2018 impact report

portraits of impact
Dear Friends,

For over 15 years, I’ve worked with a CASA organization in some capacity. But I’ve never been more excited about what we’ve accomplished and what’s on the horizon than I am today.

Thanks to supporters like you, we’ve experienced unprecedented growth in recent years—vastly expanding the number of children in Delaware and Chester counties we provide with CASA volunteer Advocates and Educational Decision Makers. This year with your help, we’ve made great strides improving our infrastructure so we can be assured that the quality of services we’re providing to this ever-growing number of children remains top-notch.

The strength of the program you’ve helped us build has been recently recognized by a number of partnering and philanthropic organizations, who have entrusted us with a leadership role in a new regional “Voices for Children” advocacy coalition and with significant grants to launch several new initiatives.

This report attempts to paint a portrait of the impact you’ve had on our region’s most vulnerable children this year. I hope you enjoy reading about the difference you’ve made.

With gratitude,

Leigh Anne McKelvey
Executive Director

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**table of contents**

- Mission & Vision 3
- Charting the Course 3
- Volunteer Profile 4
- Child Profile 6
- 2018 Outcomes 8
- 2018 Gala 10
- 2018 Looking Forward 11
- Donor Profiles 12
- Financials 14
- Supporters 15
There’s no doubt—we hold the future of countless children in our hands. And they’re relying on us to make wise decisions to ensure that as many of them as possible get the highest quality advocacy and resources we can provide.

Over the course of the past year, we’ve spent significant energy and time assessing our organization’s future course to ensure that we live up to our promise to our region’s children. We emerged from this process with an exciting and ambitious strategic plan, as well as a renewed mission and vision that better reflect our organization’s direction.

In the past, our goals have primarily focused on increasing the sheer number of children we serve. While we will continue to prioritize providing a growing number of our region’s children with CASA Advocates and Educational Decision Makers, our new strategic goals also include: enhancing the quality of our program; expanding our partnerships with other agencies to improve the overall resources available to children across the system; and maintaining a board, staff and corps of volunteers who represent the diversity and lived experience of the children we serve.

Last, but not least, our strategic plan acknowledges the critical importance of keeping volunteers, donors and funders like you—who play such an instrumental role in our work—well-informed about the impact and value of your support.

We envision a bright future for all children that includes a safe and stable home environment, consistent relationships with caring adults, and supportive child welfare, education, and health systems of care.
“My first experience of CASA was the training,” explains Jim Reynolds, who was inspired to become a CASA volunteer by a Jeopardy! contestant’s on-air testimony about her own CASA journey. “I was really really impressed with the training that we went through.

“On the very first night, they gave us a true/false test to give us an idea of what the program was about. One statement said ‘As a CASA volunteer, you should expect to be treated as an equal in the child welfare system.’ I really didn’t know at that point what I was getting into. I thought, ‘I’m a volunteer. I’m just here to help.’ Thinking in terms of judges and lawyers and social workers—I put false.

“But it’s true. As CASA volunteers, we are treated as peers by others working on the children’s behalf. When I got out into the field and started meeting with probation officers, teachers, principals, guidance counselors, lawyers in the system, I was surprised and pleased to find out how well-respected CASA volunteers and the CASA program were.”

Throughout his life, Jim, 74, has enjoyed stability and success. He had long since retired from a productive career in the international shipping business when he was sworn in as a CASA volunteer in May 2016. But since his assignment to advocate for fifteen-year-old Anyaa, he now encounters the world in a very different way through the eyes of the young man under his wing.

“Anyaa’s had a tough life,” Jim explains. “When I was first introduced to Anyaa, I was a little nervous. And we just, I felt, naturally fell into a conversation... Anyaa’s determination to make something out of nothing is an inspiration to me. I was truly looking forward to working with him and seeing where this whole adventure and this journey could go.

“It’s been over two years now, and the rewards are astounding.”

