

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



MORRIS
SUSSEX
COUNTIES



**YOU CHANGED
OUR STORY!** →
SEE
INSIDE



“IN THE MIDST OF EVERY CRISIS, LIES GREAT OPPORTUNITY.”

—*Albert Einstein*

This CASA organization would not allow a worldwide pandemic to stop our advocacy for children in need. At the beginning of March, CASA responded with agility by quickly resetting our operations, and by March 18th we closed the CASA offices with protocols for all staff to work remotely. Zoom accounts ensured face-to-face connections for staff and volunteers in weekly meetings and chat groups. CASA volunteers were notified to stop in-person visits and begin checking more frequently with the children and families via video chats and phone calls. Our volunteers responded quite creatively to connect with children virtually by

reading them books, playing games, assisting with online learning, sharing music playlists, sending recipes and then cooking and baking with them while on Facetime or Skype, and keeping in contact with the children’s caregivers to find out how CASA could assist. CASA volunteers, who have their own families and work responsibilities, found the resourcefulness to ensure that their assigned children were safe and well cared for. Our organization stretched beyond our budget to provide laptop computers for online learning, therapies, and family connections. We then proceeded to make deliveries of essential items, including diapers, formula, and supermarket gift cards. Books, bicycles and helmets, board games, craft items, and educational items were also delivered to doorsteps to keep children safely engaged.



By July we resumed in-person visits, and our volunteers were provided with masks, hand sanitizer, and a strict protocol for visiting children and families. Having eyes on these vulnerable children and being able to have physical contact, even with distancing, allowed our volunteers and staff to understand their critical needs. Although New Jersey courthouses have been closed since mid-March, our family court hearings have taken place via a virtual platform. CASA volunteers

continue to provide comprehensive reports to the court and all involved parties. For each of their assigned children, they report on the status of the child and family. The judges depend on these reports, now more than ever. Our Family Judges wrote letters of appreciation to all of our volunteers in April for National Volunteer Appreciation Month.

continued →



THE ONLY TRULY OBJECTIVE VOICE PRESENTED TO THE COURT IS THAT OF THE CASA. THUS THE COURT HAS COME TO DEPEND ON THE COMPREHENSIVE AND THOROUGH REPORTS OF OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS.

THE HONORABLE MICHAEL PAUL WRIGHT, J.S.C.

As the COVID-19 pandemic raged on, unfortunately, CASA at the ZOO, our family fundraiser at Turtle Back Zoo, had to be cancelled. We needed the support of our donors more than ever. And you came through for us! In addition to donations from our community, a very creative group of students and teachers from the West Morris Mendham High School's Service Club created a virtual event, *Service for Shenanigans*, incentivizing charitable donations with a comedic twist.

Your donations throughout the year provided tutoring for children who struggled with online learning; bought bicycles, helmets, and equipment for outdoor activities to keep children occupied during the summer months; and allowed us to continue to recruit and train volunteers to be advocates and mentors for children in foster care, who truly need a champion.

The CASA community of donors, volunteers, board, and staff will not stop our work until the time when all children are protected from harm, live in a permanent and stable family environment, and receive the services that will meet their developmental, educational, physical, and mental health needs.

Together We Can Change a Child's Story.

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OUR MISSION



Our mission is to be a strong voice for the best interests of vulnerable children who have been removed from their homes or are under court supervision due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment.

We recruit, train, and supervise community volunteers to be advocates, mentors, and champions for each child on his or her journey to a safe, permanent, and nurturing home.

THREE HEARTS ONE FAMILY





Right here in our community, there are children who have been abused and neglected and are living in the shadows of our lives. Lara was the CASA, a Court Appointed Special Advocate, for three of these children.

The children's parents, who were divorced, were cited with severe child neglect and abandonment. Dad, a substance abuser for many years, no longer lived with the family, while mom, also an alcoholic, had significant mental health issues. While the three children were on a weekend visit with dad, he left them at a diner, saying he would be "right back." An hour later the police were called, and when the children were taken home to their mom, she was found unresponsive from an alcohol binge.

The children, Matthew age 7, Emma age 5, and Ava age 3, were placed with a non-relative foster family who had a 10-year-old son. Lara met the children and the foster family 3 days after their placement. From reading their files she learned that all three children had medical and psychological issues, and Matthew, the seven-year-old, had failing grades in first grade due to numerous absences and changes in school placements.

These were first-time foster parents with a small house who graciously opened their home to three children after applying for only one child. They did not want to separate the sibling group and realized they would need a great deal of support and services to make this new family work. Therefore, they were thrilled when Lara first visited and explained her role as an advocate.

Lara was instrumental in making the needs of the children known to the court and all those involved in the case. She advocated for moving the children to a school in the town where they now lived to eliminate hour-long bus rides. She met with teachers and school Child Study Team professionals to facilitate an evaluation for Matthew and then followed up on his educational plans to ensure that he received appropriate resources, including after-school tutoring and counseling.



After 1 year, Matthew showed positive improvements in school, making the honor roll; Emma was well-adjusted in kindergarten; and Ava was thriving in her preschool.

CASA purchased a laptop computer for the foster parents to help them keep in touch with school personnel and ensure easy communication with Lara and other parties to the children's court case. Lara assisted the foster parents in finding after-school activities for the children that included dance classes, swim lessons, and sports, depending on each child's interests. The CASA organization assisted in funding several of these activities.

