



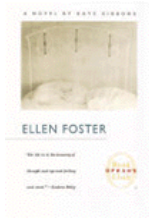
**CASA**

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
**FOR CHILDREN**

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CASA OF ADAMS & BROOMFIELD COUNTIES

# **SUGGESTED READS FOR CASA VOLUNTEERS**



**Ellen Foster** by **Kaye Gibbons** – Ellen is an eleven year old “orphan,” who is shuttled from one uncaring relative’s home to another before she finally takes matters into her own hands. A hard to put down, riveting memoir.



**Finding Fish** by **Antwone Fisher & Mim Rivas** – Fisher’s blow by blow account of his childhood, as he endures abuse and homelessness, before a lengthy stint in the Navy provides him with a way forward. A searing memoir made into an unforgettable film.



**The Good Wife** by **Stewart O’Nan** – This isn’t a novel of beating the odds, but enduring them. A small town housewife, pregnant with her first child, watches her husband go off to jail for murder and robbery gone awry. This is a story of ordinary lives and small graces.



**Halfway House** by **Katharine Noel** – A profound look at how a crisis can both destroy and reinvent a seemingly typical family. After a seventeen year old suffers a breakdown and is diagnosed with bipolar disorder, family dynamics must shift and each character must confront their own demons, in order to emerge on the other side.



**Kindness of Strangers by Katrina Kittle** – A sex abuse scandal contributes to a disturbing but compelling story line in this page turner. The novel is told through the perspective of ordinary people, trying to make the best of an awful situation, and finding the healing power of forgiveness in the process.



**My Sister's Keeper by Jodi Picoult** – The difficult choices a family must make when a child is diagnosed with a serious disease are explored with understanding in this heart-wrenching story. The best feature is that the author creates a character...who is a Court Appointed Special Advocate!



**White Oleander by Janet Fitch** – A sensitive, thirteen year old narrator is burdened with an impossible mother. When mom heads to prison for murder, young Astrid enters the Los Angeles foster care system. The reader will find the resulting tale of brilliantly characterized (through dysfunctional) foster families difficult to put down.



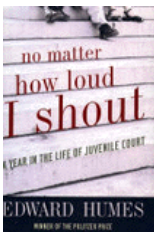
**A Piece of Cake by Cupcake Brown** – Orphaned, abused, rejected, and forgotten, young Cupcake Brown could have become a casualty of a gravely flawed child welfare system. Instead, she tells her story in the voice of a strong, clear-eyed survivor.



**The Quality of Life Report by Meghan Daum** – Lucinda relocates to the Midwest to escape the chaos of New York City. What she finds there is a boyfriend of questionable hygiene and judgment, a rambling, isolated farmhouse, and a crazy bunch of locals. Funny, genuine, and full of deft social criticism.



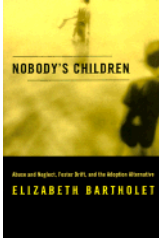
**Blackbird by Jennifer Lauck** – In this remarkable memoir, the author conveys the thoughts and emotions of a young child whose parents both die during the turbulent first six years of her life. Tossed from step parent to foster placement and eventual homelessness, this harrowing story actually ends on a note of hope and transcendence.



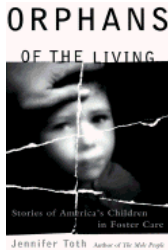
**No Matter How Loud I Shout: A Year In The Life Of Juvenile Court by Edward Humes** – This is one powerful book: it will grab you with vivid stories about individual kids, draw you in with honesty and compassion, and amaze you with alarming details about how the juvenile system works, or doesn't, in the United States.



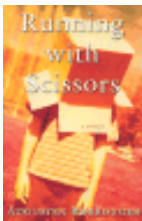
**The Lost Children of Wilder: The Epic Struggle To Change Foster Care by Nina Bernstein** – This is the absorbing account, by New York Times reporter Nina Bernstein, of Shirley Wilder, who at 14, gave birth to a son, who was swept into the same foster care system from which she had fled at the age of twelve. The author follows the thread of two tragic lives and in the process illuminates the nation's dysfunctional social welfare system and the impact on the children it tries to help.



