

Fairfax CASA
Annual
Report
FY2020





You help provide
A Guiding Light

'20

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Dear Friends,

As FY20 closed, our community--and the country--faced an unprecedented situation due to the COVID-19 crisis. While many businesses, activities and agencies closed their doors--for what we hoped would be a temporary period—Fairfax CASA not only remained “open” but fulfilled its obligation to the court, to the community, and most importantly, to the children we serve. We could not have done this without the unwavering dedication of our exceptional CASA volunteers and the continued support of our partners and generous donors. THANK YOU for standing by us, so that we could stand up for every child with an open child abuse case before the Court.

COVID-19 forced us to rethink the way we do just about everything. As you will learn in the pages that follow, Fairfax CASA adapted and our volunteers exceeded our expectations. They are often referred to as "heroes," and during this crisis, they proved that they deserve this label. Between March 1 and June 30, our CASAs conducted over 2,000 virtual visits with their children. Every court report was submitted. Every hearing was attended. Every child referred by the Court was assigned a volunteer. Every child had a voice.

We said goodbye, this year, to tenured staff and hello to two new supervisors in the office. We provided nearly three dozen continuing education trainings to our volunteers. We collaborated with community partners. For the first time in Fairfax CASA's 31-year history, we trained a class of volunteers virtually—30+ hours of training and a swearing in ceremony over ZOOM! And while the number of referrals dropped significantly in Q4, primarily because children were not in school and educators are the number one source of referrals to CPS, Fairfax CASA nonetheless served 10% more children in FY20 than FY19: 332 children were served from 191 families by 127 active volunteers.

Fairfax CASA is thriving in spite of COVID-19. And that is because of you and your support. Now, more than ever, Fairfax CASA's mandate of serving as the “eyes and ears of the court” is vital to the well-being of our community's most vulnerable children. As we embrace our new “norm,” we will continue to serve our children and recruit and train volunteers. We will continue to serve the court and our community. We will continue to do what we are entrusted to do, and we will continue to do it with passion and pride. Thank you, for trusting us to do this work. Thank you for being a part of it. We ask that you continue to support us and to know that we pledge to live up to your expectations and to honor our commitment to Fairfax and its children.



