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Fiscal Year Report



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Letter from the Executive Director



Each year as I prepare the Annual Report for Fairfax CASA, I have an opportunity to reflect on our challenges, our accomplishments, and most importantly, the children and families we serve.

Looking back on FY17, we celebrated some fantastic, joyful moments for the children we serve, while also wrestling with the difficult and very sad recommendations that had to be made for others. We succeeded in not only meeting our budgetary goals for the year, but exceeding them for the third year in a row. And, we swore in 25 new members of our community who joined our CASA family of dedicated volunteers.

As you read through this annual report, know that you—our program staff, committed volunteers, stakeholders, generous partners, collaborators and donors—played a critical role in everything we were able to accomplish over the last year. Thank you, for making FY2017 another successful year here at Fairfax CASA. We look forward to partnering with you again in FY2018 as we work to make sure every child's voice is heard in our child welfare system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Darcy Cunningham'.

Darcy Cunningham

Executive Director



**"CASA volunteers
are part of the
solution"**

About Fairfax CASA

Every year, hundreds of Fairfax children are abused and neglected by their parents or caregivers. These children need support from the child welfare system and our community to heal and thrive. CASA volunteers are part of the solution. Appointed by judges, these trained citizen volunteers look out for the children under the court's protection, advocating for their best interest in the courtroom and community. For many abused children, their CASA volunteer will be the one constant adult presence in their life.

Fairfax CASA is a 501 (c) 3 public charity, which recruits, trains, and supervises on average 150 CASA volunteers each year as they help abused and neglected children find safe and loving homes.

BY THE NUMBERS

Fairfax CASA volunteers continue to fulfill their promises to provide the children on their cases with a voice and to stay on those cases from beginning to end. They continue to act as a beacon of hope and a safe harbor in what can be a confusing and chaotic system.

-Darcy
Cunningham



 **17,077** HOURS
Spent by volunteers advocating for the abused and neglected children they serve

 **80** PERCENT
Of Fairfax CASA's funding was directed to program services in 2017

 **3,666** VISITS
Made by volunteers to the children on their cases

 **235** COURT REPORTS
Submitted by volunteers to the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court

 **25** NEW VOLUNTEERS
Were trained and sworn in during 2017

 **144** CASES
Were closed in 2017

 **132,265** MILES
Volunteers drove in furtherance of their duties to protect the best interests of their children

 **1,314** RECOMMENDATIONS
Were included by volunteers in court reports, 95% of which were adopted and ordered by judges

FY17 witnessed a 52% increase in the number of cases closed over FY16, by the Court.

Program Highlights 2017

CASA Collaborates

Collaboration is a cornerstone of Fairfax CASA's success. Identifying ways that we can work with and assist other service providers and organizations who support the children we work with not only benefits the children and the community, but is also the right thing to do: In order to create a strong safety net for Fairfax's children and families, nonprofits such as Fairfax CASA *must* work with various County agencies and other organizations. Fairfax CASA continues to appreciate and strengthen the relationships it has built with the Fairfax County Department of Family Services; the Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court; the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services; other CASA programs across the Commonwealth and country; a multitude of nonprofit agencies in Fairfax County; various County agencies and local businesses. Staff of Fairfax CASA serve on various committees, boards and task forces throughout the County and State, representing not only the CASA program but also the needs and best interests of the children and families we serve.

This year, Fairfax CASA joined SafeSpot Child Advocacy Center, Fairfax County Public Schools, SCAN of Northern Virginia, the Fairfax County Department of Family Services and the Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services to form the **Fairfax Child Abuse Prevention Partnership (FCAPP)**. FCAPP) is a community collaborative designed to coordinate efforts to prevent - and to raise awareness about - child abuse and neglect. The goal is to grow the network of professionals and citizens who exchange ideas and seek constructive ways to eliminate child abuse and neglect.



