



# Court Appointed Special Advocates FOR CHILDREN CASA of LOS ANGELES

Fall 2009

Volunteers making a difference one child at a time.

323.526.6666

[www.casala.org](http://www.casala.org)

## A Message of Thanks

By David Melendez, Executive Director

Now that we approach Thanksgiving, I am reminded that a simple "thank you" does not really acknowledge the huge personal commitment you have made to be a CASA.

As I have gotten to know many of you individually, I am grateful that you have helped me build a depth of knowledge about real life CASA work. Thank you for investing tremendous emotional strength and judgment on behalf of your children. Thank you for accepting a different and challenging learning curve with each new case. Thanks for constantly exercising your patience and nerve when dealing with our over burdened systems. And most of all, thank you for being brave enough to live with the pain and hope you see in each of your CASA children's eyes.

In addition, please know that the insights and ideas you have shared with me have given extra power to the presentations I am making on behalf of our program to potential financial supporters.

I have frequently heard from our volunteers that they are asked, "How can you stand to do that work?" And I am sure that you each answer in various ways, but in my mind, you do this work simply because you are true community heroes with a heart for children.

As you probably know, there are also many other people who profoundly appreciate your commitment to CASA: the CASA Board, the Superior Court, shelter care staff, our office staff, our financial supporters and the many outside agencies who partner with us. Everyone on this list is supportive of the work you do with your CASA children and grateful for your commitment.

So, if we have not gotten a chance to meet each other yet, I am the tall guy with the mop of salt and pepper hair. I am in and out of the office a lot, so please do not hesitate to introduce yourself when we cross paths so I can thank you in person. And until then, please know that I am filled with respect and gratitude for your devotion to CASA of Los Angeles. Happy Thanksgiving!!



Shop for fabulous holiday gifts

at the

## Holiday Boutique

**Sunday, December 6, 2009**  
11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

1431 Brixton Road  
Pasadena, CA 91105

*Proceeds benefit CASA's Glamour Gowns prom dress giveaway for girls in the foster care system.*

## CASA Holiday Party

**Monday, December 7, 2009**  
4:00-7:00 p.m.

The Children's Bureau  
1910 Magnolia Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90007

RSVP to Chantel Paniagua  
[cpaniagua@lasuperiorcourt.org](mailto:cpaniagua@lasuperiorcourt.org)  
323.526.6316

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## Spotlight on Veronica Rowl

By Carolyn McGee, CASA Supervisor



**Veronica Rowl** has been a CASA for a little over three years. During her brief time with CASA she has done an extraordinary and amazing job advocating on behalf of older children in foster care. Her first case was with a developmentally delayed young lady named Teresa who was the mother of three children all under the age of 6. The children were not dependents of the court. Teresa became a dependent of the court at age 17 when her mother died.

**Veronica** knew it would be a challenge, but she accepted the case without hesitation. **Veronica** instantly immersed herself into the case and started gathering information from the case file and various professionals. She discovered that Teresa had no formal education, no job skills and was never referred to Regional Center. After several months of advocating on Teresa's behalf, things started to improve. Teresa was accepted into South Central Regional Center and despite her reading and writing limitations she was able to complete the Independent Living Program all while living in a Shelter with her three children. **Veronica** was pleased with the outcome so far, but she knew more was needed. Teresa needed housing and a way to support herself and her children once she aged-out of the dependency system. **Veronica** knew Teresa could not support herself the conventional way since she could barely read or write; therefore, the plan was to surround her with services, family, and resources that she could make use of once she aged-out of the dependency system. **Veronica** was influential in helping Teresa reconnect with her twin sister, brother, and older sister who live in Mexico and she reconnected with her extended family of aunts, uncles, and cousins. **Veronica** also advocated on Teresa's behalf to ensure she received SSI benefits, obtained child care and job assistance through the GAIN program, and qualified for Section 8 housing. In April 2008, Teresa moved into a four-bedroom house and, the court terminated jurisdiction.

I truly admire **Veronica's** devotion and appreciate everything she has done for Teresa and her three children. Thank you, **Veronica**.



