

Dear All,

I am excited to announce the launch of our new quarterly newsletter designed to inform you—our advocates-- about Bergen County CASA news and activities!

On the training front we just finished a remote training of our second class of new advocates since the pandemic closed the office. I was ably assisted by Jennifer Marsden-Beukas who is now taking over the training at Bergen County CASA. Jennifer has a wealth of experience both training and supervising for Essex CASA. In addition, she previously was a DAG and has an encyclopedic knowledge of the legalities associated with family court.

This fall we terminated the Peer Coordinator program and started an 'Advocate Mentor' (AM) program. The program assigns very experienced advocates to work closely with new advocates for their first six months, providing step by step guidance and encouragement. I already owe a debt of gratitude to our Advocate Mentors who stepped up in the Fall, supervising numerous cases when we were transitioning between case supervisors. My sincere gratitude to our six Mentor Advocates: Nilene Evans, Kathy Krassner, Tom Lynaugh, Sharon Barth, Karen Marcantonio and Yvonne Glanville.

We plan to re-launch our new web site in April with many thanks to Columbia Bank and the Greater Bergen Realtors CARE Foundation. Both organizations provided grant funds towards this project. We are building the site with a special 'Advocate Corner'. This section of the web site be dedicated to providing detailed training materials, training opportunities that fulfill your 12 hours of continuing education as well as current resources. Most importantly, your Optima log-in link will be here too!

I am pleased to welcome four new Board members:

Amy Bogatch, who came to Bergen CASA as a potential advocate but was diverted onto the board because of her wealth of experience developing and managing web sites.

Kevin Whalen has a marketing background with experience working for the PGA store and is now spearheading our golf event (see below) and serving on the Executive Committee.

Michael Zola, managing partner of Bedford Tax Services, is our new Board Treasurer - just in time to help us navigate the rapidly changing grant and fundraising landscape that we now inhabit.

Laura Freeman brings a wealth of marketing experience currently working in Bergen County for the Jewish Federation.

We have been busy with fundraising. Our winter holiday fundraiser was very successful; we raised over \$40,000 dollars in addition to receiving lots of lovely toys for our children. Thank you to our amazing advocates who donated so generously. A very special thank you to the Alfano family who contributed \$10,000 dollars towards our gift and emergency item program – a tradition they started in 2008!

We also are working on a new fundraising event; our first annual golf outing on July 12, 2021 at the Edgewood golf club in River Vale. We hope we will attract new donors and that this will become a signature program in our fund-raising portfolio.

Thank you all for your caring, dedicated advocacy.

Lucy