



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

FY2018 Annual Report



About Fairfax CASA

Each year, hundreds of Fairfax children are neglected and/or abused by their parents or caregivers. These children need support from the child welfare system; as well as our community. CASA volunteers are the members of our community who help these children heal and thrive. Appointed by judges, these vetted and trained citizen volunteers advocate for the children under the Court's protection in the courtroom and community. For many of these children, their CASA volunteer will be the one constant adult in their life.

Fairfax CASA is a 501 (c) 3 public charity, that recruits, trains, and supervises approximately 150 CASA volunteers each year to advocate for the needs of abused and neglected children with the goal of finding safe and loving homes.

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Letter from the Executive Director



Dear Friends of CASA,

When a child's family situation becomes so dire that the Fairfax Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court must become involved, his CASA is there.

When a child needs a voice in the often complicated and chaotic child welfare system—a voice that ensures the Court hears what is in his best interests and what he truly needs—his CASA is there.

CASAs are ordinary people, doing extraordinary things. They come from all walks of life with varied backgrounds and experiences. They are the vetted and trained volunteers who step up to assist judges and serve our community's most vulnerable children as local Court-Appointed Special Advocates - CASA volunteers. They work with a common set of values: they firmly believe in a child's right to be safe, treated with dignity, and to live in a home and not a system. They are committed to putting that belief to work for children who have been abused or neglected while upholding the highest standards of excellence. This is the CASA story.

As you read through this Annual Report for the Fiscal Year 2018, please know that YOU are an important part of this story, and all that we were able to achieve this year. As volunteers, generous donors, community partners, and board leaders, you are an integral part of the story that made a huge impact in our 29th year of service to Fairfax's most vulnerable children, and to the Court.

Thank you all for making FY2018 another successful year here at Fairfax CASA. I am grateful for your support and trust in our organization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Darcy Cunningham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Darcy Cunningham

Executive Director

Our Impact

DURING FY18

136 volunteers served
282 children from
167 families



16,997 HOURS

Spent by volunteers advocating for the abused and neglected children they serve



78 PERCENT

Of Fairfax CASA's funding was directed to program services in 2018



3,102 VISITS

Made by volunteers to the children on their cases



217 COURT REPORTS

Submitted by volunteers to the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court



19 NEW VOLUNTEERS

Were trained and sworn in during FY2018



94 CASES

Were closed in 2018



119,838 MILES

Were driven in furtherance of volunteers' duties to protect the best interests of their children



1,149 RECOMMENDATIONS

Were included in volunteers' court reports, 95% of which were adopted and ordered by judges



Our Moments



AUGUST 2017

Fairfax CASA pays it forward by shipping leftover race t-shirts to the University of Houston and our sister CASA program in Houston for Hurricane Harvey relief.



OCTOBER 2017

Our annual Light of Hope volunteer appreciation celebration is held at The Barns at Wolf Trap. CASA Dennis Zimmerman received 2017's May Cook Heart of Gold Award.



DECEMBER 2017

The staff of Fairfax CASA hosts our dedicated volunteers at a holiday party with homemade treats and seasonal beverages. In addition, CASA volunteers donated supplies to BRAWS, an organization dedicated to empowering women and girls by providing new undergarments and menstrual supplies.



MARCH 2018

Our CASAs delighted in an early spring Chili Social courtesy of our long time race partner, Hard Times Cafe.



JUNE 2018

9 New CASAs are sworn into service. This "Lionhearted" class lives up to their nickname and have already proven themselves to be fierce advocates for the children they serve.

SEPTEMBER 2017

Fairfax CASA partners with Alex & Ani for a special fundraising event, including an exclusive Alex & Ani design made just for Fairfax CASA.



NOVEMBER 2017

Fairfax CASA receives a generous gift from the Big Give event, a crowdfunded and crowd decided financial gift.



FEBRUARY 2018

11 New CASA volunteers are sworn into service. Our class of "Ponderers" jumped right in by taking cases.



APRIL 2018

Our 8th annual Fairfax CASA Run for the Children is held! Superheroes and villains alike took over the streets of Fairfax with over 500 runners and walkers participating.



Fairfax CASA's fiscal year runs July 1st through June 30th.

