



# Foster Family Service Newsletter

## Who Is CASA? (Court Appointed Special Advocate)

*We all work with them on a regular basis and find them of great value to our court system. Do you know who these volunteers are and what they do?*

**CASA's** inception dates back to 1977, when a Seattle judge concerned over making decisions about abused and neglected children's lives without sufficient information conceived a way to ensure their placement in a safe and loving environment. His idea to train community volunteers to speak for the best interest of children in court was so successful that, soon, judges across the country began utilizing citizen advocates.

**CASA's Court Appointed Volunteers** are trained to act as first-hand experts on the individual needs of abused and neglected children in foster care, giving them the best possible chance at a hopeful future. The volunteers core responsibilities:

- ◆ Serve as a fact-finder for the judge by thoroughly researching the background of the assigned case
- ◆ Speak on behalf of the child in the courtroom, representing his or her best interests
- ◆ Act as a "watchdog" for the child for the duration of the case, ensuring it is brought to a swift and appropriate conclusion

**CASA volunteers** undergo a thorough training and development program that consists of at least 30 hours of pre-service training, followed by 12 hours of yearly in-service training. Volunteers learn about courtroom procedure from the principals in the system – judges, lawyers, social workers, court personnel and others. CASA volunteers also learn effective advocacy techniques for children, and are educated about specific topics ranging from seminars on child sexual abuse to discussions on early childhood development and adolescent behavior.

After completion of the initial training, volunteers are sworn in as Officers of the Court. This gives them the legal authority to conduct research on the child's situation and submit reports to the court.

*Thanks CASA Volunteers!*



## Life As A Foster Child

by Gregory Hamilton

**Living life as a foster child** has been an experience on many levels. It has its advantages, and of course is disadvantages; it also comes with the good, and the bad. Being a foster kid sets people apart from many others, facing challenges many do not have to on a daily basis. Growing up and seeing changes in myself and the world around me I have lived this for myself. As a child that has been placed in many homes I have grown up to see differences in every day life between families and this is what allows me the ability to choose for myself and how I want to live my life. For the most part that has come from being just myself, not trying to "fit in" with the crowd, that is something I am

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**February 2007**

*Wendy Knutson , Editor*

*The Delora Corporation  
dba  
**Foster Family Service**  
&  
**Adoptions by  
Foster Family Service***

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## Life As A Foster Child

by Greg Hamilton

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learning more and more about as the days go by. It is not our fault we are placed into foster care but it is our responsibility to make sure that it is not the fact that we are a foster child that dictates our actions. The ability to choose for ourselves is still within our grasps and we do not need to let life get in the way. The ability comes from knowing that we have the support of people who really care for us, and those people are generally right in front of us. The people who stay more constant in the life of a child in the system most likely are their social workers. I, myself, have had a few and I know of many times where they were there for me. Supporting me in many things such as music, day to day challenges of life, and just about anything I need. For me they have not only been somewhat of a mentor, a coach, but they have become my friends and for that, I am truly grateful. Being 17 and looking forward to emancipation I look back at all the good times I have had with my social workers, going to picnic day, Christmas parties, lunch appointments, being checked out of school just to visit with them and the list goes on. In essence they have been a wonderful support for me and have given me more than I could possibly imagine, many thanks to them and much love!

Being a High School student and a foster child, I have had everything pulling for me to fail and yet there has been success. Many times throughout my career in High School I have come across situations that I had everything telling me to quit and that I was a failure. One such situation was an abrupt change in placement. Through no fault of the system, or my own, I was taken out of the home I was living in and never knowing where I would go from there I called up my best friends parents. From that point on it was all going uphill for me. August 23<sup>rd</sup> of 2005, I was officially placed in the Carpenter certified home and have had a great chance for improving my life. Since that day I have been enrolled in ILP, CYC, and am currently in a college band. I am learning that family is not based off of the words "I love you" but on fellowship and just being around each other. Unconditional love is the basis of the family I am with now, not someone who bases their love upon the actions and tasks of others. Now, in learning what unconditional love is from those around me I am better able to love others unconditionally based on my new found knowledge. This has allowed me to create a