Staff

Darcy Hubbard

Executive Director/CEO

Corrine Cavaliere

Program & Finance Specialist

Shaina Goldberg

Manager of Volunteer Recruitment

Emily Rea

Manager of Adult Education & Supervisor

Dawnee Giammittorio

Supervisor

Jennifer Katak

Supervisor

Amy Prestidge

Supervisor

Paula Salguero

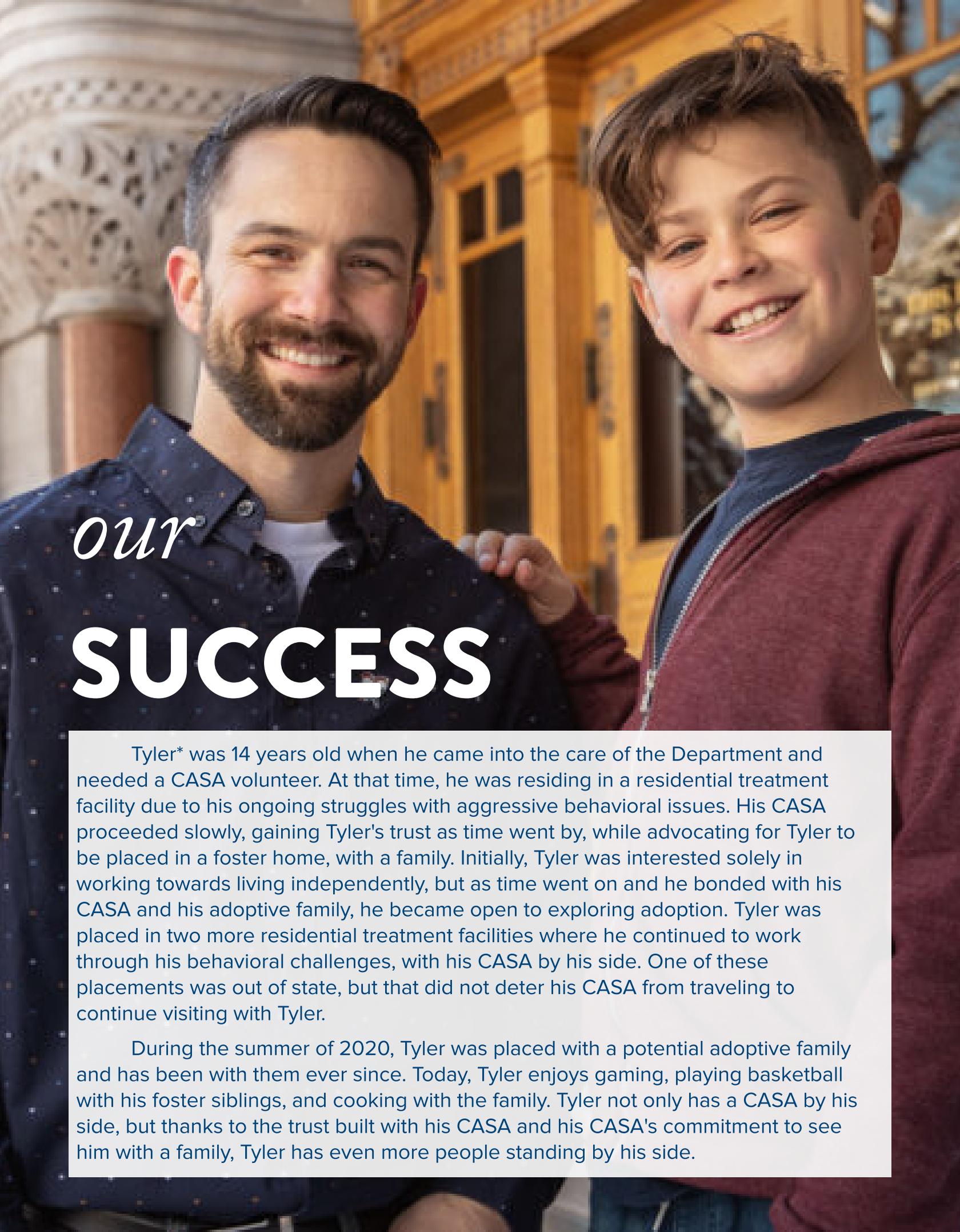
Supervisor

Tara Shimp

Supervisor

Ashleigh Conrad

Administrative, Marketing, and Events Associate



OUR

SUCCESS

Tyler* was 14 years old when he came into the care of the Department and needed a CASA volunteer. At that time, he was residing in a residential treatment facility due to his ongoing struggles with aggressive behavioral issues. His CASA proceeded slowly, gaining Tyler's trust as time went by, while advocating for Tyler to be placed in a foster home, with a family. Initially, Tyler was interested solely in working towards living independently, but as time went on and he bonded with his CASA and his adoptive family, he became open to exploring adoption. Tyler was placed in two more residential treatment facilities where he continued to work through his behavioral challenges, with his CASA by his side. One of these placements was out of state, but that did not deter his CASA from traveling to continue visiting with Tyler.

During the summer of 2020, Tyler was placed with a potential adoptive family and has been with them ever since. Today, Tyler enjoys gaming, playing basketball with his foster siblings, and cooking with the family. Tyler not only has a CASA by his side, but thanks to the trust built with his CASA and his CASA's commitment to see him with a family, Tyler has even more people standing by his side.