During their time together, Jim has played a crucial role advocating on Anyaa’s behalf—keeping his studies on track, travelling great distances to check in on him, and lending tremendous insight into Anyaa’s circumstances for the courts.

“At our swearing in, the juvenile dependency judge told us, ‘When I have a hearing and the child is there and everyone else is there, the person I want to hear from most is the CASA volunteer.’ I thought that he was just patronizing us while he was handing out our certificates, but it’s true. They really do respect our opinion.

“As a CASA volunteer, I only have one person I have to worry about,” Jim explains. “My job advocating for Anyaa may not be full time as far as hours go, but as far as my role as an advocate goes, it’s full time. It makes a big difference.”

“The rewards are astounding.”
—Jim Reynolds, CASA volunteer
“As a CASA volunteer, I only have one person I have to worry about,” Jim explains. “My job advocating for Anyaa may not be full time as far as hours go, but as far as my role as an advocate goes, it’s full time. It makes a big difference.”

—Jim Reynolds, CASA volunteer
a portrait of potential

Anyaa was estranged from his mother and he didn’t know his father. He was fifteen years old and living in a group home in the Poconos when the Judge assigned Jim to be his CASA Advocate.

“When I first met him [Jim], it was weird,” Anyaa recalls. “I’m a young black kid and he’s—no offense—an old white man. I didn’t think we were going to click at all. But he was at my first couple of court dates, and he had just met me.

“Imagine that—a two-hour drive just to make sure I’m OK.”

When Jim learned that Anyaa enjoyed playing chess, he relearned the basic moves so they could play during visits while Anyaa taught him more about the game. It’s an activity they continue to enjoy together, although Anyaa still wins most matches.

Jim quickly understood how bright and motivated Anyaa was, and he worked hard to ensure that Anyaa was appropriately challenged in his studies. With Jim’s encouragement, Anyaa graduated from high school by 16 and attended the local community college for two semesters.

“Finishing high school was a thing I didn’t think I was going to do. I felt like school would get in the way of me eating and having clothes and having a roof over my head,” Anyaa explains. “I feel very accomplished with finishing high school, and then college—I didn’t even think I was going to do that.”

Due to a complex situation, Anyaa was temporarily relocated to a facility near the Ohio border. Jim began making the five-plus-hour drive to visit Anyaa not just once, but twice a month.

Anyaa’s new school district didn’t accept his high school diploma and wanted him to go back to 10th grade. Fortunately, Jim was able to arrange for Anyaa to take the GED test instead. Less than six months later, Anyaa passed the test with flying colors. Because of Jim’s dedication, last year Anyaa had the chance to walk across the stage to claim the diploma he had earned twice.

So what does it mean to Anyaa to have a CASA advocate in his life? “I have somebody on my side. Their job is to get to know me, which can help out a lot,” Anyaa asserts. “Just having someone to talk to. They’re like a mentor.”

Anyaa is now doing well in the care of a new foster mother in Allentown, where he’s working, saving and contemplating what he really wants to study in college. At the moment, he’s considering a career in emergency response—perhaps as an EMT or a police officer.

In the meantime, he knows one thing for certain: “CASA makes a real big difference.”
Imagine that—a two-hour drive just to make sure I’m OK.”
—Anyaa, CASA youth

THANKS TO YOU, IN 2018...

231 children had a CASA champion (A new record!)

67 children benefited from an Educational Decision Maker (Another new record!)

CIRCUMSTANCES ASSOCIATED WITH CHILDREN’S REMOVAL

- 60 Neglect
- 64 Substance abuse by parents
- 26 Physical abuse
- 50 Housing
- 28 Abandonment/relinquishment
- 46 Parent incarceration
- 19 Sexual abuse
- 15 Substance abuse by child
- 18 Child disability
- 14 Parent death

231 children had a CASA champion (A new record!)

67 children benefited from an Educational Decision Maker (Another new record!)
your impact at a glance

Research shows that children championed by a CASA volunteer spend less time in foster care and get more of the help and services they need. They do better in school, are less likely to bounce from home to home, and move through the adoption process more quickly. Check out the ways you’ve made a difference in children’s lives in 2018....

