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*In loving memory of Michele L. Cotner
October 16, 1944 ~ June 2, 2008*

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Yamhill County CASA • 117 NE 5th St., Suite I • McMinnville, OR 97128 • www.yccasa.org

THE CASAGRAM

Yamhill County Court Appointed Special Advocate Program Newsletter

Winter 2009

Yamhill County CASA Program

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CASA is a United Way Member Agency and is supported by Yamhill County Commission on Children and Families.

2008... A Year of Transitions



Following a brief illness, on June 2nd, 2008, our beloved Director, Michele Cotner, took her leave of us. Her passing came as a shock to her family, friends, and to all of us here at CASA. She is, and will continue to be, deeply missed.

Michele came to our program in late 2005 and quickly set to work improving community outreach and public relations, building our budget, and fostering our relationship with the State CASA organization. Michele was a source of light, empowerment, and vision for CASA. One of her many creative ideas was the *Case for CASA* program, a partnership between CASA and local wineries that, when fully realized, would become a great source of support and revenue for the program.

Michele thought globally, her ideas were always on a larger scale. She was anxious for the day when *Case for CASA* would become a national fundraising program.

Michele *flung open* the doors of CASA and welcomed everyone to join her in creating the best possible program. In the fall of 2006, after a brief internship, Amy Bissonnette was added to the staff when Michele secured the funding to create a previously non-existent position. It wasn't long before Amy became the Coordinator of Volunteers. Michele would joke about being Amy's mentor, lightheartedly encouraging Amy to take over for her at some point in the future. Although no one expected the transition from Michele to Amy to be so soon, we have been thrilled to see the ease and grace displayed as Amy has stepped fully into the role of Program Director. Having worked day to day and hand in hand with Michele and our CASAs for the past two years, Amy embodies a vision of what's possible for Yamhill County CASA. Michele's "open door" way of being for the agency, and the idea of there being a way for each of us to participate, lives in Amy.

Shortly after Michele's passing, Karen Willard joined the staff part time to help with the workload. Already a CASA volunteer and a smart, caring, and outgoing person, Karen took to the job immediately. It was a natural fit for her to take over as Coordinator of Volunteers when Amy became Director. Karen continues to strengthen ties with each volunteer and get to know the many kids and families we serve.

Some time soon we will be thinking about adding to our staff, but at least for now we've had all the transitions we need.

2008 -2009 Board of Directors

Dr. Robert Moore , Chair
Dr. Phyllis Martin, Vice-Chair
Dorene Gleason, Treasurer
Catherine Wright, Secretary
Yazmin Funes
Patriciafaye Marshall
Bernie McGinnis
Carol Hansen
Carole Whitehead

Did you know that in Yamhill County. . .

- ◆ *89% of CASA's are women - we need more men!*
- ◆ *45% of CASA's have full-time jobs. Many of the rest are retired, with time and a lifetime of experience to offer.*
- ◆ *In 2008, there were 240 children in foster care who needed a CASA, yet only 131 had one.*
- ◆ *When a CASA is appointed to a case, statistics show a child spends considerably less time in foster care.*

Please Meet Our New CASA Volunteers for 2008



Phil Newman grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania, and spent much of his adult and professional life in the West,

living in New Mexico for 22 years, and later in Ketchikan, Alaska, for 15 years. He and his wife, Phoebe, moved to McMinnville about four years ago. Phil came to CASA after casting about for a volunteer activity that would make good use of his time and give him a sense of making a difference. "My experience so far has confirmed my suspicion formed during the training program that this is a vital and essential organization."



Ruth Garvie has lived in the McMinnville

area for 18 years. She has two sons in their 50's. Ruth has always been involved with children in many different organizations throughout her life, beginning with Social Work in Montreal after graduating from the University of B.C. in 1953. After her husband passed away, Ruth realized she had time on her hands so decided to exercise her brain with the training of becoming a CASA. "It has been very exciting to be learning something new," she said. "The problems of families and children have not changed a great deal over the years, but the services available to them have. I look forward to an interesting and challenging new year."

Joan Schindelar and her husband, John, moved to McMinnville in 1975, after teaching overseas for a number of years for the Dept. of Defense. CASA is Joan's first volunteer position, although she served over 20 years on the board for POYAMA (Polk Yamhill Marion Child Treatment Services), a day treatment program for emotionally disturbed children. She worked over 20 years as a Judicial Assistant and Court Operations Supervisor for Yamhill County Circuit Court. Joan is on her first case and finds it invigorating. "I love it," she says, "I'm learning so much about juvenile law that I was not exposed to in my court career. And I love working with the children who are so fragile and traumatized." The Schindelars have two grown boys, and recently became grandparents to a darling little boy.