our IMPACT

127
CASA volunteers served

332
Children from

191
Families in FY20

 **10%** Fairfax CASA saw a 10% increase in the number of children served in FY20 compared to FY19, despite COVID-19

 **2%** Fairfax CASA saw a 2% increase in the number of families served in FY20 compared to FY19

 **39%** of the children on our cases in FY20 were between the ages of 0-5 years old

 **18,733** HOURS spent by volunteers advocating for the children they served

 **4,4163** FACE to FACE VISITS made by volunteers with their CASA children

 **2,338** VIRTUAL VISITS made by CASAs due to the COVID-19 emergency

 **26,852** CONTACTS were made by CASAs with providers or parties to their cases

 **100,032** MILES driven by volunteers in furtherance of their duties

 **23** NEW VOLUNTEERS were trained and sworn into service

 **295** COURT REPORTS were submitted by volunteers

 **125** CASES were closed

our MOMENTS

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

In October of 2019, over 180 community members including our volunteers, judges, DFS representatives, county attorneys and agency partners, joined together to celebrate and recognize our selfless volunteers at our annual Light of Hope volunteer appreciation event. This year's event marked the 30th Anniversary of Fairfax CASA and Ashley Rhodes Courter, author of "Three Little Words: A Memoir," served as our keynote speaker. Each CASA volunteer was gifted a signed copy of the book. Volunteer Cathryn Krebs received the annual May Cook award for outstanding advocacy and Ben Osorio, an immigration attorney who represented one of our children, pro bono, in his immigration case, received the Child Advocacy Award. High Side received the Community Partner award and Union Home Mortgage was 2019's Corporate Champion.

RECRUITING SUPERHEROES, NATIONWIDE

The COVID-19 emergency prompted Fairfax CASA to cancel our 10th Annual Run for the Children in April of 2020--our largest awareness and fundraising event. Our staff quickly reorganized and implemented a **virtual** Run for the Children, held from May 30th through June 7th. The week long virtual race allowed Fairfax CASA to share via social media our story of learning to adapt through the voices of staff, volunteers, and Board members. To wrap up the race week, we celebrated with a virtual race party, complete with a DJ on Facebook Live, and honored the resilience of the children we serve, promoted awareness for our cause, and raised over \$40,000. Thanks to the flexibility and limitless reach of a virtual race, we registered 469 participants from all 50 states, and even had runners and walkers in Europe and Australia supporting the children of Fairfax CASA!

TEAM GROWTH AND MILESTONES

During this fiscal year, Fairfax CASA hired two new volunteer supervisors: Jennifer Katak and Amy Prestidge. After 7 years with Fairfax CASA, Supervisor Mary Mulvenon left Fairfax CASA to pursue new endeavors. Executive Director Darcy Hubbard completed her 5th year of employment in September of 2019, and our longest serving team member, Corrine Cavaliere celebrated her 18th year of employment with Fairfax CASA. We also bid farewell to our longest serving CASA Volunteer this year, Sandy Weinger, who retired from her CASA work after an impressive and unprecedented 25 years of service.





OUR **RESPONSE** **TO** **COVID-19**

When the COVID-19 health emergency stopped much of America in its tracks in March, the child welfare system and Fairfax CASA “pivoted” quickly and adjusted accordingly. Throughout the crisis, our CASA volunteers not only continued to meet their mandate of providing advocacy services to our most at-risk children, but they went above and beyond in doing so. Fairfax CASA requires CASA volunteers to visit twice monthly with their child(ren); this standard is in excess of state and National CASA best practice standards which require only one visit per month. In light of the COVID-19 safety protocols put into place, CASA volunteers were unable visit with their children in person from March to July. Knowing that we could not allow our children to go “unseen” we asked our volunteers to commit to visiting their children, through a virtual platform, once per week. Our volunteers quickly download apps, opened up the Facetime feature on their phones and learned how to ZOOM, to ensure that they were seeing their children.

When it came to recruiting, screening, and training new CASA volunteers, our staff exhibited the same ingenuity and dedication. Fairfax CASA conducted several live video streams on Facebook to raise awareness about the program, held seven information sessions virtually, and for the first time in Fairfax CASA history, completed a full training class over Zoom. The Fairfax CASA staff did an exceptional job adapting to the platform and adjusting training to a virtual format. Continuing education, for existing volunteers, did not fall by the wayside: Volunteers were provided with monthly online learning opportunities and book discussions.