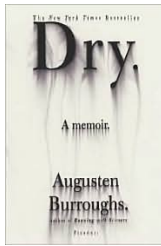
**Nobody's Children: Abuse and Neglect, Foster Drift and The Adoption Alternative by Elizabeth Bartholet** – Bartholet takes a hard look at how the lives of modern day “orphans” are sacrificed for the often unrealistic goal of keeping troubled families together. The author argues against social workers using precious child welfare resources to prop up deeply disturbed families. A thought-provoking viewpoint is examined here that may conflict with the more popular approach: “reunification or bust.”



**Orphans Of The Living: Stories Of America's Children in Foster Care by Jennifer Toth** – Toth wisely puts a human face on the current foster care system. In this eloquent and harrowing study, the author focuses on five children who grew up in substitute care. She describes the original, dysfunctional families the children come from, as well as the ways that foster care made things worse for them. A few crumbs of hope are proposed to improve the system.



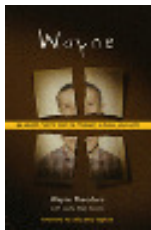
**Running with Scissors by Augusten Burroughs** – A disturbing but entertaining memoir about the author's abandonment by his unbalanced mother, his adoption by a neighborhood pedophile, and layers of despair that the quirky author almost glamorizes to stay sane. His survival mentality provides a crucial balance between humor, deep emotional pain, and a past nearly impossible to believe.



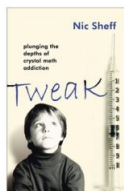
**Dry: A Memoir by Augusten Burroughs** - The sequel to "Running With Scissors," chronicles his struggle with alcoholism and with the impending death of his HIV-positive friend Pighead. This memoir is an account of Augusten trying to understand and conquer his demons that have been haunting him his entire life.



**The Tricky Part: One Boy's Fall From Trespass Into Grace by Martin Moran** – Between the ages of twelve and fifteen, Martin Moran had a sexual relationship with an older man, a counselor he had met at a Catholic boy's camp near Denver. Almost 30 years later, at the age of forty two, he sets out to find and face his abuser.



**Wayne: An Abused Child's Story of Courage, Survival and Hope by Wayne Theodore** – The author, now middle-aged, grew up with eleven siblings, an abusive father and a weak mother. In this powerful memoir, he recalls a long history of abuse and neglect that he and his siblings managed to repress during most of their adulthood. Reading his family's case files sets the author off on a recovery course that ends with a nationally televised confrontation with his parents.



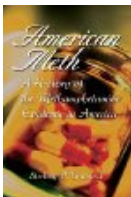
**Tweak: Growing up on Meth by Nic Sheff** - Nic Sheff regularly smoked pot, did cocaine and ecstasy, and developed addictions to crystal meth and heroin. In a voice that is raw and honest, Nic spares no detail in telling us the compelling, heartbreaking, and true story of his relapse and the road to recovery.



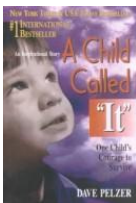
**What It Takes To Pull Me Through by David Marcus** – Motivated by a personal quest as a journalist and father, Marcus set out to report on the difficulties for being a teen today, and focuses on the transformation of four troubled adolescents. Four Sets of Desperate parents sent their teens to “Swift River,” a private therapeutic boarding school in Massachusetts for rehab, therapy, and an education. This is a thoughtful expose on what teens are up against in their world and how we, as parents and advocates, can guide them towards more promising paths.



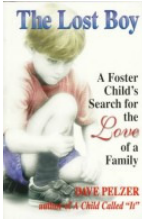
**Ghost Girl by Torey Hayden** – Ultimately a testament to the powers of caring and commitment, this is the story of a traumatized eight year old that refused to speak, due to sexual abuse and possible exposure to satanic rituals.



**American Meth: A History of the Methamphetamine Epidemic in America by Sterling R. Brasswell** – This is the unprecedented story of the deep, but little known, impact that methamphetamine has had on the American life over the course of the last century. Told from the viewpoint of the author, whose life has been touched by the drug, this is a deeply personal drama.



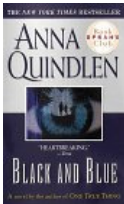
**A Child Called It by Dave Pelzer** – A brief, horrifying account of the author’s sadistic mother and the acts she inflicted on her son. One longs to learn more about his ordeal and its aftermath, which is detailed in the sequel The Lost Boy, detailing Pelzer’s life in the foster care system.



