



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Tracey Heisler, Executive Director  
Phone: (908) 689-5515  
Email: [tracey@casashaw.org](mailto:tracey@casashaw.org)

### **CASA SHaW's Innovative Traveling Tutor Program Is Bringing Results To Children In Need**

**Washington, NJ (June 13)** – We all know that children in foster care have a rough go of things. One of the many challenges they face is the academic deficits that often come with this experience – changing schools, the exposure to trauma which can impact learning, multiple foster placements, and the stress of being removed from their homes can all impact a child's academic outcomes. Nationally, only 50% of children in foster care graduate from high school, and 68% have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Court Appointed Special Advocates of Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren Counties (CASA SHaW) is a local nonprofit that provides advocates in court for children living in foster care. Seeing first hand the academic struggles the children faced and recognizing the need for a good education later in life, the organization created an innovative tutoring program, known affectionately as "The Traveling Tutors," which has seen positive results.

"We recognized early on that even if we found tutors, getting the kids to them because of transportation barriers was going to be difficult. So, with funding from The Children's Hope Initiative, we started the "Traveling Tutor" program, CASA volunteers with an educational background who travel to where the children are in order to provide them with academic support services. They are giving a variety of students in our community the tools and confidence to succeed later in life," said Tracey Heisler, Executive Director of CASA SHaW.

Since the program's inception, CASA SHaW has provided tutors to more than 40 children. Every student with a tutor has been promoted to the next grade level without anyone being retained. As the academic year wraps up, CASA SHaW has a goal to expand tutoring services to even more students in the tri-counties during the upcoming school year. One unexpected benefit has been that the tutors have become a source of support for parents too, modeling how to support their children's academic needs.

"The trauma these children face often creates mental and academic barriers that impact the way they learn," said Heisler. "Our tutors have used innovative strategies such as doing Tai Chi as an incentive, focusing lessons on areas where the child has a particular interest, like the weather, and personalizing lesson plans to the child to help them stay engaged," Heisler said. "It's been so gratifying to see their interest and confidence in learning grow."



One child participating in the tutoring program was initially reading at a 3rd grade level and within four years was getting As and Bs in high school physics with support from the tutor. Another student was two years behind in school, and, with the help of the tutor, rejoined peers by getting back to grade level. “A situation like this one can make all the difference for a child,” says Heisler. “Imagine how it must have felt to go from being two years behind in school to rejoining age-appropriate peers. As competency and achievement are built, so is a renewed sense of ‘I can do this’ for kids for whom school is a struggle.”

For more information about CASA SHaW and its child advocacy mission, visit [www.casashaw.org](http://www.casashaw.org).

CASA of Somerset, Hunterdon, and Warren Counties is part of a statewide network of community-based, non-profit programs that recruit, screen, train and supervise volunteers to “Speak Up for a Child” removed from home due to abuse or neglect. CASA is the only program in New Jersey that uses trained volunteers to work one-on-one with children, ensuring that each one gets the services needed and achieves permanency in a safe, nurturing home. To find a local CASA program in your county, visit [www.casaofnj.org](http://www.casaofnj.org).

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