

Volunteers

Volunteer Profile Oriana Camara, Peterborough



Steve Leone
Editor

Monthly call to volunteer

As a retired educator, Susan Leach thought she was prepared for what was on the other side of the door.

She was a first-time volunteer for CASA, Court Appointed Special Advocates, and it was her job to work within the court system to represent and act on behalf of neglected and abused kids.

"As I got to know the children well, I realized how serious the problem was," said Leach of Jaffrey. "Once you become part of the family, the child will start talking to you. You hear about these things. But to hear about it directly from the child was something different. It's heartwrenching."

That initial experience only made Leach more determined to see these cases through. Three years later, she's still part of a dedicated, but lean, CASA volunteer force working within the Peterborough/Jaffrey District Court.

The volunteers who take on this challenge can follow a child through the court system for years, building a relationship with a child, the family, his or her guardians and the court to help determine what is in the child's best interest. While the judge ultimately makes any decision, a CASA volunteer acts as the court's eyes and ears.

The program provides extensive training, while the volunteers give time, energy and above all, commitment.

This is just one in a vast network of valuable nonprofits that provide something every community needs in difficult times — options.

While the nonprofits may be the backbone, the volunteers are the heartbeat.

What's new: As part of our new monthly page, we will tell the personal story of a local volunteer, like Leach, who works for no other reason than to serve the people in his or her community. We will also be looking for submissions from organizations in need of items and help. In turn, this is a place where readers interested in helping out can turn to make that connection.

Here are a few other items you will find each month.

What's needed: What can you donate? In some cases, it'll be new. In other cases, it can be used. But always, it'll be needed.

Ways to help: We'll offer ideas on how you can get out and lend a hand. This will be just a sampling, and we will continue to run a more detailed and comprehensive listing on our weekly Tuesday calendar page.

Give us your best shot: We want to see your photos of volunteers in action. Each month, we'll publish three pictures.

All submissions, including photos, should be sent to volunteers@ledgertranscript.com.

If you are interested in becoming a CASA volunteer, visit www.nationalcasa.org or call call 358-4012.



Oriana Camara, 11, visits with resident Edna Dolan recently at the Scott Farrar home in Peterborough.

PHOTOS BY ANNIE CARD

A visit with new friends

Spending time with a neighbor during ice storm sparked call to volunteer

By ANNIE CARD

Special to The Monadnock Ledger-Transcript

Eleven-year old Oriana Camara stepped off the school bus on a blustery cold afternoon. Carrying a black case and a backpack, she walked down Elm Street and turned up the walk at No. 11, the snow piles towering over the sixth grader. She was expected, having visited the residents at The Scott Farrar Home weekly for the past few months.

After hanging up her jacket, Oriana followed staff member Jan Ciccione down the hall toward a resident's room. "Oriana, you'll be visiting with Edna today. She's ready and waiting. Oh, and this is Gordon, so you'll be visiting with both of them."

Sitting with her back to the headboard of her twin bed, Edna drew up her feet to make room for the girl. It was Oriana who got the conversation going. "So what have you been doing this week? ... Oh, well what are you reading?" the girl asked with the poise and comfort of an adult with a Toastmasters' black belt.

Edna handed her a paperback, President Obama's "Dreams from My Father." They talked about where the president grew up and how they both liked him. Edna played with Oriana's one thin braid.

Careful not to exclude Gordon, Oriana turned to the man seated in the recliner beside the bed. He'd asked her where she was from. Oriana explained that she was from China, that her mother had adopted her when she was just one year old.

"Wow, China. Now that's a very big place with lots of people. Isn't it nice you're here with us now," Gordon said.

Oriana retrieved her black case and opened it. As she unpacked her clarinet and sheet music on the pink granny square afghan at the foot of Edna's bed, Edna looked on with appreciation and



During her weekly visits to the Scott Farrar Home, Oriana has built friendships with Dolan and Gordon Van Campen. While they spend time making small talk, she also entertains them with her clarinet.

with a nod of her head, said, "Boy, she's going places. She's really got it."

Gordon and Edna clapped enthusiastically after a song. "I still need to practice a lot," the girl said. Besides clarinet, Oriana studies ballet and loves to ice skate and swim.

What draws Oriana to visit our senior neighbors?

"During the ice storm, my mother [Deborah Camara] and I helped our elderly neighbor Marilyn," the girl said. "Well, she helped us too. She had a fireplace and ours wasn't working. We stayed with her for 11 days, living in that one room. She doesn't get a lot of visitors, and it made me think it would be nice to visit with other elderly people. I liked spending that time with Marilyn."

The ice storm was something they could all relate too. The Scott Farrar Home used a generator for heat, but the only light was daylight. After dark, staff tended to residents by flashlight. They were all in it together, from beginning to end. They even took in other town residents who didn't have heat.

“To have someone so young, now that's different. It's just nice. Real nice.

— Edna Dolan, Scott Farrar Home resident

Help Out

WHAT'S NEEDED

Big Brothers Big Sisters

Plastic beads, games (Candy Land, Scrabble, Monopoly), markers, pencils, pens, stamping supplies (ink pads and stamps). Call Rachel at 352-9536.

The Family Center of Greater Peterborough

Two picnic tables: one child-size and one adult. Call Liz at 924-6306.

North Peterborough Family Program

Craft supplies such as markers, colored pencils, paint brushes, construction paper and computer paper for children's art programs. Also, someone with background in IT. Call Erika at 924-9601.

MAPS

Folding display panels, display cases or racks. Call 355-2244.

Monadnock Center for violence prevention

Twin-sized comforters, twin-sized flat and fitted sheets, pillows and pillow cases, trash bags, laundry detergent, toilet paper, paper towels, VHS movies or DVDs, push lawn mower, weed whacker. Call Melanie at 352-3782.

— Listing courtesy of the Monadnock United Way. www.muw.org

WAYS TO HELP

1 Big Brothers Big Sisters is looking for help in organizing Walk for the Children, a fundraising event May 30 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. at ConVal High School. An event planning committee is already in place, but help would be needed in staffing the event and/or helping to organize walking teams. If you are interested in participating, contact Janet at 924-0024 and Connie at 924-9698.

2 Kitty Rescue and Adoption in Jaffrey is looking for volunteers to help care for the more than 100 cats in residence. Volunteers have the flexibility to set their own hours and days, and this can be as little as one hour one day per week to as much as they are willing. A volunteer's primary job is caring for the cats living environment. This means cleaning litter boxes, changing soiled bedding, and ensuring fresh food and water daily. Volunteers may also help with general shelter upkeep such as light cleaning, dish washing, and litter and trash disposal. If interested, call 532-9444.

3 The River Center is looking for a volunteer to attend its financial tools workshops on April 4 (the topic is debt) and May 2 (housing), both on Saturday, from 10 a.m. to noon. The volunteer will take notes and create a brief summary of the workshop. The workshops will be held at the Union Congregational Church in Peterborough, and lunch is provided. If you are interested, call Andrea Gilbert at 924-2159.

HOW TO SUBMIT

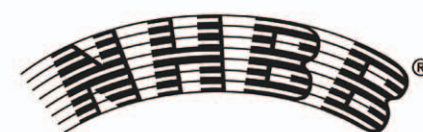
Send us an e-mail with your organization's needs and upcoming volunteer opportunities at volunteers@ledgertranscript.com

LOOKING TO HELP?

If you want to volunteer, but are unsure where you fit in, you can call the Monadnock Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and the Monadnock Volunteer Center at 924-7350.

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