

2016 ANNUAL REPORT



CASA of Will County
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

*A child's voice
in the court.*





**POWERLESS
CHILDREN
NEED
POWERFUL
FRIENDS**

Dear Friends of CASA,

As I come to the end of my first year as president of CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) of Will County, I am constantly amazed at the passion of our staff, volunteers and my fellow members of the Board of Directors who work so hard for the children in our community.

I'm also so happy to have seen so many of you who support CASA with your time and financial donations. We could not do what we do without your help. This year we continued to see an increase in the number of volunteers who went through our training program and were sworn in to serve as advocates.

As those of you who have served in this capacity are aware, this is a volunteer opportunity unlike most others. It requires not only training and dedication but also a willingness to become closely involved with an abused or neglected child who, without your advocacy on his or her behalf, would be voiceless in our court system. These are children who have been physically or emotionally abused or neglected by their parents for a variety of reasons and, at the court's direction, are appointed a CASA to represent them as their family navigates the juvenile court system, a process that can be frightening and filled with uncertainty.

Having an advocate whom they can trust and will speak up on behalf of their best interests makes all the difference in their lives and in their future. So I am grateful for all of you who have become advocates in the last year, and to the many, many more who have gone before you. If you are reading this and have ever thought about becoming a CASA advocate, I encourage you to contact us if you have any questions and consider attending our next training session in January. Please visit the "Training" page of our website for more information and training dates.

I realize volunteering in this capacity isn't for everyone, so thank you to those of you who help out at our fundraising events, either by volunteering, sponsoring or participating. These are all ways that you can support our program, and all are vitally important.

In closing, I'm going to ask you to do one more thing -- please tell someone about CASA of Will County. We can't grow and reach 100% of the children in need unless more people support our cause. So invite someone to one of our events, tell a friend about becoming an advocate or consider making a year-end donation. There are so many ways to make a difference in a child's life, and we are so thankful that you do.

May you and your families have a joyful holiday season and a Happy New Year!
Best Regards,

Clay Johnson, President
CASA of Will County Board of Directors

Communities Served

Beecher	Monee
Bolingbrook	Naperville
Braidwood	New Lenox
Channahon	Peotone
Crest Hill	Plainfield
Crete	Rockdale
Custer Park	Romeoville
Elwood	Shorewood
Frankfort	Steger
Green Garden	Tinley Park
Homer Glen	University Park
Joliet	Wilmington
Lockport	
Manhattan	
Minooka	
Mokena	

*In addition, we serve children that are placed with families outside of Will County.



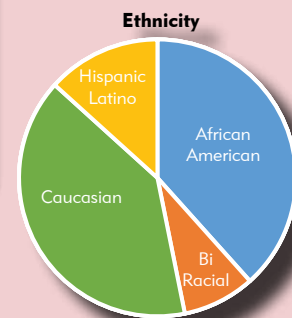
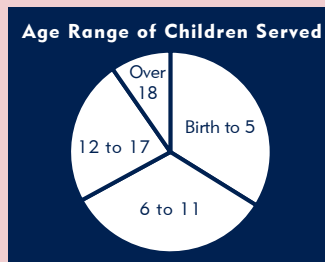
2016 CASA Client Demographics

Percentage gender:

Female	50%
Male	50%

Percentage age groups served:

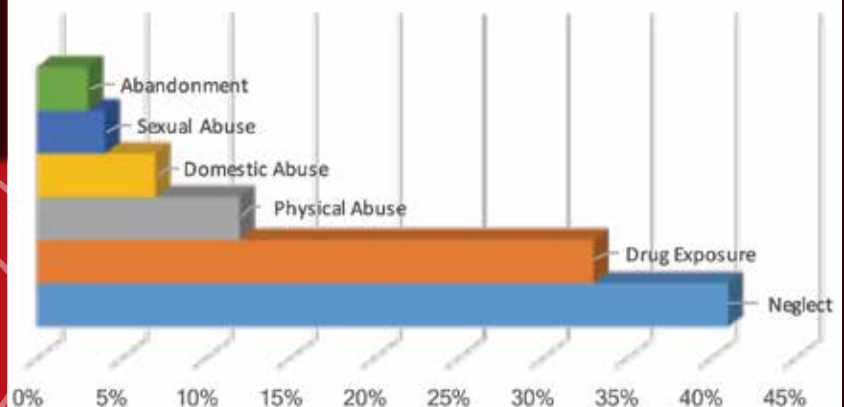
Birth to Age 5	112	34%
Age 6 to 11	110	33%
Age 12 to 17	77	23%
Age 18 and over	32	10%
	<hr/> 331	<hr/> 100%



Percentage of ethnicity

African American	127	38%
Bi-Racial	28	8%
Caucasian	132	40%
Hispanic/Latino	44	13%
	<hr/> 331	<hr/> 100%

Children We Helped Came To Us As A Result Of



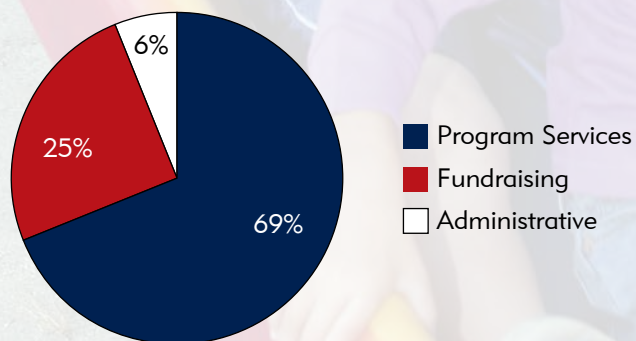
CASA of Will County, Inc.