## Thanks To Some of Our Generous Donors

RGK Foundation



Kyle Rudow Memorial Fund



Kappa Alpha Theta



Jon Orszag

## Hello from AmeriCorps Member and Volunteer Support Associate, Chantel Paniagua

My name is Chantel Paniagua and I have assumed the position of Volunteer Support Associate in the main office of CASA of Los Angeles. I am currently working for CASA through AmeriCorps, which is a national service program, similar to the Peace Corp, only we work here in the U.S.

I recently graduated from Dominican University of California located in San Rafael, CA where I earned my Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a double concentration in Public Law and American Politics. After working this year at CASA, I plan to apply to law school (preferably USC!).



Next time you are in the CASA office feel free to stop by my cubicle and introduce yourself. I look forward to meeting all of you in person!

### Helpful Link:

California Courts Self-Help Center, Families and Children <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/family/juv/>

# Welcome New Advocates!

## Main Office



Barbara Abend  
James Anderson  
Barrie Lynn Barash  
Joyce Barbee  
Rhonda Brown  
JoAnn Burciaga  
Heather Butterfield  
Margaret (Peggy) Byrnes

Gina Collura  
Dolores Croft  
Gregory Dangler  
Rosemary Enzer  
Chrystal Feiner  
Simone Friedman  
Rita Giamaniaro  
Gale Gordon

Paula Hollins  
Mary Jane Horton  
Jacqueline Joniec  
Dorcas McCown  
Mayumi Morishita  
Rick Peery  
Helene Powers  
Jennifer Rhodes

Sue Roediger  
Alissa Roston  
Jerri Safron  
Judith Schwartz-Behar  
Linda J. Smith  
Nina Stern McCullaugh  
Mary Jo Thatcher



## Antelope Valley



Toska Garner  
Candice Gilardone  
Norma Hernandez

Referee Marilyn Mordetsky  
Sandra Price  
Erica Wright



Rosa Acuna  
Referee Marilyn Mordetsky  
Linda Pacheco

Steve Rothenberg  
Gwen Washington

## The Gift of Comfort and Reading

By Lauri Halderman, CASA Supervisor



South Bay Quilter's Guild has generously chosen our CASA children to be recipients of their "Read Me A Quilt" program. Julie Maas, a member of the guild, had been making community quilts from donated

scrap materials for various organizations in the South Bay area. Julie wanted to use her quilting talents for a more focused and impactful project. Also, an avid fan of literacy, Julie realized that quilts and reading go hand in hand. The result was the "Read Me A Quilt" project which combines the comfort and warmth that comes from a quilt with the joy that comes from reading. Quilters select a children's book and create a quilt inspired by the book. These wonderful creations vary in color, shape and size; the books selected vary in the age appropriateness from infants to teenagers. The quilts and books are donated to the CASA program for CASAs to give to their CASA children. Since 2006, when I resumed working with the CASA program, more than 145 quilts have been made and generously donated to the CASA program by the South Bay Quilter's Guild.

The quilters hope that these unique and specially made creations remind our CASA children that they are special because someone made the quilt especially for them. It is the child's quilt and book; no one else's. To many of our CASA children, this is their first experience receiving something so precious that is both new and just for them.

Next time you are in the CASA office, please come and see these beautiful creations for our CASA children. The quilts/books are in the last cubicle in the back room of the CASA office. If your child has not received a quilt, please come choose a quilt/book for your youth. As we cannot take photos of the child with the quilt due to confidentiality, there are thank you letters and self addressed envelopes available to fill out after you have given your CASA child the quilt. These letters are forwarded to Julie Maas to read to the Guild's



membership at their meetings. We want the quilters to know that they are making a difference in a child's life by bringing a special kind of comfort.

## This Boots was Made for Marques

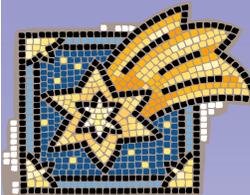
By Jessica Tachibana, CASA Supervisor

CASA **Maria Briseno** and her CSW husband Max applied for and received an Assistance Dog for their adopted son Marques. The real story and history about Marques and Boots is on their website <http://web.mac.com/mrsbriseno>. Check it out, it is inspirational and is guaranteed to warm your heart.



