

# 2022 IMPACT REPORT



**CASA**

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
**FOR CHILDREN**

**DUPAGE COUNTY**

# Change a Child's *Story*

Court Appointed Special Advocates



# Safe and Stable

Just the sound of these words makes us feel calm and protected. The sad reality for the children served by CASA of DuPage County, is safe and stable are not even words in their vocabulary—or their lives.

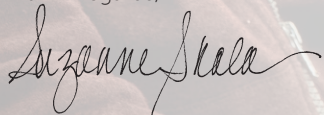
Often a CASA volunteer advocate is the only stable adult in a child's life and the one person they can trust to always be there. Because of your support, in the last year CASA of DuPage County provided 383 children with a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), a trained volunteer, who is sworn in by the Juvenile Court judge to represent each child's best interests.

We are profoundly fortunate to have a community of generous volunteers and donors who thoughtfully give of themselves to help children in DuPage County. It is only with your compassionate support that we provide a CASA volunteer to every child who is a victim of abuse or neglect in the DuPage County court system—giving them the safety and stability they deserve. It is also with your help that we continue to expand the services and resources we provide to children and families.

Recently, we have seen many children falling behind in school. When children are removed from their unsafe homes, they are placed in a different living situation and often a different school. For children in unstable homes, their education is rarely a priority. To prioritize their education, we have implemented a thoughtful educational advocacy program for volunteer advocates to assist children with services and resources to promote their education. Through this program, CASA provides workbooks and reading materials for advocates to read to or with children to help them with reading skills and comprehension. Advocates also can attend meetings with teachers about individual student's educational plans. The opportunity for advocates to provide educational resources and support prevents children from falling behind and ensures they have resources to succeed in school.

Although the number of children who are victims of abuse continues to rise every year, CASA of DuPage will continue to meet this critical need for vulnerable children. Thank you for helping us bring safety and stability to children in our community.

Warm Regards,



Suzanne Skala  
Executive Director

## About Us

### MISSION

The mission of DuPage County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) is to recruit, train and support volunteer citizen advocates to effectively speak to the best interests of abused, neglected, dependent and vulnerable children in the DuPage County court system.

### VISION

CASA's vision is that every child deserves a safe, permanent, nurturing home.

# CASA Programs

## JUVENILE ABUSE/NEGLECT

Children served in Juvenile Abuse/Neglect court have been removed from their unsafe homes due to abuse or neglect. Within 48 hours of removal, there is a shelter care hearing that determines where they will live throughout the duration of the case. At this time, a CASA volunteer advocate is appointed to the children by a DuPage County Judge. The CASA volunteer advocate will visit them regularly, help them navigate their new living arrangement, and advocate for their best interests as the system works to find a safe, permanent, and nurturing home.

## GUARDIANSHIP ASSISTANCE

One leading alternative to foster care are private guardianships, where a responsible family member or family friend is given the legal authority to care for the child until a parent is capable and willing to do so. CASA volunteer advocates are appointed to private guardianship cases to investigate the circumstances and obtain vital information to assist the court in making decisions regarding the best interest of children.

## EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY

Advocates work with caregivers and parents to ensure children are enrolled in school and receiving needed resources and services. When needs are identified, this information is included in the written report to the Court. Additionally, CASA advocates can connect children and families with community resources to support the children's education and often establish relationships with school personnel to advocate for each individual child's needs.

## EMPOWERING FUTURES

Older youth involved in the court system often face daunting obstacles, as they may have no one who is able to provide them the necessary guidance and support to prepare them for adulthood. CASA's Empowering Futures Program focuses on providing training, tools, and resources to volunteer advocates who work with children ages 13+ to assist the youth with education, life skills, employment, housing, physical and emotional health, and family connections as they attain independence and are no longer supported by the foster care system.

## EMPOWERMENT GRANTS

In conjunction with the Empowering Futures concept, DuPage CASA provides small grants to youth assisting them toward achieving educational and vocational goals and preparing them for independent living. Funds may be granted for expenses which are not covered by other sources, scholarships, grants, or loans. Examples include lab and test fees, textbooks, laptops, calculators and other required technology, driver's lessons, and extra-curricular fees.

