



CASA for Children of Mercer & Burlington Counties
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New CASA Volunteers Sworn In to Advocate for Children

Mount Holly, NJ—On Thursday, June 22, 2017, the Hon. Mark P. Tarantino swore in ten volunteers as court-appointed special advocates to stand up on behalf of abused and neglected children.

Family and friends gathered in the Burlington County Courthouse to watch the volunteers take an oath promising to advocate for the best interest of the child; including Roseann Vanella, Board President, CASA for Children of Mercer and Burlington Counties.

The newly appointed CASA volunteers bring the total number to 80 dedicated community members who have been trained and are advocating for foster children in

Burlington County's juvenile dependency court system. Also noteworthy among the newly sworn in CASA volunteers, was Gregory Grimaldi of Marlton, who served as a CASA board member since September 2016 and trained to become a CASA volunteer. There are currently 230 active CASA volunteers in both Burlington and Mercer Counties.

As officers of the court, CASA volunteers ensure that the children's needs are recognized and best interests are considered both in the courtroom and in the community. They meet with the child regularly and are authorized to interview people in the child's life such as social workers, attorneys, and teachers. They attend court hearings with the child and report their findings to the judge. "Our volunteers pledge to stay with each child until the case is closed, and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home," said Katherine Carmichael, executive director of the CASA for Children of Mercer and Burlington Counties. "The advocate is often the only consistent adult presence in the child's life."

With more than 200 children waiting for a CASA volunteer in Burlington County alone, many more advocates are still needed. There are no prerequisites for becoming a CASA volunteer other than being at least 21 years of age, clearing an extensive background screening and successfully completing 30 hours of training.

The next advocate training session for CASA for Children of Mercer and Burlington Counties begins August 7th, 2017. If you are interested in learning more about becoming a CASA volunteer and the rewards that come along with serving as the voice of a child,

please contact Harry Cassidy, Burlington County, 609-265-2222 or Jill Duffy, Mercer County, 609-434-0050.

The CASA for Children of Mercer and Burlington Counties is a member of the National CASA Association, a network of more than 900 CASA programs serving children in 49 states and Washington DC.

Photo caption: Ten new volunteers were sworn in as court appointed special advocates on June 22. (L-R) Greg Grimaldi, Susan Myers, Steve Warner, Anne Lyon, Charlene Laws-Ligon, The Honorable Judge Tarantino, Dolores Beverly, Eileen Sennett, Cindy Blackwell, Mary Cay Schaeffer, Debbie Lepo. Photo credit Laura Fitzgerald