

Northern Hills Area CASA

Director's Report

June 11, 2024 – July 8, 2024

Goals:

- **Enhance the work environment through the emphasis of teamwork.**
- **Promote retention of CASA volunteers through continuous support and educational training.**
- **Raise public awareness of NHCASA, child abuse prevention, and the unique role our volunteers play in the child welfare system.**
- **Maintain fiscal responsibility by increasing the amount of income received.**

Foster a positive culture of the work environment.

- Weekly team meetings are held, which include staffing of all cases and discussions regarding fundraisers, volunteer engagement, and grant applications.
- Monthly one-on-one SOS (Source of Support) meetings between the ED and staff members: Progress with 2024 personal/professional goals. Importance of engaging in self-care activities.
- An exit interview was held with Chelsie Perschbacher on June 13.

Strengthen the quality and professionalism of advocacy efforts.

- The staff discuss cases on a weekly basis to ensure best practice advocacy efforts.
- We currently have 23 CASA volunteers, along with NHCASA staff, advocating for 45 children on 27 cases. CASA volunteers, Marcia Barnes and Lisa Merkel, are assigned to two cases each. Thirteen CASAs have been appointed to cases in 2024, with six of them being graduates of our February-March training session. We are lucky to have a larger pool of available advocates vs. the number of abused/neglected children currently in care.
- We have served 66 children thus far in 2024. Since the June 13, 2024, board meeting, we have not received any new cases. This is troublesome, but DSS reported a high number of referrals not constituting to the level needed for an abuse and neglect petition to be filed. They also noted there are a number of families which are completing guardianships of children as a resolution, instead of opening a civil proceeding. The total year-end numbers for 2023 were 85 and 75 in 2022.
- We are fortunate to be able to fulfill our vision by having CASAs assigned to every child who is in DSS custody. We currently have one child waiting for a CASA to be their voice. A Butte County case was reopened and involves a sixteen-year-old boy whose needs were too significant for the mother to handle. After two months of residing in a hotel, under the direct supervision of DSS, the youth was transferred to a facility in Nebraska.
- Denise Schipke-Smeenck has been a CASA since October 2022. She became a volunteer specifically to serve a young man with whom she had a connection with through her professional educational role. She advocated for his needs for 9 months, traveling to Winner, SD for monthly visits. The case closed in a guardianship with a foster family who was previously granted guardianship of his sister. Denise is interested in taking on the case involving a 2-year-old girl who was involved in a car accident with her mother who was under the influence of methamphetamines. The child was left alone after the accident in the middle of the night in 38-degree weather, wearing only a diaper. She was sitting on the mother's lap during the accident and spent hours unattended, bruised, muddy, and cold. After an extensive search, she was located in an abandoned warehouse ¼ mile from the accident scene. We are awaiting the CASA Order of Appointment for Denise.