support structure that is both internal and external, that make up my own personal family based on the skills I have gained in understanding true loving relationships. It is not others that tell us who we need to love and be loved by it is up to each and everyone of us to choose for ourselves the people we need in life. True love in life is not often found in the heart of a friend but in the heart of those who truly care about us. We make out of life what we put into it. Make the best out of what your given and don't give up, what truly lies ahead is how we see it not how others do.

*I have known Greg Hamilton since February 1999, when I became his social worker with our Agency. I have watched Greg grow and mature into a fine young man with many talents. Greg has shared some of his thoughts and feelings about being child in foster care in the letter written above.*

*Thank you, Greg for writing and sharing with our foster parents, social workers, and children about your experiences.*

*Bonnie Hoffman,*

*Administrator, Sacramento Office*

### How To Say "I Love You"

There are many ways to say I love you in each language. We found a few general translations to share. Enjoy!

Language	Translation
Dutch	Ik hou van jou
Tahitian	Ua Here Vau Ia Oe
Swahili	Nakupenda
Maori (New Zealand)	kia hoahai
French	Je t'aime
Afrikaans	Ek het jou lief
German	Ich liebe Dich
Italian	ti amo
Italian	ti voglio bene (friendly)
Hawaiian	Aloha wau i'a oe
Sioux (Lakota)	Techihhila
Spanish	Te Amo
Spanish	Te quiero
Portuguese	Eu te amo
Chinese	wo ai ni

## We Are Proud To Say... We Have Great Kids & Great Parents Too!



**Josh K.** of the *Lefteroff CFH*, in Tahoe is taking snowboarding lessons this year! **Go Josh, we are so proud of you!**

**Shirley B.** of the *Anderson CFH* has been studying hard and has brought home some really good grades this quarter. **We always knew you could do it!**

**Andrew H.** of the *Holguin*

*CFH*, has shown noteworthy improvement in his behavior at school and respect toward adults. He often comes home with NO strikes on his behavior chart! Andrew, we can see a difference and are **SO PROUD OF YOU!**

**Steffani C.** of the *Davis CFH* has impressed all of us by making the **Honor Roll** at her school. **Well done Steffani!**

Mail Your Good News to:

[wendyk@fosterfamilyservice.org](mailto:wendyk@fosterfamilyservice.org)

*Remember: We all take turns being the after hours "ON CALL" social worker. Your local office will have the current phone number on their recording.*



## Teach Me!

From [FosteringFamiliesToday.com](http://FosteringFamiliesToday.com)

**Give your foster children the opportunity to teach you something.** Maybe they are interested in skateboarding or roller blading. Invest in some protective gear and go for it. Give them your time, show them you want to be a part of their lives, let them play teacher. Play dumb if you have to. Maybe it is art they are interested in. Take a walk

through the aisles of a local art supply store and grab a few items needed to create a masterpiece that suits their style. Children are so used to listening to adults yammer on about what should be done and how. Imagine the liberation when you say, "I have never tried flan, can you teach me how to make it?" Empowering children to dig deeper into themselves is

a gift you cannot wrap up on a holiday. Whether the children are 5 or 15, give them a chance to share. **Give them the gift to lead.**

*Excerpt from Article:  
**Catalysts for Connection**  
How to make meaningful connections with your foster child.*

*By Michelle Brownlow*

## The Welcome Mat Is Out For...

**The Malone Family**

**The Musil Family**

We are always interested in certifying new homes. If you know of anyone who may be interested have them call their local office.

