

**INSIDE :** Foster child Emily talks about how her CASA helped her **believe in the word family** again.



Niki shares her story with 1,700 people at the annual **Light of Hope** fundraiser.

CASA volunteers celebrated for **bringing positive change** to lives of vulnerable children.

Check out **Bike for Hope** and other fun summer events to benefit CASA.

## Restorative Justice Could Help Restore Hope for Troubled Teens

State representative Pete Lee saw his Restorative Justice bill signed into law by Governor Hickenlooper recently in front of the Pioneers Museum in Colorado Springs. The excitement over the bill comes from those hoping that this action will take some of the burden off of the legal system by settling grievances out of court, including some cases involving troubled teens served by CASA.

Restorative justice is the process of gathering offender, victim and community members together to discuss the wrong-doing of the offender, hear how the action impacted the victim, and the offender agreeing to fix the damages in whatever way is most effective. Basically, it's a way for the offender to take accountability for his/her actions without going through the court process. If the offender fails to accept responsibility or accountability a court proceeding could follow. But it might not have to go that far, saving tax payers much needed money that could be used for other programs. *Continued on page 2 >>*



**“When a CASA advocate is able to support a child/youth in taking responsibility for their behavior and accountability to their peers, a whole new vista opens up in terms of the youth being able to step down to a lower level of care, and finally finding a permanent placement in a safe, loving home. ”**



Often kids who have been abused and neglected and have not had the benefit of early intervention, have a higher propensity for behavioral issues, especially when they have been bounced around in the foster care system for many years. These kids, usually teenagers, may find themselves in a residential treatment facility or group home where they have a tendency to lower themselves to the level of others – they often get into physical altercations, steal things from their peers, run away, etc.

Depending on the offense, authorities could choose to use the restorative justice program before they press charges against the offender. If the offender is able to acknowledge fault and accept responsibility, and also be willing to pay restitution to the victim, i.e., pay for the stolen/broken iPod, charges are not made and the whole

court scene is avoided – no hearings, no lawyers, no check-ins.

This program could relieve some of the legal pressure that older kids served by CASA often face. “When a CASA advocate is able to support a child/youth in taking responsibility for their behavior and accountability to their peers, a whole new vista opens up in terms of the youth being able to step down to a lower level of care, and finally finding a permanent placement in a safe, loving home,” said Lois Gracz, CASA case supervisor.

Currently, AspenPointe runs a restorative justice program in Colorado Springs, but some residential treatment facilities are beginning their own programs, which is good news for the courts and for some troubled youth. ■

## What My CASA Volunteer Means to Me

**My name is Emily, and I'm 14 years old.** I've been in and out of different foster homes for about four years. All I've wanted is a normal life and a place to call home. In a way, I'm relieved that I'm not living with my parents anymore. But I still miss my family, even though they've done a lot to me.

My CASA volunteer has helped me understand everything and try to forgive the unforgivable. She's also given me stability in a world that has none. Everyone thinks that when children are taken out of their homes, they go somewhere safe and get over everything that's just happened to them. Truthfully, we are in shock for a while. No matter what happens around me, my CASA helps me deal with it and get somewhat comfortable with the situation. She helps me learn how to trust and believe in the word “family” again.



Self-portrait by Emily, now adopted into a loving home.

**“My CASA helps me learn how to trust and believe in the word ‘family’ again.”**

people I really talk to are teachers and my CASA.

Visitations are good and bad—good because I get to see my parents, but bad because I'm reminded of what they did to me. The sad thing is they don't even make an effort to talk to me or say they want me back. My opinion is if you can't handle the responsibilities of having children, then don't have them. Or if you do, then put them up for adoption so they feel loved and wanted from the start.

With all the moves I've made, I've been to a lot of schools. It's hard being a foster kid when every time I walk through the halls it feels like I have LOSER written on my forehead. The worst thing is that I don't know who to trust. There are a few kids who have tried to talk to me, but I just push them away. The only

**There are many good things in my life, but there are also bad things. One of the people who always brightens my day is my CASA. Even in difficult situations, she knows just what to do. She is my bright spot in my dark world.**

# The Light of Hope Shines Brightly for Niki

**Former CASA child shares her story with 1700 people at Light of Hope Event**

To generate awareness and support in the fight against child abuse, CASA of the Pikes Peak Region hosted the Eleventh Annual Light of Hope Fundraiser presented by El Pomar Foundation and Wells Fargo. The event, held on April 28, 2011 at the Antlers Hilton Hotel, drew more than 1,700 people and raised over \$349,000 for local children.