The virus has had far-reaching effects beyond illness and the CASAs have been pivotal in ensuring that the families in their cases received important information about resources available. They notified families of meal programs provided by the local school systems. They raised matters in the Court when they had concerns about safety and well-being. They did their jobs. Their unpaid, on their own time “job” of providing a voice to every child with an open case before the Court.

our

SUCCESS



Three teen sisters were removed from their mother and stepfather's care due to physical and sexual abuse. Immediately a maternal uncle, still in his twenties, stepped up to be a placement for the sisters, keeping them out of foster care and allowing them to stay together. At first, the uncle and the sisters reported many challenges and expressed apprehension about being involved with the Department, the Court system, and the CASA program. However, thanks to the trust and relationship the family built with their CASA volunteer, they grew to embrace the work the team was doing to ensure that the girls were safe and thriving. What follows is the uncle's reflection, in his own words, about the impact of their CASA volunteer:

"The role of CASA was huge for my girls and I. Our CASA appointee is someone the girls genuinely appreciate in their lives. When this all started, the girls and I were all so overwhelmed. Employees from DFS were coming in and out of our home, lawyers, caseworkers, counselors, court dates, etc. With all of this going on at the same time, the CASA's involvement was the one person the girls learned to confide in if they needed to share something. The girls, for a good majority of the time, viewed everyone else as someone trying to "take them away from their mother." However, they saw their CASA as someone they could confide in when they thought no one else was listening. They viewed their CASA as the one person on their team. I think the role that CASA plays is significant. It is a way to show the child that even though you might think everyone here is against you, I am here to make sure your voice is heard and not silenced. To this day, their CASA's involvement means a lot to them, and I genuinely thank her from the bottom of my heart."



our COLLABORATIONS

During this fiscal year, Fairfax CASA has worked with a diverse range of private, public, and non-profit organizations to better the outcomes for the children we serve within our community. Fairfax CASA is a founding member of the Fairfax Child Abuse Prevention Partnership, and also holds seats on the following organizations:

- Trauma Informed Community Network for Fairfax (TCIN)
- StepUp4Kids Collaborative
- Court's Children Services Forum
- Fairfax Domestic Violence Network
- Best Practices Team
- Northern Virginia Community College Great Expectations Advisory Committee
- Virginia CASA State Leadership Team

In addition to these partnerships, Executive Director Darcy Hubbard was asked to join the Commission on Youth Guardianship Advisory Group for the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Virginia DSS Program Involvement Program. Additionally, Darcy has been asked to join the interviewing panel for DSS for multiple vacancies.

Fairfax CASA works closely with the other CASA programs in Virginia, as well as many nonprofits in the area, sharing information, collaborating on projects and advocating for better practices and programming for the children and families we serve.

Our Board of Directors approves the annual budget and strategic goals which in FY20 included diversifying our volunteer pool, diversifying our revenue stream, identifying new corporate sponsors, and retaining both volunteers and staff.

OUR

VOLUNTEERS



SCREENING POTENTIAL CASA VOLUNTEERS

Fairfax CASA works diligently to screen and vet 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 FY20, our program received **503** inquiries about volunteering. We held **22** information sessions, the first step to becoming a CASA volunteer, for **245** attendees. **57** individuals applied to become a CASA and **23** were accepted and sworn-in to service.



40% of applicants were sworn into service

5% 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 FY20, Fairfax CASA hosted **31** in-office continuing education sessions for our CASA's with topics including domestic violence, educational advocacy, childhood trauma, incest, kinship care, and the court process. In addition, staff have watched many documentaries, listened to podcasts, and read books on issues that related to the work that we do. In total, the staff trained for **164** hours and volunteers trained for **2,238** hours.



our **SUCCESS**

Sometimes, reunification with family can take our children to homes outside of Virginia. In Mya's* case, it took her home, to Honduras. At the age of 7-years-old, Mya endured the sudden loss of her mother and came into foster care. Her extended family in Honduras immediately began working with the Department to do whatever was required to have her placed with them. At the same time, Mya's foster family indicated that they wanted to move forward with adoption. While Mya was happy with her foster family, she was able to tell her CASA about how much she missed her family in Honduras, especially her aunt. With this information, her CASA was able to advocate that even though her foster family could be an appropriate adoptive placement, Mya's best interest would be to return to Honduras where she could be raised by her family.

