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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Utah's Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Receives National Grant to Raise Awareness of Salt Lake County's Most Vulnerable Children

Salt Lake City, UT – Utah CASA has been awarded a \$38,000 Branding Campaign grant from the National Court Appointed Special Advocate/Guardian ad Litem (CASA/GAL) Association for Children. Funds will be used to tailor a national public awareness campaign about child abuse and neglect for local markets, and to distribute the campaign.

There are nearly 950 CASA/GAL programs nationwide, including 48 state offices that recruit, train, and support volunteers. These volunteers advocate in court for the best interests of children who have experienced abuse or neglect. Their advocacy assists judges in making the most well-informed decisions for each child.

National CASA/GAL has developed a broad-based national campaign, "Change a Child's Story,"™ The campaign is told from the point of view of children who have experienced abuse or neglect. The campaign shows the importance to these children of having a volunteer by their side to advocate for their best interests.

In Salt Lake County, the campaign will run on billboards, local radio stations, and on social media platforms beginning mid-August and will run through late fall.

"The CASA program allows community members a unique opportunity to interact in these children's lives and to be a part of the solution. Consistent adult support can help to counteract the abuse and neglect the children have endured. For Utahans who are wondering what they can do to support children involved in the child welfare system, becoming a CASA volunteer and speaking up for their best interests will provide these vulnerable children with much-needed support. We are grateful for this funding

opportunity which will increase awareness and recruitment of CASA volunteers in our most populous and diverse county,” said Melanie Speechly, Utah’s statewide CASA Program Administrator.

The “Change a Child’s Story”™ campaign was developed with R&R Partners, a cause-driven marketing and advocacy agency that has worked on prominent social issues campaigns. R&R Partners conducted focus groups across the country to ensure the campaign would resonate with target audiences while being sensitive to the perceptions of those with experience growing up in foster care.

The federal grant funds distributed through National CASA/GAL are provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, US Department of Justice, as authorized under the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990. In 2018, National CASA was awarded nearly \$10 million in federal grants. For more information, contact Heather Allen, Third District CASA Program Coordinator (801) 578-3962, heatheraa@utcourts.gov.

About Utah CASA

The Utah Office of Guardian ad Litem and CASA are a member of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association and a part of the Utah Courts. We train and support community volunteers who are appointed to work on cases with Guardian ad Litem attorneys to represent the best interests of dependent, abused and neglected children in Utah.

Our Vision is to be leaders in child advocacy and to provide the highest level of representation to children and their best interests. Our advocates ensure that our most vulnerable children are not overlooked when involved in an overburdened system. Last year in Utah, 791 volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates served 1,616 children. These advocates donated 35,745 hours on behalf of the children they served.

For more information or to submit a volunteer application, please visit www.UtahCASA.org.

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