

An Update from the CASA Program Staff
by Shelia Parks, CASA program Administrator

It's been a few months since the last update from the CASA program of the Eighth Judicial District Court. Although we, like many of you, are working primarily in this virtual world, our day-to-day responsibilities and expectations have not slowed down. As a matter of fact, our program has seen an increase in most categories, especially in the number of people who inquired about becoming CASA volunteers. In the 23 years that I have worked at the CASA program, this is the first time that we have generated a waitlist of applicants, who are pending interviews and training. What an amazing problem to have! We are grateful for all of these individuals who remain committed to making a difference in the community, by serving as a volunteer child advocate, during these unprecedented times. For those who may not know, the work of a child advocate, especially those dealing with abuse and neglect, does not stop because of a pandemic. Rather, the work is sometimes even more challenging because of the alternative methods that are required to get the work done. And, that's exactly what the CASA Program staff and CASA volunteers have been doing over the past few months.

Despite having to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, the staff was also faced with the huge loss, due to Mike's retirement from the program, after 14 years of service as a CASA Volunteer Coordinator/Recruiter. Mike will truly be missed by the CASA staff, the CASA volunteers and anyone who came to know him through the CASA Program. But, as I mentioned previously, the work of the CASA Program staff and the child advocates must continue.

Below is a snapshot comparison of data from March 2020 to August 2020 (*during the pandemic*) to the same period of time in 2019 (*no pandemic*). As you might see, the numbers in 2020 have either increased or remained consistent, which goes to show that with continuous dedication and support coming from individuals in this community, along with the diligent efforts of the CASA program staff and CASA volunteers, we will be able to "change a child's story" from a life of hurt with one of hope.

