

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

From: Bergen County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Inc.
One Bergen County Plaza
4th Floor, Suite 440
Hackensack, NJ 07601

May, 2011

Contact: Amanda Simonton, Volunteer Administrator
201-336-7520 - telephone
201-336-7521 - fax
amanda@bergencasa.org

During National Foster Care Month, Bergen County CASA Welcomes Their New Class of Volunteers!

Hackensack, Bergen County, NJ – May is National Foster Care Month. During this month we are encouraged to keep foster children in our thoughts and renew our commitment to making their lives better. Bergen County Court Appointed Special Advocates announces 18 new volunteer advocates who will better the lives of foster children here in Bergen County. These volunteers have been trained to provide support for the abused and neglected children in our community and were sworn in by Judge Mizdol on May 4, 2011 at the Bergen County Court House.

The goal of the Bergen County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program is to prevent abused and neglected children from becoming lost in the child welfare system. The objective of appointing a CASA Volunteer, a trained advocate from the community, is to ensure that the child's best interest is represented at all times. CASAs are appointed by a judge, to ensure that the best interests of the child are met. In order to do this, the CASA must investigate the facts of the case, recommend a course of action to the court, facilitate the resolution of the presenting problems, and monitor the progress toward the established goals.

The Swearing-In Ceremony, that took place on May 4, 2011, was held at the Bergen County Court House. Each new volunteer read a statement of commitment in front of Judge Mizdol, Presiding Judge of Bergen County Family Court. This statement affirmed that each volunteer will work within the programs philosophy and administrative procedures as well as the policies and practices of the court. Furthermore, that they swear to uphold an Oath of Confidentiality and to advocate for the best interests of the children in Bergen County. Then each volunteer signed an Oath of Confidentiality and received a certificate of completion of training. Bergen County CASA is happy to welcome their new advocates: Jayne Burke, Midland Park; Jennifer Cicarini, Ridgefield Park; Diane DeAngelis, West Milford; Edith Diana, Elmwood Park; Rosemarie Finneran, Newfoundland; Mandeiran Ghahary, Mahwah; Kim Jones-McKnight, Teaneck; Patrycja Lawnicka, Wallington; Sarita Lee, Annette Marshall, Rondal Taylor, Phyllis Wright, Hackensack; Kathleen Rail-Welch, Wyckoff; Hanna Silva, New Milford; Elliot Steinberg, Emily Steinberg, Fort Lee; Maribel Unanue, Norwood; and Amy Wilker, Glen Rock. These 18 volunteers join a dedicated group, bringing the number of CASAs in the county to 98.

All CASA volunteers are carefully screened and receive 30 hours of training in skills necessary to fulfill his or her responsibilities. They now join a volunteer corps of court appointed special advocates, helping the county's abused and neglected children receive proper services while in foster care. Volunteers also ensure that they are placed in safe, permanent homes as quickly as possible. CASA volunteers are matched to the child directly and will be assigned one case of a child or sibling group. They will provide approximately 10-20 hours of service per month of casework.

Bergen County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) is a private, nonprofit organization serving children throughout Bergen County. Today, the organization is able to serve about one-third of more than 300 abused and neglected children who have been removed from their homes by court order for their own protection. This new class will provide more volunteers and allow them to help more children. Anyone wishing to volunteer can contact the CASA office at 201-336-7520 or info@bergencasa.org or go to www.bergencasa.org for more information.