

## Meet the KASA Consultants!



Jennifer Thomas first got involved with KASA as a Board Member in 2003. As the first State Youth Consultant for Children's Rehabilitation Service, Alabama's state Title V Program, KASA was introduced to her by her supervisor. Jennifer used what she learned from her involvement with KASA to inspire youth in her state to advocate for themselves and to become a part of activities in the state. She has had the opportunity to serve as a KASA Co-Chair and as a member of the Membership Committee. After aging off of the Board, Jennifer took on the opportunity to become a Consultant. Jennifer possesses a BS Degree in Elementary Education.

## National KASA's Past and Present Celebrating Kids As Self Advocates' 10th Anniversary

KASA Consultant Jennifer Thomas interviewed Micah Fialka-Feldman, KASA Board Member since 2002, on his involvement with KASA over the years. Here is how it went.

**JT:** How did you get involved with KASA?

**MF:** I saw the website, and it looked cool, so I applied.

**JT:** How have you seen KASA change over the course of the past 10 years?

**MF:** I think it [KASA] has had some great plans of action and some strong leaders, and it improved over the years.

**JT:** What has been your favorite part of being involved in KASA all these years?

**MF:** Traveling and learning how to do conference calls.

**JT:** What has it been like working with different people as board members rotate and people age out over the years?

**MF:** They are interesting, and I have learned a lot from the different people on board.

**JT:** How do you see KASA in the next 10 years?

**MF:** I see KASA having chapters across the country, having more face-to-face meetings, having more teleconference calls, being a 501(c)3, and becoming a great group across the country.



*Micah Fialka-Feldman, KASA Board Co-Chair*

## Taking a Glance Down Memory Lane

By Jennifer Thomas, Consultant

Have you ever dreamed of starting something great and then working in every position that it has to offer? Well, when it comes to national KASA, Naomi Ortiz, the current Project Director has done just that. Ortiz came up through the project as a founding Board member, transitioned to a consultant, and then became the Project Director. This being the case, she understands what it is like to be a Board member and shares KASA's vision.



*Naomi Ortiz*

Ten years ago, Ortiz and several other youth went to a national conference that was for youth with disabilities. During the conference, the young people talked and agreed that they all had just as much wisdom as the conference speakers that could have been shared in a more accessible and youth-friendly way and that other young people do as well. As a result, these youth, along with adult ally Julie Sipchen, formed a youth advisory committee for Family Voices that later became a youth-run project, KASA.

When asked how she has seen national KASA change over the years, Ortiz replied, "It has changed so much!" One thing she mentioned

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# KASA CONNECTION!



Mallory Cyr first began her work with KASA as a board member in 2008. She served as Co-Chair and then jumped at the opportunity to be a consultant with the KASA Task Force. She began doing advocacy work in high school when she helped to form the first state youth advisory council in the country (YEA Me, in the state of Maine). After graduating from college in 2007, Mallory began working as a youth coordinator for both the state of Maine Title V program and Healthy & Ready to Work National Resource Center. Often feeling like the only youth representative at national meetings and events, Mallory was thrilled to discover KASA - a national group of ambitious youth who all share the same vision of having equal rights and being heard!

that helped get the change going was a grant the national KASA project received from the Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund which allowed KASA to work on strategic planning and evaluation. That seemed complicated, but by youth translating the process for other youth, it was made clear. This process empowered the youth to really create the foundation for KASA.

Ortiz' favorite part of being involved KASA is witnessing KASA do what it preaches. As she has gone from being a leader to an adult ally who helps young people support themselves and others, she and KASA have helped many young people with disabilities find their voice.

Another change is that the KASA Board now has three committees, which helps KASA come together and get its work done faster. Ortiz says that as Board members change, it is always different. She enjoys seeing them take ownership and get involved, knowing it's their project. Because the project is youth-run, new members start out with a great history instead of having to create one from scratch.

In the next 10 years, Ortiz hopes to see national KASA with more state chapters and more of a national voice. She also plans to support another young person to become the director. She is excited about national KASA's three-year strategic plan and young people making decisions about what will happen.

## National KASA Publications

### Top Website Downloads

- ★ *KASA Brochure* - 1,303 downloads
- ★ *Disability Portrayal and the Media Today (Part 2)* - 737 downloads
- ★ *Medical Model vs Social Model* - 678 downloads
- ★ *KASA How to Give a Presentation* - 660 downloads

*Average Hits Per Day: 504*  
*Total Resource Directory Hits: 77,533*

### Total Hardcopy Publications Requested:

So, how many KASA documents have been requested in hard copy since Dec. 2008?...A whopping **10,810!**

**2009 Youth-Developed and Peer-Reviewed\* Documents:** Dancing Through Life, KASA Funding Higher Education, KASA Breaking Down Barriers: Going to College, KASA Relationships and Dating, KASA How to Ride the Bus, KASA Getting Involved in Doing Community Service, KASA How to Work with PCAs, KASA Voting to Voice Our Opinions for Change, KASA What is a Center for Independent Living?, What is Voc Rehab?

**Find these documents and more at:**

<http://www.fvkasa.org/resources/index.html>

\*Peer Reviewed: The national KASA Task Force reviews all KASA documents for youth- friendliness and accessibility

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## His Journey

By: Danielle Luchesi-Fellguth

Hamza Jaka, a KASA National Board member, is preparing to go on a journey that will not only change his life but also the lives of many others. In just a few weeks, Hamza will arrive in Lahore, Pakistan where he will be spreading disability awareness in addition helping out at the Rising Sun Institute.

