



ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024



*“Because they are children, and for no other reason,
they have dignity and worth simply because they are.”*

- Barbara Coloroso

From Executive Director *Becky Morris*



I recently moved my son, my oldest child, into a college dorm for the very first time. It was a day full of so many different emotions. I am excited for all the possibilities in front of him. I feel sad for myself because of how much I will miss seeing him every day. I am worried about the challenges he will face and if he is ready for them. As hard as it can be to juggle all of those emotions, that is the life of a parent! It is important work and rarely easy. We love, cheer on,

encourage, guide, and worry - whether they are 18 months or 18 years old.

When I think of the 350 children and youth (aged infant – 21 years old) who were served by CASA of McHenry County over the past year because of a parent's inability to provide a safe home for them, I find myself, again, with so many different emotions. I feel sad for the children who are experiencing trauma at home. I am heartbroken for the ways these kids' lives are turned upside down when they enter the foster care system. I am frustrated by a less-than-perfect child welfare system. I worry about the abundance of challenges these kids will face due to things completely out of their control. I fear for how this time in their life will affect them long-term.

But then I also look at the 177 volunteers in our county who stepped up to advocate for those kids and I feel so much more! I am proud of the work these selfless volunteers do for kids who need someone to be on their side. I feel grateful for the board members and generous donors who give sacrificially to ensure every child in McHenry County is supported and protected while navigating the tough road of foster care. And I feel hopeful. I have hope that these kids' stories don't begin and end with trauma and displacement. Their stories are still being written as CASA Advocates give them a voice and fight for their best interest to be heard and considered at every turn.

Thank you for the part each of you have played in this past year to do the important work of "parenting" the children in our community. I am honored to do this vital work in partnership with you.

With gratitude,

Becky Morris

Mission

To support and protect children who have been abused or neglected by providing them with trained, committed volunteers who advocate for their best interest.

Vision

We believe every child deserves to live in a safe, loving, forever home.

Values

We operate with compassion for those we serve, passion for our mission, and respect for all stakeholders.



Board Members

Holly Hawes, *President*
Anita Neville, *Vice President*
Mike McAvoy, *Treasurer*
Lori Gajdzik, *Secretary*
Monica Castillo
Catherine Fischer
Kristin Georgy
Jake Holmes
Jay Schwarzrock
Tracy Streppek

Staff Members

Becky Morris, *Executive Director*
Stacy Scala-Krajewski, *Program Director*
Bea Pedersen, *Development Director*
Sharie Dodge, *Advocate Engagement Manager*
Andy Rodriguez, *Advocate Manager*
Alyssa Baltzersen, *Advocate Manager*
Sara Hockensmith, *Advocate Manager*
Erin Freese, *Advocate Manager*
Jen Gibson, *Events & Communications Manager*
Jeanne Shaw, *Administrative Assistant*
Brandi Witt, *Development Assistant*



Advocating for the Child's Best Interest

Joe* has been at CASA for less than one year and has already made a significant impact on the three children he advocates for. He stood by them during challenging times and was always there when they needed him most, no matter what! When he came across roadblocks to seeing the kids in the home where they were staying, Joe visited them at school to ensure they had a voice while in the foster care system. Joe spoke up when he noticed safety issues in their foster home and then helped the kids transition to their new foster home.

When he noticed the oldest boy had fallen behind academically due to frequent school changes, Joe arranged tutoring (paid for by CASA's Family Support Fund) that helped the boy catch up nearly three grade levels in just one summer! Ron also took the initiative to learn about IEP's (Individualized Education Plans at the schools), helping the foster parent better understand the process and advocate for the boy's educational needs. **Joe is the type of Volunteer Advocate who is always thinking outside the box for things to do with the kids, building trust along the way, and ensuring their best interest is always taken into account – inside and out of the courtroom.**

*Name and image changed to protect privacy.

Mission Partners

\$10,000 Forever Home Sponsors: Twin Shores Management, PSM Technology, AJ Manufacturing, Josh & Morgan Spencer

\$ 5,000 Providing Advocacy Sponsors: Vaclavek Hartman Vaclavek, P.C., Express Employment Professionals

Jay Schwarzrock

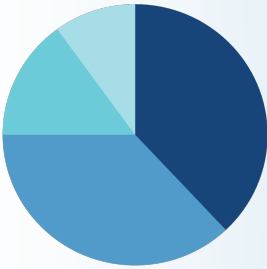
CASA Board Member



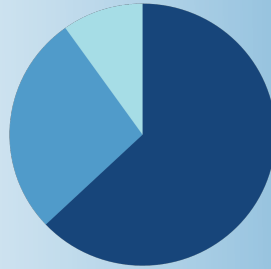
a person's willingness to volunteer or donate to CASA of McHenry County, you can be a part of the solution, too.”

“Every child needs to be heard. CASA of McHenry County does a fantastic job of training adult volunteers to reach out to these children, who through no fault of their own, have been abused or neglected and placed into foster care. These kids are facing the greatest trauma of their lives. By supporting CASA, I am able to serve my entire community in a deeper, more impactful way. Through

Financials



Revenue
\$909,243

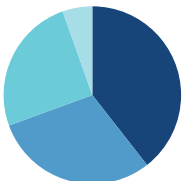


Expenses
\$902,474

- Grants & Foundations: 38%
- Events: 37%
- Individual: 15%
- Business: 10%

- Program: \$568,280
- Development: \$245,281
- Operating: \$88,913

of the 350 children served...



- Ages 0-5
- Ages 6-11
- Ages 12-17
- Ages 18-21

56 scholarships

for extracurricular activities awarded a total of \$5,795 to CASA's kids between 4-16 years old from Healthy Paws Animal Hospital Charitable Fund

Welcome New Advocates



Our Impact

350 Children Served
(20% growth)

200 Cases

177 Volunteer Advocates
(8% growth)

33 New Advocates Trained
and Sworn in

“Volunteering is an extreme act of optimism that things can be better and that we can make them better.”

- John Bridgeland



Lisa Harvey DCFS Caseworker

“In child welfare, it is important to have as much support as possible. CASA goes above and beyond to not only support the youth in care, but the case as a whole. Having a case come into care is most likely one of the hardest times in a family’s life, CASA is there to support those youth during this time, and to help them along in their journey. Mchenry county is lucky to have a knowledgeable team that is unwavering in the support they give everyday.”

Bea Pedersen Development Director

“It is an honor and a privilege to serve an organization that works to improve, protect, and support all our community members; from the children in foster care for whom we advocate, to the individuals and businesses whose donations and trust we steward with utmost fidelity.”



Celebrating Permanency

81 children & Youth
reached permanency

53 children
returned home

7 children
placed with guardian

16 children
adopted

5 children
reached independence



CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF McHENRY COUNTY



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