



## Steve Knapp

A CASA volunteer since 1999, Steve Knapp has made a lasting difference in the lives of his CASA children. Steve's first case involved **Johnny**, a 15-year-old boy whose mother put him into foster care because of his behavior. Through numerous placements, Steve strongly advocated for Johnny and he beat the odds, graduating from high school.

### Mike Robinson, Therapist:

*"I had Steve as a CASA on the case of a 15-year-old boy entering the system for the first time. Johnny went through 6-7 placements very quickly. Because of the frequent moves and chronic family issues that never got addressed, maintaining a therapeutic relationship with the boy was difficult and his mental health needs were not being adequately treated. Steve was a constant*

***"Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome."***

*- Booker T. Washington*

*adult figure in this young man's life during this time and diligently worked not only with Johnny, but also with each and every foster placement/family. Steve has a clear understanding of his role as a CASA and maintains excellent boundaries with his clients, families and other professionals. In his desire to help his clients he seeks to fully understand their mental health needs, not to be their therapist, but to learn how he and his relationship with the client can best be used. One of the more difficult things for any professional or trained volunteer to learn in working with mentally ill children and adolescents is how to let the client use them as part of their treatment. This necessitates a full understanding of the role as defined (CASA, therapist, etc.) of themselves as a significant adult in a child's life, and the life experiences -- particularly traumatic ones -- the child brings. In this regard, Steve is the ultimate "student," seeking a deeper understanding of himself, his role, his client and their world, and what other professionals can and need to do. He holds himself and others to the highest expectations but is always realistic and always supportive. By the way, Johnny is now 22, and still calls Steve."*

Steve's second case was an 11-year-old boy named **Manny**. Manny had been raised by his grandmother who was confined to a wheelchair.

### Magistrate Paul DeMott, Hamilton County Juvenile Court:

*"Steve Knapp has been the ProKids advocate for a boy on my docket named, Manny, since January of 2005. Mr. Knapp has played the pivotal role in what I view as one of the most remarkable success stories I have seen in my career at Juvenile Court.*

*Manny was first removed from his parents' care in 2000 and placed with his grandmother. He remained with his grandmother until the fall of 2004 when she was no longer able to provide care for him due to his severe emotional and behavioral problems and her deteriorating health.*

*When Steve Knapp was appointed as the advocate for him, Manny's circumstances were bleak. He had been in agency care for a few months. His grandmother had recently passed away and he had no family or friends involved in his life. Neither of his parents was willing to work towards reunification with him or to even visit with him. He was exhibiting severe emotional and behavioral problems and was diagnosed with major depression and oppositional defiant disorder. I can recall making the referral of his case to ProKids and talking with Charlotte Caples about how this boy would need a very remarkable advocate, if he were to have any chance of success in life.*

*Since he was appointed, Steve Knapp has taken on the role of a truly remarkable advocate and mentor for Manny. During this time, Manny has been through some extraordinarily difficult times and disruptions. Steve Knapp has been by Manny's side during the difficult times. In addition, Steve Knapp has been an effective leader and advocate who has been able to pull together teams of professionals in various placements and help them to work together synergistically to provide the best for Manny.*

*The effect of Steve Knapp's involvement can be seen by the remarkable changes that have occurred in Manny's life over the past four-and-one-half years. Manny is now placed in a stable long-term foster home with a biological brother from whom he was separated as a young child. Manny has a foster mother who is committed to him and his brother and is providing them with exceptional care. He now has the family he never had as a child. Manny no longer presents the emotional or behavioral problems that initially brought him into care. He has successfully completed counseling. He is doing well in school. He has a committed team of professionals who have gathered around him to provide support and guidance. He has gone from a boy with little hope to a young man well on his way to becoming a successful adult.*

*Manny is a poster child for the difference that a committed Court Appointed Special Advocate can make. The work that Steve Knapp has done represents ProKids at its best. "*

For his dedication to changing childrens' lives, Steve Knapp has been named the 2009 Darlene Kamine Advocate of the Year.

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