect.**

CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate; these advocates are specially trained volunteers who look out for the best interests of the children assigned to them by the court. The number of Porter County children served *has grown from 183 in 2011 to 372 in 2016*. That is over 200% growth in only five years. Also, the types of cases have changed as we now must deal daily with cases of opioid and heroin abuse, attempted suicide, and heartbreaking domestic and sexual abuse cases.

Children with CASA volunteers spend less time in long-term foster care, experience fewer out of home placements, and have significantly improved educational performance.

More than 90% of children with CASA volunteers never re-enter the child welfare system. This outcome also results in significant savings in child welfare expenses.

Are you someone who can make a difference in a child's life? CASA Volunteers come from many age groups and professions: construction, IT, educators, and retired people. We have several training sessions each year to prepare volunteers for this critical, life-saving work. Contact CASA Director Sarah Fink at 464-9585 or sfink@fysb.org for more information. Donations to the CASA Program are always welcome, and can be made online at www.fysb.org or by mailing to Family & Youth Services Bureau, 253 W. Lincolnway, Valparaiso, Indiana, 46383.



One fortunate teenage youth in foster care says "My CASA volunteer makes sure I get what I need—things like tutoring and visits with my sister, And I know he really cares for me. I can talk to him. I can count on him."



5th Annual Chalk the Walk

Saturday, June 10, 2017



Chalk the Walk continues to be a fundraising and awareness building event for the Family & Youth Services Bureau. Chalk the Walk also offers local businesses and organizations the opportunity to promote their message, and gives area artists of all ages the chance to have their artwork featured in a public space. And the artwork lasts for weeks!

All sponsors receive 3 x 3 foot spaces to create a chalk drawing on the Porter County Courthouse sidewalk, including a box of brightly colored chalk. Sponsorships start at \$150.00.

Artists who are looking for a sponsor do not pay at all!

Are you interested in being a sponsor or an artist for this event? Please contact Jackie Gray at 464-9585 or jgray@fysb.org, or check our website for further information: www.fysb.org.


Chalk the Walk
A Family & Youth Services Bureau Event

Healthy Families Program educates young parents

The Healthy Families program prepares young families to be good parents and responsible community members.

Over 1,000 people are screened yearly to determine eligibility and the FYSB staff conducts home visits to over 250 families throughout the year for this program.

Healthy Families is a national program that seeks to identify families whose current life circumstances suggest that additional support might be helpful as they begin caring for their newborns. With virtually universal screening through hospitals serving Porter County residents and with the cooperation of WIC, the Porter County Public Health Department, area OB-Gyn practices and others, this voluntary program is provided at no charge to the families.

“The plan we develop with each family is tailored to their needs,” states Melanie Dooley, Director of Prevention and Early Intervention Services. “One family may need help with daily living, such as information about housing or an energy assistance program, while another may want to study for a GED or take classes. We work with each family so that we can provide the best possible foundation for their young child.”



The Healthy Families Program has been in place at FYSB since 1997, and our agency is recognized statewide and nationally as a leader in this type of programming.

For more information about the program, please contact Melanie Dooley at 763-6623 or mdooley@fysb.org.

In Memory: Luci Hand



Luci Hand, a long time volunteer for the Family & Youth Services Bureau’s CASA Program, passed away on March 1, 2017. Luci became a CASA volunteer over 26 years ago while she was still working as a School Principal because she “didn’t want her job to be her whole life.” Since 1990 she handled more than 65 cases of neglected or abused children for the Porter County CASA program, some cases lasting well over a year. She said it was her way of giving back to those who really need our help. We will miss her passion, insight, and advocacy for children.

Our Mission is to assist youth and families through supportive services that create a positive change for Porter County.

The Family & Youth Services Bureau will ensure that no person shall be excluded from or denied participation in services based on the grounds of race, age, religion, sex, disability, national origin, ancestry, protected class, or any other protected class as defined by current law, or otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that directly or indirectly receives state or federal support.

Our Wish List; Can you help out with these donations?

CASA Program

- A 4 foot wide x 3 foot high dry erase white board
- Two and three inch 3-ring binders

Healthy Families Program

- Items for Moms, such as nail polish, lotions, shower gels

The Tot Shop

- Books for children, infants to 3 years old
- Baby Slings/Wraps for carrying babies
- Infant/newborn toys, rattles, teethers

New/unused items only, please. Thank you in advance!



Featured Donor Realty Executives, Mike and Pam Tezak

Mike and Pam Tezak of Realty Executives have always taken special interest in the youth of our area and are frequent sponsors and supporters of various local youth programs.

They visited FYSB's Chalk the Walk a couple of years ago and thought it was a great event, not only as a fundraiser but an outstanding way for local people to highlight their talents. They made a note to add the Chalk the Walk to the list of events that Realty Executives sponsor.

The Tezaks also note their appreciation for the work that FYSB does in the community. "For example, Family & Youth Services Bureau is bringing topics of drug and substance abuse to forefront with their *Beyond the Influence* workshop series. Drug abuse is a devastating reality facing not only our community, but communities all over the country."



Realty Executives was started in Valparaiso almost 10 years ago. They located on Lincolnway in downtown Valparaiso with a second office in St. John, and currently have about 50 agents.

We thank them for their support of Family & Youth Services Bureau, and all the activities they support in our community. Their civic involvement is what helps make this a great community!

Family & Youth Services Bureau Board of Directors

Bonnie Sullivan, Chair

David Butterfield Vice-Chair

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Featured Board Member

Kathy Evans

Kathy currently resides in Valparaiso and practiced law in the Porter County Juvenile Court as a Public Defender.

Everyday she saw the effect that poverty, a lack of family support, and drugs and alcohol can have on families.

She joined the Board of Directors to support the Family & Youth Service Bureau's mission and vision for helping others. Kathy's experience as a local Public Defender has provided our agency with helpful insight over the years.

Thank you Kathy for all you do for kids and families in our community!



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Featured Staff Member

Dan Rau, LSW

Dan is currently a Clinical Services Counselor and began working at the FYSB in August of 1996; his first job in social services was in 1977. "It pleases me when old clients contact me years after working with them wanting to let me know they're doing well," says Dan. "I also find it rewarding to be able to work with my co-workers in Clinical Services...they're all terrific, caring and nice people." During the summer he looks forward to going to the dunes and watch sunsets and then visit the root beer stand afterwards in Chesterton. He spends spare time in the winter watching NFL games (Go Packers), college basketball games (taking in as many VU games as possible), and going to the movies. Sounds like a full life Dan, thanks for being part of our team!



