

A young girl with curly hair is smiling and sitting on a swing. She is wearing a pink shirt. The background is a bright, outdoor setting with green grass and a clear sky. The text is overlaid on a red rectangular background on the left side of the image.

FAIRFAX

CASA

FY2019

ANNUAL

REPORT

Celebrating 30 years of Hope



you are

CHANGING THEIR STORIES

'19

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Dear Friends,

When Fairfax CASA opened its doors 30 years ago, we were welcomed into the hearts of a community. During that first year, we served 80 abused and neglected children. In FY2019, we served 302. Due to your generosity throughout these years, Fairfax CASA has trained over 1,700 lay people to be the voice of more than 6,100 children who often have no voice in their case.

As we celebrate our 30th year of serving Fairfax's most vulnerable, resilient, and exceptional children, we must pause and recognize the people, their time, and their commitment to our community, that brought us to this milestone: our volunteers, our board members, our donors, and our partners. Our work is far from over, and we will continue to do this work as long as any child in Fairfax is abused or neglected. We will continue to train volunteers to speak up for a child, giving them hope for a bright future and instilling in them that they are worthy of love.

Over the years, we have adjusted our advocacy to meet the needs of the children we serve. We have expanded our staff, trained volunteers on topics that are timely and relevant, and emphasized to prospective volunteers the magnitude of the role, resulting in an exceptional pool of dedicated CASAs.

As you will see in the pages that follow, Fairfax CASA has never been healthier, and our role has never been more important. Be proud of what your contributions have made possible over the last 30 years. Be proud of your role in changing the life of an abused child.

As we have grown stronger, the community has come to rely upon us more, and our responsibilities are expanding. We are essential to making our children's lives better in the Fairfax community. We do not take our duties lightly, and we are honored to do this work. As we embark on year 31, we ask that you consider what you can do to help the next child.

THANK YOU, for being a part of it all.



Staff

Darcy Cunningham

Executive Director/CEO

Corrine Cavaliere

Program & Finance Specialist

Shaina Goldberg

Manager of Volunteer Recruitment

Emily Rea

*Manager of Adult Education &
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Dawnee Giammittorio

Supervisor

Mary Mulvenon

Supervisor

Paula Salguero McCommons

Supervisor

Tara Shimp

Supervisor

Ashleigh Conrad

*Administrative, Marketing, and
Events Associate*



OUR SUCCESS

At four months old, Ava* was admitted to INOVA Fairfax Hospital for severe injuries that appeared suspicious to medical professionals. Child Protective Services immediately got involved to ensure Ava's safety and well-being. Ultimately, Ava was removed from her parents and placed in foster care. As she healed and grew in her foster home, her biological mother diligently followed through on all court ordered evaluations, treatments, and parenting classes. The CASA collaborated with the foster parents, biological mother, and social worker to make sure that Ava had all the support she needed to thrive in foster care. At the same time, her mother worked hard to do what she needed to have custody returned to her.

Ava has grown into a active, curious, and playful toddler. In February of 2019, she was able to return to her biological mother's care for a trial home placement. Her mother reported to the CASA that she now feels more confident as a mother thanks to the support she received throughout the process. Recently, full custody was returned to her as she has demonstrated that she is capable of raising Ava in a safe, stable environment. Ava can now thrive at home with her family.

**Name changed to protect confidentiality*

our IMPACT

130

CASA volunteers served

302

Children from

188

Families in FY19



38%

of the children on our cases were witnesses to domestic violence



30%

of the children on our cases have at least one parent struggling with opioid addiction



37%

of the children on our cases have at least one parent struggling with mental illness



17,163

HOURS spent by volunteers advocating for the children they served



18

NEW VOLUNTEERS were trained and sworn into service during FY2019



252

COURT REPORTS submitted by volunteers



78

CASES were closed in 2019



5,580

VISITS made by volunteers to the children on their cases



114,360

MILES driven by volunteers to complete their duties



1,356

RECOMMENDATIONS were included in volunteers' court reports, 98% of which were adopted and ordered by judges

OUR

MOMENTS



JULY 2018

High Side, a local craft brew and Asian street food restaurant in Fairfax City, hosts our Cheers for Children Happy Hour. This kicks off an over year long partnership with High Side and with their support we have raised over \$3,000 for our program.



