



Alaska State Legislature
Representative Les Gara

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Friday "Forgotten Children" Rally
Achieving Foster Youth Success Through Awareness

(Anchorage) - Friday Alaskans will rally in support of Alaska's 2,000 foster youth, and the need to move forward to ensure they share the same opportunities and chances in life as all other Alaskans. "It's a call for improving the chances we offer youth to **succeed, so they can share** in the opportunities all Alaskans should share in. We have to do better than a system that **sends** more foster youth to jail than to college," said Rep. [Les Gara](#) (D-Anchorage). The rally is organized by volunteers who provide crucial support to foster youth, Alaska's Court Appointed Special Advocates. The press release by Friends for Alaska CASA follows.

Speakers will include foster youth advocate Amanda Metivier, founder of the statewide foster youth advocacy group Facing Foster Care in Alaska, Rep. Gara, and a number of leaders in this area. CASA volunteer Beaty Graves will be recognized for her outstanding work with children and youth in our community. Organizer Ryan Zinn's contact information is included here.

Last week the Legislature took big steps forward, and passed the [most significant foster care reforms in a decade](#). The reforms are aimed at increasing youth success. Legislation by Rep. Gara, and bi-partisan reform efforts included in the budget, are awaiting review by the Governor. The efforts, pushed by Metivier and Gara over the past two years, passed with the help of strong bi-partisan support in the legislature.

Key supporters of these efforts included, among many others, Sen. Bettye Davis (D-Anchorage), Rep. Nancy Dahlstrom (R-Eagle River), Rep. Bob Herron (D-Bethel), Rep. Mike Hawker (R-Anchorage), and Rep. Beth Kerttula (D-Juneau).

For more information, contact Rep. Gara or aide David Theriault at (907) 465-2647 or at Representative_Les_Gara@legis.state.ak.us.

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MEDIA ALERT

**FRIENDS OF ALASKA CASA "FORGOTTEN CHILDREN" RALLY
RAISES AWARENESS FOR AREA FOSTER YOUTH**

What:

A rally to raise awareness of Anchorage's foster children and youth and celebrate workers in the child protection network that supports them. A dramatic visual demonstration comes to life as two dozen life-sized "children" will appear at the Town Square Park. These figures represent Anchorage's children and youth who are affected by abuse and neglect – and subsequently placed in foster care.

Supreme Court Justice Morgan Christen, Representative Les Gara, Director of the Office of Public Advocacy Rachel Levitt, Cook Inlet Tribal Council President Gloria O'Neil, Mayor Dan Sullivan, and others will speak at the event. The Office of Public Advocacy will present the Carol Olson Memorial Award to CASA volunteer Beaty Graves for her outstanding work with children and youth in our community.

When:

Friday, April 30th at 12pm

Where:

Anchorage Town Square Park

Who:

The rally will be led by the non-profit organization Friends of Alaska CASA (FAC), which supports Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs in Alaska. In Anchorage, the Office of Public Advocacy recruits, trains and supervises volunteer advocates who stand up for abused and neglected foster youth and help them find safe, permanent homes. In 2009, the Anchorage CASA program included 129 CASA volunteers advocating for 341 children in the Municipality of Anchorage.

Why:

As part of National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month, Friends of Alaska CASA is joining a national crusade as communities across the country stand up for abused and neglected children in foster care. National sponsors of the Forgotten Children campaign are the Dr. Phil Foundation, the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation and Jewelers for Children.

Visuals/Photo Opportunities:

Over a dozen life-sized "children" adorning the Town Square Park with messages from current and former foster youth.

For further information:

Please contact Friends of Alaska CASA Executive Director Ryan Zinn at 907-947-6046 or ryan@friendsofalaskacasa.org. For more information on Friends of Alaska CASA please visit www.friendsofalaskacasa.org.

About Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

CASA is the only volunteer organization that empowers everyday citizens as officers of the court. In an overburdened social welfare system, abused and neglected children often slip through the cracks among hundreds of current cases. CASA volunteers change that. Appointed by judges, CASA volunteers typically handle just one case at a time—and commit to staying on that case until the child is placed in a safe, permanent home. Judges, attorneys, child welfare workers and parents overwhelmingly report that volunteers make a difference with the children they serve.

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