



ONE CHILD
AT A TIME
ONE LIFE
CHANGED
AT A TIME



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

DENTON COUNTY

2016 | ANNUAL REPORT



MAKING A DIFFERENCE ONE CHILD AT A TIME

one visit at a time

one court hearing at a time

one child at a time

one life changed at a time

Dear CASA Family,

2016 was a year of growth for CASA of Denton County but also a time where the very heart and soul of the agency continued as we provided top quality court advocacy services to the most severely abused and neglected children in our community – one visit at a time, one court hearing at a time, one child at a time, one life changed at a time. Finishing 24 years of devotion to children and families, a record number of 189 volunteer child advocates provided life-changing court advocacy services to a record number of 583 children in 2016 – up 15% from the previous year with 30% more child advocates. In this report of annual activity, we applaud the work of CASA as an agency but more importantly, the work of each of you, one person, one company, one friend at a time who contribute your time, your resources and your heart and soul to help children in need.

In the 24 years that CASA has been providing a voice for abused and neglected children, we have learned that the “job” of being the “voice” is often challenging, slow, confusing and isolating. To illustrate this, we share “the starfish story” by Loren Easley with volunteers. It goes like this:

One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked, “What are you doing?” The youth replied, “Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don’t throw them back, they’ll die.” “Son,” the man said, “don’t you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can’t possibly make a difference!” After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said, “I just made a difference for that one.”

This story reminds me of the work of our CASA volunteer child advocates. They work tirelessly and with open minds and hearts to make sure that the individual and unique needs of the children they serve are met while they are in foster care, providing the judge on the case with information that will help them make decisions that are in the best interest of the children. Gathering facts and investigating the child’s circumstances is a one-person job that can often be slow and isolating. We encourage our volunteers to remember the end result – the life they are changing – one visit at a time, one court hearing at a time, one child at a time.

Certainly those who support CASA are also shining examples of CASA advocacy at its best. Without financial and in-kind support, CASA simply would not be able to support the volunteer child advocates. Your donations helped us recruit, train and support 62 new volunteer child advocates in 2016! Your \$25 investment provided a training manual for a new advocate. Your \$50 investment paid for important background checks. Your \$100 investment provided continuing education for an advocate for a year. Your \$1,500 investment provided life-changing services to a child in need for 12 months. It’s amazing what CASA is able to do because of your generosity. It’s scary to think what would happen to “our” children without your support and our services.

As you review the accomplishments achieved in 2016, remember to applaud yourselves for sharing your heart and soul with CASA’s kids and families. You truly make a difference – one child at a time – and for that, we thank you!

With a Warm Heart
Sherri Gideon, Executive Director



CASA **ADVOCATES** **DO MAKE A** **DIFFERENCE** **ONE CHILD** **AT A TIME**

WHAT DO CASA VOLUNTEERS DO?

CASA volunteers get to know the child and everyone involved in the child's life to advocate for the child's best interests while in the foster care system.

Making a Difference | One Child At a Time

Now 18 years of age, Jonathan entered foster care at the age of 14, along with his four younger siblings, due to serious physical abuse in the home. His parents' parental rights were terminated and his younger siblings were adopted by a foster family. However, that family was not able to adopt Jonathan and he has spent these past four years living in the custody of the state.

When Jonathan turned 16 years old, he was headed down a destructive path, including stealing, skipping school and using drugs. The foster family who had taken in Jonathan at the time didn't know how to help him, and Jonathan was on the verge of being moved to yet another new placement when he took matters into his own hands and ran away.

Fortunately for Jonathan, he has a Court Appointed Special Advocate, or CASA, who has been with him since he entered the foster care system. Throughout the four years in care, Jonathan's CASA has remained faithful to him and has never failed to advocate for his best interests during the good times and the bad. Over the years, Jonathan has experienced the loss of his biological parents, foster families, social workers and his siblings, but his CASA has never left his side.

Throughout the four years in care, Jonathan's CASA has remained faithful to him and has never failed to advocate for his best interests during the good times and the bad. This special relationship built on trust allowed Jonathan to open up to and share things with his CASA that he has not shared with anyone else.

This special relationship built on trust allowed Jonathan to open up to and share things with his CASA that he has not shared with anyone else. Eventually, this trust encouraged him to reveal to his advocate that he ran away from his foster home because he could not bear to be moved to another placement.

Jonathan took it upon himself to locate family friends who agreed to allow him to stay in their home. The family did not have much to offer Jonathan financially, but they have been able to provide him with a loving and supportive environment and a sense of community, which are both something that Jonathan has been in desperate need of since coming into foster care.