**Maria** took leave as a CASA when the family went through the adoption process but as soon as the adoption was completed she returned to CASA (even during the nine therapies a week Marques required) and took cases and continued to take cases while earning her Masters in Special Education

(which she was awarded earlier this year).



## Wish List

Can you, or someone you know, donate any of the following items?

### Antelope Valley Office



Refrigerator – top-freezer, approx. 14.3 cubic ft.

Contact Pam Hardy at 661.945.6483 or [phardy@lasuperiorcourt.org](mailto:phardy@lasuperiorcourt.org).

### Main Office



Adobe Acrobat Professional 9.0 software



Point & shoot digital camera & memory card  
8-megapixels & 4-gigabytes



Laminating machine  
Fellowes Office size



Puzzles & activity sheets  
1-pg sheets for teens awaiting court appearance

Contact Carol Marlowe at 323.526.6315 or [cmalowe@lasuperiorcourt.org](mailto:cmalowe@lasuperiorcourt.org).

Your donation will be acknowledged as a charitable in-kind gift, for tax purposes.

## Iris Shaw — A Tribute

By Jessica Tachibana, CASA Supervisor and Sue Thompson, CASA Consultant

It is with profound sadness that CASA mourns the passing of one of its most beloved CASAs, **Iris Shaw**.

A CASA since 1984, **Iris** was exemplary in every aspect of her volunteerism. A very accomplished professional in her own right, **Iris** was self effacing and most of all **Iris** was a real *lady* – in every sense of the word. Dignified, polite and full of grace, she had the ability to make everyone around her, adults and children alike, feel special.

Both **Iris** and her devoted husband, Dr. Anthony Shaw, Chief of Pediatric Surgery at Olive View Medical Center, professor at UCLA Medical Center (retired) and a member of the Juvenile Court 730 Panel of Experts, were life-long advocates for abused, neglected and abandoned children. They co-authored numerous papers on the subject for professional journals and texts and were greatly responsible for amending the child abuse laws for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Along with many of her other accomplishments, **Iris** was one of the first women to pass the bar in Massachusetts. She received Special Commendation from the Governor of Virginia for her work as the Chair of Virginia's Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Advisory Council. **Iris** also served as the Chair of the Juvenile Justice Committee for the Los Angeles County League of Women Voters.

As a CASA, **Iris** served countless children, many with complex special needs. As one of the first Children's Court Assistants she provided care and comfort to many newly detained chil-

dren. In her effort to help the program serve more children, **Iris** gave unstintingly of her time to help Supervisors assess the advocacy needs and goals of children newly referred to the CASA program.

In 1994, **Iris** was named CASA Volunteer of the Year and was subsequently selected by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors as the Los Angeles County Volunteer of the Year, the county's most prestigious award for community service.

With all her accomplishments, **Iris** never shined more than in her role as wife, mother, and grandmother. Devoted to her children and grandchildren, she was compassionate, loving and proud of her family. Her real legacy *is* her family. **Iris** touched this Earth and left a large footprint. She wouldn't see it that way, but those of us who had the privilege and honor (and it was an *honor*) to be in her presence, know this to be true.



## Government Budget Cuts That Will Effect Children

By Jessica Tachibana, CASA Supervisor

LAUSD will be taking a \$1.6 BILLION cut over the next 3 years, making California 50th in the nation in per pupil funding (below Mississippi and Louisiana).

Based on a preliminary review of available information, the total estimated loss of funding to the county of Los Angeles in 2009-2010 will be \$189.8 million, which includes:

- A \$12.4 million loss from the deferral of AB 3632 program payments for services provided to severely emotionally disturbed children;
- Reductions in foster care rates that will cut overall state funding for child welfare administration by 10 percent, and will cut Title IV-E waiver funds to the county by \$17 million;
- Reduced rates for group homes and foster family agencies will generate state general-fund savings of \$26.6 million and county savings of an estimated \$12.3 million in 2009-2010;
- A provision to tie increases in Adoption Assistance Program payments to need will generate state general-fund savings of \$900,000 and county savings of an estimated \$100,000; and
- A \$5 million reduction in funding for the Transitional Housing Program Plus (THP-Plus), which assists emancipated foster youth in successfully transitioning to adulthood, should result in an estimated annual county loss of \$314,000.

