

## 2019 National CASA Annual Conference



Once again, the 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court CASA Program and its CASA volunteers were well represented at the 2019 National CASA Conference in Atlanta, GA., held June 1-4, 2019. This year's theme was ***Better Together: Building Stronger Families to Change Children's Lives.*** Special thanks to the CASA Foundation, who sponsored five CASA volunteers, one CASA staff, and one board member to attend the conference. Others in attendance included: the Honorable Frank Sullivan, Dependency Judge, Shelia Parks, CASA Program Administrator, Jane Saint, Executive Director of Nevada CASA Association, three CASA staff from Nye and Douglas County and one additional CASA volunteer.

The National CASA conference affords excellent opportunities to attend a variety of workshops, hear powerful messages from world renowned speakers, and network with National, State, and local CASA staff, Judges, and some amazing CASA volunteers. The conference also provides insight and knowledge about new CASA developments and Child Welfare trends, such as Family First Prevention and Services Act. This year, everyone was eager to see the unveiling of the new National CASA branding campaign, which has the slogan of *"Change a Child's Story."* **Shelia Parks**

This is what other attendees from Las Vegas had to say about the conference:

"As a CASA for five years, attendance at the NCASA conference was an incredible experience. I met CASA staff and volunteers from all over the country. The breakout sessions were insightful and informative. One of the many amazing guest speakers was a gentleman name Bryan Stevenson. During his talk about advocacy for a 9 year old boy, caught in the juvenile justice system, he stated, "There is power in proximity." It reminded me of the power we all have when we choose to put our fears of getting it wrong aside, step into the trenches of the foster care system, listen intently and speak up for those who can't speak for themselves. My advocacy tools have been sharpened. **Andrea Rapanos**

"The speakers were excellent. I sat through many classes. However, the one that stood out for me was the training regarding Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in the System. Since my CASA case includes a grandmother who is raising her 6 grandchildren, this session provided me insight on how to better assist her." **Deniece Lopez**

"I have been a CASA volunteer since October 2007 and this was my first opportunity to experience the wealth of information that I received at this year's conference. I was fortunate to attend the presentation, Trauma and Brain Science: Changing the Way We Work with Children and Families, presented by Debra Ross, an Instructional Service Coordinator at Georgia State University, School of Social Work. The

information aided my understanding of trauma and how trauma not only affects them psychologically, but also physically. In her closing, Debra Ross provided the following information for us remember, "It isn't what you do for a living, it's how you do it". There were so many more speakers who provided not only hope, but inspirational stories. They shared their experiences in the foster care system and showed how someone providing love and support to a child can change the whole trajectory of that child's life."

***Jennifer Clark***

"I was motivated by the compelling presenters who grounded attendees back into the need and purpose for the important work of CASA volunteers. I was also excited to hear about the new CASA branding campaign and approach to raise awareness of CASA programs nationwide. In one of the workshops, I was able to learn ways to support families struggling with drug addiction, including innovative systems-level strategies that have shown success in other markets. This workshop shaped my perspective and uncovered ideas that directly apply to one of my current cases." ***Lisa Coruzzi***

"I have been a CASA volunteer for four years and this conference really helped me remember why I chose to devote my time to our children in foster care. It was such a joy to attend so many eye-opening sessions and to learn about different techniques and approaches to further my CASA kids' goal of permanency and safety." ***Tara Dye***

"This year's conference provided a wealth of knowledge and expertise to CASA volunteers and GAL's from around the country. The caliber of the speakers and workshop topics (such as mental health barriers, child sex trafficking, and meeting the educational needs of youth in care) was phenomenal. You cannot help but comeback more empowered and recharged to advocate for all kids in care." ***Verise Campbell***

"I attended informative training sessions. I personally had the pleasure of speaking with Mrs. Tara Perry, CEO of the National CASA Association and Seattle Superior Court Judge, David Soukup, the founder of the first CASA program. I also met James and Patrice Comey, who are members of National CASA's Board of Trustees, Dr. Steve Perry, Motivational Speaker and Author and Bryan Stevenson, Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative. I walked away with a better understanding of how CASA functions at the national level. I saw similarities and differences across state and county borders. Most importantly, I saw how flex training is being implemented across various programs and had the opportunity to speak to CASA employees about their implementation and practices. Overall it was a very rewarding experience to exchange information with all of the entities involved." ***Vickie Wilson***