



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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We All Can Play a Part in Strengthening Families

April Features National Child Abuse Prevention Month and National Volunteer Week

SOMERS POINT, N.J. – In celebration of National Child Abuse Prevention Month and National Volunteer Week (April 18-24), Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Atlantic and Cape May Counties is hosting a three-week Volunteer Advocate training course beginning April 26 from 5 to 9:30 p.m. The training culminates in a swearing-in ceremony on May 17. The 30-hour, 2-day a week course gives individuals the necessary skills to advocate in court on behalf of abused and neglected foster children. Interested individuals should call (609) 601-7800 or visit www.AtlanticCapeCASA.org to apply.

Over 700 children in Atlantic and Cape May County live in foster care due to abusive or neglectful parents. In the same region, an additional 650 cases of substantiated child abuse and neglect referrals are made each year. CASA is the only organization that uses community volunteers to speak in court on behalf of these children, advocating for health, education and the overall well-being of each child. "April is a time to celebrate the important role that communities play in protecting children," said Angela Waters, CASA Executive Director, "Everyone's participation is critical. Focusing on helping our most vulnerable children is the best action our community can take to strengthen families and prevent child abuse, neglect and abandonment."

"Those who want to make a true difference in a child's life should consider becoming a CASA Volunteer Advocate. You don't have to be extremely intelligent or extremely wealthy." says CASA Volunteer Advocate Clare McCarroll of Ocean City, N.J. "You can simply be an average

person who wants to make a difference. Take that small step and transform yourself from being an ordinary person to becoming someone who is extraordinary.”

In support of National Child Abuse Prevention Month, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, Child Welfare Information Gateway and the FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention have created *Strengthening Families and Communities: 2010 Resource Guide*. The guide, designed for service providers who work throughout the community to strengthen families, is available online at www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/res_guide_2010.

For more information about child abuse prevention programs and activities during the month of April and throughout the year, contact CASA of Atlantic and Cape May Counties at (609) 601-7800 or visit www.AtlanticCapeCASA.org.

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