Our Successes

Our CASAs truly exemplify “going above and beyond.” It is hard for most people to imagine walking, **without an appointment**, into a law firm and asking to speak with an attorney, but most people are not our CASAs, who often have to think outside the box when advocating for our youth. When faced with the situation of her 18 year old youth being detained in an ICE facility and facing a deportation hearing, she not only convinced a partner of the firm to sit down with her and listen to the circumstances of the young man’s situation, providing free advice, but she also walked out of the office that day with the partner committed to taking the young man’s case, free of charge. Not quite finished, she then organized a team of CASA volunteers to attend a United States Immigration Court hearing on behalf of this young man, to not only provide support but to show he had a community of people dedicated to his well-being. She continues to stand by his side during this process, providing him with hope and doing all she can to ensure that every legal avenue to citizenship is explored.



As the school year rolled to a close, one of our youth placed outside the County, in a different Virginia jurisdiction, was falsely accused of a criminal act during school hours, resulting in suspension with a request by the school for expulsion for a full year. The CASA immediately went into action and worked to notify and bring together his entire team, and ensure that he was not only afforded the due process he was entitled to, but that the school system actually *prove* their case against him. Because the CASA pushed back, and required the school division to investigate (something they should have done prior to handing down any punishment) our youth was vindicated by video evidence, as well as witnesses, and a confession from another student, allowing him to return to school and all charges being dropped.

In 2016, Fairfax CASA received a case from the Court, involving a little girl who had essentially been abandoned at a medical facility as a toddler and had been living at the facility ever since, without any family visitors, without any connections to the world outside her facility. Her CASA advocated for her to be placed in a therapeutic foster home, with a family, and to be enrolled in a school. Soon enough, this amazing child was in an appropriate foster home, weaned off medical equipment, in school and around children her own age who she could interact with, for the first time in her life. An out of state family member was identified as a potential placement, and after the appropriate background checks and assessments, the child was placed with the family member. The CASA made many trips out of state to make sure that this special little girl was in a safe, appropriate, and loving home. The case closed this year with custody being granted to the very dedicated family member who stepped up and is providing everything that this little girl deserves and needs.



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Our Highlights

On July 1, 2016, Virginia passed legislation allowing for the extension of Foster Care services to age 21, through the Fostering Futures program. Since then, Fairfax CASA volunteers have enjoyed working with older youth, ages 18-21, in an official capacity. Unlike foster care for youth 0-17, where the child receives services so long as their case remains open before the Court, Fostering Futures requires that the young adult meet and maintain certain eligibility requirements, including enrollment in school, employment in some capacity, or enrollment in a program that removes barriers to employment or education. Through Fostering Futures, youth are provided monthly maintenance payments, case management services and a continued relationship with their CASA advocate. Studies have shown, time and time again, that youth who age out of foster care at 18 experience higher rates of homelessness, unplanned pregnancy, incarceration and lack of medical insurance, compared to their peers who achieve 18 in a family setting.

During this last year, **14%** of our cases involved youth 18-21, and **10%** opted to enroll in the Fostering Futures program. Our CASA volunteers have eagerly provided encouragement and continuity to these resilient and remarkable young adults as they move from childhood to adulthood, ensuring a safety net and a support system. Over the last year, we have witnessed this group of young people graduate high school, enroll in college, receive scholarships, be inducted into the National Honor Society, experience the thrill of a first paycheck, and receive the keys to their first apartment.



Last year, Mila*, one of our older youth, was accepted into multiple colleges across the country, and is currently attending a college in Pennsylvania. She also won a prestigious scholarship, beating out applicants at a national level, which allows her to avoid taking out loans for her education.

*Name has been changed to protect confidentiality

Our Traditions

This past April, Fairfax CASA hosted its 8th annual Fairfax Run for the Children. Over 500 runners and walkers, and even a tortoise, took to the streets of Fairfax for a superhero style takeover, ending with a post race celebration in front of the courthouse. Participation in the 2018 race increased by 20% thanks to the dedication of our volunteers, runners, walkers, donors, and sponsors, who were able to raise over \$89,000 that goes towards advocating for the children we serve. In addition, this event brings greater awareness of Fairfax CASA, our mission, and the selfless work our CASAs do.



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Our Volunteers



SCREENING

It is almost impossible to imagine the complicated, challenging, and emotional scenarios a CASA volunteer will be exposed to when they are assigned to a case. Because the cases involve such sensitive and often upsetting information, Fairfax CASA dedicates a great deal of time and energy to recruiting and screening prospective volunteers, ensuring that we are selecting the right candidate for the job. Applicants are carefully vetted to ensure they have the skills, time, and dedication to serve the children on their cases for the duration of the case - an average of 2 years or longer.



