**FEBRUARY is historically a month showered with LOVE**

Commerce has basically set the shape of a heart as the symbol for this month when people shower their loved ones with tokens of appreciation demonstrating or in some cases declaring their love. They do so with roses, chocolates, affectionate gifts, and cards.

Showing love to someone sparks an emotion within both the giver and the recipient. I would like to take this space to remind us all (myself included) a couple of things – 1 **LOVE** should be demonstrated ALL YEAR LONG, not just in February and - 2 **LOVE** can be demonstrated with ACTION and ATTENTION – gifts and cards are not always required.

CHILDREN learn from adults and when they are shown love, affection, and attention they feel the emotion of LOVE and also are motivated to thrive. Children in the foster care system sometimes lack attention because everyone who works within the system is concerned and overwhelmed with meeting the child’s basic needs i.e., FOOD, WATER, SHELTER, CLOTHING. But we often leave **LOVE** and ATTENTION out of the equation because those are not considered a “basic” need, at least not according to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.

That is where a CASA Volunteer becomes vital in every case! A CASA Volunteer plays many roles in a case – but the MOST important, in my humble opinion, is to give the children **LOVE** and ATTENTION – not the commercial kind, either. I love reading in CASA Reports about trips to the park; to the library; and to eat a child’s favorite meal. Most recently I read about CASA volunteer’s bi-weekly visits with child who has been in foster care for several years – struggling to find a forever home. The most simple yet pleasant sentence to read was “X still loves chicken nuggets and toy dinosaurs.”

As a judicial officer in Dependency Court I read a lot of black and white paper overflowing with information about a family – the children’s portion of the report authored by the Department Family Services is usually the shortest (compared to the parent’s portion) and is very sterile “Little Johnny is in 5th grade at so and so elementary school. He is doing well in his placement.” On the other hand, when I read a CASA Report I can feel a smile on my face because I know I am going to read about Little Johnny and all his likes and dislikes; struggles and joys. In my mind the CASA Report is written in the color RED because it is overflowing with ACTION and ATTENTION, i.e., **LOVE.**

From the very bottom of my HEART thank you to all the CASA Volunteers, staff, and champions of this mission. Keep up the great work and may you pour out ACTION and ATTENTION **(LOVE)** ALL YEAR LONG!!