Potential Foster Parents can call one of our offices or find a [Pre-Application](#) at our website:

[www.fosterfamilyservice.org](http://www.fosterfamilyservice.org)



### Foster Family Service Office Numbers:

Sacramento (916) 487-2111

Placerville (530) 621-2110

Lake Tahoe (530) 544-2111

Lodi (209) 334-2111

Santa Rosa (707) 576-0522

Oroville (530) 533-1576

## Notes From Our Director

2007 is starting with an exciting “BANG,” as we begin increased planning with the counties we take foster child referrals from. As most of our certified families have experienced, during the 2006 calendar year our caseloads dropped by about 15%. This drop is a result of “Child Welfare Redesign,” where all of California’s 58 counties are being required to do business differently. As I’ve shared in past newsletters, this Redesign requires counties to respond to abuse cases more quickly, strive to place children with relatives in lieu of unrelated foster homes, to move children to adoption more quickly, and to accomplish all of this through closer collaboration with community-based organizations.

While our license allows us to work with 17 Northern CA counties, the majority of our placements come from El Dorado, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Butte and Sonoma. Up until 2006 agencies like ours could simply rely on counties to call with referrals on a consistent basis, and placements would frequently be longer-term. What we, along with the other foster family agencies in CA now see is counties establishing focused attention on certain agencies that can offer specific services. Starting in November ’06 the administrators of each office and I have been meeting with leaders from these five counties to determine what areas of focus they would like us to build. Obviously, adoption is one area and we currently have several families and children receiving these services. In fact, this spring we will see our first series of finalized adoptions. In addition, counties want us to further our clinical social work services, so that children with severe emotional, behavioral and educational needs can be maintained in stable homes over time. Our Board of Directors has approved the 2007 vision for Foster Family Service to include expanded therapeutic training to social workers and foster parents, to establish assessment protocol for children in our care, to add psychological and medical/psychiatric services to our program, as well as mentoring for biological families striving to reunify with their children. It is imperative, however, that we all keep in mind our primary objective: to place foster children in safe, nurturing homes. This is something that readers—certified families and staff alike—can be proud of, as we certainly do this well. Our challenge is to continue doing this well while also expanding services to meet county needs.

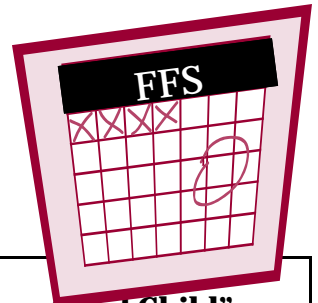
With this vision, I have chosen to hold off on our annual Town Hall meetings until the spring. When we do hold them I will have specific information to report. Until then, please know that we are doing everything possible to continue securing placement referrals while also seeking to expand what we do that can support an overall top-notch program.

*John*

John C. Johnson, M.S.W., Psy.D., Executive Director

## Foster Parent Training

Each office schedules their own trainers and topics. Check with your local office if you have questions about the times or topics. The listing below is what was available at the time we printed this newsletter.



<b>So. Lake Tahoe</b>	Monday, 2/5 5:30 to 8:30	<i>Al Tahoe Boys and Girls Club</i>	<b>“The Parented Child”</b>
<b>Oroville</b>	Tuesday, 2/20 5:30 to 7:30	<i>So. Side Community Center/ Large Conf. Room</i>	<b>“CCL Regs &amp; Prudent Parents Law”</b>
<b>Placerville</b>	Tuesday, 2/27 6:30 to 8:30	<i>Placerville Office</i>	Not available at Press Time! Call your office.
<b>Santa Rosa</b>	Tuesday, 2/13 6:00 to 8:00	<i>Santa Rosa Office</i>	Not available at Press Time! Call your office.
<b>Sacramento</b>	2/12, 2/26 5:30-8:00	<i>A few available this month- check with your worker!</i>	Courts, Grief & Loss, Dysfunctional Childhood Development
<b>Lodi</b>	Thursday, 2/15 6:00 to 8:00	<i>Lodi Office</i>	Not available at Press Time! Call your office.