

Reading Area Community College and Court Appointed Special Advocates Berks County Implement Bridging Culture Partnership

READING, PA, UNITED STATES, February 8, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On January 28th, volunteers, board members, and staff of [CASA of Berks County](#) gathered in the Schmidt Technology Center of [Reading Area Community College](#) (RACC) to learn culture, language, and resources to improve the agency's advocacy efforts with Hispanic children who are victims of child abuse and neglect. The day-long workshop developed by Auria Bradley, RACC Associate VP of Workforce & Continuing Education, in conjunction with CASA Berks County, is part of a series of workshops to inform child welfare and court workers of improved techniques for reaching children of Hispanic families in foster care.



CASA Berks County Child Advocates Gather for Cultural Training

"Our volunteer advocates work with over one hundred children from Berks County each year who come from violent situations. Many have observed domestic violence in their homes and gang violence on their streets. Children with violence have special needs to address their unstable childhoods. Foster care can be even more traumatic if their caregivers and workers do not understand their culture, their language, and what can comfort them." Said Executive Director Nancy McCullar, "We partnered with RACC to learn better ways to comfort the children and problem-solve with their families. Auria Bradley and her team from RACC met and exceeded our expectations."

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Nancy McCullar

Dr. Danelle Bower sensitized the audience to equity,

inclusion, and hidden bias concepts. Later in the day, she gave the group case scenarios of Hispanic children involved with the court. Fresh from a presentation by Rocio Damato about Hispanic family culture, the group discussed how to manage the cases now that they had some insight. "The workshop gave practical tools to take back and apply to our jobs." Said Janine Torres, "Being aware of others' cultures and building bridges between them is key to helping people live and enjoy life together in unity." Dr. Eve Kimball, CASA Berks Board member and longtime Berks advocate for children, noted, "The brief Spanish language session was particularly helpful because it included words about feelings and emotions." Other participants agreed that learning to say "It's not your fault " in Spanish" was a critical skill.

Our team enjoyed the delicious Hispanic cuisine from Mi Casa Su Casa while Mr. Michael Toledo, President and CEO, and Ineavelle Ruiz, Director of Human Services from the Hispanic Center, spoke of the resources and services that the Hispanic Center provides to the entire community. "I loved attending this workshop. Although I was not aware of all the services provided by the Hispanic Center," said Laura Biancone, "I really appreciated their presentation."

Discussions at the workshop's closing identified the need for a similar workshop for other groups, such as foster care providers, case workers, and court personnel. Therefore, CASA Berks and RACC will engage these groups and offer similar training. Improving child welfare service outreach to Hispanic families in Berks County is funded by National CASA through a grant from OJJDP, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Berks is a non-profit organization that trains and supports volunteer citizens who advocate for children in foster care to ensure their well-being. More information on CASA is available at: www.casaberks.org or email nancy@casaberks.org

If your organization or business is interested in Cultural Awareness and Diversity Training, please contact Auria Bradley at 610-372-4721 ext. 5120 or by email at abradley@racc.edu

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