

2023

ANNUAL REPORT



**CHANGE A
CHILD'S STORY.™**





Dear Friends of CASA,

On behalf of CASA of River Valley, I wanted to personally thank each of you for your continued support of our mission to ensure every child has a voice. Because of your support and the tireless efforts of our staff and 134 selfless volunteers, we were able to support 420 children throughout River Valley (Will and Grundy counties) that have experienced abuse and neglect.

As I penned this letter, I wanted to take a moment to pay tribute to the patriarch of CASA, Judge David W. Soukup, who we lost this past December. Judge Soukup started the first CASA program in King County near Seattle, Washington, in 1977, where he served as a Superior Court Judge. He conceived the idea of using carefully screened and trained community volunteers to speak for the best interests of children in the foster care system in court after grappling with his own concerns about making decisions about their lives without sufficient information.

Judge Soukup once shared that “while sitting at juvenile court, I never got a night’s sleep without waking to wonder if at least one decision I made that day had been the best for a child.”

We are proud to carry on Judge Soukup’s legacy and pledge we will continue to work tirelessly to advocate for these innocent children in our community to ensure their best interests are always at the forefront.

But we need your help to ensure no child is ever without a voice—our team currently supports 72 percent of the 580 children in our community that have experienced abuse and neglect.

They often are the innocent victims of domestic violence and/or substance abuse and have endured countless traumas. CASA staff and volunteers are often one of the few lifelines these children have available to them, and we are bullish on the potential to serve even more children with additional resources.

I hope you will consider a one-time or recurring gift to help support our important work—helping the children of our community. \$1,000 will provide one child in River Valley with the advocate they need for an entire year.

So, no child is ever left behind, CASA has a great need for volunteers to serve the 160 children who had no CASA Advocate in 2023. With your time, talent, or treasure, you can be the one that gives a voice of hope to a child struggling to find their safe and loving home.

Sincerely,

Meg Dworsky

President, CASA of River Valley Board of Directors



YOU CAN “CHANGE A CHILD’S STORY™”

Amy’s journey began amidst the complexities of a medically challenging start, becoming part of the foster care system at the age of two amongst a background of trauma and neglect. Born to a mother grappling with drug use during pregnancy, Amy faced formidable obstacles from the very beginning. Her legs were underdeveloped because of congenital foot deformities, and she faced other medical complexities and intellectual disabilities, in addition to being non-verbal. Although she is reliant on a wheelchair for mobility now, Amy was determined to stay mobile from an early age. While visiting Amy in her first foster placement, the CASA assigned to her, Julie, noticed she was frequently putting herself in harm’s way by attempting to climb on furniture and up the stairs. In addition to emotional support, CASA provided the many necessities to keep Amy safe in her home.

Despite Amy’s non-verbal communication, Julie was able to make a connection with her from the very beginning by engaging in activities such as playing with toys together, watching Disney cartoons and splashing in a baby pool. Amy loved it when Julie would sing songs to her! Amy continued to reside in her foster placement and seemed to be on the path to guardianship. However, Julie started observing signs of neglect. Amy could not communicate this to Julie directly, but Julie noticed that Amy frequently remained unbathed, and lived in an environment strewn with waste. Also, her foster parents were not providing her with the necessary therapies and educational programs Amy required for her progress. CASA was able to bring

this information forward to the judge and Amy was soon relocated to another home where she began to thrive.

Once in a stabilized home environment, Amy showed remarkable growth and development. At the specialized school she attended, Amy utilized a communication device, where she discovered a whole new world of expressing her thoughts and was even able to communicate with simple phrases and sentences. Julie recognized the immense potential in this technology, and driven by our commitment, CASA was able to secure the same device for her use at home. The impact was momentous, CASA was privileged to play a part in supporting Amy’s needs, but none of that would have been possible without the support we received from donors like YOU!

