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## **RETIRED TEACHER HONORED FOR VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT TO COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES (CASA).**

When 79 year-old Harriet "Happy" Curts left the classroom she didn't walk away from children. Instead, the longtime Monroe County teacher found a new way to use her talents. In 2000, Curts began volunteering for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). The group serves as a voice for abused and neglected children. Curts has represented 14 children over the past 8 years. State leaders recently recognized Curts for her volunteer work as part of the Indiana Retired Teachers Association Appreciation Day.



While Curts was not able to attend the October 9<sup>th</sup> ceremony due to health reasons, she did not let that stop her from encouraging other teachers to become advocates. Curts' daughter, Dr. Janet Clark, accepted the award from Chief Justice Randall T. Shepard and read a statement from Harriet about the value of serving as a CASA. Dr. Clark is pictured here with Chief Justice Shepard (on the left) and Indiana Retired Teachers Association Executive Director Andy Thomas.

Guardian ad Litem/Court Appointed Special Advocate (GAL/CASA) is a mostly volunteer program run independently in 67 Indiana counties. Advocates are trained volunteers that make recommendations to the court about what may be best for a child in foster care. The advocates play a role in finding a safe and permanent home for the child. The Indiana Legislature and the Department of Child Services provides funding for the statewide programs. The Indiana Supreme Court distributes that funding and provides support to the program through its Division of State Court Administration.

The Indiana Retired Teachers Association is partnering with the Indiana Supreme Court to recruit volunteer advocates. Both organizations are encouraging retired teachers to donate their time to children in foster care. After years of service in the classroom, teachers have insight into the emotional and educational needs of children

The Supreme Court is also launching the "Each One Reach One" campaign in an effort to recruit volunteer advocates. In 2007, nearly 7,000 Indiana children were represented by an advocate. However, another 3,000 children remain on the waiting list. To learn more about the program call 800-542-0813 or visit our website [courts.IN.gov/galcasa](http://courts.IN.gov/galcasa).

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