Program Highlights 2017

Improving the outcomes of youth 18-21

Effective July 1, 2016, for the first time in Virginia history, foster youth who attain the age of 18 can remain in care, if they choose, up until age 21. This important law, called the Fostering Futures Program, allows these young adults to remain in their foster homes or receive financial assistance for independent living arrangements, formal supports and educational funding, as well as to formally maintain their relationship with their CASA volunteer.

In July of 2016, Fairfax CASA, in collaboration with the Great Expectations program of NOVA Community College and the Virginia Department of Social Services, held a well-attended training on Fostering Futures that was attended by stakeholders, students, CASA Volunteers, NOVA employees and Fairfax DFS staff, that provided a comprehensive overview of the program, preparing those on the “front lines” with the information they would need to help roll out the program. During the first year of Fostering Futures, 75% of the youth with a CASA Volunteer who turned 18 opted to take advantage of the program and remain in care. Statistically, youth who remain connected and have options such as the Fostering Futures program will experience less homelessness, unemployment, school dropout, court involvement, poor health and teen pregnancy than their peers who “age out” of foster care.

Fairfax Run for the Children

Fairfax CASA held its 7th annual Fairfax Run for the Children on Saturday, April 29, 2017, that started and finished at the Fairfax County Courthouse Complex. The race brought together runners, walkers and community members to support Fairfax CASA’s mission and raised over \$84,000!

Caleb Hymans, the youth winner for the boys 8k (and 2nd overall among all runners) broke a world record at the race, in the 12-year old boys 8k category! His time was 28.58, crushing the existing record of 30:18 that had been in place since 1996.

This year's race is scheduled for April 28th, 2018.

How our Volunteers made an impact this year...

Volunteering for Fairfax CASA is challenging. Our volunteers are required to make monthly face-to-face visits with the children on their cases (sometimes to multiple foster homes if sibling groups are placed separately); attend all meetings related to their children; make contact with service providers; gather documents; assist the Guardian ad Litem; write court reports that include recommendations; attend all court hearings; and, of course, always keep the children's best interests in mind while providing them a voice in the complex child welfare system. Below are a few examples of how Fairfax CASA Volunteers made an impact in FY17:

A 17 year-old young woman had been placed in an independent living setting, where she had her own apartment, and was responsible for getting herself to her job and community college classes (as she had graduated from high school early). This young woman was suffering from Depression, and it appeared to her CASA that she was struggling. The CASA made an effort to develop a relationship with this young lady, showing her how to cook and grocery shop, taking her out for lunch, and being available to her by phone. The CASA also advocated for this young woman to be placed in a foster home, where she would have the support and guidance of a responsible adult. One night, the CASA received a text message from the young woman, who had taken a bottle of pills in an effort to end her life. The CASA immediately called her but the young lady didn't answer. The CASA called 9-1-1, staying on the phone until first responders could confirm she was alive. The young woman was transported to the hospital and survived. The Department of Family Services (DFS) moved her into a loving foster home, with a foster mother who is able to meet her needs. This young woman is receiving the mental health treatment, and continues to attend community college.

Jane came into foster care at age 14 having just given birth to her son. She was dropped at the hospital by cab and numerous attempts were made to contact her mother; however, her mother failed to respond. In the four years since she came into foster care, Jane has had custody of her son, and they lived in 7 different foster care placements. She had 2 different Guardian *ad litem*s, 2 DFS Specialists, and attended 2 different high schools. In June 2017, Jane graduated from high school on time. She was awarded a \$500 scholarship from her school's counseling department, and she has enrolled in Northern Virginia Community College. Over the course of her time in foster care, her CASA volunteer was a significant support to Jane. Her CASA followed her to every placement, including ones as far away as Fredericksburg, visiting her twice a month and talking and texting with her frequently. The CASA has assisted Jane to identify resources available to her in college including the Great Expectations program. Jane invited her CASA to her high school graduation and when Jane turned 18, she asked for her CASA to continue on her case as she transitions into an Independent Living placement and college.