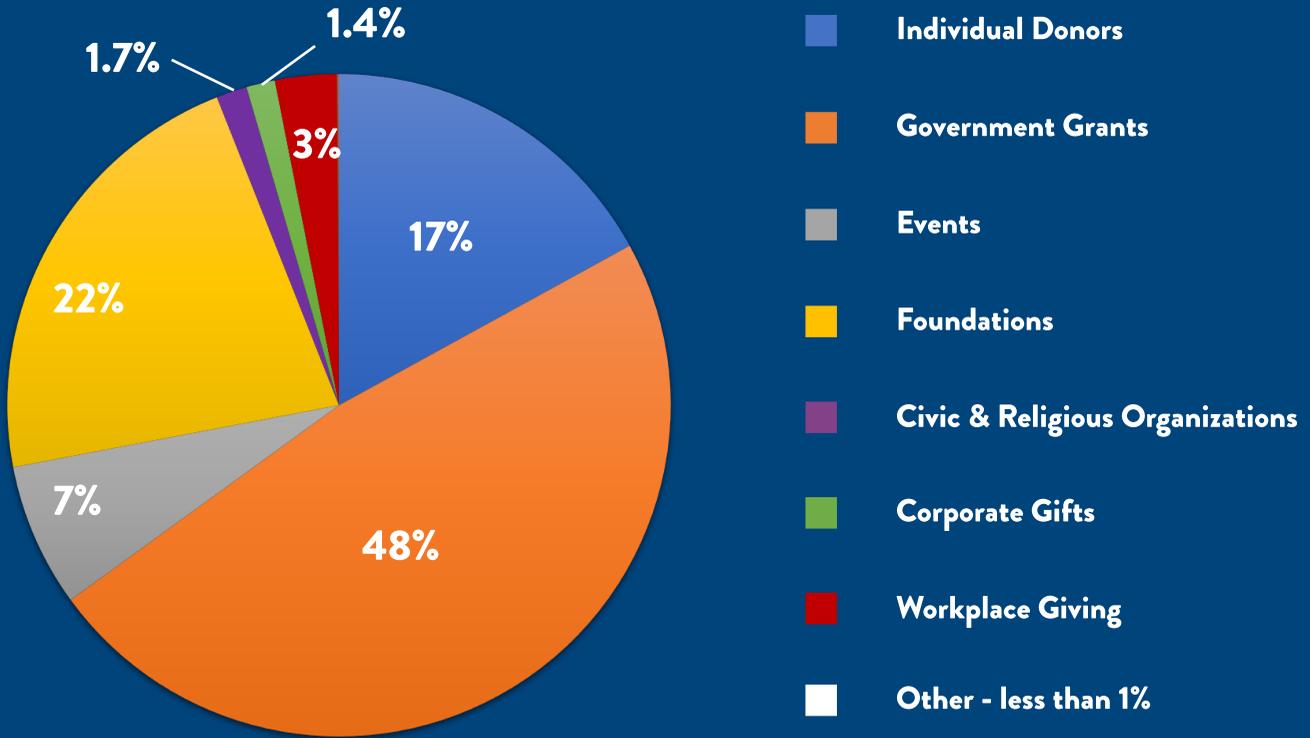
During the months it took for an international home study to be completed, Mya had Facetime and telephone calls with her family. After the home study was approved, Mya moved to her aunt's home in Honduras. The DFS specialist accompanied the child on her journey and stayed for several days to ensure she was adjusting to the new home. The reports from the DFS specialist were overwhelmingly positive. The family gave Mya a welcome celebration upon her arrival. She spent the first few days going to the pool with her cousins, and spending time with other family members, including her half siblings. All reports since the move have been positive. Mya will continue to be monitored by an international social services agency for a few months at which time the case will be closed with Mya having found a permanent home with her family.

