

NEWS RELEASE



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ATTORNEY GENERAL HONORS ARIZONA COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES *Statewide Volunteers Recognized for Service to Abused Children*

PHOENIX- Eight hundred fifty Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) from across the State of Arizona were selected as winners of the Advocacy and Direct Service Award for the 2006 Attorney General Distinguished Service Award for Outstanding Service to Crime Victims. The award will be presented 9:30am, Monday, April 24, 2006 at the state capitol. This is a prestigious award and one that recognizes the impact CASAs make in helping save a child's future.

CASAs are volunteers who give a voice to abused and neglected children in court and spend many hours on their cases. Bonnie Marcus, Arizona CASA Program Manager, says that, "In 2005, Arizona CASAs donated 65,923 hours to their cases. If these hours, spent with the children, in court, and in Child Protective Services meetings, were computed with the *value* of their time, the number is a staggering \$1,069,255." These dedicated volunteers know the grave need and courageously accept the challenge of speaking up for Arizona's abused and neglected children in court.

The Arizona Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program is a member of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association, more than 900 local community programs that recruit and train citizen volunteers to advocate for the rights of abused and neglected children.

Everyday citizens can be everyday heroes for those smallest of victims. To learn more about the Arizona Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program, contact Brian Eggen at (602) 542-9683 or visit www.azcasa.org.

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History of CASA

National

Concerned with the staggering number of children in foster care, the United States Congress in 1974 enacted Public Law 93-274, the “Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act,” which provided financial assistance to states for the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. The legislation included a requirement for that assistance: mandatory appointment of a guardian ad litem (GAL) to represent the abused or neglected child’s best interests in every case which resulted

in a judicial proceeding. The legislation did not specify that the guardian ad litem had to be an attorney, but usually it was an attorney who was appointed to fill this role.

In 1976, Judge David W. Soukup, then Presiding Judge of King County Superior Court in Seattle, Washington, searched for alternative ways to ensure that the child’s best interests would be consistently represented to the court. He found that few court-appointed attorneys had the time or the training to carry on the comprehensive investigation that would elicit the information the court needed. Judge Soukup decided to utilize trained community volunteers who would be asked to make a long-term commitment to a child for whom they would serve as guardians ad litem. Judge Soukup’s concept became a successful program in it’s first years of operation and word of the program spread quickly.

Following this early model, similar programs were developed across the United States. By 1982, it was clear that a national association was needed to direct CASA’s emerging national presence. The National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association (NCASAA) was formed that year. Currently, there are 950 CASA programs with more than 52,000 CASA volunteers throughout the country and U.S. Virgin Islands advocating for 206,000 children.

Arizona



Arizona’s CASA Program was established in Maricopa County in October 1985. The Honorable C. Kimball Rose, Maricopa County Presiding Juvenile Court Judge, joined community leaders and spearheaded efforts to establish this program. The program was “tested” with operational programs in Maricopa and Coconino counties. Rules and procedures were developed, duties and responsibilities were defined and evaluations were performed by the Arizona Supreme Court. The Pima County CASA Program, which was independently formed in 1979, joined this effort in January 1987.

In 1987, the Arizona Supreme Court formally established the Arizona CASA Program under the court’s jurisdiction. Through this process, the legal and administrative standing of the Arizona CASA Program was established.

Funding for the Arizona CASA Program through fiscal year 1991 came from a combination of the state’s General Fund, federal grants, and private monies. Legislation was passed in 1991 that institutionalized the role of the court appointed special advocate and the Arizona CASA Program into a statutorily-mandated program. House Bill 2419, signed into law in 1991, provided 30% of unclaimed lottery winnings as the primary funding source for the administration of the Arizona CASA Program.

By 1993 every Arizona county juvenile court had established a CASA program. In 1994 the Policies and Procedures were written and formalized by an Order of the Chief Justice of the Arizona Supreme Court. Currently the Arizona CASA Program is operated locally in all 15 counties by Arizona’s Juvenile Courts and administered statewide by the Arizona Supreme Court. Since the Arizona CASA Program’s inception in

October 1985, more than 3,630 CASA volunteers have served over 11,700 of Arizona's abused, neglected, and abandoned children.

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