

Standing Up for Children

Easton resident Susan Piggott was named Caroline County “Volunteer of the Year” and received a Governor’s Service Award

by Caryn Sagal
Community contributor

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Caroline, Inc. Volunteer Advocate Susan Piggott was named “Volunteer of the Year” by the Caroline Human Services Council “for making an outstanding contribution to Communities that Support Family Life.”

In recognition of her efforts, on Nov. 4 she was presented with a Governor’s Service Award from the Governor’s Office on Service and Volunteerism for “making a significant volunteer contributions to the life and health of the State and its people during 2012.”

A former speech-language pathologist, special educator and principal in Louisiana and the District of Columbia, Piggott had been an advocate for children for 35 years.

“The idea of volunteer advocacy was a natural step for me,” she said. “When I moved to the Eastern Shore in 2009, the first thing I did was call CASA of Caroline, and they welcomed me into their outstanding group of advocates.”

“My training was stringent and inspiring, and I couldn’t wait for my first case. When I was assigned to a child who had been severely abused, I had a moment of doubt, wondering whether I could do this job. But when I met the child, I quickly realized how much she needed me. She gave me the courage I needed to stand up for her, and I never looked back.”

Now having served as a Court Appointed Special Advocate for five children (in two families), Piggott describes the process as follows:

“CASA volunteering is like un-



Photo courtesy of Caryn Sagal

About CASA

Maryland CASA Association is the state organization for Maryland’s Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Programs. The organization works to ensure every victim of child abuse and neglect their right to grow up in safe and permanent homes. To find out more, visit marylandcasa.org

aveling a mystery. Over the course of months and sometimes years, the advocate observes and meets with foster children, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, foster parents, social workers, teachers, counselors, therapists and attorneys. The story unfolds until, after deep listening and vigilant observation, it gradually becomes clear what is in the best interest of the child. After that, it is easy and gratifying to stand up for what is right for the child. The best part is see-

ing it through to the end, watching the child begin a new life, full of potential and possibility.”

“If you love kids, love a challenge and love hands-on volunteering, CASA may be for you. It takes courage and persistence to be a good CASA, but the rewards are huge.”

— Susan Piggott

“Susan Piggott exemplifies a high level of ethics and respect for their role as a CASA; she demonstrates exceptional diligence and persistence in representing the child’s best interests to the court, and she promotes and supports CASA of Caroline within in the community,” said Jennifer Rinehart, executive director of CASA of Caroline, Inc. “We are proud to have Susan as one of our 21 trained CASA volunteer advocates.”

When she’s not advocating for children, the Easton resident spends her days as volunteer coordinator at the Talbot Hospice Foundation and her leisure time with her husband and their two grown daughters — one a teacher and the other a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) for foster children.

Hoping to inspire others to follow her lead and volunteer with CASA, Piggott says: “If you love kids, love a challenge and love hands-on volunteering, CASA may be for you. It takes courage and persistence to be a good CASA, but the rewards are huge.”

She concludes: “My vision is that every child who needs a CASA will have one. Every child deserves to grow up feeling safe and loved.”