



ADVOCACY IN ACTION

2021 Annual Report



MISSION, VISION AND PROMISE

OUR MISSION

Child Advocates – Denver CASA advocates for the best interests of children who have experienced abuse or neglect by training diverse volunteers who create opportunities for children, youth and families to thrive.

OUR VISION

Our vision is that all children, youth and families are thriving emotionally, mentally and physically with lifelong connections to caring and responsible adults, a permanent home and a safe and nurturing environment where they have a sense of belonging.

OUR PROMISE

Children and youth who have experienced abuse or neglect are among the most vulnerable populations in America. A child in foster care may have faced physical, psychological or emotional trauma and years of uncertainty as they wait to go home or be adopted. All that chaos has long-term effects. Young people who have spent time in foster care are more likely to face incarceration, homelessness and unemployment. They are less likely to graduate high school and more likely to be victims of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

There is a simple and effective solution: A CASA Volunteer. **CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate.** A CASA is a trained community member who acts as an agent of the court. They work directly with the professionals on the case to make sure that the best interests of the children and youth they serve are always front-and-center. A young person who has a CASA Volunteer has the best chance of a successful outcome.



A letter to our **CASA** Community:

*From Our Executive Director
and Board President*

We are proud to present our annual report for 2021. It was a year of challenge and growth for Denver CASA, as we continued to respond to changes caused by the COVID 19 pandemic. The advocacy our CASA Volunteers provide became more important than ever, especially as children returned to in-person learning. Our CASA Volunteers were tasked with ensuring our children and youth received the education they deserve, in addition to advocating for children's health, safety and wellbeing.

During 2021, we saw another year of incredible enthusiasm from volunteers interested in meaningful opportunities to serve Denver's children, youth and families. Denver CASA swore in an additional 134 volunteers throughout 2021.

In response, we expanded our staff to ensure that all volunteers were trained and supported in their work. We also hired an Older Youth program manager to focus on creating a new program that helps older youth transition from foster care to independence. So many of the youth we serve leave the system without the tools or knowledge needed to navigate adult life – Denver CASA wants to make sure we bridge that gap. We are so excited for this program and hope to expand it in the coming years.

In addition to serving more children, Denver CASA planned for the future. Our senior leadership team and board of directors created a new 3 year strategic plan, intended to strengthen and modernize our organization. A significant

portion of the plan is dedicated to our ongoing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging initiative. This plan allows Denver CASA to expand on important work that we started several years ago, always in pursuit of the goal to make Denver CASA an organization where all are welcomed, included and valued.

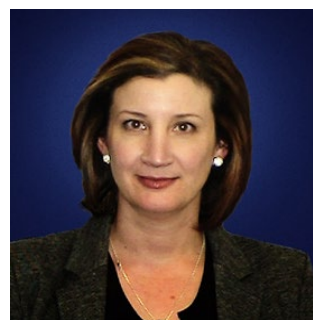
As you review this report, don't miss the incredible story of Mariana and Arabella, and how a meaningful connection can make a lifetime impact.

As we continue our work to provide advocacy, mentoring and support for Denver's vulnerable children and youth, we hope you will join us. Thank you for your continued support throughout the year, and into the future.

Sincerely,



Karen Silverman
Executive Director



Suzanne Sanchez
Board President



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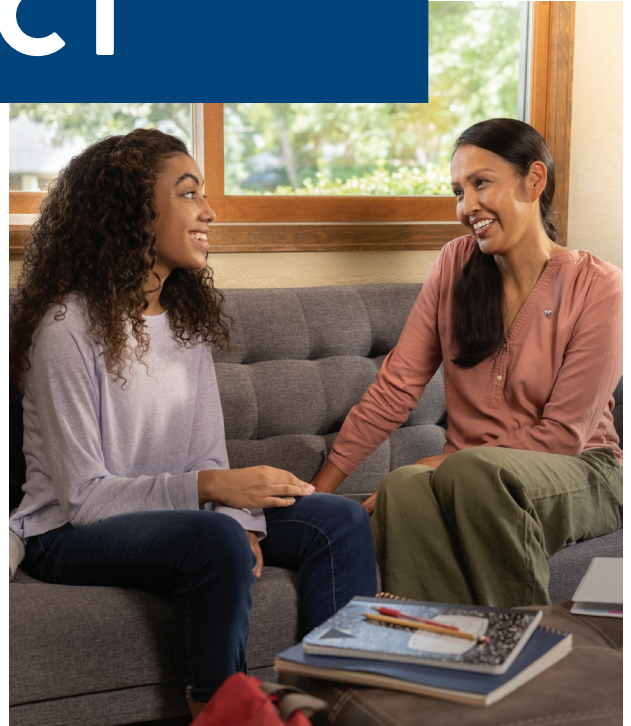
*"If you look at the world and feel any measure of despair or discomfort, **coming alongside a child or a family is a small but powerful way of bringing light to darkness** and lessening the load of people who just need some help. "*