Amy’s case, once marked by multiple traumas and uncertainties, closed earlier in the year with her successful adoption. Julie recognized Amy’s unique challenges, becoming a beacon of support and guidance throughout her journey. From the early days of the case to her adoption, Julie played a crucial role in ensuring Amy’s voice was heard, needs were met, and her well-being was prioritized. Through CASA’s tireless efforts, she found stability within the legal system. Amy’s resilience echoed the strength of numerous children within the foster care system. Each of them facing unique challenges but finding the strength, love, and support from their CASA advocates to transform their stories into tales of hope, healing, and promise.

Communities Served

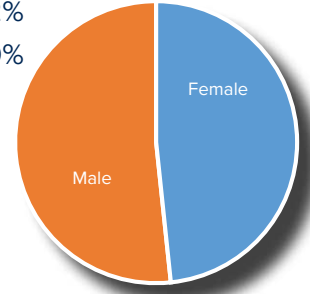
- Beecher
- Bolingbrook
- Braceville
- Braidwood
- Carbon Hill
- Channahon
- Coal City
- Crest Hill
- Crete
- Custer Park
- Elwood
- Frankfort
- Gardner
- Green Garden
- Homer Glen
- Joliet
- Kinsman
- Lockport
- Manhattan
- Mazon
- Minooka
- Mokena
- Monee
- Morris
- Naperville
- New Lenox
- Peotone
- Plainfield
- Rockdale
- Romeoville
- Shorewood
- South Wilmington
- Steger
- Tinley Park
- University Park
- Verona
- Wilmington

In addition, we serve children that are placed with families outside of Will and Grundy Counties.

2023 CASA Client Demographics

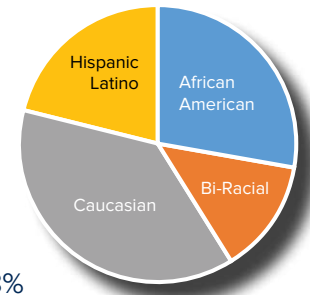
Gender

Female	203	48%
Male	217	52%
	420	100%



Age

Birth to Age 10	333	79%
Age 11 to 17	77	19%
Age 18 to 24	10	2%
	420	100%

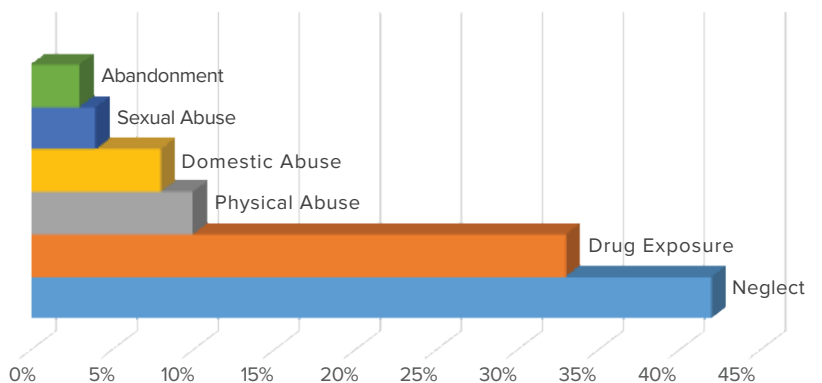


Ethnicity

African American	117	28%
Bi-Racial	56	13%
Caucasian	159	38%
Hispanic/Latino	88	21%
	420	100%



Children We Helped Came to Us as a Result of

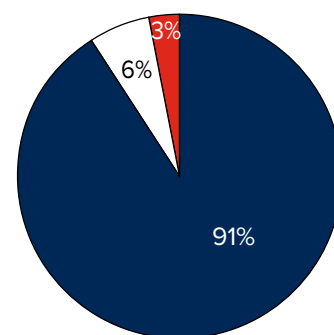


CASA of River Valley, Inc.