In the past year, Jonathan has grown and matured into a wonderful young man. He is no longer stealing or using drugs. He attends school every day and has worked to be accepted into a charter school program, which allows him to participate in credit recovery.

Jonathan looks forward to graduating by the end of the year and has aspirations to go on to college or begin a career in the U.S. military. His advocate has been there to support and encourage him every step of the way. Everything from making sure Jonathan has had access to medical, school supplies and holiday gifts to taking him to appointments with his probation office and job interviews, she has done it all. But – the most important thing Jonathan's CASA did for him was to be a consistent advocate and cheerleader in his corner.

A year ago, Jonathan's future looked grim. It was the opinion of many adults in Jonathan's life that if he continued on the path he was on that prison would be in his future.

Jonathan's advocate never gave up faith and always believed that behind the negative behaviors was a child who needed the right environment and someone to believe in him. Together, she and Jonathan proved the others wrong. His future looks brighter than ever and his advocate could not be more proud. CASA advocates do make a difference, one child at a time.



YOU CAN'T HELP EVERYONE, BUT YOU CAN HELP ONE

CASA VOLUNTEERS:

- Commit to at least one year of advocacy
- Communicate effectively both orally and in writing
- Participate in an in-depth training program
- Pass criminal and CPS background checks
- Are at least 21 years old

READY TO HELP A CHILD?

Visit casadenton.org to learn about becoming a volunteer and how you can help.

FY 2016 | Stats at a Glance

CHILDREN SERVED

Cases Worked	349
Children Served.	583

PERMANENT PLANS ACHIEVED

Total Number of Children	187	Returned to Family	60
Placed with Legal Guardian.	9	Adopted into New Family.	36
Adopted by Relative.	48	Aged Out (turned 18)	16
Other.	18		

OUTCOMES

- 96% of CASA recommendations were accepted by Judges/Juries.
- 70% of children achieved permanency within 18 months of CASA's acceptance of the case.
- Less than 1% of children served by CASA entered the child welfare system for a second time within six months of case closure.

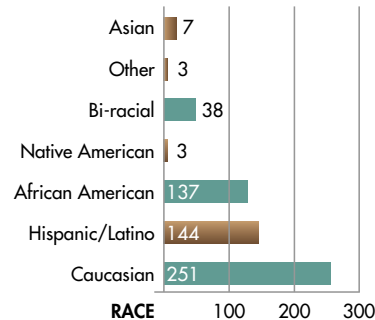
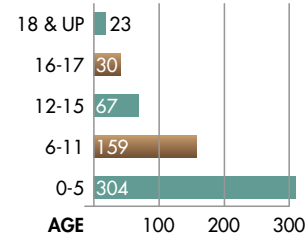
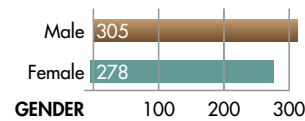
VOLUNTEERS

- A record 189 volunteer child advocates donated their time to children in Denton County in 2016.
- Average length of time advocates stay with CASA of Denton County is 40 months – just over three years.
- Volunteer child advocates contributed 25,615 hours of time to casework for children.

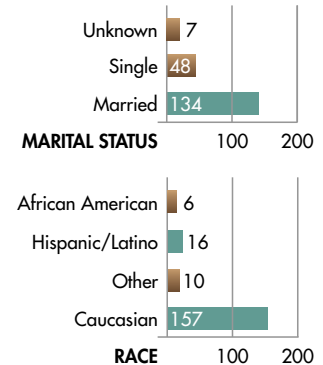
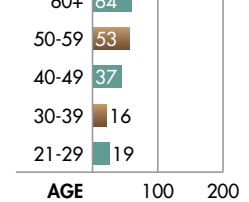
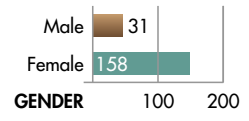
OTHER

- In FY 2016, CASA served 583 children, 94% of the 624 children in foster care from Denton County in that year.
- 90% of those children were served by volunteer child advocates. The other 10% were served by staff child advocates.

583 CHILDREN ASSISTED IN 2016



189 VOLUNTEER CHILD ADVOCATES IN 2016





I AM ONLY ONE, BUT I AM ONE WHO CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Are CASA volunteers foster parents?

It is a common misconception that CASA volunteers are foster parents. CASA volunteers do not house foster children; instead, they are a powerful voice for a child or sibling group, representing their best interests in court and other settings.