- New CASA Volunteers, Patrick and Shawna Goldhammer, were appointed to a case involving a nine-year-old boy. The case opened in January 2023, as the mother was arrested for drug charges and eluding law enforcement. The father is deceased. The child didn't have any structure or stability. The previous CASA had to be discharged due to her busy work schedule. It was imperative for a volunteer to be assigned, as the child was at home with his mother on a trial reunification. While contact with the mother was a challenge, Shawna was persistent with her efforts. She advocated for the case to remain open for a few more months, for monitoring purposes, because there were some ongoing issues with the mother's ability to maintain housing and employment. The CASA Report detailed these concerns. Judge Fitzgerald acknowledged Patrick and Shawna's involvement in open Court and thanked them for their service. Yet, the case closed after only two months of the child being in a trial reunification. We are cautiously optimistic about the success of this family.
- NHCASA volunteers are dedicated and committed to the children they serve. Our CASAs remain on cases until the children achieve permanency, unlike many other CASA programs across the United States. Unfortunately, we have several youth who have been in care for many years, simply waiting to age out of the child welfare system. CASA Kim Marsing has been on her current case for nearly 8 years. Two of the children in the case were adopted several years ago, but the other, who just turned 17, remains in DSS custody. Sadly, he has been in foster care off and on since he was an infant. CASA Marcia Barnes has been advocating for a young man for 92 months. His other siblings were adopted early on by a non-relative foster family. He will turn 18 on September 8. Marcia has also been the voice for two teenage boys since February 2020, as the previous CASA requested a discharge due to burn-out, after serving on the case for three years. One of the youth will age out in November, while the other, age 15, remains at McCrossan Boys Ranch, with no leads on a permanent home. The hope for adolescents is that they remain in DSS custody until they complete high school or obtain their GED. However, this is often unlikely.
- CASA Jessica Stanton has been the voice for two boys since 2018. The boys were returned home, and the initial case closed after only 9 months, despite opposition from CASA and the child's attorney. Within a year, they were again removed from their parents' care for the same issues which caused removal the first time. Jessica agreed to be reappointed to the case. Over time, the boys disclosed sexual abuse, extreme neglect, physical violence, and heavy parental drug use. They spent several years at the Black Hills Children's Home. We were hopeful about the adoptive resource in Massachusetts; but ultimately, their needs were too high for the family to manage. They recently returned to South Dakota and are placed in residential treatment facilities in Sioux Falls and Rapid City. With the high turnover rate of DSS workers, in addition to multiple placement changes, including new caregivers, schools, and therapists, the one true constant for these children has been their CASA volunteer.
- We have attended 105 abuse and neglect hearings since January 1, 2024, plus a federal sentencing in Pennington County, several criminal hearings regarding parents, juvenile delinquency hearings, and Drug Court proceedings. We also participate in Adoption Conference Calls.
- The CASA Family Picnic was a huge success, with over 40 people present, including 14 volunteers and 5 board members. We received positive comments regarding the social. New CASA Janelle Rogers donated \$50 to help offset food expenses.
- The Court Improvement Program, along with the Center for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment, hosts virtual Lunch & Learn events dealing with child advocacy. The invitation to participate is emailed to all CASA volunteers and board members. Previously recorded sessions can be viewed at <https://sdcpcm.com/our-work/cip/>. June's virtual learning opportunity focused on the 2024 SD Legislative updates. The next session is scheduled for

August 28, at 11:00 a.m. MT. The topic will be “The Role of a Qualified ICWA (Indian Child Welfare Act) Expert.” These are free sessions, but you must register in advance in order to receive the Zoom link to participate. <https://sdcpcm.com/our-work/cip/>

- Refer to the updated NHCASA Calendar of Events for the virtual educational sessions regarding “Understanding ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), “Enough Abuse,” and other learning opportunities. Several CASA volunteers are taking advantage of these learning opportunities for their 12 continuing education hours which are required by the National CASA Association.
- Anna and I continue to meet monthly with the Children’s Worker, DSS Supervisor, and Attorney Karen Hunt to discuss long-term cases. Unfortunately, the Sturgis and Spearfish DSS offices will be taking on some additional Rapid City cases, which may result in a higher turnover rate due to their increased caseloads.
- Anna and I facilitate weekly calls with CASA volunteers, state’s attorneys, and DSS for case updates. We are also prioritizing contact with advocates who aren’t currently assigned to cases, in an attempt to keep them actively engaged. This is a prime retention method.
- In-person team meetings are held on a regular basis between CASA, children’s attorneys, and DSS, in an effort to provide best-practice advocacy regarding the best interest of children.
- I participated in a quarterly webinar with the National CASA Association which involved representatives from rural CASA programs.
- Anna and I attended the Justice for Children conference regarding sexual predators in Rapid City on June 27.
- I participated in a virtual learning opportunity which focused on writing an effective court report.

Increase public awareness of the mission of NHCASA.