In FY18, the program received 330 inquiries about volunteering. We held 9 information sessions (attendance at one is the required first step in becoming a volunteer) for 139 attendees. 47 people applied and 19 were accepted and sworn into service.



40% of applicants sworn into service

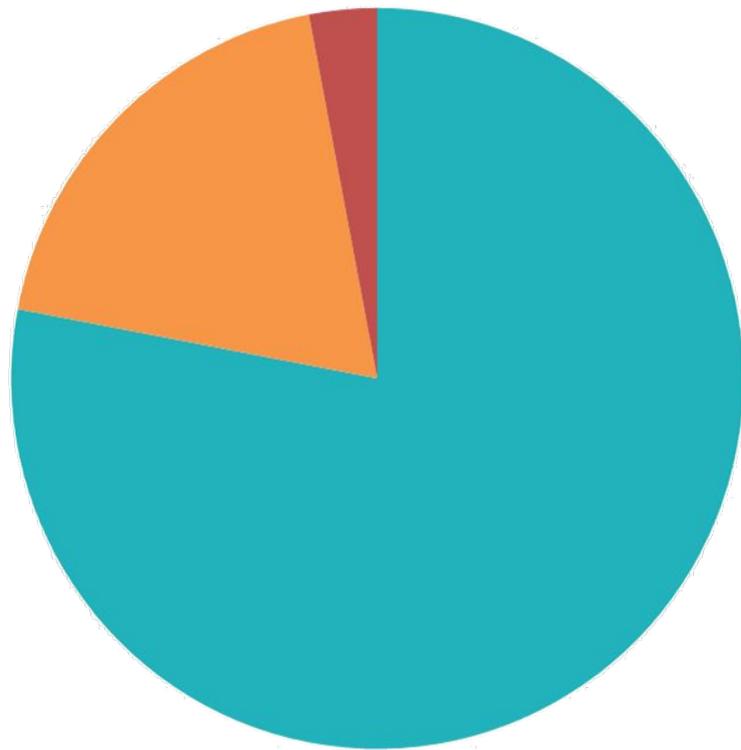
6% of those who inquire about becoming a CASA make it to swearing in.

TRAINING

In addition to the rigorous 35 hours of pre-service training completed by Fairfax CASA volunteers, all volunteers must complete 12 hours of continuing education yearly to re-certify as active volunteers. In FY18, Fairfax CASA hosted 22 in-office continuing education sessions for our CASA's with topics including Fatherhood Engagement, Substance Abuse, Educational Advocacy, and community resources available for families. CASAs also completed an additional 175 hours of independent study.



Our Financials



- Program 78%
- Administration 19%
- Fundraising 3%

In FY18 our Expenses totaled \$774,307

LIFETIME MAJOR DONORS

***Individuals who have given \$25,000 or more since 2000**

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|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Betty & Wayne Angell | Vicki & John Nelson |
| Shelia & Brian Bates | Patsy & Randy Norton |
| W. Brad Clark | Ingrid & Scott Plein |
| James W. Clauson, Jr. | Kevin Riley |
| Barbara & B. Mark Fried | The Schluskel Family |
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| Cecilia "Ceal" Hayes | Beatriz & John Williams |
| Debra & Timothy Howard | Christine & Monte Zaben |
| Riea & Steven Lainoff | Cameron Baird Foundation |
| Elaine & Alan Montgomery | |
| Sharon Nelson & John Simek | |

INVESTORS CIRCLE

***Individuals who renew an annual \$5,000 gift or more**

- Jennifer Bethel
- Carol & Rick Froehlich
- Debra & Timothy Howard
- Riea & Steven Lainoff
- Elaine & Alan Montgomery
- Sharon Nelson & John Simek
- Vicki & John Nelson
- Patsy & Randy Norton
- Ingrid & Scott Plein
- Kevin Riley
- The Schluskel Family
- Robert "Bob" Stewart
- Christine & Monte Zaben



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- Lisa Wal
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- Barbara
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- Nicholas
- Peggy P

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- Darcy C
- MaryAn
- Shaina C
- Priscilla
- Mary M
- Emily Re
- Paula S
- Corrine
- Ashleigh

Our Team

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