

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



**CHANGE A  
CHILD'S STORY.™**



# TESTIMONIALS

## VOLUNTEER

At CASA of River Valley, our volunteers are the heart of our program. They are individuals who have decided to Change a Child's Story™ by becoming a CASA advocate. Each volunteer has a passion for giving a voice to abused and neglected children in foster care. Each month, they selflessly dedicate hours of their time to ensure each child's voice is heard. We had several of our volunteers tell us why they choose to Change a Child's Story™.



DANIEL

*"I volunteer with CASA of River Valley because being the voice of the child will make changes for generations. The only way to change society is to care for those who cannot care for themselves with unconditional love."*



DANIELLE

*"I volunteer because no child should have to walk through the foster care system alone. Every child deserves to feel safe, be heard, and know someone is on their side."*



MARGIE

*"I volunteer because I want to make a positive difference in a child's life during one of their most vulnerable times."*

## THANK YOU

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

### CASA Board of Directors

Sarah Vahey, President  
Jerry Gleason, Vice President  
Mike Noonan, Treasurer  
Meg Dworsky, Secretary

### Members at Large

Skye Bergeson  
Joe Boyle  
Kristina Cameron  
Julie McNeill  
Michelle Sargent  
Hollie Salinas  
Susan Maupin  
Chris Uram  
Heather Voorn

### CASA Advisory Committee

Rita Facchina  
Herbert Brooks, Jr.  
Anthony Cameron

### Honorary Members

Virgie Bursey  
Bruce Darin  
Mike Hilton  
Clay Johnson  
Cindy June  
Kevin Manson  
Colleen Mora  
Jarrett Payton  
Sheri Ritchey  
Anna Rocha-Gray  
Karen Stratton

### CASA Staff

Rita Facchina, Executive Director  
Denise Beran, Program Director  
Madison Bailey  
Laura Blum  
Melanie Buhle  
Jessica Chignoli  
Kendra Connor  
Rebecca Cullen  
Stephen Hale  
Rebecca Howey  
Kimberly Jenkins  
Jackie McFedries  
Kaitlin Nolan  
Meg Pennington



Dear Friends of CASA,

What a difference a year makes. Last year at this time I was writing to you at the beginning of my term as President to announce the exciting news of our expansion into Grundy County and rebranding to CASA of River Valley.

As we all know, the entire world changed in the months that followed. No one could have imagined the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic would have not only on our daily lives but on how we work, connect with others and the toll it's taken on so many, both financially and emotionally.

Those that have been hit hardest during these challenging times are the most vulnerable in our midst – children and the economically disadvantaged. Especially children in abusive environments or those whose caregivers are substance abusers. These are the children we serve, and they need our help now more than ever.

**Since the onset of the pandemic, we have seen a 59 percent increase in children coming into care.**

We have put new protocols into place so that our volunteers and the children and families they serve can remain safe. Our staff is providing online training and virtual swearing-in ceremonies and staff and volunteers are using technology and social distancing to continue to be the caring, consistent face to these children in need. They are truly on the front lines and have earned our support and praise. I hope you are as inspired by their dedication and determination as I am. If you or someone you know would like to learn more about becoming a volunteer, please reach out, as the need is great.

As you can imagine, the pandemic has had a significant impact on our 2020 fundraising. We had to cancel or modify most of our events, which had previously set records for fundraising and attendance. We are looking forward to an eventual return to normalcy and in-person events. In the meantime, I hope you'll consider a **one-time or recurring gift** to help us meet our shortfall.

We have a lot to be hopeful about and thankful for as we go into 2021. We look forward to being reconnected with our friends and loved ones again. We will continue to cheer on our staff and volunteers who selflessly serve the children of our community. And together, we will surely **Change a Child's Story™**.

Best Regards,

Sarah Vahey, President  
CASA of River Valley Board of Directors



## Communities Served

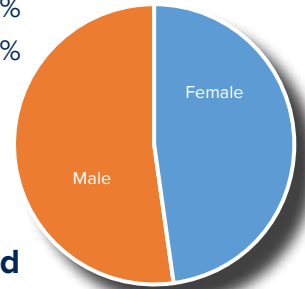
Beecher	Minooka
Bolingbrook	Mokena
Braceville	Monee
Braidwood	Morris
Caron Hill	Naperville
Channahon	New Lenox
Coal City	Peotone
Crest Hill	Plainfield
Crete	Rockdale
Custer Park	Romeoville
Elwood	Shorewood
Frankfort	South Wilmington
Gardner	Steger
Green Garden	Tinley Park
Homer Glen	University Park
Joliet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