## Enjoy Our CASA Library

By Carol Marlowe, CASA



There are actually two libraries in the CASA office!

Most of you have probably seen the youth-orientated library in the center of the main office. Those books are for your CASA children. You may select books to give to them, you may just want to borrow books to read with your child on a visit, or you could invite your child to visit the CASA office after a Court hearing so they can make their own choice of a couple of books. You might characterize this activity as helping them begin to build "their own personal library." It can become a very nice routine attached to coming to Court.

Our other library is against the back wall in the annex office on the way to shelter care. We have a very nice selection of books on various topics relating to child welfare. Please borrow one or more the next time you are in the office. We frequently receive donated books, so check the shelves often! Also, please consider bringing in books that you would like to share with other CASAs. And it is now much easier to find books by topic, since CASAs **Alice Horevitz** and **Edina Somlai** sorted and labeled our collection. Remember that you are eligible for up to five hours of education credits for each book you read. Be sure to enter those hours on your monthly time sheets.

### SUGGESTED READING FROM OUR STACKS:

[The Heart Knows Something Different](#) – Teenage voices from the foster care system.

[The Transcendent Child](#) – Tales of triumph over the past

[Lost Boys](#) – Why our sons turn violent and how we can protect them.

[Positive Self-Talk for Children](#) – A guide for parents, teachers and counselors.

[The Developing Mind](#) – How relationships and the brain interact to shape who we are.

[When Children Grieve](#) – For adults to help children deal with death, divorce, pet loss, moving and other losses.

[My Sisters' Voices](#) – Teenage girls of color speak out.

*Excerpted from lists compiled by CASA Kay Van Horn.*

Also in the same area, there is a separate section of recreational books. Please freely help yourself and take books you feel would be appropriate for your older CASA youth. We plan to donate the balance of those books to library book sales at the end of November. If there is an author you enjoy and cannot get into the office by then, just call Carol Marlowe (323-526-6315) to have a look for you and she will set books aside.

So, please use and enjoy our libraries!

## CASAs Helping CASA of LA

CASA **Jim Anderson** arranged for us to have a booth at the Pasadena Home Show. Board member and CASA **Roger Ridlehoover** not only represented us there but he recruited and scheduled other CASAs to work booth "shifts", including **Jim Anderson, Jan Barcus, Rene Bilson, Rita Giamaniaro, and Ron Stewart**...and Board members **Jacque Dolan, Sue Marshall, and Joanne Solov** (and CASA), Assistant Director **Rene Casarez**, and CASA Supervisor **Lauri Halderman**.

CASAs **Jan Miller** and **Lynne Gabriel** spent a Saturday morning at the L.A. Paralegal Pro-Bono Fair, and spoke to attendees about volunteering with CASA.

CASA **Rita Giamaniaro** researched foundations that might support our work. CASAs **Linda Smith** and **Barbara Abend** helped Chantel Paniagua, our AmeriCorps member, manage a big mailing. CASA **Sherry Goddard** has been in the office several days organizing fundraising files. CASAs **Marie Scanlan** and **Armin Szatmary** assisted our Executive Director, David Melendez, by making numerous calls to foundations seeking grants to support our work.

CASAs **Harriet Zaretsky** and **Marlene Rapkin** each generously hosted their friends and acquaintances for elegant afternoon events at their homes to spread the word about our program and to seek financial support to sustain and expand our work.

CASA **Reva Trevino-Martinez** spoke about CASA at an Occidental College student event sponsored by the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority chapter.

CASA **Joan MacLaughlin** worked with Board member **Jacque Dolan** on the Macy's "Shop for a Cause" effort.