- CASA volunteers, Michelle Clark and Lacey Schwindt, are employed by First Interstate Bank. Both submitted nominations for NHCASA to be the recipient of one of their “Believe in Local” awards. Much to our surprise, employees from the local branch showed up at the CASA Family Picnic to present us a check for \$25,000. We are grateful for the relationships we have with our volunteers and the communities we serve.
- We conducted a check presentation with the Midco Foundation who donated \$1,000 to our organization.
- We utilize social media, particularly Facebook and Instagram, to promote our mission and NHCASA activities. It is also used to acknowledge event sponsors and donors.
- I was involved with idea sharing with the new CASA Program, located in Pierre. I provided input on what things have been working well regarding volunteer recruitment, training, and retention, plus board engagement and fundraising efforts
- Three board members and one CASA volunteer participated in the Canyon Acoustics Series, sponsored by Spread the Tunes, on July 3. Inclement weather forced the abrupt location change from the Spearfish City Park to Crow Peak Brewery. \$250 from the 50/50 ticket sales will be donated to NHCASA. A special thank you to everyone who helped.
- Event sponsorships are continuously being procured. The KEVN TV advertisement for the Spearfish Canyon Half Marathon/5K has been running for the last month. One for the Black Hills Super 6 will begin in mid-July. The Black Hills Pioneer has published numerous ads regarding our events and will continue to do so for the bike race.
- The Spearfish Canyon Half Marathon/5K promotional flyer will be included in next week’s Spearfish Chamber of Commerce “Fish Pond” e-news.
- We partner with other local organizations to promote our program. I am a board member of the Lawrence County Coalition and attend monthly meetings. We are also involved with the

Sturgis ABC (Action for the Betterment of the Community). We provide the Zoom link and facilitate the Northern Hills Interagency quarterly meetings.

- NHCASA Monthly Spotlights are highlighted on our website at www.nhcasa.org, featured in our newsletters, and recognized on our NHCASA Volunteers private page on Facebook. If you would like to view information on this page, please request access. Eleven-year veteran volunteer Victoria Hogrefe was the May honoree. Returning CASA Virginia Mollman was featured in June. New volunteer Shay Hood is the July recipient. It should be noted some volunteers request not to be publicly recognized for their service.

Fiscal Responsibility

- Grants/Donations Received: VOCA monthly drawdowns from the FY24--July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024 (allocation of \$111,840); Jim and Janice Wright (\$220 monthly donations); Autum Johnson, Mike Zilberstein, Marcia Barnes, Scott Hunter, Ameriprise-Legacy Financial Partners Consulting (monthly contributions); United Way (2023-2024 monthly distributions--\$666.67: The monthly allocation increased significantly in June 2024 to \$2,083.33, as we were awarded \$25,000 from the 2024-2025 Community Impact Grant); Court Improvement Program (\$26,000); CASA Commission (\$23,000); Perkins County (\$1,500); Midco Foundation (\$1,000); City of Whitewood (\$1,000); CASA Janelle Rogers (\$50); CASA Jessica Anderson (gift-in-kind: clothes)
- 2024 Confirmed Allocations: First Interstate Bank “Believe in Local” Award (\$25,000—payable in August); Montana-Dakota Utilities Resources Foundation (\$2,500—payable in August); Lawrence County (\$7,500—the first half of the 2024 installment was received); VOCA (award total yet to be revealed)
- Other grants submitted and awaiting response include: 2024-2025 fiscal year city grants--Spearfish, Lead, Deadwood, Sturgis, Belle Fourche, Newell, McIntosh, Dupree, Timber Lake, Buffalo, Lemmon, Bison; County grants for 2024-2025--Butte, Corson, Dewey, Lawrence, Meade, & Ziebach; Adams-Mastrovich; Allegiant Airlines; Butte Electric Operation Round Up
- The Spearfish Canyon Half Marathon/5K is less than a week away, with 411 people registered thus far (Totals: 2023 = 505; 2022 = 419). Payments are sent to us via Innovative Timing.
- Registrations are open for the Black Hills Super 6, with 12 participants taking advantage of the early bird discount so far. Fees will increase by \$15 on August 1. We will be busy promoting the bike race as soon as the half marathon/5K is completed. Sponsorships for both events are continuously being updated on *ItsYourRace* and the NHCASA website. We are also utilizing social media for sponsor recognition.
- Confirmed race sponsorships: Coeur Wharf (\$1,500--Half and \$1,500--BHS6), RCS Construction (\$1,500--Half), Monument Health (\$500 plus GIK medical support at Half and \$750--BHS6), Roughlock Auto (\$1,500: 750--Half and \$750--BHS6), Visit Spearfish (\$1,250 combined for both events + GIK information bags for packet pick-up), Spearfish Family Dentistry (\$750--BHS6 plus GIK as race coordinators and prize donors and \$100--Half) Lynn’s DakotaMart (\$833--Half), Black Hills Energy (\$500 for each event); Spearfish Electric & Heating (\$500 for each event), Lawrence County Coalition (\$500--BHS6), Ketel Thorstenson (\$500--Half), Sabers Agency (\$100 for each event), SoDak Title (\$100 for each event), Spearfish Economic Development (\$100 for each event), Family Optical (NEW Sponsor: \$100 for each event), Stadium Sports Grill (\$100 for each event), Real Estate Center of Spearfish (\$100 for each event), First Interstate Bank Spearfish (\$100 for each event), Master Blaster (NEW Sponsor: \$100 and GIK--BHS6), KEVN (in-kind for both events), 605 Media (GIK--Half), Superior Sanitation (GIK--Both events), Alpine Impressions (GIK--Half), Spearfish Holiday Inn (Discounted rooms for the half marathon and gift-in-kind donation of