This year's program featured former CASA child Niki and her foster/adoptive parents Chris and Shanna Kohr. Niki and her sister Kayla entered the foster care system after a neighbor reported her suspicion of abuse to the Department of Human Services. An investigation revealed sexual abuse and neglect. The biological parents, who both had issues of alcohol addiction and mental illness, had their parental rights revoked and were eventually sent to jail.

Peggy Watt was the Court Appointed Special Advocate for the girls. She was the one constant in their lives and was instrumental in looking out for Niki and Kayla's best interest through the court process, ultimately ensuring a safe, permanent home with the Kohr family.

"When we moved in with the Kohrs, it was all still very confusing," said Niki. "I was so happy that Peggy spent a lot of time with us. It didn't take long before we felt like a family. I was so happy – it felt different, clean, and joyful. I told Peggy I liked where I was so that she could tell the judge."

Other highlights of the 2011 Light of Hope included inspirational insights from CASA volunteer Leonard Andrews and a moving performance by the Colorado Springs Children's Chorus.

This year's event was made possible by co-presenting sponsors, El Pomar Foundation and Wells Fargo. El Pomar helped found our local CASA program over 22 years ago and remains a strong and valued partner. This is their third year as a presenting sponsor of the Light of Hope.

Wells Fargo is deeply committed to the quality of life in our community and has been a CASA partner for over 16 years.

The Gay & Lesbian Fund for Colorado has had a decade-long commitment to CASA's children. As this year's challenge sponsor they generously matched up to \$10,000 in new and increased gifts.

The need for CASA's services remains strong in our community. The child abuse hotline at the El Paso County Department of Human Services rang 12,604 times in 2010 marking the third year in a row in which El Paso County fielded more child abuse hotline calls than any other county in Colorado. Six children died in our county last year as a result of maltreatment.

The latest report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reveals that child abuse rates in the state of Colorado as a whole increased over previous years,



**Pictured Top:** Niki Kohr with her advocate Peggy Watt.

**Pictured Middle:** The Kohr family pictured with former mayor, Lionel Rivera.

**Pictured Bottom:** CASA Director Trudy Strewler Hodges with CASA volunteer Leonard Andrews.

*Photos courtesy of Everything719.com*



**Pictured Left:** Kat Jorstad, a member of CASA's Circle of Impact. **Middle:** Bill Shaner, CASA 2010-11 Board Chair. **Right:** Colorado Springs Children's Chorale.

opposing the national trend of declining rates in reported child maltreatment. The state's child abuse and neglect fatality rate has also increased for the past several years, with 36 deaths last year, up from 32 the prior year, 27 the year before and 24 the year before that.

CASA of the Pikes Peak Region's programs increased the number of children served last year as well. CASA advocated for 348 children with Dependency & Neglect cases last year; a 22 percent increase from the previous year. Overall, CASA saw a 12.8 percent increase in services provided through all programs when compared to the prior year. ■

**Special thanks to our Table Captains and the Light of Hope Committee. For a complete list of names visit [www.casappr.org](http://www.casappr.org)**

### Colorado Springs Gazette: A Valued Partner

For 17 years, CASA of the Pikes Peak Region has been fortunate to have the support of the Colorado Springs Gazette. Gazette Charities has generously donated advertising space for fundraisers, events, and volunteer recruitment efforts, making it possible for the CASA message to reach far more people than it would otherwise. In addition, many Gazette employees have volunteered as Court Appointed Special Advocates or Facilitators in our Supervised Exchange and Parenting Time Program, served on committees, and supported CASA's work on behalf of local children in numerous ways. The Gazette is a valued community partner with a long history of giving back through civic investment.

### Our Deepest Appreciation to the 2011 Light of Hope Sponsors:

Co-presenting Sponsors:



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**“Thank you... for the hard work. Thank you for all you do for children. Thank you for all the things that you’ve taught me about being a better judge and about being a better human being during the time that I’ve been a juvenile judge.”**

Hon. Robert Brutinel, National CASA Association Judge of the Year

## Volunteers celebrated for service to children

Hundreds of CASA volunteers in El Paso and Teller counties are vigilantly fighting for and protecting the fundamental right every child has to be safe and to be treated with dignity and respect. Our volunteers are not only bring positive change to the lives of these vulnerable children, but also to their children and generations to come.