CASA **Nina Stern McCullaugh** has been using her professional P.R. skills to assist our staff with fund raising.

CASA **Alice Horevitz** has been researching the benefits of renewing our "script" donation program.

CASA **Dan Silva** (pictured left) joined CASA staff at the Santa Clarita Non-Profit fair held at College of the Canyons.



Last but not least, we are so grateful for our ever faithful, brave crew of CASAs who show up every day the Court is open to attend to and assist the children in **Shelter Care**. *If you have time and/or skills to offer our program, in addition to your generous commitment to our foster youth, please call Carol Marlowe: 323-526-6315.*

# mark your calendars!

## upcoming court holidays 2009

Wed, Nov 11, *Veterans Day*      Wed, Dec 16, *Court Closure*  
 Wed, Nov 18, *Court Closure*      Fri, Dec 25, *Christmas Day*  
 Thu & Fri, Nov 26-27, *Thanksgiving*

## 2010

Fri, Jan 1 *New Year's Day*      Fri, Feb 12 *Lincoln Day*  
 Mon, Jan 18 *MLK, Jr. Birthday*      Mon, Feb 15 *President's Day*  
 Wed Jan 20 *Court Closure*      Wed, Feb 17 *Court Closure*

### November

**Wed, Nov 18**  
 San Fernando Valley Book Club  
 7:30 p.m., Studio City  
 Book: *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* by Ruby K. Payne Ph.D.  
 RSVP [Rjilson@aol.com](mailto:Rjilson@aol.com)

**Thu, Nov 19**  
 Orientation for Prospective CASAs  
 2:00-3:30 p.m. Monterey Park

### December

**Wed, Dec 2**  
 Orientation for Prospective CASAs  
 12:30-2:00 p.m. Monterey Park

**Sun, Dec 6**  
 Holiday Boutique  
 11:00-5:00 p.m., Pasadena

**Mon, Dec 7**  
 CASA Holiday Party  
 4:00-7:00 p.m., Children's Bureau

**Tue, Dec 8**  
 Coastline CASA Book Club  
 1:30 p.m., Manhattan Beach  
 Book: *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* by Ruby K. Payne Ph.D.  
 RSVP [freitagfamily@verizon.net](mailto:freitagfamily@verizon.net)

**Sun, Dec 12**  
 San Gabriel Valley Book Club  
 7:30 p.m., Studio City  
 Book: *The Glass Castle*  
 RSVP [sueredman@att.net](mailto:sueredman@att.net)

### February 2010

**NEW CASA  
 WINTER TRAINING SESSION  
 (Days 1-3 of 5)**  
 8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. daily  
 Monterey Park  
 Tue, Feb 23  
 Thu, Feb 25  
 Fri, Feb 26

### March

**NEW CASA  
 WINTER TRAINING SESSION  
 (Days 4-5)**  
 8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. daily  
 Monterey Park  
 Tue, Mar 2  
 Thu, Mar 4

### April

**Fri-Mon, Apr 16-19**  
 National CASA Annual Conference  
 Atlanta, GA

### June

**Thu & Fri, Jun 3-4**  
 Beyond the Bench XX:  
*Collaboration Works! Improving Outcomes and Achieving Safety and Stability in Challenging Times*  
 San Diego Marriott Hotel and Marina

**NEW CASA  
 SUMMER TRAINING SESSION**  
 8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. daily  
 Monterey Park  
 Tue, Jun 22  
 Thu, Jun 24  
 Fri, Jun 25  
 Mon, Jun 28  
 Wed, Jun 30

### October

**NEW CASA  
 FALL TRAINING SESSION**  
 8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. daily  
 Monterey Park  
 Mon, Oct 18  
 Tue, Oct 19  
 Thu, Oct 21  
 Tue, Oct 26  
 Thu, Oct 28

### CASA of Los Angeles

CASA of Los Angeles recruits, trains, and supports volunteers who advocate for abused and neglected children in court and the community.

