



Denver CASA at 25
**Changing the
Narrative**

2020 Annual Report

Child Advocates - Denver CASA



MISSION, VISION AND PROMISE

Our Mission

Child Advocates - Denver CASA recruits and trains community volunteers from diverse backgrounds to advocate for the best interests of children, who have experienced abuse or neglect, in the pursuit of safe and permanent homes.

Our Vision

Our vision is that all children 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.

*Every day at Denver
CASA, our volunteers
work hard to change a
child's story.*

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, be adopted or simply see what happens next. 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.



Dear friends,

At the start of the global pandemic, Child Advocates - Denver CASA was faced with a daunting reality for not only our organization, but for our entire sector. Child welfare experts cautioned that an increase in isolated families may have a devastating effect on the rates of child abuse and neglect. Community support is a critical component to ensuring child well-being in our cases, and when the stay-at-home order went into effect, our organization had to figure out how to best meet the needs of our kids and families in a completely new way.

At the beginning of 2020, Child Advocates - Denver CASA also celebrated 25 years of advocacy and quality service provision. While no one could have imagined the challenges this past year involved, we are proud to look back and see CASA volunteers and families

finding new ways to connect and advocate for children. Elijah's journey from hospital to home, found later in the report, especially reminds us of what amazing things can happen when our children and families have a CASA in their corner. We are grateful to celebrate the successes of our CASA volunteers, children, and families. These wins, big and small, are made all the more impressive in the middle of this shared crisis.

Throughout the pandemic, Child Advocates - Denver CASA worked hard and got creative to ensure children and families had the support they needed. We asked our donors to walk with us during these uncertain times and gathered virtually for the first time, raising \$179,000 between the first two online events in this history of our organization. Our staff onboarded over 147 new volunteers and served 59% of

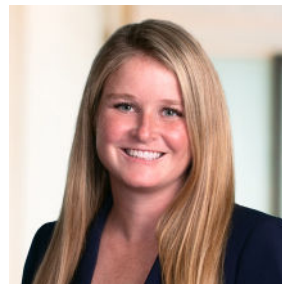
Denver cases—the highest rate of service in the history of the organization. In a year when the world shut down, Child Advocates-Denver CASA was busier than ever finding new ways to support our children and families.

After a year full of enormous challenges and unforeseen complications, we are so grateful for our community of CASA volunteers who continue to go above and beyond to celebrate our children and families. Everything Child Advocates - Denver CASA has accomplished over the past 25 years, including over 6,500 children served, is because of the hard work and passion of our CASA community. Above all—we want to celebrate the children and families Child Advocates - Denver CASA works with every day.

Sincerely,



Karen Silverman
Executive Director



Caitlyn McHugh
Board President

CONTENTS

- 6 OUR MODEL
- 7 IMPACT
- 8 FINANCIALS
- 10 ELIJAH'S STORY
- 12 OUR TEAM
- 14 YOUR LEGACY



25 years of
change through caring



OUR MODEL

Child Advocates - Denver CASA follows a proven, national model focused on promoting the best interests of a the child. A CASA Volunteer can be a key factor in ensuring a brighter future awaiting every child who has experienced abuse and neglect.



Studies have show that children who have a CASA volunteer are:

- **MORE** likely to find a safe, permanent home
- **MORE** likely to succeed in school
- **HALF AS LIKELY** to re-enter the foster care system

IMPACT

Despite the pandemic, Child Advocates - Denver CASA was able to serve more kids in Denver's Juvenile Court System. Our organization served nearly 12% more children than in 2019, all without any layoffs or furloughs. When kids and families needed support the most, our CASA community showed up in record numbers. We think that's support worth celebrating.

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582 kids served

147 new volunteers

307 total volunteers

nearly
7,500 volunteer hours

FINANCIALS

Without the support of individuals, foundations, corporations, and government dollars, we would be unable to serve the children in our community. We extend our deepest gratitude to our partners, who share the Child Advocates - Denver CASA mission and successes.



USE OF FUNDS

Program Services.....	\$592,868
Management.....	\$60,708
Fundraising.....	\$123,506
Total expenses.....	\$ 777,082

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Individuals and Corporations	\$ 297,108
Foundations & Community Groups.....	\$ 205,817
Government.....	\$228,551
Fundraising Events.....	\$ 189,370
Other Income.....	\$38
Net Investment Income.....	\$3,043
In-Kind Contributions.....	\$17,973
Total support and revenue.....	\$ 941,900



For a complete list of our supporters, scan the QR code or visit <https://denvercasa.org/2020-denver-casa-donors/>



25 years of
celebrating childhood



In the middle of a global crisis, one child's story shows what is possible with a CASA Volunteer's care and support.

ELIJAH'S STORY



Elijah had a long journey ahead of him. Born with several developmental disabilities and addicted to drugs, Elijah began his life in the foster system and needed abundant care and special attention. He had no biological family in his life and required a supportive and attentive foster family. Meanwhile, during the long process of finding a permanent home, Elijah needed someone to make sure his needs were met. Joanne, a longtime CASA volunteer, was a perfect match for his case.

While Joanne dedicated her time to representing Elijah's best interest in the courtroom, she could see that Elijah needed extra support outside of the courthouse. She loved going to the hospital to spend time with Elijah, holding him and singing his favorite songs.

When Denver issued the stay-at-home order, Joanne suddenly could no longer make her

weekly visits to hold Elijah. CASA Volunteers were still needed in virtual court, but could no longer safely meet face-to-face with kids and families. As life moved inside, Joanne was determined to find creative ways to support Elijah and his life in the child welfare system.