# CASA

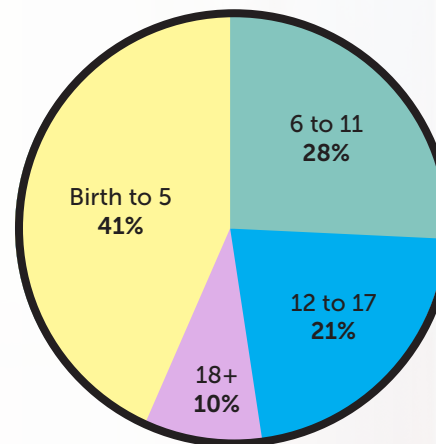
## by the Numbers

### CHILDREN SERVED BY CITY

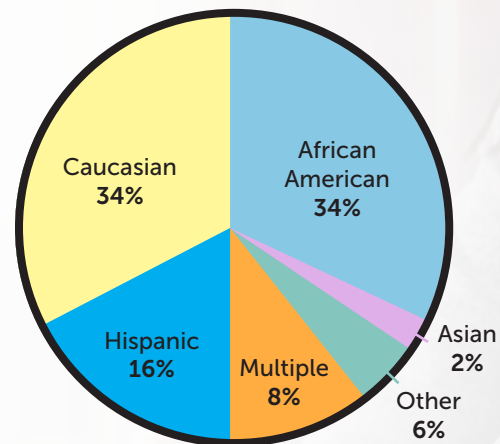
Addison	21	Itasca	5
Aurora	23	Lisle	15
Bartlett	10	Lombard	26
Bensenville	6	Naperville	34
Bloomington	3	Roselle	2
Bolingbrook	3	Villa Park	13
Burr Ridge	3	Warrenville	11
Carol Stream	18	West Chicago	21
Clarendon Hills	1	Westmont	9
Darien	3	Wheaton	46
Downers Grove	32	Willowbrook	14
Glen Ellyn	13	Winfield	4
Glendale Heights	15	Wood Dale	6
Hanover Park	14	Woodridge	12

**Total 383 Children Served**

### AGES



### ETHNICITY



**154**  
Volunteer  
Advocates



**20**  
New  
Volunteer  
Advocates  
Trained

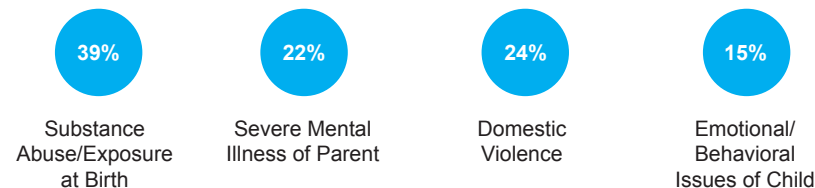


**40,334**  
Miles Driven



**5,120**  
Hours Spent  
on Casework

### Four major underlying factors in households of children involved in abuse cases



**“All kids need is a little help, a little hope and somebody who believes in them.” ~ Magic Johnson**



# Welcome *new advocates!*

After completing background checks, fingerprinting, interviews, and a 30-hour training program, CASA of DuPage County was proud to welcome 20 new advocates who were sworn in by Juvenile Court Judges Brian Jacobs and Anthony Coco.



**"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."  
~ Mahatma Ghandi**

# Recognizing *our advocates!*

On Friday, April 29th, CASA of DuPage County thanked active advocates with an inspirational breakfast, held at Klein Creek Golf Club in Winfield. Special guest speaker and retired Judge, Bob Anderson, addressed the crowd and spoke about the importance of CASA in the court system.



# Donations *for Children*

## BACK TO SCHOOL

CASA advocates joined us on Friday, August 13th at an outdoor back-to-school event, where they shopped for books, backpacks, supplies, personal items and gift cards. We enjoyed meeting in person and were thrilled to have these donated items to distribute to children as they went back to school!



## JINGLE AND MINGLE

CASA staff and volunteer advocates gathered at the Wheaton Community Center on Wednesday, December 15th to distribute holiday stockings, stocking stuffers, and gift cards for children in foster care. These children were delighted to receive full holiday stockings from their advocates, and we are genuinely grateful to our generous community who donated items.





# CASA

## Special Events

### GALA

CASA proved that "Nothing is Impossible" by attending the gala event in person at the Westin in Lombard, while enjoying an inspirational and fun night out and raising \$182,000 for vulnerable children in DuPage County. On behalf of our Gala Committee co-chairs, Karen Patton and Luke Vanderbloemen, we are truly grateful for your generosity that supported abused, neglected, and vulnerable children in our community.



### GOLF CLASSIC

On Thursday, May 19 at Cantigny Golf Course, 165 golfers came together for a beautiful day outdoors while raising \$137,000 for children. Golf Committee co-chairs, Scott Drumheller and Sandy Higgins, along with the entire Golf Committee, want to thank everyone who supported the event to help raise funding to support the CASA mission.