rooms for the timer for both events), Dakota Gold (GIK--Both events), Spearfish Ambulance Service (GIK--Both events), Lawrence County Sheriff's Department (GIK--Half), Strider (4 bikes--BHS6), Scheels (5-\$20 gift cards--BHS6), and the Black Hills Pioneer (GIK--Both events).

- Dueling Pianos Sponsorships: Legacy Financials--Jody Elmore (\$750), Williams & Associates Architecture (\$750), Monument Health (\$750), Coeur Wharf (\$750), Highmark Federal Credit Union (\$600 Table Purchase)
 - See the attached itemized income/expenses for June 11, 2024 – July 8, 2024.
- **CASA Connection:** In addition to DSS-supervised family time, the space is also utilized for visits between CASA volunteers and the children they serve.

Case Reports for January 1, 2024 – July 8, 2024

	Total Children	Lawrence	Butte	Meade	Dewey	Ziebach	Corson	Perkins
Currently Active (7-8-2024)	45	16	14	12	1	1	1	0
Children Closed in 2024	21 (Reunification = 3; Reunification with other parent = 6; Guardianship = 4; Dismissed with opposition noted by CASA = 6; Transferred to another state = 1; Kinship adoption = 1)	1	0	19	0	0	0	1
Total Served in 2024	66	17	14	31	1	1	1	1

YTD COMPARISONS	Total Children	Lawrence	Butte	Meade
Total Served (January 1, 2023 – July 8, 2023)	64	16	12	36

NHCASA Calendar of Events:

- **July 11, 2024:** BOD Meeting; Spearfish Chamber of Commerce; 11:30 a.m.
- **July 13, 2024:** Spearfish Canyon Half Marathon/5K
- **July 22, 2024:** Cup O'CASA; 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
- **July 24-27, 2024:** Days of '76 Rodeo VIP Bar
- **July 31, 2024:** Learning Opportunity for Non-Profit Organizations: The Responsibilities of a Board Member; Joy Center; 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.; Lunch is provided; Register by July 25
- **August 2-9, 2024:** Amy OUT
- **August 5-9, 2024:** Brenda and Anna's office hours may vary

