



GEORGIA COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES, INC.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SOWEGA CASA Receives *Innovative Program Award of Excellence* from Georgia CASA

Atlanta, Apr. 6, 2009 – The SOWEGA CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) program, based in Americus and serving Lee, Macon, Schley, Stewart, Sumter and Webster counties, has received the 2009 *Innovative Program Award of Excellence* from Georgia CASA. Brad Ray, Executive Director of SOWEGA CASA, accepted the award on behalf of the program at the Georgia CASA State Conference on Sat., Mar. 28 in Atlanta.

SOWEGA CASA was chosen as the winner of the *Innovative Program Award of Excellence*, by a selection committee of the Georgia CASA Board of Directors, for its vision in restructuring the program and making significant strides to stream-line staff, increase the number of active CASA volunteers and serve more children in care. The program, which began in 2002, was an independent nonprofit that moved under the umbrella of Georgia Southwestern University (GSW) in 2006. After evaluating the structure of the program under GSW, the university and the CASA advisory board made a strategic and innovative investment to restructure the CASA program in a way that would maximize its operations - back to an independent nonprofit.

In 2008, SOWEGA CASA was restructured, and today the program has tripled its number of active CASA volunteers and serves 90% of the children in care. The CASA advisory board became the board of directors for the independent nonprofit. Faye Frazier, Board Chair, said, “I am excited about SOWEGA CASA being named to receive the 2009 *Innovative Program Award of Excellence*. We are blessed with dedicated staff and volunteers who work diligently to accomplish the goals of CASA.” The program has implemented ongoing in-service trainings for volunteers, has consistent community awareness and involvement, a balanced budget, makes continuous requests for new funding, and has a staff that is energized to work together to secure the long-term stability of the program.

All of these attributes and more made SOWEGA CASA very deserving of the 2009 *Innovative Program Award of Excellence* from Georgia CASA.

SOWEGA CASA, Inc., is a member of the National CASA Association and an affiliate of Georgia CASA, Inc., which develops and supports CASA programs throughout Georgia. Through individualized attention, CASA volunteers advocate for the best interests of abused, neglected and abandoned children. Bringing urgency to a child’s needs, both in and out of a courtroom, CASA volunteers promote safety, permanency and well-being through independent recommendations. Last year, over 1,870 CASA volunteers served over 8,760 children in Georgia. Currently, 48 CASA programs are located across Georgia, serving 126 counties. For more information about SOWEGA CASA, email info@sowegacasa.org or call 229-931-4488. For more information about other CASA programs in the state, visit www.gacasa.org or call 404-874-2888 / 800-251-4012.

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MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE ASSOCIATION