Statement of Financial Position - Modified Cash Basis
September 30, 2023 and 2022

	2023	2022
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 505,992	\$ 633,795
Short-term investments	317,223	14,503
Total Current Assets	\$ 823,215	\$ 648,298
Property and Equipment		
Office furniture	\$ 3,671	\$ 3,671
Computer hardware and software	30,401	22,085
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(28,528)	(24,989)
Property and Equipment, Net	5,544	767
Total Assets	\$ 828,759	\$ 649,065
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Liabilities		
Due in one year	\$ 7,762	\$ 7,552
Due in more than one year	280,797	288,559
Total Liabilities	\$ 288,559	\$ 296,111
Net Assets		
Net assets without donor restrictions	\$ 540,200	\$ 352,954
Total Net Assets	540,200	352,954
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 828,759	\$ 649,065

2023 Functional Expenses



- Program Services
- Fundraising
- Administrative



LEND YOUR VOICE

Help a child who has experienced abuse or neglect.

Volunteer Today!



What is a CASA

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a trained volunteer who is appointed by the judge to represent the best interest of children who enter foster care due to abuse or neglect.

A CASA volunteer works with an Advocate Supervisor to act as the eyes and ears of the judge by documenting each child's circumstances and making recommendations for services and permanency. The ultimate goal of the CASA advocate is to help ensure every child lives in a safe and permanent home. This could mean reunification with their parents, placement with relatives, or adoption by a loving family.

2024 Training Sessions

Session 2: Feb 22, 24, 26, 28 / Mar 2, 5

Session 3: Apr 3, 6, 9, 11, 13, 16

Session 4: May 30 / Jun 1, 3, 5, 8, 11

Session 5: Jul 11, 13, 15, 17, 20, 23

Session 6: Sep 12, 14, 16, 18, 21, 24

Session 7: Oct 30 / Nov 2, 4, 6, 9, 12

Visit our website for the most updated list including session times and topics: casaofrivervalley.org.

Children with a CASA

- are half as likely to re-enter foster care
- spend on average 8 months less time in foster care
- have opportunities through a partnership with Give Something Back to attend college
- report significantly higher levels of hope

Requirements to become a CASA

- Be 23 years of age or older
- Have good communication and writing skills
- Pass DCFS background checks
- Attend 30 hours of training

Expectations of a CASA/GAL

- Visit your assigned child(ren) monthly
- Interview all involved in child's life
- Prepare written court reports with findings and recommendations
- Complete annual continuing education

Scan here to learn more

Or e-mail: casa@casaofrivervalley.org



**Can you dedicate 5 hours per month?
YOU can be the difference in the life of a child!**

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Rhonda Hasse has dedicated herself to the cause as a CASA volunteer since April 2012, embarking on a journey that spans six cases and encompasses the lives of eleven children.

Rhonda's passion as a CASA volunteer lies in building trust with the children she advocates for, and she is truly a force for good as she helps children thrive despite the circumstances that brought them to CASA's door.

Through Rhonda's CASA journey, she has helped children ranging from a young girl who only required CASA advocacy for a year before she found her happy ending to a young boy that Rhonda supported for six years, with Rhonda being the only constant in his tumultuous life until his adoption. As he lived in multiple foster homes and had several different caseworkers, Rhonda remained his strong and steady constant.

Rhonda has helped children return to their biological parents, reconnected a child with their father who had been estranged, and supported a child through the adoption process with a relative.

Each child's happy ending is as unique as the child themselves, and Rhonda acts as their beacon of hope along their path to permanency.

Beyond her direct advocacy work with CASA, Rhonda's involvement also has extended to supporting CASA in other ways as well, including participation in the advocate panel for new trainees, and membership in our Diversity Task Force. Rhonda has also actively contributed to the CASA community through book clubs, holiday parties, advocate appreciation lunches, and various social events.

Outside of her time with CASA, Rhonda has had an extremely successful 40-year career in

banking. In addition, Rhonda loves to travel extensively and scuba dive, with her favorite dive spots being Cozumel, Aruba, and the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. She is frequently in pursuit of new skills like playing the saxophone and knitting.

Despite being busy between her work life and multiple fun and fulfilling hobbies, Rhonda has found 5 hours per month to change the life of a child.

