

LOCAL NEWS

CASA features Rose as volunteer of the month

CONTRIBUTED BY FLORA BEACH
BURLINGAME

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Mariposa County was established in 2004 to serve the needs of Mariposa County children who, for their own protection, have been removed from their homes and placed in foster care.

The goals of CASA of Mariposa County are to prevent these abused, neglected and abandoned children from becoming lost in the juvenile dependency system and to help find them a safe, permanent home as soon as possible.

To achieve this, CASA of Mariposa County recruits, trains, supervises and supports community volunteers to serve as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and mentors. The CASA volunteer is often the only person in the courtroom who has visited the child consistently, getting to know him or her as an individual, not a case, and who really understands the child's needs.

Don Rose's introduction to the CASA program came out of the blue. After his retirement from the Mariposa County Unified School District, he sometimes observed court and on one such day, during recess, the bailiff approached him saying, "The judge wants to see you after dismissal." Rose knew both Mariposa County Superior Court judges personally, having taught their children and grandchildren at Woodland School, so his thoughts weren't so much "Whoa, what have I done," as "what could Parrish possibly want?"

In fact, both Judges Wayne Parrish and Dana Walton cornered him in the hall later that day. They suggested that he would be a great candidate for either CASA or the Juvenile Justice Commission.

"I'd only been retired for six months," Rose said, "and besides the visits to the court sessions simply for my own interest, I was sprucing up our 11 acres and loving it." He wasn't sure he wanted to commit himself elsewhere. Still, he had worked with young people for years, and here was an opportunity to assist children with critical needs. Of the two volunteer opportunities being offered, CASA was the most appealing. "It meant direct contact with kids," he said, "which wouldn't necessarily be the case if I opted to serve on the Juvenile Justice Commission."

Rose soon began the 30 to 35 hours of pre-service training required of every CASA volunteer. He was about to complete the program when a young man, who'd been abused by a family member, was placed in a foster home and was in need of an advocate. Rose seemed the ideal selection. He was sworn in individually by the judge ahead of the planned ceremony for his class and immediately began his first assignment.

"There were several things appealing about the case," Rose said. He was asked by the young man to find

a close family member he hadn't been in touch with for a number of years, and the boy also wanted to know the whereabouts of his mother's grave. His parents were divorced and all he knew was his mother had recently died. "I enjoyed the investigative part of it," Rose said, "and became very fond of the young man I was assigned to." Through diligent detective work, Rose was able to locate the lost relative living in another part of the state and arrange for them to meet. He also found the cemetery where the mother was buried. "I was

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The foster parents eventually took legal guardianship of the young man which meant CASA was no longer involved. But Rose, like many volunteer advocates, has continued his contact with the family, assisting whenever he is needed.

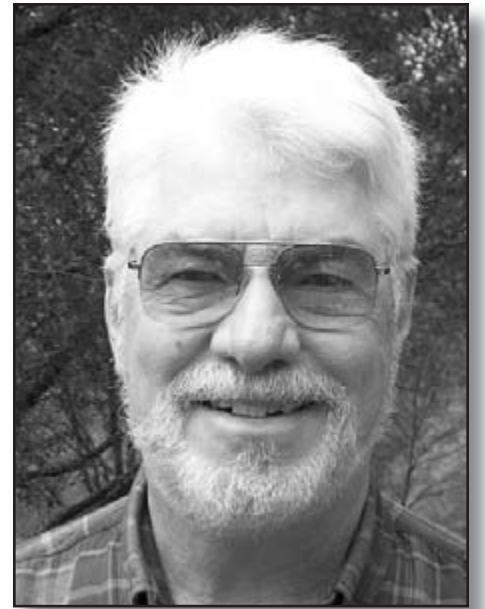
Janet Kottman, Executive Director of CASA, who did not know Rose prior to his training as an advocate, considers him, "a gift from the judges." She recognized Rose's talents and his multitude of contacts in the community and asked him to join the staff as volunteer coordinator. "We had just received one year's worth of additional grant funding to hire another part-time staff person," she said "Our fiscal officer, Linda Myers, and I were working exhausting hours, so it was a relief to be able to bring another part-timer on board."

Though Rose and his wife, Karen, have lived in Mariposa for over 30 years, he has deep roots in Ventura County. His great grandparents settled in Ojai in 1878, and his grandfather was sheriff for Ventura County, later serving as United States Marshal in the Southern California District, based in Los Angeles. Law careers continued to run in the family, Rose's mother being one of the first policewomen in Pasadena.

Rose, however, chose education for his life's work. "I taught kindergarten," he said, "and loved it." But he and Karen wanted to raise their two children in a small, rural community and began looking around for a new location. Just by coincidence, he received a phone call from the principal of Mariposa Middle School (at the time Mariposa Junior High School) asking him to come teach remedial reading and English. Rose had

taught kindergarten with the principal's wife in Ventura County.

"We checked out the area and decided this was the place," Rose said. He took the job and stayed at the junior high for two years. Yet to him it wasn't as much fun as teaching kindergarten, so when an opening came up at Woodland School, he applied. "At first the principal thought I was joking," Rose said, "It's unusual to find men teaching five-year-olds. When I told him I had a degree in Early Childhood Education, he realized I was serious and I got the job."



DON ROSE

tion," Rose said, "But I go beyond that. All three of us on staff give it everything we've got."

Rose still hopes to spend some retirement time on his 11 acres, yet admits to doing the right thing by becoming involved with CASA, saying, "Even though I claim to have been dragged into CASA by the judges and Janet, I truly find it a very satisfying occupation of my time."

Rose would like to see other members of the Mariposa and eastern Madera County communities become involved. "I would encourage anyone who cares about kids to give me a call at the CASA office at 742-4206. I would be happy to provide you with information and/or an application to become a volunteer."

The CASA office is located at the corner of Highway 140 and Eighth Street. Those interested in volunteering as an advocate, or board member, or who would like to give of your time and talents in some other way, can contact the CASA office. If you would like to assist with much needed funding, donations can be sent to: CASA of Mariposa County, P.O. Box 73, Mariposa, CA 95338.

Besides volunteering as an advocate, Rose's time as a CASA staffer is spent working with a "sophisticated" data base called CASATracker that records a myriad of information required to be kept by the California Administrative Office of the Courts and the National CASA Association. Rose insures that a background and DMV checks are completed on all aspiring volunteers, keeps a record of all hours and miles donated to the program by CASA volunteers, and reminds the advocates of upcoming court hearings for their assigned child(ren). The reminders also urge the advocate to complete their court report, so it can be disseminated to the judge, the dependency attorneys and their clients, County Counsel, and the Child Welfare Services supervisor and case social worker.

"The board of directors for CASA allocated funding for three and a half hours per day for four days a week for the volunteer coordinator posi-

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