- CASA VOLUNTEER



IMPACT

In 2021, Denver CASA was faced with the challenge of emerging from the pandemic. We saw record numbers of our children and youth struggling in school and in need of additional support. Not only did our 370 volunteers serve 574 kids throughout the year, they also provided life-changing advocacy for educational assistance and supportive school placements.



574 KIDS SERVED

134 NEW VOLUNTEERS SWORN IN

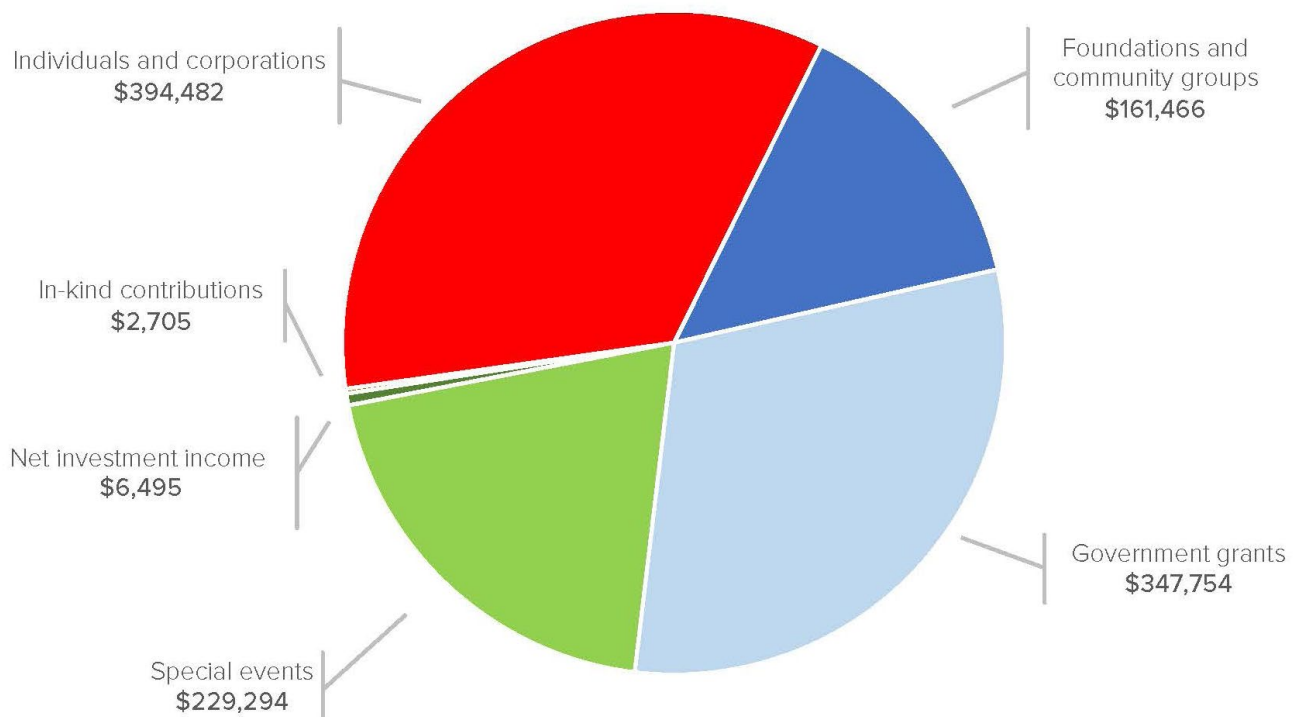
370 TOTAL VOLUNTEERS

7,485.72 HOURS DONATED

48% OF CHILDREN IN THE SYSTEM
SERVED

FINANCIALS

Individuals and Corporations.....	\$394,482
Government Grants.....	\$347,754
Special Events.....	\$229,294
Foundations and Community Groups.....	\$161,466
Net Investment Income.....	\$6,495
In-Kind Donations.....	\$2,705
Other	\$1,800
Total.....	\$1,143,996



CUTTING THROUGH THE SILENCE

How a CASA Volunteer's Shared Language Spurred Life-Changing Advocacy



As a supporter of Denver CASA, you know that CASA Volunteers play an important role in a child or youth's life by visiting with them at least twice a month and representing their best interests in court. But, have you ever wondered how we match a child or youth with a CASA Volunteer? Staff carefully consider the needs and interests of the child or youth and the

skillset of the volunteer when making matches. Since many of the children and families served by Denver CASA do not speak English as a first language, we are always working to recruit multilingual volunteers.

