

CASA Looks Ahead to Help All Abused Children in Region

BY PATTYE VOLZ

“The CASA volunteer gives me peace of mind for the decisions I have to make,” said Colorado Supreme Court Justice Brian Boatright at the El Pomar Foundation’s Penrose House on Mesa Avenue on Aug. 19.

Boatright was one of many speakers at a celebration of CASA of the Pikes Peak Region’s 25th anniversary. The non-profit organization recruits, trains and supports Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers to represent abused and neglected children in the local court system. Boatright and others gave examples of how such personalized attention makes a difference in the lives of children who have been thrust into the court system because of difficult family situations.

The judge described how challenging it can be to make quick decisions about the placement of a child with



Peregrine area resident Doris Ralston helped Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) celebrate 25 years of advocating for children in the Pikes Peak region at an event at the Penrose House on Mesa Avenue. Ralston is executive director and CEO of the Colorado Springs Osteopathic Foundation which is supporting CASA with \$150,000 over three years. “We are looking at outcomes, at a great return on our investment. It’s all about the children,” said Ralston about her organization’s support of CASA. She said the Osteopathic Foundation is making larger multi-year grants to achieve greater impact on the health of the community.



CASA Executive Director Trudy Strewler Hodges, at podium, spoke to supporters in celebration of the nonprofit’s 25th anniversary. Noting the organization has served more than 10,000 children, Hodges said the goal is to serve all area children needing advocates in court by the year 2020.

family or not given the information traditionally provided. He said the recommendation of a CASA volunteer who has spent time with that child and other family members has helped him choose what is best for the child.

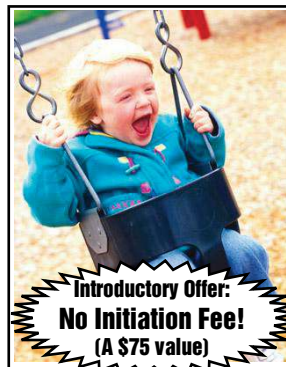
“There is no place where our mission is better served than here in Colorado Springs,” said National CASA CEO Michael Piraino who came to the event from Seattle, Wash. Nationwide, CASA has more than 950 programs involving 75,000 volunteers helping 238,000 children each year. He emphasized that the organization’s value extends beyond the individual who is given better opportunities. “We are changing lives for these children and their children’s children,” he said.

Here in the Pikes Peak region, CASA started in 1989, serving 42 children with 21 volunteers. Now the nonprofit has 350 volunteers and has advocated for 10,000 children in El Paso and Teller counties over the past 25 years.

“My hope is we can serve every child in need,” said local CASA Executive Director Trudy Strewler Hodges. “We have this vision to serve every child in need by 2020,” she said, noting the organization is looking for more people to become volunteers and advocate for abused or neglected kids in court.

For details about becoming an appointed representative of the court for children, CASA is hosting a 4-1-1 information hour at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 4 at the CASA office,

701 S. Cascade Avenue. Register at 447-9898, ext. 1033. For more information, see www.casappr.org.



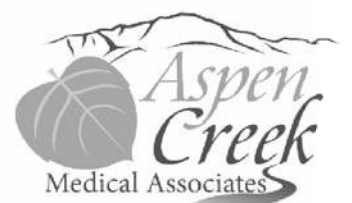
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