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

## 2020 CASA Client Demographics

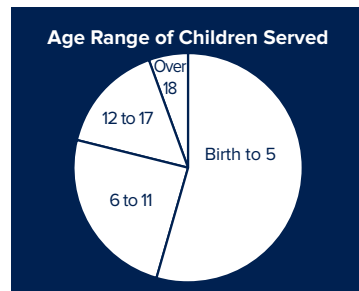
### Gender

Female	163	48%
Male	177	52%
	340	100%



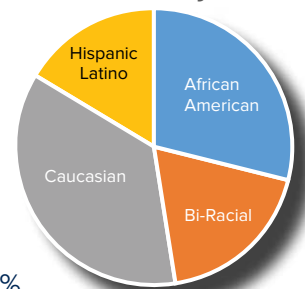
### Percentage age groups served

Birth to Age 5	186	55%
Age 6 to 11	83	24%
Age 12 to 17	53	16%
Age 18 and over	18	5%
	340	100%

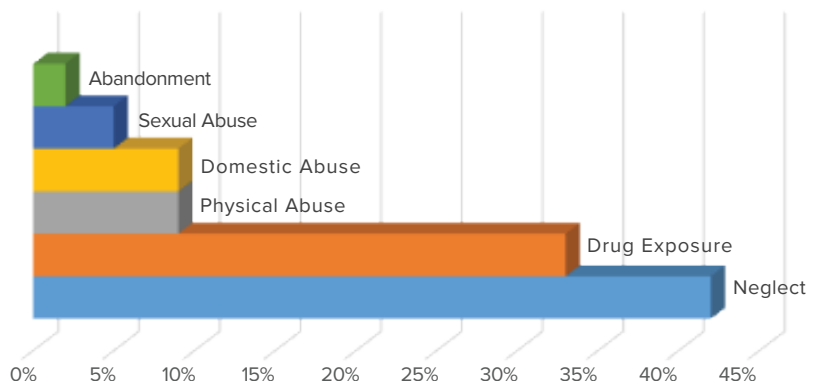


### Percentage of ethnicity

African American	99	29%
Bi-Racial	63	19%
Caucasian	123	36%
Hispanic/Latino	55	16%
	340	100%



### Children We Helped Came to Us as a Result of

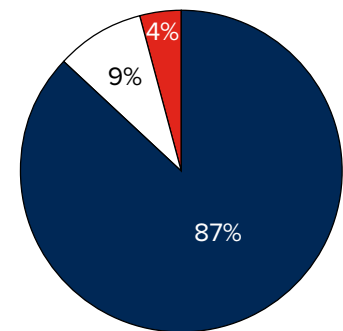


# CASA of River Valley, Inc.

Statement of Financial Position - Modified Cash Basis  
September 30, 2020 and 2019

	2020	2019
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 400,014	\$ 196,727
Short-term investments	14,455	14,354
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$ 414,469</b>	<b>\$ 211,081</b>
Property and Equipment		
Office furniture	\$ 3,671	\$ 3,671
Computer hardware and software	19,783	6,131
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(14,360)	(9,802)
<b>Property and Equipment, Net</b>	<b>9,094</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$423,563</b>	<b>\$ 211,081</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
Liabilities		
Due in one year	\$ 63,472	
Due in more than one year	146,795	
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 210,267</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>
Net Assets		
Net assets without donor restrictions	\$ 213,296	\$ 211,081
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>213,296</b>	<b>211,081</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$423,563</b>	<b>\$ 211,081</b>

## 2020 Functional Expenses



■ Program Services  
□ Fundraising  
■ Administrative



# YEAR in REVIEW

## Thank You to Our Sponsors and Partners

As you know, 2020 was a time for significant change as it relates to our fundraisers and events. While our annual gala took place just prior to the onset of the pandemic, all of our other events were impacted. We were forced to cancel our annual Running 4 the Kids, which instead became a virtual run. Our June golf outing was postponed to late September, and our annual Christmas Express was canceled altogether and replaced by virtual visits with Santa.

With all of the changes, we are grateful that we had a very successful gala, and we thank the sponsors who supported us for our modified events the remainder of the year. Also, thank you all who came out for our Golf for the Child event at Morris Country Club and who participated in our first ever helicopter ball drop, which proved to be very successful. Here's a look back at each event.