# CASA

## in the Community

### CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH IN APRIL



CASA staff and volunteer advocates, along with the Chief Judge and Juvenile Court Judges tied blue ribbons around the trees outside the DuPage County Courthouse. The blue ribbon symbolizes healthy, happy childhoods and raise awareness that all children deserve to grow up in nurturing, safe homes. During Child Abuse Prevention Month, it is more important than ever to raise awareness about positive parenting, keeping children safe, and encouraging families to support each other and reach out for help.



*Naperville Rotary Grants Award Luncheon*



*CASA Volunteers at Ribfest!*



*Anderson Bookstore Event Benefitting CASA*



### WHEATON BREW FEST

More than 100 volunteers joined CASA of DuPage County and the Wheaton Park District at Memorial Park as attendees enjoyed tasting unique brews from local and national breweries. CASA of DuPage County is one of the beneficiaries of this hometown event.

# The importance of a CASA Volunteer

## A CARING CONSISTENT ADULT FOR THE CHILD

Keisha, a CASA volunteer, was assigned to her first case advocating for a teen girl, age 15. When they first met, the young girl was very quiet, not social, and was not engaged with friends or activities at school. **Keisha worked closely with her, encouraging her to start thinking about her future.** Keisha suggested she start by writing her goals for the next month. After she did, they moved on to write her goals for the next year and then into her future. Keisha also recommended she start journaling as one way to express her feelings—especially during times when she was uncomfortable talking with her foster parents. Keisha told her it was a good way to let her feelings out, instead of bottling up her emotions and frustrations. She also worked closely with the young teen to start writing things she liked to do and was interested in, so when the time came to start thinking about college, she might have an idea of what she would like to study. Keisha was delighted to see her taking advice and finding these activities were helpful. **This young girl has made a 360° shift in her personality, attitude, and initiative.** She is now researching colleges she would like to attend and has a direction for her college major. She is now involved in school activities, including track, and seems to really be enjoying high school.

## ASSISTANCE IN ACCESSING RESOURCES

Before CASA Brenda was assigned, the family had 56 open DCFS investigations. Since assignment, another DCFS investigation and an Adult Protective Services investigation were initiated. Each family member has cognitive delays, yet none were receiving the resources they needed. The family moved from hotel to hotel throughout the summer. **Brenda has worked tirelessly to connect this family to services that will help them manage their home, their disabilities and remain together as a family.** Brenda has helped obtain and coordinate services from two schools, Catholic Charities emergency housing, Department of Humans Services, Public Aid, Adult Protective Services, and Intact services. With Brenda's excellent communication and advocacy skills, she has connected with several agencies providing services for individual family members. Despite the many challenges this family faces, Brenda continues to empower the family to learn, and help themselves so they can remain together. This family has extraordinary needs and Brenda is able to identify and locate resources for each of those needs. She continually follows up and communicates with family members to help them navigate services without becoming overwhelmed.

## KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER

Hugs and tears of joy followed a successful reunification with a parent recently for two teen girls ages 17 and 15. Grandmother said that since mother has been sober, she is back to being an "awesome" mother and said that mother's life now revolves around her daughters. Grandmother also reported that the girls are very excited about their mother assuming the role of full-time caregiver again. When CASA asked the children about the impending move to a new apartment, one girl quickly said she was excited about it. She liked the idea that she would be with her mom again after four years, and, she said that she liked doing things with her mom such as watching movies, playing games and cards. Mother shared that she had become addicted to painkillers and was unable to care for her children at the time that the guardian was appointed. However, she says that she has overcome her addiction and is now fully prepared to be a full-time mom again. She reported working hard to re-establish trust and develop appropriate relationships with her daughters. At the end of the discussion, **mother became emotional stating that she is "overwhelmed and filled with love" for her daughters.** She says she feels she is "completely capable" now to take care of them and meet their needs and she was grateful for the guidance that the family received from their CASA volunteer, Judy.

## 2022 FINANCIALS

### REVENUE

Community Contributions	\$246,503
Special Events	\$318,187
Grants	\$354,554

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<b>Total Donations</b>	<b>\$919,244</b>
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### EXPENSES

Program Services	\$663,738
Management and General	\$98,664
Fundraising	\$134,541

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<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$896,943</b>
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<b>Net Operating Revenue</b>	<b>\$22,301</b>
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**“History will judge us by the difference we make  
in the everyday lives of children” ~ Nelson Mandela**



# Thank You

for helping us to  
*“Change a Child’s Story”*

## CONTACT US

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## 2022 CASA STAFF

Suzanne Skala, Executive Director  
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\*\* New in FY23

\* No longer active