By 13, Arabella had already lived in several group homes and needed a permanent placement outside of the foster system. Her caseworkers were hoping to place Arabella with family members so she could benefit from a stable and familiar home. Arabella's first language is Spanish, and most of her immediate family spoke no English at all. There were two options, either live with her former step mom, who had been out of the picture for about 10 years but now was taking important steps to recover from addiction, or with her biological grandmother, who had been her primary caretaker in the past.

When Marianna signed up to be a CASA Volunteer, she asked if she could be matched with a case where the child might not be entirely proficient in English. Since Spanish is her native language, Marianna was hoping to use her fluency to support a family in need of additional

“Just three short months ago, the case team had no insight into what Arabella wanted.

**Now, thanks to Marianna’s
unrelenting commitment to get
to know Arabella, Arabella has a
permanent placement”**

translation services. Jackie, a Senior Advocate Supervisor, had just reviewed Arabella’s case and knew immediately that Marianna could help this young girl.

Marianna met the professionals on the case, who said they were having difficulty figuring out if Arabella felt safer and more supported at her step-mother’s house or her grandmother’s house. Every time the caseworker tried to broach the subject with Arabella, Arabella would barely utter a sentence – only saying one or two words at a time. Even with a translator present, it seemed like the caseworker would not be able to fully understand Arabella’s feelings. Frustrated without more information, and with the case at a standstill, Arabella’s team turned to Marianna for a fresh perspective.


Marianna realized that not only were important nuances missed when the questions were translated and posed to Arabella, but that Arabella was also uncomfortable talking about these issues with someone she didn’t know. Marianna spent valuable time getting to know Arabella and communicating with her in Spanish. Over time, Marianna learned that Arabella wanted to live with her grandmother. As a CASA volunteer, Marianna was able to share this critical information with the team and report back to the court.

Just three short months ago, the case team had no insight into what Arabella wanted. Now, thanks to Marianna’s unrelenting commitment to get to know Arabella, Arabella has

a permanent placement with her beloved grandmother. Marianna’s ability to evoke and communicate the nuances of Arabella’s needs became the cornerstone of a successful placement and a bright future for a previously misunderstood child. All she needed was for someone to listen, truly listen, to what she was saying.

A CASA Volunteer has the unique ability to build a trusting relationship with a child or youth and advocate for their best interests. They can often bridge gaps and reveal blind spots to other professionals, simply because of their ability to form a one-on-one connection with the child or youth they are advocating for. This connection is crucial – and in Arabella’s case, allowed Marianna to bring clarity to a complicated situation. With expert, highly trained volunteers like Marianna in our community, Denver CASA provides affirming and transformational advocacy.





*"Being a CASA means making a verifiable impact on the life of a child. **Volunteering can mean many things but, for me personally, engaging directly with a child that needs me keeps me going.**"*

- CASA VOLUNTEER

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Giving for Tomorrow

Child Advocates - Denver CASA provides a crucial service to hundreds of children and youth who have experienced abuse and neglect in the Denver area. With a planned gift, you can secure your legacy of giving back locally to those who need it most. By including Child Advocates - Denver CASA in your will, trust, life insurance policy or other planned gift, you can help our organization plan for tomorrow and thrive into the future.

Setting up a legacy gift to compliment your current annual giving is a great way to make a bigger impact, today. Including Denver CASA in your estate planning is a quick, easy way to secure your gift for the future.

If you have already included us in your will or are planning to do so, please let us know. We'd love to express our thanks for your generosity towards Denver CASA's children and families. For additional information on how to make a life-changing impact, please contact:

Karen Silverman
Executive Director
303-832-4592 or
ksilverman@denvercasa.org



THANK YOU TO OUR
CORPORATE PARTNERS!



For a full list of Denver CASA
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FOR CHILDREN

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1325 S. Colorado Blvd. Ste. B402

Denver, CO 80222

303.832.4592

DenverCASA.org