If you are interested in helping change the lives of CASA children, we are offering seven trainings throughout 2024. Through CASA, YOU can help an innocent child navigate a complicated foster care system until they find their own safe and loving home.

Our sincere thanks to the individuals who work hard year-round on our behalf.

CASA Board of Directors

Meg Dworsky, President
Heather Voorn, Vice President
Mike Noonan, Treasurer
Julie McNeill, Secretary

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Danielle Chaplin
Austin J. Feeny
Jerry Gleason
Catherine Katilius
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Becky Cullen
Abbey Fitzgerald
Rebecca Howey
Kimberly Jenkins
Katie Kopecky
Janice Masokas
Jackie McFedries
Tammie Parrish
Meg Pennington
Hannah Rummel-Chadderdon

Help me
find my
happy
face.



WAYS YOU CAN HELP



PASS THE WORD

Please share CASA information. Invite a colleague to one of our events, ask a friend about becoming a volunteer or to consider donating. There are many ways to make a difference in a child's life, and we are thankful that you do.



As you read in the letter from our President, Meg Dworsky, we plan to work tirelessly to support the children of River Valley, and we need your continued help. Please consider volunteering your time and talent as a CASA Advocate and/or provide much needed financial support.

Help us to reach our goal of serving 100% of the children in need of a CASA in Will and Grundy Counties.

DONATE

Are you able to sponsor an advocate for a child in need? Please consider your pledge based on your ability to give, taking into consideration that it costs \$1,000 to provide a CASA Advocate for one child for an entire year.

VOLUNTEER

CASA of River Valley is recruiting volunteers to be the voice for children experiencing abuse or neglect.

Giving of your time and talent will make a direct impact on the lives of children in your community. Together, we can **Change a Child's Story™** and ensure that every child has a safe, loving home. Visit casaofrivervalley.org to make a difference and be a part of something bigger than yourself. Let's create a brighter future for all children—they deserve it!

Thank you,
CASA of River Valley

YEAR in REVIEW

Thank You to Our Sponsors & Partners

More than half of CASA of River Valley's funding comes from corporate sponsorships, private donations, and fundraising events. We would not be able to serve the children in need of our care without your generous financial support. We

are so grateful that you have joined us in our mission, and we speak for the more than 400 children we serve in saying a heartfelt "Thank You!" With your continued generosity we will reach our goal of caring for all Grundy and Will

County children in need of a voice in the court.

We would like to take a moment as we review 2023 to acknowledge those sponsors who helped make our events a success!

"HAVE A HEART" BENEFIT

Presenting Sponsor

ComEd



Heart of Gold Sponsor

Graycor

Entertainment Sponsor

The Sargent Consulting Group, LLC – Board Member

Technology Sponsor

JD Bergman Charitable Foundation

Whiskey/Cigar Bar Sponsor

D'Arcy Buick - GMC

Dining Sponsor

Bishop's Hill Winery

Event Support Sponsors

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Schiller Ducanto & Fleck LLP

Weaver Consulting

Corporate Table Sponsors

Dr. Brad & Meg Dworsky - Board Member

Rita Facchina – CASA Staff

Glenwood Academy

Hometown National Bank

Jennifer Lynch - Attorney

June, Prodehl, Renzi & Lynch, L.L.C.

Rodan + Fields – Julie McNeill – Board Member

The Honorable Judge Paula Gomora

The Sargent Consulting Group – Board Member

Vahey Law and Mediation, LLC – Board Member

Village of New Lenox

Voorn, Jaworski, & Preston, PLLC – Board Member

Susan Wiemeyer – CASA Volunteer

Come join our events!
As CASA celebrates 30 years in 2024



30
YEARS

Have a Heart Sponsor

ExxonMobil

Jerry and Corrie Gleason – Board Member

Jerry Sr. and Evelyn Gleason

Minnesota Lawyers Mutual Ins. Co.

