

In Christ's Name

The mission of Love INC is to mobilize local churches
to transform lives and communities in the Name of Christ.

Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD
rejoice. **1 Chronicles 16:10**

Casting for CASAs - by Irene Gallion (Training begins September 13)

Do you have what it takes to walk with a child in need? If only from the movies, most of us can envision the melt down moments of a family falling apart. Perhaps we think of drug or alcohol abuse, maybe violence against others in the family. Perhaps the police are involved in a tense confrontation, fraught with high emotions. Maybe it is as simple as abandonment, walking away from one's family. For thousands of children in Alaska these are the precursors to being plunged into the adult world of courts and law enforcement, a place where it is easy for a kid to become lost.

Now, imagine being the Guardian ad Litem responsible for the well being of 70 such kids. That's a lot, but with the assistance of 28 volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates, or CASAs, they work together to see that children have a voice in the system. Lynn Squires-White has this caseload, and acknowledges that kids who have a CASA get better advocacy. "I am so humbled by what they do for these kids on an on-going basis," says Lynn, "It is amazing to witness that."

The CASA program is looking for 12-15 solid volunteers with a heart for these kids to become a part of the program. It is a secular organization that gives Christians the opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus in a very personal and powerful way.

What does a CASA do?

There is no typical scenario for CASA participation. CASAs are part of a team that can include the Guardian ad Litem, parents, tribes, and social service organizations. They serve as "fire starters" when they see needs that are not being met, and those needs can range from basic necessities to moral support.

In one case, a child was relocated from the bush to Juneau to live with relatives. This child had not met these relatives before, and felt shy about asking for assistance. The CASA was able to determine that aspects of the child's Individual Education Plan were not being met, and that the child did not have adequate clothing for school, and worked with social service agencies and the family to meet those needs.

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Three New Fall Classes

Life Skills Class

This class is a Biblically based course that will teach students how to handle and deal with different life situations. It begins in September at Lemon Creek Correctional Center.

Money Management Class

This course uses Biblical principles to teach students basic financial skills. It begins **September 13** and will meet on Thursday evenings for 8 weeks at St. Brendan's Episcopal Church. A meal will be served at 6:00 P.M. followed by the class from 6:30 – 8:00 P.M. Students will be paired with a mentor who will support and encourage them throughout the class.

Jobs for Life Class

This is a Biblically based class that will teach students how to apply for and successfully obtain employment. Beginning **October 1** and meeting on Monday evenings for 8 weeks, the class will meet at Juneau Christian Center. Class time will be 6:30 – 8:30 P.M. Every student will be paired with a mentor who will support and encourage them during class time and also one other time during the week.

Casting for CASAs continued

In another situation, the child was living with his parents when he got lice. The parents had two other children, no washer or dryer, and no car to make trips to the laundromat. The CASA was able to have a washer/dryer donated, and to get someone to donate the service of hooking it up.

One youth in the system was unable to afford to participate in sports. His CASA canvassed his business connections, and before you knew it had raised enough money for a number of foster children to participate.

Recent changes to law allow older youth to have more of a say in their case, giving them more control, and opening CASA participation to different levels. "Facing Foster Care" is a program that works with older youth, and its motto is, "Nothing about us without us." For one youth in the system, it was extremely important to be a part of the court proceedings against his abuser. The Guardian ad Litem thoroughly reviewed every aspect of the process with him so he could feel as comfortable as possible - from court rules, to timing, to where the youth would sit so that the abuser would not walk up the aisle behind them. The youth chose two people to sit next to him during this challenging time, and one was his CASA.

Why would anyone do this?!??

Lynn acknowledges that "emotional blood and guts" is not for everyone, and the 32-hours of training that will be taking place in September is designed to help people self-evaluate their capabilities. Besides having resilience, a CASA needs to be realistic. "There are no perfect solutions, but there is good enough," says Lynn, "A CASA must not be discouraged by that. Small changes can have a profound effect on quality of life."

A CASA needs to be a team player who does not take things personally, and who is able to facilitate between many different people. They need to have had some sort of relationship with a child, but not necessarily parental. Finally, they need to have a good driving record and vehicle insurance.

Ok, I'm interested. Am I the right fit?

If you have common sense, you've got the building blocks to be a CASA - you don't necessarily need a social services background. "We've got engineers, secretaries, special education teachers, former executives, the Coast Guard, and insurance providers," says Lynn, "A real cross-section of the community."

Among the topics covered in the initial 32 hours of training are law, the history of the program, child development, parental mental health, substance abuse, and Individual Education Plans. The training also provides for self-evaluation and clarification of one's personal values system: As a Christian, could I effectively advocate for a child who was gay, or who's parents were gay? Could I work constructively with clients who are not Christian? How would I handle drug-addicted parents? Is there anything in my past that would impact my service to these kids? It is important to think about this ahead of time, says Lynn. "These kids have been through so much already, it is important not to let them down."

