

## SUPPORT CHILDREN & FAMILIES IN LOUISIANA BY...

### **PROTECTING OUR MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN**

In 1992, recognizing the vulnerability of, and need for services for abused and neglected children, Congress passed the Victims of Child Abuse Act and since 1994 has appropriated funding for the same. This funding provides for, among other things, CASA Volunteers who advocate in court for the best interests of abused and neglected children, and Children's Advocacy Centers, where forensic interviews of children alleged to have been sexually and severely physically abused are performed. Since that time, the number of abused and neglected children in Southwest Louisiana, as well as nationally has continued to increase, while funding for these vital programs has at best remained static, and in some cases been reduced. Funding for Children's Advocacy Centers nationally has remained static at \$19 million for some time, despite the fact that we saw 59 more children in 2014 than we did in 2010. Funding for CASA nationally has gone from \$15 million in FY2010 to \$6 million in FY2015, despite the fact that in SWLA, the number of children in foster care at any given time has increased by 100 over the same period (299 children in FY2010, 410 children in FY2015). We appreciate Congressman Boustany's efforts to markup CASA to \$12 million for FY2016, but the House Appropriations Committee passed the Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) spending bill (HR 2578) on May 19 without an increase above the current \$6 million level for CASA or the \$19 million for CAC's. The full House in turn passed the CJS spending bill on June 3. However, the Senate Appropriations Committee passed its version of HR 2578 on June 16 and included funding for CASA at \$12 million and CAC's at \$20 million, but of course it has not yet made it to the Senate floor.

### **THE CURRENT PICTURE & ALARMING STATISTICS...**

- In the five parish area of SWLA, there are over 400 children in foster care at any given time.
- In 2014, the Children's Advocacy Center in Lake Charles, LA performed forensic interviews for 526 children alleged to have been sexually and severely physically abused. In the state of Louisiana, 4,571 children were interviewed.
- Since the Children's Advocacy Center opened in 1996, supported by funding from the Victims of Child Abuse Act, forensic interviews have been performed for over 6,000 children alleged to have been sexually or severely physically abused.
- Studies and statistics show that without intervention, abused and neglected children are much more likely than other children to develop addictions, have health problems, become incarcerated or become homeless. The outcomes are not good, and the costs of services for these problems far outweigh the cost of the interventions to prevent them.

### **AS YOUNG PEOPLE, OUR HUMBLE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE...**

- Continued vigilance to ensure that the markups by the Senate Appropriations Committee for FY2016 (\$12 million for CASA, \$20 million for CAC's) and beyond are not reduced.
- Continued awareness of the numbers and needs of abused and neglected children and the need for services for these children.
- Become a Champion for Vulnerable Children by holding your meetings at (and visiting) CASA and/or Children's Advocacy Center to raise awareness about child abuse.
- Ongoing support for continued funding for the Victims of Child Abuse Act in FY2016 and beyond.