YOU HELPED US CHAMPION MORE CHILDREN.

25 MORE CHILDREN had CASA champions in 2018, for a grand total of 231. That’s a 12% increase over last year!

YOU IMPROVED OUR INFRASTRUCTURE.

A NEW satellite office in West Chester can now better support our work in Chester County.

Three NEW staff members provide additional support to our programs:

- a case supervisor for Chester County (who doubles our capacity there),
- a case supervisor in Delaware County, and a program assistant.

Each case supervisor can support up to 25 volunteers.

A NEW donor database improves our efficiency and enhances our ability to finance our programs.

NEW efforts around volunteer recruitment and retention increased our number of volunteer inquiries and improved our volunteer retention in 2018. The average length of time volunteers remain active with CASA is 46 months.

53% MORE CHILDREN and twice as many cases received CASA services than ten years ago.

8 MORE CHILDREN had Educational Decision Makers in 2018, for a grand total of 67. That’s a 14% increase over last year!
YOU PROMOTED THE QUALITY OF OUR PROGRAMS.

74% of the kids whose cases closed in 2018 had only one CASA volunteer throughout their entire journey in the child welfare system—a testament to our commitment to providing children with a consistent, caring adult.

A NEW strategic plan

is now in place to guide our decision-making as we pursue both growth and quality, individual advocacy, and system change.

A NEW National CASA training curriculum

was implemented and was used to train 30 new volunteer advocates.

55 hours

of in-service training opportunities were offered to volunteers.

None of this amazing work or this extraordinary growth—which truly transforms the lives of our region’s abused and neglected children—would be possible without you.
Fundraising and Friendraising at the Gala

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO SUPPORTED OUR 2018 GALA!

2019 GALA: DECEMBER 6!

238 IN ATTENDANCE

30 SPONSORS

132 SILENT AUCTION DONORS

2 VOLUNTEER ADVOCATES HONORED

OVER $140K RAISED

BE THERE IN 2019-2020!

Don’t miss any of the coming year’s opportunities to champion our children and mingle with the CASA community. From the chance to masquerade as a superhero, to our annual Gala, we know our children can count on you!! Check www.delcocasa.org/news-events for the latest information.

2020 SUPERHERO 5K: APRIL 26
eyes on the horizon

Thanks to the strong, robust program you’ve helped us build, several major funders have entrusted us with launching new projects and initiatives over the next year.

Expanding our capacity

The Nelson Foundation awarded CASA a three-year $230,000 capacity-building grant that will be used to expand and sustain our development, public relations and marketing efforts. These operations are vital to continuing our growth through fundraising and for supporting events and programs throughout the year.

Improving services for a special category of kids

The National CASA Association awarded CASA Youth Advocates a grant to undertake a special project on advocacy for children of incarcerated parents. The training programs, resource materials, and children’s book library we’re developing will benefit kids in this population and their advocates across the counties we serve.

Evaluating our strengths and identifying areas for growth

A 30-month qualitative program evaluation launched in 2018 and conducted by Capacity for Change will continue throughout the year as we seek out new ways to better serve a growing number of vulnerable children.

Mobilizing child advocates across the county

Through grants from The Foundation for Delaware County and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), this spring CASA will officially launch Voices for Children, an advocacy coalition focused on child well-being and victimization. In this role, CASA will mobilize a multidisciplinary coalition of organizations and concerned individuals from across sectors—government, philanthropy, nonprofit, and corporate—working together to improve the lives of abused and neglected children in Delaware County.

Voices for Children will strengthen partnerships between child-serving organizations, raise public awareness, contribute to the public dialogue on matters of child welfare, identify gaps in services to abused and neglected children, and advocate for systemic and policy improvements. The goal is to build a comprehensive safety net of services to ensure vulnerable children’s healthy and safe development while improving aid to victims.