NOVEMBER 2018

Four new CASAs are sworn into service after completing 35+ hours of diverse training. These volunteers are now serving 6 children, advocating for their best interests and working to help them achieve permanency in a safe and loving home.



OCTOBER 2018

Fairfax CASA hosts our annual Light of Hope Celebration highlighting the incredible achievements of our volunteers. Judges, representatives from the Department of Family Services, and community leaders joined us to honor the accomplishments of our CASAs at The Barns at Wolf Trap .



JANUARY 2019

Fairfax CASA is selected as a \$7,000 grant recipient by the Reston Giving Circle of Hope, a collective giving organization that has invested more than \$1.2 million dollars into the community, to support CASA's work with older youth, 18-21



FEBRUARY 2019

After completing training, nine new CASA volunteers are sworn into service. Now, this group of dedicated individuals are advocating for 13 children.



APRIL 2019

The 9th Annual Fairfax Run for the Children is held at the Fairfax County Courthouse Complex and draws over 500 runners, 150 volunteers, and countless community supporters. Fairfax CASA raised over \$85,000 to fund our program, which equates to providing a full year of advocacy to 50 children who have experienced abuse and neglect.



MARCH 2019

Corporate partner, FreddieMac Legal Division, is nominated by Fairfax CASA, and wins, the 2019 Laurie D. Zelon Pro Bono Award, thanks to their work crafting new record retention policies for the program. This new operating procedure went on to positively impact all 27 CASA programs across the state of Virginia.

Fairfax CASA is also awarded a \$40,000 grant from the Greater Washington Community Foundation's Fund for Children, Youth and Families to further advocacy on behalf of older youth



JUNE 2019

Our Summer 2019 training class of 4 new CASAs and 2 new supervisors are sworn into service. These CASAs are now serving 6 children, advocating for their best interests. Our new supervisors are now guiding 48 CASAs on their own cases, providing a positive impact for 83 children.



OUR

SUCCESS

Three years ago, Cam* was placed into foster care due to the neglect and abuse he suffered because of his mother's struggle with mental health issues and her refusal to accept services and assistance. While in his foster home, his biological parents' rights were terminated, however, his older half sister and her boyfriend came forward wanting to be a permanent placement for Cam. He eventually moved in with them and things appeared to be going well until the boyfriend expressed doubts about moving forward with the adoption. This led to Cam exhibiting behavioral issues, acting out at home and school.

Cam's CASA became concerned that the adoptive placement might disrupt and took action. During her next visit, she and Cam took a walk to talk about how things were going. She expressed to Cam that she was worried about him and hoped he trusted her enough to confide in her. Cam opened up and revealed that he didn't feel that he belonged in the home and that he felt his sister did not want to go through with the adoption. His CASA listened, and encouraged him to bring these subjects up in therapy.

The therapy facilitated healthy conversations about understanding Cam's feelings, and the boyfriend was able to share his concerns about the adoption, ultimately alleviating some of his fears. Once he felt understood, Cam's behavior greatly improved, and the family came together, stronger than before. At this time, the family is moving forward with the adoption, providing Cam a safe, loving, and permanent home with family.

**Name changed to protect confidentiality*



OUR HIGHLIGHTS

During this fiscal year, Fairfax CASA staff focused on the impact of trauma, both for the children we serve and their parents, to help the volunteers look at their cases through a lens of empathy. Instead of asking “What is wrong with you?” we are witnessing our volunteers asking, “What **HAPPENED** to you?” During the year, Fairfax CASA provided 8 separate training opportunities to volunteers involving trauma. Executive Director Darcy Cunningham and CASA volunteer Kurt Doehnert attended the Virginia Summit on Childhood Trauma and Resilience, where keynote speaker Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, pediatrician, author of “The Deepest Well” and the newly appointed first-ever Surgeon General of California, shared with the audience the science behind Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), explaining how childhood adversity can affect every system of the body, from brain development to the hormonal and immune systems. It can even affect a child’s DNA. The more ACEs to which a child is exposed, the greater the likelihood of developing chronic health problems, such as asthma, during childhood. The health effects do not stop after childhood – exposure to ACEs greatly increases the likelihood of developing seven out of ten leading causes of death in adults, including heart disease and cancer. Dr. Burke Harris is working to share this information and knowledge widely, along with the knowledge of what can help buffer the effects of trauma and build resilience. Fairfax CASA volunteers can be a safety net, a source of support, and a resilience factor for the children in our cases.