Statement of Financial Position - Modified Cash Basis

September 30, 2016 and 2015

	2016	2015
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$139,890	\$116,233
Short-term investments	8,135	5,358
Total Current Assets	148,025	121,591
Office Furniture and Fixtures		
Office furniture	3,671	3,671
Computer hardware and software	6,142	6,131
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(9,813)	(9,802)
Total Office Furniture and Fixtures	0	0
Total Assets	\$148,025	\$121,591
NET ASSETS		
Net Assets		
Unrestricted	148,025	121,591
Total Net Assets	\$148,025	\$121,591

2016 Functional Expenses



YEARⁱⁿ REVIEW

2015 Christmas Express

The Christmas Express has been so successful that it is now a two-day event, taking place the first weekend in December. Once again, the event was near capacity, with record attendees and sponsors enjoying the holiday-themed festivities.

- More than 1,100 participants between Joliet and Tinley Park
- Featured in local newspapers



2016 "Golf for the Child" Classic

We hosted our fourth annual golf outing on June 24, 2016, at Prairie Bluff Golf Club in Lockport. This event for golfers of all skill levels grows each year, and we look forward to seeing you in 2017.

- More than 100 golfers—a new record
- Raised more than \$35,000
- On-course games and prizes





2016 "Have a Heart for the Child" Benefit Auction Gala

This year's event was held February 27 at the Haley Mansion in Joliet. The event drew record attendance numbers and raised more than \$98,000, another record for our organization! We have even outgrown our venue and are looking forward to hosting the event at Ruffled Feathers Golf Club in 2017.



2016 "Running 4 the Kids" 5K/10K

Our second annual walk/run was a great success, taking place this year at Martino Junior High School in New Lenox on October 2. We hosted both walkers and runners and held a Kiddie Run for the first time, which was great fun for our younger participants.

- Runners doubled from our first year
- More than \$11,000 raised




MIA AND ZACH ENJOY A HAPPY HAVEN

Early this September, Mia (age 4) and Zach (age 2) arrived at River Valley Justice Center for the fourth time in mere weeks. Each time they arrived, they were unsure of their fate – would they get to go home, or would they be placed into foster care? Mia was extremely anxious about the situation and repeatedly asked for her daddy. Unshed tears glistened in the corners of her eyes.

Our staff member, Kaitlin, immediately stepped in: “Would you like to see our garden, Mia? There’s butterflies!” Mia and Zach excitedly followed Kaitlin outside, where an impromptu picnic was held using oranges, pretzels, and bottled water from the office. As Mia and Zach looked around the garden, you could see their tense posture relax. Both Mia and Zach excitedly went from flower to flower, touching them gently and breathing in their scents. Soon, Mia was naming butterflies: “This one is Elsa! And this one is Ms. Sue!” She also named her favorite plant, “Sugar.” As time passed in the garden, the children giggled and played. It was clear to see that the garden had worked wonders on their nerves, and they were finally able to relax.

Luckily, Mia and Zach’s story has a happy ending: They were able to go home with their grandparents. By the time court had ended and the children were ready to go home, over four hours had passed. Without the gift of our Children’s Garden, which was made possible by donations from generous community partners, those four hours would have passed slowly for the children in the clinical atmosphere of an office. Instead, they were able to relax and enjoy a carefree morning playing throughout the garden and dancing with the butterflies.



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CASA CHILDREN'S GARDEN THRIVES

Thanks to the awe-inspiring job of Nancy Kuhajda and her team of master gardeners, our garden is flourishing and proving to be a haven to nature's most delicate wildlife. Numerous butterflies can be seen fluttering throughout the garden, but on September 10, one of our master gardeners happened to see a monarch butterfly that had been reared, tagged, and released in Plainfield, IL! We at CASA are honored to provide temporary sanctuary not only to the butterflies, but to the fragile children who find themselves waiting with us just as Mia and Zach did while the court attempts to give them hope for a better future.



WHY WE NEED YOUR HELP

As you read in the letter from our President Clay Johnson, there are a number of ways that you can support CASA of Will County, through your time (as an advocate) and through your financial support. Here's what that means to the program.

Imagine the child who has been harmed through no fault of their own. It costs \$1,000 to provide a CASA advocate for that child for an entire year. Last year we did a great job in serving 331 children in Will County. That number represents 60 percent of all children who came into care, leaving nearly 200 who were left behind to navigate the court system without an advocate because we lacked the funding to reach them.