### Main Office

Edelman Children's Court  
 201 Centre Plaza Drive, Suite 3  
 Monterey Park, CA 91754-2142  
 Phone (323) 526-6666 Fax (323) 264-5020  
[www.casala.org](http://www.casala.org)

<i>Executive Director</i>	David Melendez
<i>Assistant Director</i>	Rene Casarez
<i>CASA Supervisors</i>	Sarita F. Carden Donna Carson Charla Gardner Genser Lauri Halderman Carolyn McGee Christine O'Rourke Jessica Tachibana Luz Weaver
<i>Program Assistants</i>	Tanisha Brown Uriel Ocampo Bree Taddwilliams Alice Yu
<i>Volunteer Support Associate</i>	Chantel Paniagua
<i>Consultant</i>	Sue Thompson

### Antelope Valley Office

1040 W. Avenue J, Room 1130  
 Lancaster, CA 93534-3329  
 Phone (661) 945-6483 Fax (661) 723-6875

<i>CASA Supervisor</i>	Melinda Murphy
<i>Program Assistant</i>	Pamela Hardy

### Board of Directors

<i>President</i>	Patricia Y. Trendacosta, Esq.
<i>Treasurer</i>	Ralph Walter
<i>Secretary</i>	Joanne Solov Steve Bloom Cathleen Cobb Jacquie Dolan Bruce Herron Sue Marshall Michael Pappas, Esq. Roger Riddlehoover John Sabourin

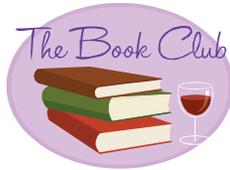
### Honorary Advisory Board

Edward P. Roski, Jr., <i>Chair</i>	Michaela Pereira
Robb Evans	Sandra Rudnick
Pat Haden	Richard H. Sheehan, Jr.
Dr. Astrid Heger	Robert J. Skousen, Esq.
Kerry McCluggage	Doug Weld

Honorable Peter Giannini, Founding Judge,  
 Los Angeles Child Advocates  
 Hal Brown, Founding Chairman, Friends of Child Advocates  
 (Deceased)

## CASA Book Clubs

Have fun and earn continuing ed hours!



CASA **Renne Bilson** will host the **San Fernando Valley** book club on **November 18, 7:30 p.m.** at her home in Studio City. The selected book is *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* by Ruby K. Payne Ph.D. Anyone interested in an evening meeting is welcome. CASAs should RSVP to [Rjbilson@aol.com](mailto:Rjbilson@aol.com).

**San Gabriel Valley**'s book club will meet on **December 2, 2:00 p.m.**, at the home of **Sue Thompson** in Pasadena. The selected book is *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Wells. To connect with the San Gabriel Valley Club, e-mail [4suethompson@gmail.com](mailto:4suethompson@gmail.com).

The **Coastline** CASAs will meet on **December 8, 1:30 p.m.** in Manhattan Beach at the home of **Betty Freitag**. The selected book is *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* by Ruby K. Payne Ph.D. To RSVP for this meeting, e-mail [freitagfamily@verizon.net](mailto:freitagfamily@verizon.net). All are welcome!

To receive a copy of the book club guidelines, contact Chantel Paniagua at [cpaniagua@lasuperiorcourt.org](mailto:cpaniagua@lasuperiorcourt.org).

### Start a CASA book club in your area!

Contact **Sue Redman** at [sueredman@att.net](mailto:sueredman@att.net).

**SAVE THE DATE!**  
*Glamour Gowns 2010*  
Saturday, March 13  
If you are interested in helping out or donating items, please contact Chantel Paniagua, Volunteer Support Associate, in the CASA Office at 323-526-6316



## Annual Conference

April 16-19

[www.casaforchildren.org](http://www.casaforchildren.org)

### REMINDER:

If your insurance has expired within the past 6 months, please be sure to email, fax, or mail us a copy of your new insurance card. This information is needed to comply with the rules of our supervising agencies.

[casa@lasuperiorcourt.org](mailto:casa@lasuperiorcourt.org)  
Fax: 323-264-5020

## Available Online!

To view the *current issue* of the CASA newsletter, go to the website at [www.casala.org](http://www.casala.org) and click on the "Current Advocates" link.