During this fiscal year, Fairfax CASA also provided more trainings to volunteers on working with older youth and on the Fostering Futures program, program for youth who are in foster care when they turn 18. Fostering Futures allows youth ages 18-21 to remain “in care,” and to receive a monthly stipend. Youth who work 80 hours a month or are enrolled in school or who are working to eliminate barriers to employment are eligible for the program. During the year, **27** youth were eligible for the program. **2** were adopted and **17 (68%)** opted to take part in Fostering Futures. CASA volunteers remained on those cases and witnessed great outcomes for our youth, including graduations, acceptances to college, and gainful employment.

our

VOLUNTEERS



SCREENING POTENTIAL CASA VOLUNTEERS

Fairfax CASA dedicates an immense amount of time and effort properly screening and vetting potential volunteers. Due to the intensity of CASA work and the sensitivity of the information that CASAs have access to, we are critical, careful, and thorough in assessing potential volunteers to ensure that we are selecting the right candidate for the job. We evaluate each applicant's skills, time, and dedication to carrying out their advocacy work for the children they will potentially serve.

In FY19, our program received **414** inquiries about volunteering. We held **13** information sessions, the first step to becoming a CASA volunteer, for **210** attendees. **45** individuals applied to become a CASA and **18** were accepted and sworn-in to service.



40% of applicants were sworn into service

4% of those who inquire about becoming a CASA are sworn in as CASA volunteers

TRAINING CASA VOLUNTEERS

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 FY19, Fairfax CASA hosted **16** in-office continuing education sessions for our CASA's with topics including Trauma, Family Engagement, Substance Abuse, Immigration Advocacy, and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. In addition, **20** CASAs were certified in the Darkness 2 Light training program about child sex abuse. In total, our CASA volunteers completed **1,529** hours of continuing education hours in FY19.

"I think the most positive impact my work as a CASA has had on the children I have served is in demonstrating what a healthy relationship looks like. All CASAs do what we said we would. We are consistent. We are caring. We don't lose our temper. We tell them good things about themselves. We show up no matter where they have been moved or how well they behaved at their last visit or how well they are doing. We are kind to them and their family. For some children, this is the first time they have experienced a healthy relationship with a caring adult. **I am proud to be that adult.**" - Nancy D., CASA

"This experience has made me really appreciate the value of caring adults in a child's life and how important that caring relationship can be even when it may not be evident at the time. My time with the child and being able to enjoy that child for who they are and **provide them with a "safe place" to be who they are** has been one of the most rewarding parts of my CASA work." - Elizabeth P., CASA

"I believe that as a CASA I'm in the best position to connect the dots--collecting and assimilating all the information needed to serve as an objective voice, solely **focused on being the best possible advocate for a given child.** From my perspective, the best part of being a CASA is the opportunity to interact on a one-on-one basis with my CASA child and the foster parents. This is closely followed by the ability to network and collaborate with other professionals who share the same common goal--of providing the best possible care and support to children." - Gary A., CASA

Our CASA volunteers are truly an extraordinary group of individuals doing extraordinary things, both for CASA and in our community. On top of fulfilling their commitments to the children they serve, here are some other ways in which our CASAs gave back over the last fiscal year:



Fostered 8 rescue dogs



Tutored 30 students a week at the Fairfax Juvenile Detention Center



Traveled to Honduras and helped a rural community build houses



Volunteered 250+ hours at a local women's shelter



Managed a food pantry serving over 1,000 people in the last year



Donated a kidney to a matching donor in need

A young woman with long brown hair, wearing a blue and red plaid shirt, is petting a brown horse in a grassy field. The scene is set during sunset, with a warm, golden glow and silhouettes of trees in the background. The text 'our SUCCESS' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

our SUCCESS

16 year old Rebekah* had her case come before the Court after suffering sexual abuse at the hands of her mother's paramour. Initially, Rebekah was placed in a residential facility due to her expressions of suicidal ideation. After completing her in-patient treatment, she returned to live with her mother and younger siblings. Throughout the course of the case, Rebekah and her mother worked with therapists to improve their communication skills and build their relationship. Rebekah also had the opportunity to engage in therapeutic horseback riding lessons, which she enjoyed immensely. Despite her strengthening relationship with her mother, and her newfound passion for horseback riding, Rebekah was still struggling in school. Her CASA worked diligently with the social worker on the case, who teamed with Rebekah's mother to advocate for special education testing. Thanks to the team working together, Rebekah was found eligible for an Individualized Education Program (IEP). When the case closed earlier this year, Rebekah was stable, doing well in school, and had made significant progress in addressing her trauma and improving her relationship with her mother and younger siblings.

**Name changed to protect confidentiality*

celebrating **30 YEARS**

A reflection on 3 decades of CASA by Judge Jane Delbridge, founder of Fairfax CASA



Pictured above, Judge Delbridge
with Carol Coile

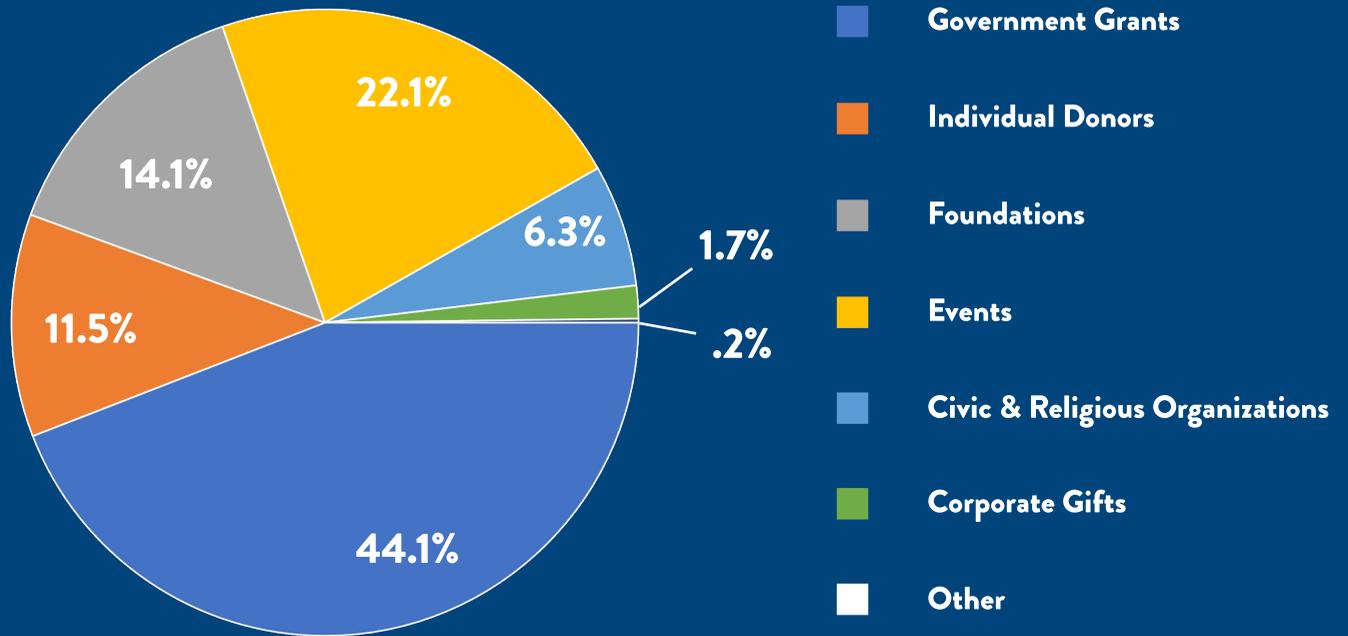
I first learned about CASA about 33 or 34 years ago when I attended a conference of District Attorneys and Judges on the West Coast. One of the meetings was an introduction to CASA. I had been on the bench long enough then to recognize immediately that the vast majority of the children in most cases involving alleged parental negligence and or abuse would benefit by the appointment of a dedicated, trained, and hopefully not over-worked volunteer, who would be a neutral spokesperson. They would meet often with the children, get to know the parents and other family members, as well as other people in the child's life like teachers, coaches, friends, etc. They would then report to the court as to what facts about the child's life they had learned, and the best solution that they could discover which would provide the child protection from harm if needed, and would provide the child with stability. It was hoped that the family, who had been called "bad parents, who may lose their children" would trust and be honest with the CASA because the volunteer is not being paid for their involvement in the case, and does not "belong" to the Department of Human Services, or on the list of Court Appointed Attorneys who belong to the same Bar Association and may be friends with the Department's Attorney whom they see talking and laughing together in the hall of the court before hearings.