### **"HAVE A HEART FOR THE CHILD" BENEFIT AUCTION GALA**

#### **Presenting Sponsor**

Castle Law

#### **Silver Anniversary Sponsor**

ComEd Exelon

#### **Technology Sponsor**

Jay and Lori Bergman

#### **Entertainment Sponsor**

The Sargent Consulting Group, LLC

#### **"Have a Heart" Presenting Sponsors**

D'Arcy Motors  
Deerfield Construction  
McDermott Law Group  
Minnesota Lawyers Mutual Insurance Co  
PMI  
Schiller, DuCanto & Fleck  
Zeigler Motors

#### **Table Sponsors**

CASA of Will County  
ComEd  
Delaney, Delaney & Voorn  
Dr. Brad Dworsky  
Edward Jones / Skye Bergeson  
Henkels & McCoy  
Hometown National Bank  
Jerry Gleason Board Member  
June, Prudehl, Renzi and Lynch, LLC  
Marquette Bank  
NRG  
Red & Ritchey Orthodontics  
Rodan + Fields,  
Independent Consultant, Julie McNeill  
Karen Stratton  
Village of New Lenox

#### **Wine Pull Sponsors**

Beermann LLP – Jessica Boike  
Breakthru Beverage Group  
ExxonMobil  
Jerry & Corrie Gleason  
Marius & Cathy Katilius  
Linda Sticklen  
The Wine Cellar Outlet

#### **In-Kind Partners**

All Occasions Balloons  
Bella Fiori Florist  
Cox Livery Service  
David Nelson Exquisite Jewelry  
Impress Printing  
MAD Suburban Productions  
Sky Byrd Photography  
Star 96.7

### **Event raised more than \$150,000**

**2021 Event Date – April 17 (special virtual event featuring Andy Avalos of NBC 5)**





## "GOLF FOR THE CHILD" CLASSIC



### Presenting Sponsor

D'Arcy Motors

### Luncheon Sponsors

Henkels & McCoy  
Strategic Retirement Partners

### Golf Cart Sponsor

Delaney, Delaney & Voorn

### Helicopter Ball Drop Sponsor

ComEd/Kevin Manson

### Beverage Cart Sponsors

ComEd  
Red & Ritchey Orthodontics

### Golf for the Child Sponsors

DOT Foods  
Edward Jones/Skye Bergeson  
JK Consulting  
The Mather Group  
The Sargent Consulting Group, LLC

### Registration Sponsor

MoxieBravo

### Mask Sponsor

Hometown National Bank

### In-Kind Partners

Breakthru Beverage Group

**Event raised \$50,000**

**2021 Event Date – July 9, Morris Country Club**

## VIRTUAL EVENTS

### RUNNING 4 THE KIDS VIRTUAL 5K (October 1-December 31)

#### Presenting Sponsors

CITGO  
Currie Motors  
Hipplehaueser & Associates



**2021 Event Date for in person run TBD**

### CASA December TO REMEMBER



## VIRTUAL SANTA VISITS

#### North Pole Presenting Sponsors

Midland States Bank  
University Park Generating Facilities

#### December to Remember Sponsors

D'Arcy Motors  
Holly Club



UNIVERSITY PARK



Generating  
Facilities



**2021 Event Dates for in person CASA Christmas Express – December 4 and 5**

**PLEASE FOLLOW OUR WEBSITE  
AND FACEBOOK FOR THE  
LATEST UPDATES ON OUR 2021 EVENTS!**

A young boy with dark hair stands in a hallway, looking directly at the camera. He is wearing a blue and black horizontally striped long-sleeved sweater and blue jeans. He is holding a large, crumpled black plastic trash bag in his right hand. The hallway has light-colored walls and a wooden floor. A doorway is visible in the background to the left.

With your help, we can  
put the magic back into  
childhood.



# EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY CAN “CHANGE A CHILD’S STORY™”

Ollie was 9 years old when he and his younger brother came into foster care as a result of abuse from their mother and father. Ollie was suffering from anxiety and ADHD due to past trauma. Because he was switching schools every few months with new foster care placements, he was not getting the help he needed to succeed academically. After the Covid-19 pandemic began, Ollie’s school transitioned to remote learning, and he struggled even more. The lack of structure and spending hours each day on the computer made it difficult for him to learn and concentrate. He was also sharing a computer with his younger brother, which made it impossible for them both to complete their schoolwork.