- **August 15, 2024:** BOD Meeting; Spearfish Chamber of Commerce; 11:30 a.m.
- **August 17, 2024:** Black Hills Super 6 Mountain Bike Race
- **August 28, 2024:** CIP Virtual Learning (The Role of the Qualified ICWA Expert); 11:00 a.m.
- **August 28, 2024:** NHCASA Lunch & Learn; Topic TBD; Noon
- **September 2, 2024:** Labor Day; NHCASA Closed
- **September 5, 2024:** Learn About CASA; 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
- **September 6-10, 2024:** Amy OUT
- **September 12, 2024:** BOD Meeting; Spearfish Chamber of Commerce; 11:30 a.m.
- **September 19, 2024:** New CASA Volunteer Orientation; 6:00 p.m.
- **September 20, 2024:** Cup O’CASA; 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
- **September 23 – October 17, 2024:** New CASA Volunteer Training
- **October 3-4, 2024:** Community Response to Child Abuse Conference; Sioux Falls
- **October 8, 2024:** NHCASA Traveling Lunch & Learn; Northern Hills Drug Court; 11:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
- **October 10, 2024:** BOD Meeting; Spearfish Chamber of Commerce; 11:30 a.m.
- **October 14, 2024:** Indigenous People’s Day; NHCASA Closed
- **October 21, 2024:** Request Christmas Wish Lists
- **October 24, 2024:** Volunteer Appreciation Banquet; BHSU Joy Center; 5:00 p.m.
- **November 2, 2024:** Dueling Pianos; Spearfish Holiday Inn
- **November 6, 2024:** NHCASA Lunch & Learn; Topic TBD; Noon
- **November 11, 2024:** Veteran’s Day; NHCASA Closed
- **November 14, 2024:** BOD Meeting; Spearfish Chamber of Commerce; 11:30 a.m.
- **November 14, 2024:** NHCASA Social (Bingo); 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
- **November 18, 2024:** Christmas Wish Lists Due
- **November 20, 2024:** United Way Wednesday WalkAround/Cup O’CASA; 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
- **November 21, 2024:** Make Tree Tags
- **November 22-25, 2024:** CASA Christmas Gift Project Wish Lists Distributed to Tree Tag Locations
- **November 27-December 4, 2024:** Amy OUT
- **November 28-29, 2024:** Thanksgiving Break; NHCASA Closed
- **December 9, 2024:** CASA Christmas Gifts Due
- **December 10, 2024:** BOD Meeting & Annual Meeting; Spearfish Chamber of Commerce; 11:30 a.m.
- **December 12, 2024:** Christmas Gift Project Wrap Day; BHSU Joy Center; 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
- **December 25, 2024:** Christmas; NHCASA Closed

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Accrual Basis

NHCASA - Office
Income by Customer Summary
June 11 through July 8, 2024

	<u>Jun 11 - Jul 8, 24</u>
Anderson, Jessica	0.00
Barkley, Tyler	1,950.00
Barnes, Marcia	28.80
City of Whitewood	1,000.00
First Interstate Bank - Spearfish	488.59
Helstad, Rod & Valli	11.00
Highmark Credit Union	600.00
Hunter, Scott	49.95
Innovative Timing Systems, LLC	13,430.11
Jarrett, Madisen & Bowles, Jacqueline	890.00
Johnson, Autum	25.00
Master Blaster	100.00
MIDCO Foundation	1,000.00
Monument Health	2,000.00
Rogers, Janelle	50.00
Schmidt, Jared & Anna	0.00
State of South Dakota	26,000.00
Synchrony	40.00
United Way of the Northern Hills	2,083.33
TOTAL	<u>49,746.78</u>

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Accrual Basis

NHCASA - Office
Expenses by Vendor Summary
June 11 through July 8, 2024

	<u>Jun 11 - Jul 8, 24</u>
All Net Connect	188.98
Amazon.com	114.81
Amy Cermak	382.57
Anna Schmidt	214.40
Clear Bags	42.17
Crow Peak Accounting	550.00
Dollar Tree	23.50
fischer Furninture	1,052.97
Jimmy John's Vendor	29.99
Knecht	25.35
Lasting Impressions Unlimited	180.10
Lueder's Food Center-Vendor	5.29
Marco	465.14
McDonalds Vendor	3.65
On Point Electric	779.18
Safeway - Vendor	12.45
Sam's Club	142.34
US Post Office	518.40
Vista Print	151.96
Walgreens	15.99
Walmart	84.49
Zoom	149.90
TOTAL	<u><u>5,133.63</u></u>