Three siblings came into care after witnessing horrific domestic violence and the sexual assault of their mother. They were placed in a wonderful foster home outside of Fairfax County. It became immediately apparent that all three children had significant educational need: The oldest sibling was estimated to be 5 grade levels behind in reading, the younger two also significantly delayed. The foster mother tried, unsuccessfully, to secure special education services with the school district. The CASA volunteer began advocating for special education, and through an exceptionally contentious and adversarial process that involved mediation and getting the Virginia Department of Education involved, all three children were found to be eligible for special education and have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the 2017-2018 school year.

Volunteer Selection and Training



SCREENING

It is almost impossible to imagine the sad, traumatic, and disturbing scenarios a CASA volunteer will be exposed to when they are assigned to a case. That is one of the reasons why Fairfax CASA dedicates so much time and energy recruiting and screening prospective volunteers; to ensure that we are selecting the right candidate for the job. Applicants for pre-service training are carefully vetted to ensure they have the skills and dedication to serve the children on their cases for the lifetime of the case - an average of 2 years or longer.

In FY17, the program received 313 inquiries about volunteering. We held 16 information sessions (attendance at one is the required first step in becoming a volunteer) for 180 attendees. 58 people applied and 25 were accepted and sworn into service.

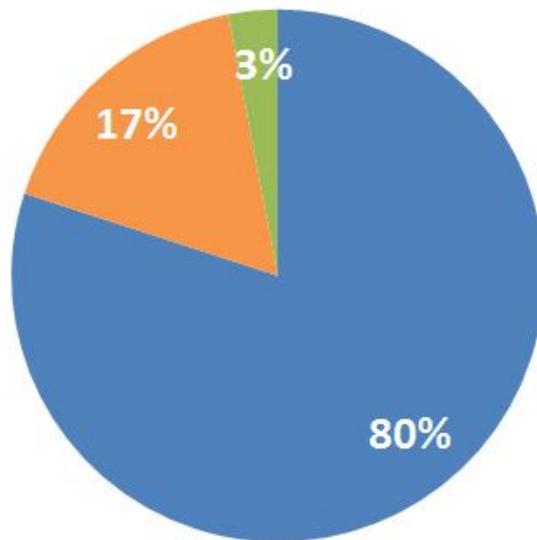
TRAINING

On top of 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.

Fairfax CASA hosts a robust and diverse continuing education program with several opportunities every month for volunteers to come together and share their experiences. Gatherings run the gamut from lectures and round table discussions, to book clubs and movie nights.



FINANCIALS



■ Program Services ■ Management and General Expenses ■ Fundraising

Fairfax CASA is funded through public, private, and foundation support. In 2017, 80% of funding received by Fairfax CASA was directed to program services.

In FY17 our Functional Expenses totaled

\$744,650.54

LIFETIME MAJOR DONORS

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

Betty & Wayne Angell
Shelia & Brian Bates
W. Brad Clark
James W. Clauson Jr.
Barbara & B. Mark Fried
Barbara & Rick Froelich
Rod & Karen Gancas
Betty & Robert Gates
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Patsy & Randy Norton
Ingrid & Scott Plein
Barbara Kinosky & Kevin Riley
The Schluskel Family
Robert "Bob" Stewart
Nancy & Robert Torray
Beatriz & John Williams
Christine & Monte Zaben
Cameron Baird Foundation

INVESTORS CIRCLE

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

Elaine & Alan Montgomery
Sharon Nelson & John Simek
Vicki & John Nelson
Patsy & Randy Norton
Ingrid & Scott Plein
The Schluskel Family
Robert "Bob" Stewart
Christine & Monte Zaben

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FY 17 (July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017)

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FAIRFAX CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

www.fairfaxcasa.org

Phone: 703.273.3526

Fax: 703.273.2201

4103 Chain Bridge Rd, Suite #200, Fairfax, VA 22030