Rick and Val Moore

Mike and Chris Noonan – Board Member

Patrick J. Roe Family

ORBA - Jim and Maureen Quaid – CASA Volunteer

Whiskey/Wine Pull

Edward Jones - Austin Feeney – Board Member

Wine Cellar

Turk Furniture

In-Kind

BreakThru Beverage

David Nelson Jewelers

Impress Printing

Mary & Natalie – 1340 WJOL

SkyByrd Photography

Program Ads

Thank You to all who provided ads to our program book.

2024 EVENT DATE: SATURDAY, APRIL 20
BOLINGBROOK GOLF CLUB, BOLINGBROOK, IL
JOIN US AS CASA CELEBRATES 30 YEARS!

HAVE A  FOR THE CHILD.



GOLF FOR THE CHILD CLASSIC

Presenting Sponsor:

D'Arcy Motors - GMC



Lunch Sponsors:

Marquette Bank

The Sargent Consulting Group, LLC - Board Member

Golf Cart Sponsor:

Strategic Retirement Partners

Golf Ball Sponsor:

ComEd

Helicopter Ball Drop Sponsor:

Voorn, Jaworski, & Preston, PLLC - Board Member

On-Course Beverage Cart Sponsor:

Edward Jones - Skye Bergeson and Austin Feeney - Board Member

Bloody Mary Sponsor:

Minnesota Lawyers Mutual Ins. Co.

Golf for the Child Sponsor

The Mather Group

In-Kind Partners

Breakthru Beverage

Star 96.7

SkyByrd Photography

Hole Sponsors

Thank You to all our Hole Sponsors

2024 EVENT DATE: FRIDAY, JUNE 7

JOIN US AT OUR NEW VENUE, LINKS AT CARILLON GOLF COURSE, PLAINFIELD, IL



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT ON BEHALF OF CASA OF RIVER VALLEY

2023 Chicago

Marathon Runners

Arkas Restaurant Group

Full Circle Acoustic

Lockport Moose Lodge #1557

Witch's Night Out Joliet



BOOTS & BBQ

Presenting Sponsor

Ron Tirapelli Ford Inc.

TIRAPELLI



Have a Heart™ Sponsors

Ascension Saint Joseph

BF Tire, Inc.

Nan Taller - Board Member

The Sargent Consulting Group, LLC - Board Member

Whiskey Pull / S'mores Sponsors

Dr. Brad & Meg Dworsky - Board Member

D'Arcy - GMC

Hometown Bank

Thank You to all our In-Kind Partners

**2024 EVENT DATE: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6
ZACHARY'S RED BARN, HOMER GLEN, IL**



CASA CHRISTMAS EXPRESS

Presenting Sponsor

Midland States Bank



Santa's Reindeer Sponsors

D'Arcy Buick - GMC

BF Tire, Inc.

Santa's Helpers Sponsors

Currie Motors

Holly Club of Joliet

In-Kind Partners

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Edward Jones - Skye Bergeson

Harald Viking Lodge #13

LDot Designs

Lockport Township

SkyByrd Photography

Smokin'Z BBQ

Star 96

Tinley Park Fire Department

Ty, Inc.

Will County Model Railroad

Association

2024 EVENT DATES:

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7 &

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8

**NEW LENOX TRAIN STATION
TO HARALD VIKING LODGE,
TINLEY PARK, IL**



HOPE NEEDS A HELPING HAND



**CHANGE A
CHILD'S STORY.™**





We are a nonprofit, 501(C)(3) organization that trains volunteers to advocate for the best interests of children who have experienced abuse or neglect within the Juvenile Court System.

Located in the River Valley Justice Center
3200 W. McDonough Street • Joliet, IL 60431
Phone: 815.730.7072 • Fax: 815.730.7073

CASA of River Valley is a United Way agency, a member of the National CASA Association and a recipient of the Will County Development Block Grant. Equal Opportunity Organization

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 Follow us on Instagram:
www.instagram.com/casarivervalley

Sign up for our newsletter at CASAofRiverValley.org/stayintouch | All photos courtesy of National CASA/GAL