Just before the pandemic began, Elijah was



connected with a foster family while still in the hospital. No longer able to visit Elijah in the hospital, Joanne set up Zoom calls and activities with Elijah's foster family. She spent her now ample free time knitting colorful hats for Elijah to keep him warm in the chilly hospital wing. Remarkably, in the

midst of the pandemic, Elijah had gotten strong enough to leave the hospital.

His initial prognosis was grim, but he continued to exceed his doctor's developmental expectations and moved to a home environment sooner than

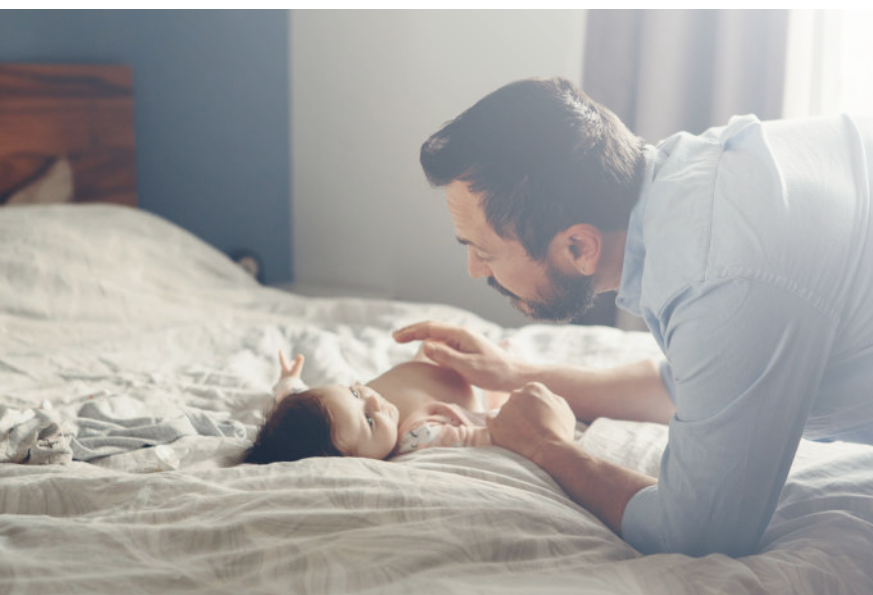
expected. Since he still required regular care, Joanne would meet Elijah and his family in a parking lot before weekly doctor's appointments. Standing six feet apart with masks on, Joanne and the family found a way to check-in while prioritizing everyone's safety and health. While it wasn't an ideal situation, they did their best to make it work.

Elijah now has a safe, permanent home that will allow him to continue growing and thriving. His foster family is in the process of adopting Elijah, and Joanne still checks in every week. Elijah's doctors continue to note that the leaps and bounds he's made in his developmental progress would not have been possible without the extra care and support he received from everyone involved. Even in a public health crisis, Denver CASA Volunteers, like Joanne, worked harder than ever to support children and families. If 2020 taught us anything, it is that our community is filled with

brave and resourceful community members who can, when working as a team, achieve extraordinary outcomes. As we navigate a new



normal and incorporate the unexpected into our everyday lives, we celebrate the CASA kids and families who achieved so much during these difficult times.



“If 2020 taught us anything, it is that our community is filled with brave and resourceful community members.”

OUR TEAM

Board Members

Caitlin McHugh

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Suzanne Sanchez

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Attorney
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Jack Weixel

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IHS Markit

Honorable Tanja Wheeler

Board Member
Judge
Denver County Court

Wendy Withee

Board Member
Associate Product
Manager
Jackson National Life
Insurance Company



25 years of connecting communities

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Executive Director

Vonia Adams
Director of Programs

Dick Hulseman
Director of Operations

Kara Angelini
Director of Development

Shayla Covington
Training & PC Manager

Suzy Martin
Senior Advocate
Supervisor

Jackie Heins
Advocate Supervisor

Brianna Holmes
Advocate Supervisor

Tiffany Edwards
Advocate Supervisor

Drea Dowlin
Advocate Supervisor

Rachel Levy-Culler
Older Youth Program
Supervisor

Hunter Nelson
Volunteer and Data
Specialist

Rachael Friedman
Community Engagement
Manager

Erika Parkinson
MSW Intern



What will your legacy be?

For over 25 years, Child Advocates - Denver CASA has worked tirelessly on behalf of Denver's most vulnerable children and families. You can help shape our future by including Child Advocates - Denver CASA in your will, trust, life insurance policy, or other planned gift. It is a simple way to leave a lasting legacy to help support children and families in Denver well into the future.

In 2018, the first endowment was created by generous donors Linda Murakami, Joseph Davis, and Jennifer and Shawn Barker. By creating the **Catalyst for CASA Endowment**, they took the first steps to ensure Denver CASA's stability and sustainability. You can join them by arranging for your own legacy gift. We encourage you to contact your financial advisor or attorney to discuss the best legacy gift for you and your family.

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 transformational commitment to Denver CASA's children and families. For additional information on how to make a lasting impact, please contact:

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

FROM OUR VOLUNTEERS

“I know that I can’t fix the world but I know that by showing up for this one child, I can make a little change in their world and that to me makes all the difference.”

“Taking an hour or two out of my week makes all the difference to the child and kinship family in my case. The additional support a CASA can provide to a child going through a tough time is greater than you can imagine.”

“Being a CASA gives back to the community **in a way that lets me do so many things**: advocate in ways that I can, experience the joy and wonder of childhood, learn about how other people in my community live and what barriers they face and grow as a person all at the same time.”

“This is *the most quality work* that can be done to support children and families in the foster care system.”

Donors and
Supporters List



Child Advocates -
Denver CASA
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CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CHILD ADVOCATES DENVER CASA

Child Advocates - Denver CASA

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