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**NATIONAL CASA ASSOCIATION LAUNCHES VIVID DISPLAY
OF SUPPORT FOR “FORGOTTEN CHILDREN”**

*National Mall Event Gives Voice to the Growing Population of Foster Children;
National Study Reports the Frustrations of Foster Youth*

WASHINGTON, DC (May 19, 2008) – Every day on average another 850 children quietly enter the nation’s foster care system under a veil of confidentiality, commonly due to suspected abuse or neglect. A dramatic event launching today, and a new study, aims to give voice to these “Forgotten Children” – while still preserving their privacy.

Since underaged foster children cannot appear for themselves, life-sized, cut-out photos will take their place in the shadows of the Washington Monument on the National Mall this week – at the pace of 850 per day. These surrogates will bear messages from foster children, all drawn from a study that captures the voices of 100 foster youth across the nation.

The event and study launch an ongoing project, “**Forgotten Children: Foster Children Take a Stand,**” led by **The National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association** and made possible by the generous support of Title Sponsors Freddie Mac Foundation and the Dr. Phil Foundation. Additional support has been provided by Casey Family Programs, Hewitt and Foster Club.

Michael Piraino, chief executive officer of National CASA hopes the event will raise awareness regarding the nation’s 513,000 foster youth in need of support. Last year, CASA’s advocates represented 225,000 children, but that’s only half the youth in the system.

”As the event grows throughout the week, the visual of the thousands of children will help raise awareness to the struggles of foster children across the country,” Piraino said. “One foster youth that we spoke with said that moving from foster home to foster home they often feel homeless. CASA volunteers play an important role to find safe and permanent placements for these forgotten children.”

With a network of 900 programs nationwide, CASA recruits, trains and supervises volunteer adult advocates who help get foster children into safe, permanent homes. The organization’s 50,000 volunteers aim to counter some daunting statistics: On average, foster children spend more than two years in the child welfare system, and can be moved as often as 15 times, wreaking havoc on their education, friendships and sense of belonging.

Findings from the national study, to be released later this week, will give the nation a better understanding of the personal struggles children face in foster care. Some of the most potent and telling responses recorded in the study will appear on signs held by the “children” on the Mall: “Foster children should be seen and heard,” “We all have the highest potential,” and “My CASA is always there for me.”

In the words of one youth: “If you want the foster care system to get better, if you have compassion in your heart, don’t stop doing whatever you can to make it better — even if it’s just by providing an ear. Be someone we can talk to. You are the one that can create the change.”

CASA volunteers help to alleviate the constant upheaval faced by foster children. Research shows that children with a CASA volunteer are substantially less likely to spend a long time in long-term foster care, defined as three years or longer. When a CASA volunteer is involved, a child is less likely to move from home to home, and they are 95 percent less likely to re-enter the foster care system.

“Broader awareness, more volunteers, and additional financial support are needed to expand this vital advocacy for all children in need,” Piraino said. “These children deserve more from us as a nation.”

The “Forgotten Children: Foster Children Take a Stand” campaign will continue throughout the next year, helping to raise awareness on a local level for CASA programs across the nation.

To learn more about National CASA and the “Forgotten Children” campaign, and how you can help bring stability to the life of an abused or neglected child, visit www.nationalcasa.org.

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About National CASA

In 1977 a Seattle judge, concerned over making decisions about abused and neglected children's lives without sufficient information, conceived the idea of using trained community volunteers to speak for the best interests of these children in court. So successful was this program, that judges across the country began utilizing citizen advocates. Today, more than 950 CASA/GAL offices operate in 49 states, with more than 50,000 men and women serving as CASA/GAL volunteers.