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Inside this issue:

FYI	2
Continuing Education	4
February Birthdays	4
Program Statistics	4
February Court Dates	5
Feb. Foster Care Reviews	5

Passing of Judge David Soukup

We are deeply saddened to share with you that **Judge David W. Soukup**, the founder of the court-appointed special advocate/volunteer guardian ad litem (**CASA/GAL**) movement, passed away on December 18th, the day after his 90th birthday. **Judge Soukup** served in Seattle, Washington, as Superior Court judge from 1969-1983 working extensively in the local juvenile court system. Pictured at right are **Judge Soukup** and **Frances Allsup** at a National **CASA** event.



Judge Soukup was a giant of a man in the **CASA/GAL** network and around court and child welfare innovation. When he started the first **CASA** program in King County (Seattle), Washington in 1977, the number of children in foster care topped half a million nationally and a new phrase, foster care drift, became a way to describe the increasingly long time many children spent in foster care.

Concerned over making decisions about abused and neglected children's lives without sufficient information, **Judge Soukup** conceived the idea of using carefully screened and trained community volunteers to speak for the best interests of children in court. In 1977, he created a legacy that continues to flourish today throughout the country and with the dedicated efforts of almost 100,000 volunteers, serving nearly a quarter of a million children annually.

Over the years, when talking about conceiving the vision for the **CASA** program, **Judge Soukup** shared, "While sitting at juvenile court, I never got a night's sleep without waking to wonder if at least one decision I made that day had been the best for a child. It struck me that it might be possible to recruit and train volunteers to investigate a child's case so they could provide a voice for the child in those proceedings, proceedings which could affect their whole lives.

I had my bailiff call four or five people in the community who might be resources in recruiting volunteers to ask if they would meet for a brown bag lunch at juvenile court to discuss the idea. There were 50 people in the room when I walked in for that lunch. I thought, 'This idea is going to work.' It has. Tens of thousands of people speaking up for hundreds of thousands of children have proven that it does.

After I retired from the bench, I became a volunteer. It was an extraordinary experience. Both the hardest—and the best—thing I've ever done.

For this incredible movement, and the work done day-in and day-out through state organizations and local programs, we owe a debt of great gratitude to **Judge Soukup**. His legacy is alive and well through the work of our network of over 900 **CASA/GAL** state organizations and local programs in 49 states and the District of Columbia. Our collective commitment to children and youth is stronger than ever. The world is immeasurably better because of **Judge Soukup**.

We celebrate the life of Judge Soukup and are extraordinarily grateful for his vision, leadership, and remarkable support of the **CASA/GAL** mission at the local, state and national levels for over 40 years. We look forward to honoring **Judge Soukup's** incredible work and legacy.

FYI



Pictured above: **Teresa Jaye**, Outreach Coordinator, and **Amber Ehlers**, Advocate Supervisor, did a presentation for the **Auxiliary** members of **American Legion Gautier-Vancleave Post 1992**. During the December meeting, the members presented **CASA** with over 100 filled and unfilled backpacks and became a sponsor for **2024 CASA Blues**.



Pictured above: A huge thank you to **Brandi Fayard** with **JABOS** for dropping by with birthday gifts for a few of the children celebrating January birthdays. The members of **JABOS** are faithful supporters of **CASA** in many ways throughout the year. **Brandi** currently serves as president of this dedicated group of community-minded volunteers.



Frances Allsup and **Geri Buttram** with the **Singing River Charter Chapter of AB-WA** are pictured above. **Frances** was the January meeting's guest speaker and presented updates on the local **CASA** program and told the membership of upcoming needs. **Geri** and the group presented her with a bag filled with a variety of goodies to share with some of the children we serve.



Governing board member **Rene' Shaw**, **CASA** staff and volunteers spent a Friday morning in a continuing education session to learn more information about having crucial conversations and discovering your purpose. Presented by **Carlos Moulds**, director of EEO/DEI at Huntington Ingalls, the group learned that uncomfortable conversations are often necessary and how to carry them out in a safe, objective manner. Questions and answers followed the general presentation.

FYI



Additional volunteers are needed to serve in Jackson, George and Greene Counties!

Contact Karen Horn, CASA of Southeast Mississippi Training Coordinator, today to learn more about beginning the 30 hour required pre-service training to become a Court Appointed Special Advocate!



Save the Date

March 15

We are still in need of silent auction items and additional sponsors!

If you, or your business, would be willing to help by becoming a sponsor or if you have an item you would be willing to donate for the silent auction, please contact Teresa Jaye, CASA Outreach Coordinator, at 228-762-7370 or by email teresa_jaye@co.jackson.ms.us.



Continuing Education Opportunities

Reminder— to maintain your active CASA standing, you are required to complete 12 hours of Continuing Education training each year. Be sure to include any completed Continuing Education hours on your monthly activity reports that are submitted in OPTIMA.

Victim Assistance training will be offered on **Friday, February 23**, from **10 – 11 am** in the **Jackson County Youth Court Courtroom**. The in-service opportunity will be presented by **Flo Abney**, Jackson County Youth Court Case Manager. **Flo** has proven to be a wonderful resource for our older youth as they are aging out of the system. Along with **Jeremy Moore**, Transitional Navigator, they are able to provide information on many areas such as college resources, financial aid, and apartment assistance. There will be time for questions and answers to address individual case issues.

Human Trafficking - Learn why children and youth in foster care are disproportionately victimized by human trafficking and how to help prevent exploitation. This timely and informative program will be presented by **Capt. Patrick Brandle** with the Pascagoula Police Department at the Citizens Bank, 1519 Jackson Avenue in Pascagoula, on **Friday, February 16**, from **10—11 am**. Please let your your advocate supervisor know by **February 9** if you would like to attend the presentation, since seating is limited.

No one else can ever truly understand the hard work that you accomplish serving as an advocate for a child.

Your success stories inspire us. We see the joy on your face as you stand in Chancery Court smiling with pride as your child is adopted into a forever home.

Thank you for giving your time and heart unselfishly throughout the year to carry out the CASA mission.



February Birthdays

February 1

Jonathan Mills

February 2

Daisye Campbell

February 10

Sherita Knowles

February 14

Danny LeBatard

February 16

Katie Allsup-Mason

February 21

Vicki Applewhite

February 27

Lisa Hayward



Latest Program Statistics

As of December 29, 2023, 120 CASA volunteers served 162 children with 3,922 donated hours of service for the calendar year. Thank you to each dedicated volunteer who worked to provide a voice for a child who is journeying through the Youth Court process. As the number of children in custody continues to grow, we are in need of additional advocate volunteers to serve in 2024!