

Dear Friends of CASA of Shawnee County-

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month- a time when caring people go the extra mile to raise awareness about abuse and neglect within their community. At CASA of Shawnee County, we work to prevent abuse and neglect every month of the year! It is important to remember that children who experience abuse or neglect don't simply leave their struggles behind as they grow up. Without the focused support they need to heal, they carry that trauma into adulthood, shaping their lives and the communities around them. CASA Advocates provide abused and neglected children with guidance and advocate for their every need.

CASA Volunteer Advocates are doing this powerful work every day for years, helping those in need find hope and healing. One such **success story** began in the early 1990s with CASA Advocacy and continues today, as this individual has grown into an incredibly successful adult running his own business.

Chris Martin was born in 1975, the same year his parents decided to split up. His mother was involved in drugs and his step-father was a very heavy drinker. His family struggles really started around the age of 9 and he was the oldest sibling; **the protector** of his little siblings and his mother.

There were many negative interactions at home... running away to feel safe, **sleeping at the park** to get away, and living in constant fear. But everything changed the night **he protected his mother**. Chris ended up covered in wounds, bruises, cuts, and even bite marks on his shoulder. His nearby friend and her father, a local pastor, called the police immediately. That day, everything changed, and Chris was now in foster care. In the first year, Chris was placed at the emergency shelter 13 times. He learned quickly to fight for his own life while placed in, **"one of the single most scary places he lived besides being hit on at his home"**.

Chris was constantly moved around between the ages of 9 and 18, when he would eventually age out of foster care. **42 Placements. 8 High Schools. 1 CASA Advocate.**



“
...pretty bad when
you're less afraid
to live on the
street than in a
boys home, shelter,
or at your own
house
”

Chris had an INCREDIBLE CASA Advocate named Dave, who entered Chris' life during his Sophomore year of High School. Chris constantly tried to push him away; he viewed Dave as just another nosy guy from the state.

**through laughter...*

“ He (Dave) wouldn't go away... he kept coming back and kept explaining what his role as the CASA worker really was"... “He showed me compassion, he showed me trust & honor... things I knew nothing about”



On one of young Chris' worst days, he was pulled with no notice from the town of Pittsburg and brought back to Topeka. Chris did not get to tell his friends goodbye or speak with his coaches. CASA Advocate Dave figured out where Chris was placed and went to visit him. He sat with him all night, **to just be there**. Dave let Chris know...

“ You've got 2 choices, be sad & miserable, or you can go forward... I can promise if you go forward, I'll be there with you. (taking Chris' hand...) Give me your hand, I'm gonna be there for you! ”

Today, Chris is **happily married** with children and grandchildren. He and his wife **own “Hempful Farms”** and are actively educating and promoting awareness for the medical benefits of CBD. He has also **created a nonprofit “Zonkamiles”** to help abused & neglected children as well as non-violent drug offenders! Not all stories end up like Chris' because of the incredible cycle of generational abuse. Chris had a CASA Advocate that cared, guided, and watched out for him!

Your gift will support comprehensive training for volunteers, public awareness of the needs of abused & neglected children and in-depth support for CASA Volunteers in our community.

CASA of Shawnee County currently serves **13%** of the children needing an advocate. The other **87%** of abused & neglected children are waiting for someone to stand up and say, **I am for the child**.

It takes **\$1,500** to provide essential support/advocacy for one child in need of care; and **\$1,300** recruits, trains, and prepares a volunteer for a case. **One Child/One Champion** – is this YOU?

Sincerely,

Molly Petric

Executive Director, Board of Directors, and
CASA of Shawnee County Staff