The children's health issues, including malnourishment and asthma, improved, and their self-confidence soared.

Life was on a positive trajectory for the three siblings; however, they were very anxious about a possible reunification with their mother, and they were all fearful of having to leave their new home. Lara suggested to the Law Guardian that the children meet with the judge to express their concerns and desires.

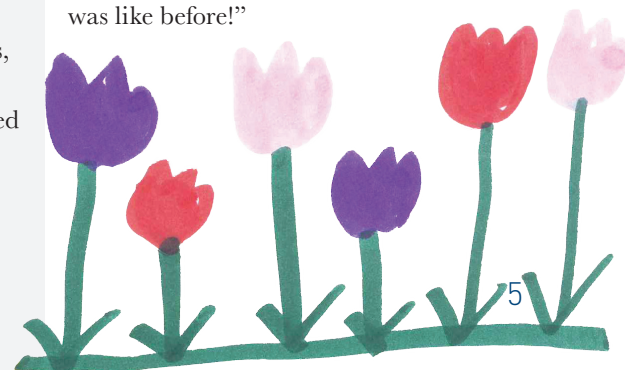
The judge spoke to the children in his chambers, and even at their young ages, they were able to tell the judge where they wanted to live.

After over 2 years, mom and dad surrendered their parental rights, allowing their children to be adopted by their foster parents. Overnight a family of three became a family of six.

Lara was in court for the adoption, and she couldn't have been happier to have had a part in this happy ending. However, when the foster parents told the judge,

"If it wasn't for the constant efforts and support of the CASA, we may not have been able to go through with this," Lara could not contain her tears of joy. She will always be a very special friend to this family.

When the judge asked the biological son, who gets along wonderfully with the other children, how it was to suddenly have three siblings, his response was, "I don't even remember what my life was like before!"



THANK YOU FOR STANDING WITH US!



We could not do this work without donors like you.

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A special thank you to the Team at **W20** for donating their time, talents, and friendship to CASA throughout the year. We especially appreciate their creative work in designing this Annual Report.

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2020 ANNUAL REPORT

IN FY20, OUR DONORS HELPED US GET THE WORK DONE. OUR ORGANIZATION SERVED 100% OF THE ELIGIBLE CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE IN MORRIS AND SUSSEX COUNTIES. WE ARE THE ONLY NJ CASA PROGRAM TO HAVE REACHED THIS SUCCESS.

144

CASA VOLUNTEERS
ADVOCATED FOR 219
CHILDREN

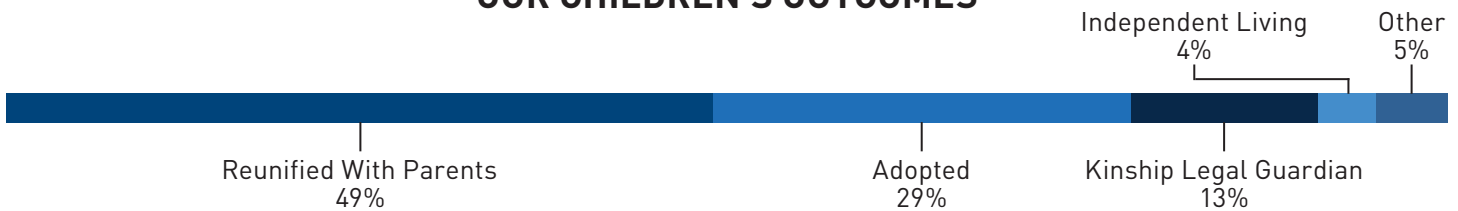
80

CHILDREN ACHIEVED
PERMANENCY
(SEE OUTCOMES)

93%

OF RECOMMENDATIONS
MADE BY CASA TO THE
COURT WERE ACCEPTED

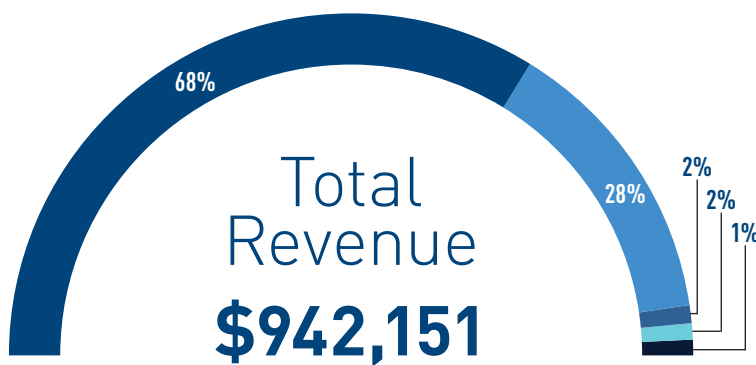
OUR CHILDREN'S OUTCOMES



\$307,227 of advocacy services were provided by our CASA volunteers based on the NJ Independent Sector value of volunteer time

10,418 hours of service were provided by CASA volunteers

69,539 miles were driven



Revenues

Grants	\$636,215
Individuals	\$261,542
Investment Income	\$15,971
Fundraising Events	\$14,551
Corporate	\$13,872



Expenses

Program (Volunteer Training, Child Advocacy/Mentoring)	\$646,455
Development (Fundraising, Marketing, Outreach)	\$81,968
Management (Administrative and Office)	\$42,601

A Member of the National CASA Association.

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