CASA honored volunteers at an appreciation breakfast in June held at Colorado College. Our community is incred-

ibly fortunate to have so many extraordinary citizens donating their time to provide healing and hope for local children and families. We are grateful to all 280 volunteers who help in our programs, support the office, work on committees and events, and so much more.

At the breakfast, special recognition was given to volunteers who hit milestones of 5, 10, and 15 years of service as noted below:

### 15 YEARS:

**Barbara Irwin:** Barbara has been a CASA volunteer for a total of 15 years, starting out as an Advocate in the Dependency & Neglect program, and serving as a Facilitator in the Supervised Exchange and Parenting Time (SEPT) program for the past 8 years.

### 10 YEARS:

**Jane Hegstrom:** Advocate in the Dependency & Neglect program for 10 years, serving 27 children to date. Jane also serves on the Milton Foster Children’s Fund committee and CASA speakers bureau. She is a former volunteer liaison to the board and past committee member for Light of Hope.

**Roxanne Tallon:** Advocate in the Domestic Relations program, serving 11 families and 13 children to date.

### 5 YEARS:

**Kathy Bohanon:** Advocate in the Domestic Relations program, serving 6 families and 21 children.

**Chuck Donachy:** SEPT Facilitator/Captain, Advocate in the Dependency & Neglect and Domestic Relations programs, serving 5 families and 5 children.

**Chrys Fotenos:** SEPT Facilitator/Captain and serves on the Light of Hope committee.

**John Fotenos:** SEPT Facilitator/Captain.

**Renae Gannon:** Advocate in the Dependency & Neglect program, SEPT Facilitator, and on the Diligent Search Team

**Georgeann Hughes:** Advocate in the Dependency & Neglect program, serving 4 families and 10 children.

**Gail Merson:** Office support and provider of wisdom and good cheer.

**Angela Rose:** Advocate in the Dependency & Neglect and Domestic Relations programs, serving 4 families and 8 children.

**Abigail Schreiber:** Advocate in the Domestic Relations program, serving 5 families and 9 children



Barbara Irwin receives a certificate of appreciation from Trudy Strewler Hodges and Bill Shaner for 15 years of volunteer service to CASA.

See a full list of CASA volunteers at [casappr.org](http://casappr.org) > [Volunteers](#) > [Our Volunteers](#)

# Join us for these summer benefit events for CASA:

## June 24: Art for Hope

Eat, Drink, Paint and Help Fight Child Abuse.

## July 9: Max Silver 4th Annual Fun Run

Cheyenne Mountain High School/Little Dipper Pool.

## July 30: Bike for Hope

A challenging bike ride over Gold Camp Road that ends with a celebration in Victor.

For more information and event registration visit [www.casappr.org](http://www.casappr.org) > News & Events > Upcoming Events

## CASA 411 Night Thursday, July 20

Get the "411" on CASA volunteer opportunities and find out how you can make a lifelong difference for an abused or neglected child on July 20, 5:30 p.m. at the CASA office, 701 South Cascade. No experience is necessary. Please RSVP to Amy Pattin at 447-9898 x1033. *Each One, Reach One...Please tell a friend!*

**MISSION:** *CASA of the Pikes Peak Region provides a volunteer's voice in court for children who are victims of abuse, neglect or domestic conflict and promotes community awareness of these issues to ensure safe and permanent homes.*



**Pictured left:** Incoming CASA Board Chair Sherri Newell presents a gift of thanks to former chair Bill Shaner for his service, leadership, and passion for the CASA mission.

### Board of Directors:

**Chair:** Sherri Newell

**Vice Chair:** Dawn Ignatius

**Secretary:** Jacqueline Kintz

**Treasurer:** Wayne Bland

**Immediate Past Chair:** William Shaner

**Executive Committee Member at Large:** James Moore

**Members at Large:** Wayne Bland, Catherine Calvin, David Graff, Fletcher Howard, Heather Kelly, Dave Mason, Rob McDonald, Paul Perea, Caroline Pope, Aje Sakamoto, Dawud Salaam, Jacqueline Swartz, Jennifer Taylor, Rebecca Theobald, Joshua Waymire.

**Contact Us:** Phone: 719-447-9898 / Fax: 719-667-1818 / Web: [casappr.org](http://casappr.org)



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