It would take an additional \$100,000 for us to reach our goal of serving 100 percent of the children in need. That amount is also the equivalent of nearly THREE additional case managers to oversee those children. That is a lot of money, *but it is attainable with people like you to be a friend to those children in need.*

So how do we achieve our goal? Just as we have all along – step by step. Imagine that the children we are currently unable to serve are the kids in your neighborhood, your children's classmates and friends. In fact, your children. *These children belong to all of us.*

We ask now . . . who among you is willing to be a friend to those children in need? Can you sponsor a child? Please consider your pledge based on your ability to give, taking into consideration the following:

- \$1,000 = One child for 12 months
- \$500 = One child for six months
- \$250 = One child for three months (or one quarter-year)

Or, perhaps you can sponsor more than one child. Any amount you can give will help. You may send in your check using the enclosed envelope or donate online on our website at www.casaofwillcounty.org or on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/casawillcounty. Please also consider helping the children of our future; inquire about making a bequest to CASA of Will County.

***Let's make sure that 2017 is the year
we reach all children in need!***

Thank you,

CASA of Will County

Help an Abused or Neglected Child

Volunteer Today!



A powerful voice in a child's life...

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a trained volunteer who is appointed by the Juvenile Court Judge to represent the best interests of an abused or neglected child.

CASA volunteers are appointed as Guardian ad Litem (GALs) and 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 that 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.



*"It's about
helping a child
replace a life
of hurt with
one of hope."*

- CASA Volunteer

The Role of CASA

What are the requirements to be a CASA/GAL?

- Anyone 25 years of age or older with good communication and writing skills is welcome to apply (*bilingual volunteers needed!*)
- Pass DCFS and criminal background checks
- Attend 35 hours of training

What are the expectations of a CASA/GAL?

- Visit children at least monthly
- Interview everyone involved in the child's life
- Prepare written court reports with findings and recommendations and attend court
- Complete 12 hours of in-service training annually

CASA of Will County strives to contribute positive outcomes in the lives of mistreated children. CASA advocates are well-supported by case management, staff, and mentors.

To learn more about the CASA of Will County program, please call us at 815-730-7072 or visit our website at www.casaofwillcounty.org.

We're waiting to hear from you!

2017 Training Sessions*

- Session 1: Jan. 21, 24, 26, 28, 31 Feb. 1
- Session 2: April 1, 4, 6, 8, 11, 12
- Session 3: July 15, 18, 20, 22, 25, 26
- Session 4: October 1, 17, 19, 21, 24, 25

* Contact our office or visit our website for more details.

THANK YOU

Our SINCERE THANKS
also to the individuals who work hard
year-round on our behalf:

CASA Board of Directors

Clay Johnson, President
Skye Bergeson, Vice President
Sarah Vahey, Secretary
Bruce Darin, Treasurer
Meg Dworsky
Jerry Gleason
Colleen Mora
Mike Noonan
Niveditha Rajagopalan
Anna Rocha-Gray

CASA Advisory Committee

Carrie Anderson
Herbert Brooks, Jr.
Lisa Ricchio

Honorary Members

Virgie Bursey
Mike Hilton
Cindy June
Kevin Manson
Jarrett Payton
Karen Stratton

CASA Staff

Rita Facchina,
Executive Director
Denise Beran,
Program Director
Melanie Buhle,
Director of Advancement
Kaitlin Larson,
Director of Advocate
Development
Rebecca Howey,
Advocate Supervisor

UPCOMING EVENTS

"Have a Heart for the Child" Benefit Auction Gala

Saturday, February 18, 2017

Announcing a new venue for 2017!
Join us at Ruffled Feathers Golf Club
in Lemont for a new format and
program, featuring NBC 5 Chicago
Meteorologist Andy Avalos joining us once again
as our master of ceremonies. Entertainment to be
provided by Peter Oprisko.



Running 4 the Kids Third Annual 5K/10K Event

Sunday, October 1, 2017

Information to
come. Watch our
Facebook
page and website
for the latest news.



"Golf for the Child Classic" Fifth Annual Golf Outing

Friday, June 23, 2017

Please join us for an 18-hole
Scramble hosted at Prairie Bluff
Golf Club, located at 19433
Renwick Road in Lockport. This annual event has
seen a wonderful turnout the past three years,
and we are looking forward to seeing it reach new
heights in 2017. Please save the date and help us
spread the word!



CASA Christmas Express Train Ride

Saturday, December 2, 2017

Sunday, December 3, 2017

Join us for our 9th Annual
event that kicks off the
holiday season for the
whole family! We're looking
forward to another fun-filled weekend featuring visits
with Santa, the train ride from Joliet to Tinley Park,
activities and more!



CASA of Will County

We are a nonprofit, 501(C)(3) organization that trains volunteers
to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children 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

Sign up for our newsletter at CASAofWillCounty.org



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