The Rising Sun Institute is a non-profit organization that strives to benefit disabled children in the city of Lahore. The institute, or school, provides its students with physical therapy, teaches them how to care for themselves (independent living skills), and gives them the opportunity to participate in recreational, or fun, activities such as singing, sports, and field trips to local places.

Hamza obtained this amazing opportunity two years ago when his aunt realized that disabled people in Pakistan needed to be introduced to someone with a disability who is living their life to the fullest, someone much like Hamza Jaka. It was then that his aunt contacted the Rising Sun Institute and made the necessary arrangements for him to come and work with them. Hamza will be spreading disability awareness in the process. When Hamza first heard about the trip he was going to take, he felt good about it but was also extremely nervous because he'd be speaking for so many people.

Hamza doesn't really know what to expect from this trip, but he is looking forward to seeing the Institute's beautiful campus and meeting new people. He hopes to achieve his goal of raising awareness and to be able to return to the Rising Sun Institute one day with donations from people in the United States as well as assistive technology for the school's students to use. While in Pakistan, Hamza plans to watch and observe, contributing his thoughts on subjects such as disability pride, accessibility, and job training. *Skills he's learned through KASA!* He plans to keep a video record and write a blog of activities he participates in while there. Hamza hopes to bring back more wisdom and a new perspective on disability advocacy to KASA because he knows that a different country sees things differently than people in the United States.



Board Member, Hamza Jaka

For more information on the Rising Sun Institute go to: <http://www.risingsun.org.pk/>  
Read Hamza's blog at: <http://disabilityadvocacyinpk.blogspot.com/>

## CT-KASA Update

Connecticut KASA has been very busy practicing self-advocacy since the last newsletter was published. One big project that CT-KASA members have been working on is creating booklets around transition from pediatric to adult healthcare. This project is being funded by the department of Public Health in the state of Connecticut and is one that the group is very excited about. They held an overnight meeting at the Farmington Marriot Hotel in Connecticut to get work done on the project. The booklets will be directed to youth, parents, and doctors. CT-KASA has been traveling around the state doing presentations about the booklets.

While at their overnight meeting, CT-KASA put instant advocacy into practice and wrote a letter to the planning committee of the Power Fest Conference to express their concerns about the conference. Prior to the conference, CT-KASA sent representatives to the planning meetings. These youth reps felt that the suggestions that they made were not taken into consideration and are interested in training the Power Fest Planning Committee on what youth led means.

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## Update from the KASA Task Force

By: Justin Louchart

Recently the Task Force has been working to realize the “up and coming” Professional Toolkit, a project we have spent much time on to make sure it is a comprehensive and functional document to last. We plan to offer training sessions on the Toolkit which we are hoping to begin in early 2010.

The Task Force has conducted several tip sheet reviews for the KASA Board and is working closely with various disability organizations to expand our projects within the upcoming months.

Being a co-chair for the Task Force is something I couldn't have fathomed. Always ready to work, and producing such spectacular documents, the Task Force is a hard-hitting team of advocates. Beyond just being a team, we're friends. We work together, talk together, and we get things done.

In a special edition of the KASA monthly listserv for National Disability Employment Awareness month, KASA members shared what Disability Pride meant to them. KASA Task Force member Kelsie Cain said: *“My experience at the Disability Pride Parade in Chicago was amazing! I loved the idea of a group of people coming together for the reason of pride in who they are. It was a chance to forget all the struggles that those with disabilities may face and to remember that we as a culture can be proud of who we are and what we can do. It was nice to know that others were getting a chance to see that the disability community does not feel bad for themselves. People that go to these parades can see that we are full of life, joy, and dreams. We are strong individually but unimaginable together!”*



## Thank You Donors!

**Donors make things happen, and KASA wants to thank the many donors who have helped KASA to be able to continue the work we do for young people with disabilities!**

*Special thanks to these donors who supported in making the paraprofessional toolkit possible:*

Beth Goodman	Kip & Ruth Queathem
Martha Sims	BJ Voelkel
Yoshiko Dart	Mr. & Mrs. William Swaim
Jean Trainor	Sam Bryant
Beth Goodman	Rachel & Julio Rodriguez
Jamila Davey	Janice M. Fialka
Jim Potter	Lisa Hoffman

*And to those who helped make the face-to-face board meeting in May possible:*

Jodi Goodman	Josie Dunlap-Smith
Ruth Queatham	Zubeda Rajab Ali
Paul & Ruth Cyr	Arif Jaka
Cary & Kim Boswell	CT-KASA

Donors help to make all of these things possible and so much more!!

***KASA has over 60 youth written tip sheets and resource guides on our website – all written for youth. KASA speaks at conferences and provides training to youth and adult organizations on a variety of different topics. Check it all out at [www.fvkasa.org](http://www.fvkasa.org)***

***Interested in becoming a KASA member? For a small fee (and FREE for youth) you can receive a lifetime membership to KASA where you will get a monthly listserv full of information and resources, discounts on materials, become part of a national network speaking out on youth disability issues and much more! Check out all of the benefits at: <http://www.fvkasa.org/benefits.html>***  
***Become a KASA member today!***

Note: This newsletter was written and put together by the KASA Adv. Board's membership committee and KASA youth consultants.

KASA is a youth run project of Family Voices

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