Ollie is just one of many children who have been struggling with school during the pandemic. According to Illinois CASA, foster children are 50 percent more likely to fall behind in school than the general population. For many children, remote learning has created additional barriers to their education, while others haven’t been challenged enough and aren’t growing as much as they could be.

Tom became Ollie’s CASA advocate, and they started meeting together monthly. He noticed the two brothers were sharing a device and that Ollie was quickly falling behind. Tom advocated for Ollie to get an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) which would require the school to make special accommodations for him and worked with the school to get him his own Chromebook. Tom also worked with the school staff so Ollie could qualify for hybrid learning, meaning he could be at school in-person at least three days a week. He also advocated for Ollie to receive after school tutoring sessions on these days to help him stay on track with his schoolwork. On the days Ollie attended in-person, he was able to meet with a school social worker to work through the anxiety and trauma he was struggling with.

Tom began to see Ollie improving in school, and during a call with his teacher, she remarked that she was impressed with his progress. Tom also saw a noticeable improvement in Ollie’s mood. He seemed much happier and more engaged during his visits. He was excited to play educational board games with him to show off some of the new things he had learned in school.



Recently, Illinois CASA and the Community Foundation of Grundy County have issued grants to CASA of River Valley, allowing us to provide additional Educational

Advocacy and Educational Supportive Services to CASA children. This grant will help CASA in achieving our goal of ensuring that all CASA children receive everything they need to succeed in school. In addition to checking in on each child’s schooling and grades once per month, CASA now has access to many new tools and subscriptions in order to help enrich children’s learning. CASA also is obtaining new resources to provide CASA volunteers with educational activities and games during visits. In total, these grants have allowed CASA to receive \$300 in educational supplies and supports for each school-aged CASA child. We believe this new level of educational advocacy and support during these challenging times will help children like Ollie thrive in school when they otherwise might have been struggling.

At CASA of River Valley, we believe every child is capable of realizing their dreams. It is our goal to make sure that each child is given every possible opportunity to help reach their potential.

The future of our society rests in their hands; so, to **Change a Child’s Story™** we will create a better future not only for that child, but for our world.

**To learn more or to donate, visit [CASAofRiverValley.org](https://CASAofRiverValley.org).**



# Ways **YOU** CAN **HELP**

As we begin this new year, please consider providing ongoing support for CASA of River Valley through planned giving. You can make a direct impact on the lives of the children in your community. This past year, CASA advocated on the behalf of siblings Laney and Luca. Their mother Zoey went through a difficult season during the pandemic where she lost her job and turned to alcohol abuse, leaving her unable to care for her children for the time being. CASA advocated for Zoey to get addiction treatment services and helped her find resources to get back on her feet. After a successful recovery, Laney, Luca and their mother were reunited, just before the holidays. The family was so excited to finally be together once again. Every child deserves to live in a home where they are loved and their parent is able to care for them. CASA's goal is to help each child overcome trauma while finding a loving, permanent home where they can thrive. We cannot achieve this goal on our own - it can only be done with your help.

*Let's make sure that  
**2021 is the year**  
we reach all children in need!*

It costs \$1,000 to provide a CASA advocate for one child for an entire year. Can you help us save a child? No amount is too small. 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 6 months
- \$250 = One child for three months

There are many ways to donate. Checks can be sent using the enclosed envelope, and donations are accepted online through our website at [www.casaofrivervalley.org](http://www.casaofrivervalley.org). In addition, bequests are a wonderful way to support the children of the future. Regardless of your donation method of choice, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

Thank you,  
CASA of River Valley





# LEND YOUR VOICE.



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 is to help ensure that every child lives in a safe and permanent home. This could mean reunification with the parents, placement with relatives, or adoption by a loving family.

## *Help an Abused or Neglected Child* **Volunteer Today!**

### **2021 Training Sessions\***

Session 1: Feb. 25, 27 / Mar. 2, 4, 6, 9, 11

Session 2: April 8, 10, 13, 15, 17, 20, 22

More training dates to be added soon, visit our website for the most updated list:  
[casaofrivervalley.org](http://casaofrivervalley.org)

### **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
- Complete 12 hours of in-service training annually

CASA of River Valley 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 River Valley program, please call our Volunteer Coordinator at 815-730-7072 or visit our website at [www.casaofrivervalley.org](http://www.casaofrivervalley.org).

**We're waiting to hear from you!**

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





# 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 abused and neglected children within the Juvenile Court System.



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

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 [CASAofRiverValley.org](http://CASAofRiverValley.org)  
All photos courtesy of National CASA/GAL



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