Ronda Taft has lived most of her life in Portland. She moved to Yamhill County about eight years ago and enjoys the tranquility found in a smaller community. She has two children, Angie, 24, and Randilynn, 17. Ronda went through the CASA training last fall. She became a volunteer to help children be heard. "I wanted to be a voice when they had no voice," she said. She works fulltime at a local preschool and admits to little free time. Her first case has been advocating for a two-year-old boy who may soon be returning home to mother. We do like those happy endings.

Nancy Irvin moved to Oregon in 1999, and lived in the Portland area before settling in McMinnville in 2005. She spent most of her life in Minnesota, where she was born and raised. Nancy has three grown sons and a very supportive husband named Dan. Being a CASA is her first and only volunteer position since retiring from the telephone company. As with all of our CASA volunteers, Nancy wanted to make a difference in the life of children. "I had more free time and knew I could really make the commitment," she said.



Kim Green has been busy since moving from the bay area of California, where she was born and raised, to Sheridan, Oregon in 1997. Aside from raising two children with her husband, John, she got her Oregon real estate license and subsequently opened N.W. Property Sales in Sheridan. Kim plans to open another side-line business, "The Spartan's Lunchbox", in March. She has been a CASA for about a year and has found the experience rewarding. "I wanted to be a CASA so I could have an impact on a child's life that needs me," she said.

Oklahoma born and raised, **Sarah Shipley** moved to McMinnville in December,

2007, from Dallas, Texas, where she worked most of her adult life in high-tech management. After unpack-

ing, Sarah sought out volunteer opportunities in the community, deciding upon ASPIRE and CASA. "I find the CASA work interesting and rewarding. I had read about child advocates several years ago and always thought this was something I'd love to do as I think we each have a responsibility to help those more vulnerable." Sarah has three grown daughters, all of whom live far enough way (Australia, France, and Oklahoma) to make traveling a constant and enjoying option. Other hobbies include reading, knitting, cooking, card design, and now gardening.



More Transitions

2008 was a year that also brought many transitions for our Board of Directors. Several members gave up their seats after serving the program for many years. Our sincere thanks to **Roz Turner, Victoria Charbonnier, Linda Dollinger, and Jean Mosiman** for their dedicated service. We have also been encouraged by the enthusiasm of our new members:



Carole Hansen moved to McMinnville with her husband in 1973. This mother of three has been devoted to women and families for some time, working as a LaLeche League leader helping mothers with breastfeeding, and active in the American Association of University Women (AAUW). She retired from Yamhill County Public Health in May 2008. Her hobbies include travel, reading, photography, re-learning to knit, and spending time with her grandchildren.

A graduate of the University of San Francisco with a degree in Economics and having earned a Masters degree in Computer Science from Purdue University, **Bernie McGinnis** had a 40 year career in computers and data processing. The past 40 years have been marked by a series of volunteer roles centered on the education and support of young people. Now retired, Bernie continues his commitment to children and young adults by acting as a co-coordinator of the SMART program at Newby School and a mentor in Mac High School's ASPIRE program. Bernie has two sons, ages 13 and 30.



Carole Whitehead has had a commitment to child advocacy for many years. Her career as a high school and junior high English teacher, counselor, and administrator, kept her connected, for over 30 years, with young people in our public schools as well as abroad in Japan. After retirement, Carole was a CASA for four years, working with teens in Yamhill County. Her other interests include travel, reading, Oregon history and all family occasions. She and her husband, Pete, have been married for twenty years and between the two of them, share four adult children and six delightful grandchildren.

Catherine Wright obtained her undergraduate law degree in England, then completed her postgraduate law degree at Willamette University. Now a partner in the firm of Drabkin, Tankersly & Wright, Catherine specializes in estate planning, probates, guardianships and conservatorships. She particularly enjoys helping grandparents gain guardianship of their grandchildren although she sees the strain it can place on grandparents who find themselves in that situation. Catherine has a passion for the welfare of children, beginning when she worked for a law firm in England which represented dependent children, leading her to volunteer as a CASA from 2000-2005. She always intended to return to this work, and was pleased to join our board in June.

