

## The Honorable David Wecht swore-in last class of CASA volunteers as presiding judge

Pittsburgh, PA, December 15, 2010: The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program of Allegheny County is proud to announce the graduation of our 45<sup>th</sup> class of volunteers. Their swearing-in ceremony was held on Tuesday, December 14, 2010 at 12:30pm in Children's Court room 4029. The swearing-in ceremony was presided over by Family Division judges of Allegheny County's Court of Common Pleas. Judge David Wecht administered this ceremony, his last swearing-in ceremony as presiding judge of the Family Division. Volunteers took an oath to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children involved within the child welfare system.

Class 45 went through over 40-hours of extensive training to become CASA volunteers. CASA volunteers are appointed by Family Division judges to extreme cases of child abuse and neglect. Through un-biased investigation, CASA volunteers provide invaluable information to the courts about the welfare of children in the system. This work ensures that children involved within the system receive individualized attention that they deserve.

Representing various Pittsburgh communities, backgrounds and ethnicities, this class of advocates, one of the most diverse classes in CASA of Allegheny County history, will aid in assisting the 52 children currently waiting for an assigned advocate. The average period a child spends waiting for a CASA volunteer is 140 days. Wasting no time, most of the sworn advocates from class 45 will have cases by the New Year. Currently we have 210 volunteers who are trained and advocating for kids.

CASA's mission is to ensure that every child has a safe, supportive and permanent home by providing volunteer advocacy for the best interests of abused and neglected children within the child welfare system. Every day, CASA works to expand community activism and awareness regarding dependent children and to promote a child welfare system that is child-focused in its politics and decision making.

Please contact Daren Ellerbee at CASA (412-594-3606 x207 or [dellerbee@pgh-casa.org](mailto:dellerbee@pgh-casa.org)) or visit [www.pgh-casa.org](http://www.pgh-casa.org) for more information about class #45 and the Court Appointed Special Advocate program. If you would like a comment from Judge Wecht please contact his Administrative Assistant Linda Alt at 412-350-6801. Photos are available upon request.