**Name changed to protect confidentiality*

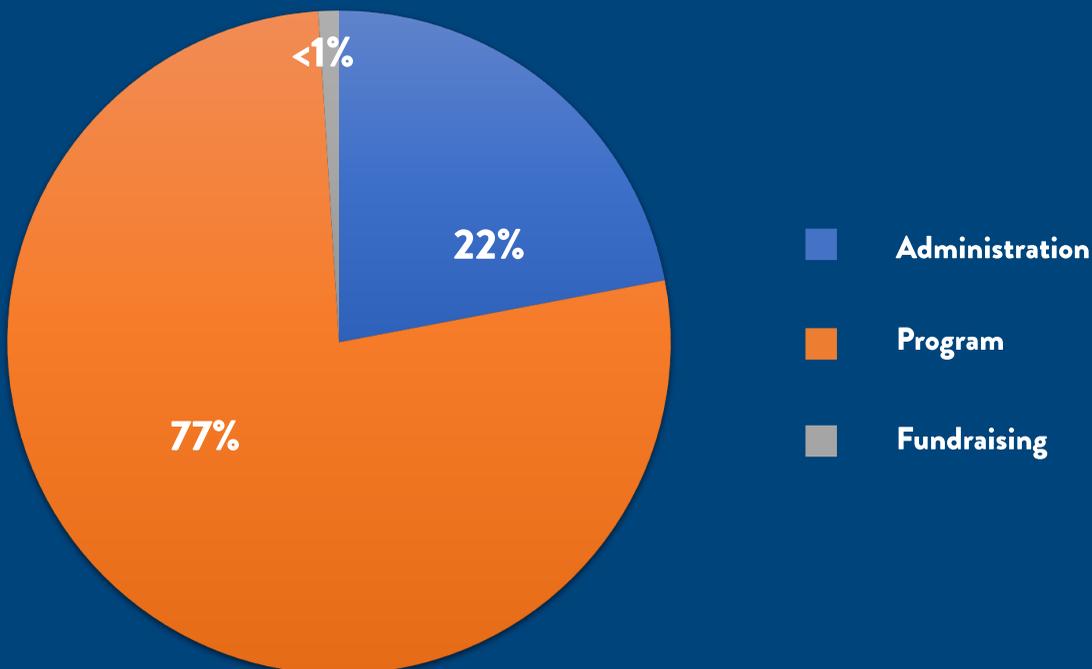
OUR

FINANCIALS

Total Income FY20 - \$821,922



Total Expenses FY20 - \$841,983



OUR

SUPPORTERS

LIFETIME MAJOR DONORS

Individuals giving \$25,000+ since 2000

Betty & Wayne Angell
Shelia & Bryan Bates
The Cameron Baird Foundation
W. Brad Clark
James W. Clauson Jr.
Barbara & B. Mark Fried
Rick & Carol Froehlich
Rod & Karen Gancas
Betty & Bob Gates
Cecilia "Ceal" Hayes
Debra & Timothy Howard
Riea & Steven Lainoff
Elaine & Alan Montgomery
Vicki & John Nelson
Patsy & Howard Norton
Ingrid & Scott Plein
Kevin Riley
The Schlusssel Family
Alan Schuman
Robert Stewart
Nancy & Robert Torray
Jon Williams
Christine & Monte Zaben

INVESTORS CIRCLE

Individuals giving at least \$5,000 annually

Debra & Timothy Howard
Elaine & Alan Montgomery
Vicki & John Nelson
Patsy & Howard Norton
Ingrid & Scott Plein
Kevin Riley
The Schlusssel Family
Robert Stewart
Robert Torray
Christine & Monte Zaben

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The Chambliss Family
Christie Leary, Leary Porter Law
Christopher Krell, Principal, Cassaday & Company
CrankFrog
Dickson Company
Fayez, Goriup, McRae
Freddie Mac Foundation
The Froehlich Family
Gates Hudson
GB Company, LLC
Kappa Alpha Theta, Northern Virginia Alumnae Chapter
Karen O'Gorman
Nitehawks Swing
Sensei Enterprises
The Schlusssel Family
Shady Grove Pharmacy
Soundwave Entertainment
St. Marks Catholic Church
Twins Ace Hardware
Tyler Nguyen & Associates
Union Home Mortgage

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United Way of the National Capital Area #9201

Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) #68151