CASAs can choose the age and gender of the kids they work with. They will generally have one case at a time, though more experienced CASAs may have two. The length of involvement depends on a number of factors, such as treatment, orders, hearings, parental termination of rights and adoption, or reunification with parents, but will generally run about four years. There are elements that CASAs may find challenging - many people are uncomfortable visiting parents in jail, or participating in court cases. The Guardian ad Litem can help them through those situations.

While not for everyone, the CASA program provides a hands-on opportunity to improve the life of a child going through a very tough time. Lynn notes that the kids she works with do not know three-fourths of what she does for them, and for her, that is fine. "That means I am not making any more ripples in their lives, and maybe I'm even calming a few."

Love INC begins Relational Ministry

by Irene Gallion

It isn't surprising to many of us who have had the opportunity to work for God's kingdom that, sometimes...sometimes heeding the call is just difficult. It is a little hard to get excited about. God's work can be really satisfying, but sometimes that is hard to see for all the hard work that is in the way. Maybe God does not have to send a giant fish to swallow us whole and then unceremoniously burp us up on our destiny, but then again, maybe He does.

So none of us could blame Wanda Richardson for hesitating to take the new position that had opened up, "Relational Ministry Coordinator." She was interested in the position, and she knew it was desperately

needed, but she thought her husband would be *perfect*. When that didn't work out, it was only after lots of encouragement from the gals in the Clearinghouse (the "big fish" in our story) that compelled her see herself in that position. Wanda says that as she talked to Ann about the job, she got more and more excited. As Ann talked about what the board was looking for in a Relational Ministries Coordinator, Wanda thought, "I can do that!" She says, "The Lord gave me a sense of peace, and I knew."

While the Lord gave Wanda a sense of peace, he gave us an experienced volunteer coordinator! Wanda was the Commodity Senior Food Program Coordinator for the Community Food Bank in Kalispell, MT. One program was the Senior Food delivery program, and required bagging meals and organizing volunteers to deliver the food. The other program was called the "Five Year" program, for the year between when children fell off of "Women, Infants and Children" (a food subsidy program) at age four, and when they got to first grade and could get low cost lunches. Parents in the program often required gentle reminders. Wanda tracked participation and followed up with those who were in jeopardy of losing the benefit.

Wanda is turning that experience toward what will be a massive effort for an organization our size – to make sure that every participant in Love INC's "Jobs for Life" and "Money Management" classes has a mentor to walk with them through the class, and for about a year afterward. With this sort of commitment, Wanda recognizes that it is more important than ever to create the right match between mentor and protégé. When you pick up your application to be a mentor (...and you know you will...) you'll notice that it is asking for a lot of stuff. This is to ensure a good match, and that you have common interests beyond the class and a

love of Christ to help work through the challenging times. As Wanda fills the volunteer pool, her goal is to have enough to see 3 classes ongoing – to rotate teachers and mentors, avoiding burn-out and providing

abundant opportunities for those wishing to participate.

Besides mentors, all of these classes need several teachers to lighten the load and to cover for absences,



Volunteer Testimonial

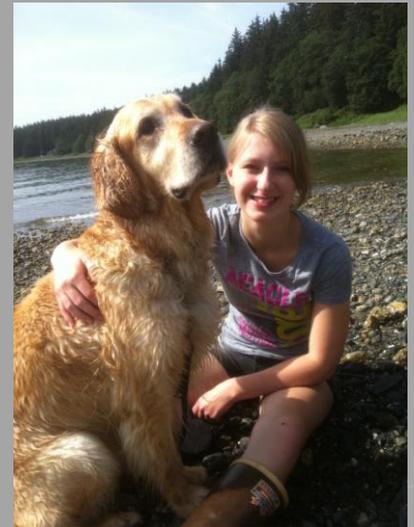
What started as a small donation of travel-sized shampoos and soaps to the Love INC personal care ministry has evolved into a passion of mine. Volunteering with Love INC for the past year has blessed me, maybe ever more so than the clients that have been cared for by this wonderful organization. The need for Christ's love in our community is enormous.

Love INC has taught me how important it is to make Him known and how fulfilling it is to be a servant.

I was shocked when I found out that there are over one hundred homeless teenagers in Juneau. Saralyn Phelps told me that some high school students skip P.E. class because they don't have clean underclothes. She said, "There are some problems we can't solve, but this is not one of them." Love INC started purchasing new underwear for the youth, and the Love INC personal care ministry took off from there. It has blossomed into a ministry that provides basic personal hygiene products to Love INC clients and others in need. A personal care kit brings a small sense of comfort into people's lives.

Working with Jan Jerue in the Love INC food ministry has also been more fun than I had anticipated. It's so inspirational to see how dedicated she is to the work that God has set before her. Packing food boxes for families that are going through difficult times brings a huge amount of joy into my life. I can't thank Love INC enough for showing me the importance of volunteering and allowing me to make a small difference for God.

We always have a need for personal care items and food. Every donation counts, so your help would be greatly appreciated. For those of you who travel frequently, the hotel soaps, shampoos, and lotions are needed as well. You can bring your donations to the Chapel By The Lake.



Paperless?
 Yes, we are moving in a new
 direction – converting to
e-newsletters in the near
 future. Please send us an
 email to receive these updates:
loveinc@alaska.net

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