I was excited about the possibilities of better informed cases and better outcomes for the children by starting a CASA organization. Carol Coile, a dedicated Fairfax attorney involved with the court, and folks from SCAN of Alexandria met with me to talk about what CASA could do for our families. We were all convinced it would help the Courts not separate, but see the repair of families, when possible. That group ran with the planning and organizing of CASA. We convinced Vince Pichcano, the Fairfax Director of Court Services, that CASA should be organized and supported and he did, professionally and personally. The rest is 30 years of history, and we have seen so many heroic CASA volunteers give of themselves and give of their time just because they want children to be safe and lovingly supported. Assisting in their training and swearing-ins, and reading many great reports of hard working CASAs, have been some of the real joys of my last 30 years of work with our Juvenile Court.

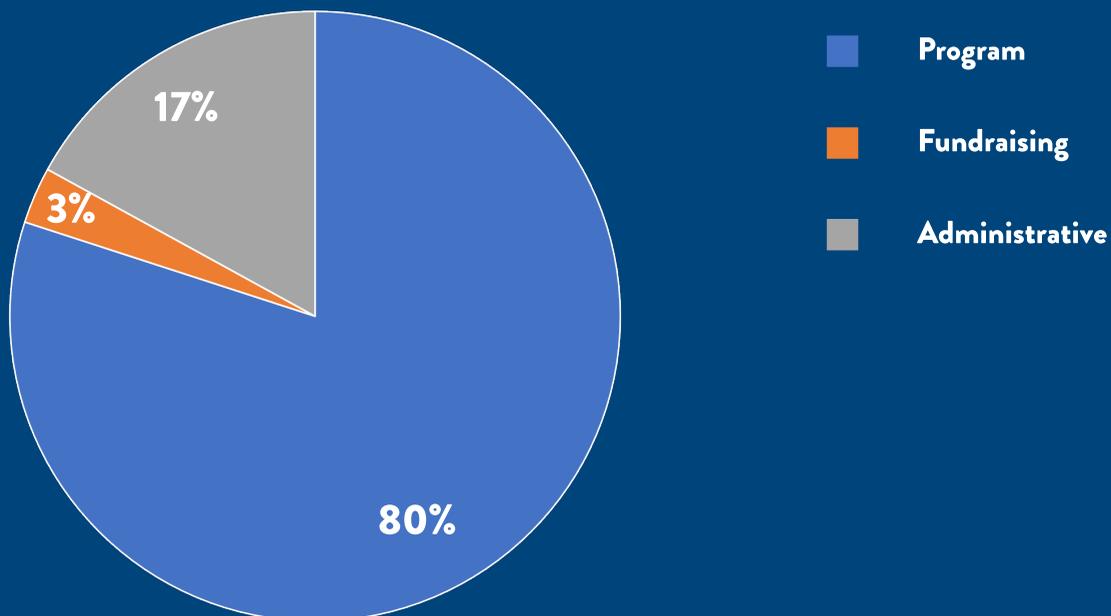
OUR

FINANCIALS

Total Income FY19



Total Expenses FY19



OUR

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INVESTORS CIRCLE

Individuals giving at least \$5,000 annually

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Debra & Timothy Howard
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