FY 2016 | Audited Financial Report

WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM?

Contributions	\$66,235
Fund Raising Events	\$222,308
United Ways	\$114,811
Federal Grants	\$103,318
State Grants	\$213,909
Local Government Grants.	\$110,256
Corporate/Foundation/Org. Grants.	\$50,269
Interest Income	\$204
In-Kind Contributions	\$795
Total Revenue	\$882,105

WHERE THE MONEY GOES?

Personnel Expenses	\$627,064
Occupancy Related, Phones & Repairs.	\$30,094
Casework Travel & Conferences.	\$29,232
Supplies	\$9,117
Printing, Postage & PR	\$21,665
Insurance.	\$5,283
Contracts & Services.	\$28,527
Dues & Subscriptions.	\$1,953
Volunteer Related	\$38,871
Fund Raising Expenses	\$77,046
Miscellaneous.	\$12,171
Depreciation	\$22,672
Care4Kids Expenditures	\$4,666
Total Expenses.	\$908,361
Net Loss for 2016	-\$26,256



The mission of CASA of Denton County, Inc. is to provide trained community volunteers, to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children, and to promote community awareness about child abuse issues.

– Adopted 08/22/2000



SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT **CASA**

CASA programs need help spreading the word about the organization in order to recruit volunteers and garner other resources. Local program spokespeople are available to speak to organizations, corporations or faith-based groups about how to become involved in many different capacities.

FY 2016 | CASA Volunteers

Special Thanks to the 353 Volunteers
Who Made a Difference for Children in 2016

- Barb Abernethy
- Perry Abernethy
- Nancy Acee
- Judy Agee
- Berenice Alcantar
- Stacey Anderson
- Molly Arnold
- Jonathan Bailey
- Cassidy Baker
- Fernando Barelas
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- Mark Croff
- Ray Croff
- Susan Croff
- Rahna Cutting
- Clarice Darnell
- Terri Darr
- Carol Delbecq
- Manoj Devas
- Manveer Myah Dhesi
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- Michael Fitzsimmons
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- Eric Freeman
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- Emma Winker
- Katie Winker
- Rebecca Winker
- Damian Wrzesien
- Nancy Young
- Ge Yousef
- Wani Yuoh
- Julie-Anne Zamorano Dean
- Madison Zitney



GIVE ONE CHILD A CHANCE VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

A CASA volunteer:

Seeks solutions to achieve resolution of problems and aims to foster positive steps toward achieving permanency.

Makes recommendations for specific, appropriate services for the child and the child's family.

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SUPPORTING ONE CHILD AT A TIME

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Dave and Deb are celebrating 13 years of support for CASA and the children and families served.

Dave and Deb Finley | **CASA Supporters**

Dave and Deb Finley are CASA supporters through and through

As CASA celebrates 25 years of service to children, Dave and Deb are celebrating 13 years of support for CASA and the children and families served. With many options in the community to volunteer for and share their resources, in 2004, Dave and Deb selected CASA of Denton County. Dave went through CASA Advocacy Academy and spent the next five years serving as a volunteer child advocate on two different cases for two teenage boys. Not only did he work to understand their needs and advocate for their best interests in the court system, he served as a role model and trusted adult that they could count on. In and of itself, this contribution is immeasurable. But, there is even more. Dave's company, LeadsOnline, serves law enforcement agencies across the United States. Dave's first-hand experience as an advocate, combined with his work with investigators has given him a unique understanding

of the critical need for children to have a safe, permanent home and the opportunity to thrive. Individually and through LeadsOnline, they place a high value on the work of CASA, making direct gifts to the organization and participating in events such as Pulling for Kids and Evening of Elegance. When others were asked about their support in the community, these words and phrases were used to describe the Finleys – role models with positive values, sensitive, supportive, big hearted, and sacrificial in giving of themselves. Really, that's all CASA can ask for – supportive, sensitive, big hearted people who give of themselves and serve as role models to help children heal from the wounds of abuse and neglect. We are grateful for the support of Dave and Deb Finley and all those who share their resources to make CASA, and our community, a better place.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE **ONE** CHILD AND **ONE** ADVOCATE AT A TIME

A child with a CASA volunteer is more likely to find a safe, permanent home...more likely to be adopted...and half as likely to reenter foster care.

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Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

DENTON COUNTY

CASA of Denton County, Inc.

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Fax: 940.243.1605

Email: info@casadenton.org

Website: casadenton.org



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
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**THANK YOU
FOR MAKING A
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ONE CHILD
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