

Press Release

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CASA of Allegheny County Executive Director Honored by the Pittsburgh Business Times

Melissa Protzek, Esq. Named 2010 Women in Business Awardee

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Pittsburgh, PA, March 9, 2010: The Court Appointed Special Advocate program of Allegheny County is pleased to announce that our Executive Director, Melissa Protzek, Esq., has been chosen as one of 25-winners of the Pittsburgh Business Times' 2010 Women in Business Awards. Ms. Protzek will be recognized at an award ceremony which will be held on Monday, March 15, 2010 at the Westin Convention Center Downtown Pittsburgh.

Ms. Protzek has been involved with CASA since 1996; she initially started as an advocate-volunteer and took the helm as Executive Director in 2004. In addition to holding degrees in Philosophy and Political Science from Penn State University, Ms. Protzek earned a Jurist Doctorate from The University of Pittsburgh School of Law. Because of her work in improving the child welfare system, Ms. Protzek was named one of *Pittsburgh Magazine's* "40 under 40" in 2004 and was named the 2006 Woman of the Year by the Pitt Law Women's Association and the Allegheny County Bar Association. She is also the winner of the 2010 Kappa Alpha Theta Program Director of the Year award which will be presented to her at the National CASA Annual Conference in Atlanta, GA.

Daniel Pipitone, CASA's graphic designer for the past six years, nominated Ms. Protzek for this award. He said that he can name dozens of reasons why Ms. Protzek is deserving of this recognition; "but seeing CASA's impact on the lives of kids across Allegheny County paints a true picture of Ms. Protzek's influence on her organization's goal – to ensure that every child has a safe, supportive, and permanent home."

When asked to share her thoughts on being nominated for The Women in Business Award, Ms. Protzek stated "When I began working in the nonprofit field 14 years ago, I was naïve to the business acumen required to run a successful organization. Even today, I find myself explaining to young lawyers and young professionals that, as a nonprofit director, I run a business. It just so happens that our business is not profit driven, but mission driven. It is that mission that guides all of my business decisions."

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.

For more information about CASA of Allegheny County please contact Daren Ellerbee at (412-594-3606 x207 or dellerbee@pgh-casa.org) or visit www.pgh-casa.org.

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