**The Lost Boy by Dave Pelzer** - As a young boy, Dave Pelzer was physically, emotionally, and spiritually abused by his obsessive mother. This book discusses Pelzer's struggling with his ability to fit in and adapt to the new environment around him as he is put into foster care. It also talks about the kindness of his foster parents and other people around him as well as his inability to brush his mother aside.



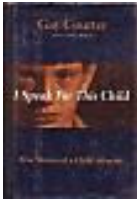
**A Man Named Dave by Dave Pelzer** - During his early 20's, Dave loses his father to cancer and vows to become a firefighter, like his Dad, so he joins the Air Force. It takes many years before Dave gets to realize his dream - and then he meets Patty. This story follows the triumphs and falls of Dave's relationship with Patty. His inspirational attempt at trying to reconcile with his very abusive mother is remarkably open and honest in its presentation.



**Black and Blue by Anna Quindlen** - For eighteen years, Fran Benedetto kept her secret, hid her bruises, and stayed with Bobby because she wanted her son to have a father and because, in spite of everything, she loved him. Then one night, when she saw the look on her ten-year-old son's face, Fran finally made a choice--and ran for both their lives.



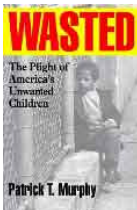
**Three Little Words by Ashley Rhodes-Courter** - "Sunshine, you're my baby and I'm your only mother. You must mind the one taking care of you, but she's not your mama." Ashley Rhodes-Courter spent nine years of her life in fourteen different foster homes, living by those words. As her mother spirals out of control, Ashley is left clinging to an unpredictable, dissolving relationship, all the while getting pulled deeper and deeper into the foster care system.



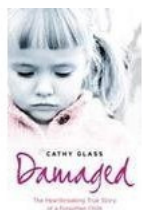
**I Speak For This Child by Gay Courter** – Since 1980, novelist Gay Courter has worked on more than a dozen cases of child abuse and neglect as a volunteer Guardian Ad Litem in Florida. While there aren't many happy endings here, each story is real, inspiring and an excellent introduction into what child advocacy is.



**Orphans: A True Story Of Abandonment, Abuse and Redemption by Roger Dean Kiser** – This memoir is told from the viewpoint of a child who endured nearly unspeakable horrors in a Florida orphanage and somehow emerged, spirit intact to not only survive, but tell his story with unflinching honesty.



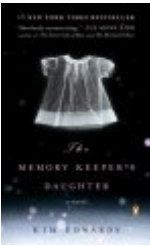
**Wasted: The Plight of America's Unwanted Children by Patrick T. Murphy** – The author has no illusions about our present welfare and children's services systems, offering an earthly, inside view of why these systems aren't working and providing anecdotal proof of the failures. He feels that our efforts are being misdirected in preserving families and shows concern that the parent's victim status sometimes becomes more important than the child's neglect.



**Damaged by Cathy Glass** – Although Jodie is only eight years old, she is violent, aggressive, and has already been through numerous foster families. Her last hope is Cathy Glass. Jodie's challenging behavior has seen off five care takers in four months. Over time, Jodie reveals details of her abuse at the hands of her parents and others involved in a sickening pedophile ring.



**The Kindness of Strangers by Katrina Kittle** - When a shocking and unbelievable revelation rips apart the family of her closest friend, Sarah finds herself welcoming yet another young boy into her already tumultuous life. Powerful and poignant, *The Kindness of Strangers* is a shocking look at how the tragedy of a single family in a small, suburban town can affect so many. Told from varying perspectives, *The Kindness of Strangers* shows that even after the gravest injuries, redemption is always possible.



**The Memory Keeper's Daughter by Kim Edwards** - A brilliantly crafted family drama that explores every mother's silent fear: what would happen if you lost your child and she grew up without you? A rich and deeply moving page-turner, *The Memory Keeper's Daughter* captures the way life takes unexpected turns and how the mysterious ties that hold a family together help us survive the heartache that occurs when long-buried secrets burst into the open. It is an astonishing tale of redemptive love.