April 2019 press conference launch L-R: CASA Board Member Anthony Cavaliere; CASA Board Member Patricia Saxton; CASA Board Chair David Cramer; CASA Executive Director Leigh Anne McKelvey; Delaware County District Attorney Katayoun M. Copland; Kristin Seale, Legislative Director for Pennsylvania State Senator Tim Kearney; Pat Kosinski, Executive Director of Family Support Line; Deirdre Gordon, Director of Children & Youth Services.
2018 financials

Our continued growth in revenue has provided the resources to expand our infrastructure as we work to provide quality services to an ever-growing number of children. With increased funds, we’ve also been able to take a leading role in shaping the systems and services available to all vulnerable children in the region.

CASA was honored to receive the prestigious 2018 GSK Impact Award of $40,000 for our work improving community health by advocating for the medical and dental needs of the abused and neglected children that we serve. Thanks to GlaxoSmithKline for recognizing the efforts of our amazing volunteers and staff who ensure that the children receive needed medical and dental care, participate in recommended therapeutic services, and that their medications and medical records follow them from placement to placement.
CASA staff

Leigh Anne McKelvey, MSW, LSW
Executive Director

Anne Shenberger, MSS, LSW
Strategic Director

Mary Kate Howard, MSS, MLSP, LSW
Program Director

Jacquona Blackwell, MSW, MBA
Development Director

Tamara L. Wilson, JD
Chester County Program Manager/Outreach Coordinator

Suzanne Coladonato, MSW
Senior Case Supervisor

Shakira Hansley, JD
Case Supervisor

Diamond White, MSW
Case Supervisor

Susanne Whiting, MSW
Case Supervisor

Alyse Wilbanks, BSW
Case Supervisor

Vita Dolan, BS
Office Manager

Gabrielle LeGendre
Program Assistant

Diana Zahner
Bookkeeper

board of directors

David Cramer,
Board Chair

Fran Howell, MBA, DNP, APRN, CDE,
Secretary

Ian Kauffman, CPA,
Treasurer

C. Winston Bailey

Carmen Belefonte, Esq.

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Anthony Cavaliere

Susan K. Maue, Ph.D.

Karen M. Rivera

Jennifer Sandner

Patricia Saxton

Michael Simpson, CPA, CVA

Bernard Skeete
thank you to our 2018 DONORS!

Thanks to everyone who contributed to CASA Youth Advocates, helping us to champion the needs of children in our community! The children we serve need to know that the community cares about them. Through your time, your donations and your care, we have been able to provide them with the support they need in their most formative years. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. We could not do this without you!

Businesses:
Amerisource Bergen
Brandywine Pediatrics P.A.
Brinker Simpson & Co. LLC
Bryn Mawr Trust
Comfort Zone Massage
Common Cents Planning
DelFera Heating & Cooling Co.
Emerald Advisers Inc.
Gap Inc.
Garnet Ford
GSK Polaris Solutions LLC
Gwen Krilova Coaching
The Higgins Group Incorporated
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Keystone First
Marchese Opticians
Monroe Energy
Moore Brothers Wine Company
Nolan Painting
Pinocchio’s Restaurant
Powers Brand Communications LLC
Republic Bank
SEI
Sherwin Williams
Turnaround Management Association
United Methodist Women of West Chester
WSFS Bank

Foundations:
Chappell Culpeper Family Foundation
The Claniel Foundation
The Community’s Foundation
Connelly Foundation
The Dale L. Reese Foundation
Robert & Joan Dircks Foundation
ECMC Foundation
The Ethel Sergeant Clark Smith Memorial Foundation
The Foundation for Delaware County
Genuardi Family Foundation
The Lawrence Saunders Fund
MKM Foundation
The Nelson Foundation
The Patricia Kind Family Foundation
The Philadelphia Foundation
Schiel Family Foundation
State Farm Companies Foundation
TD Charitable Foundation
United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey
The Wawa Foundation

National and Government:
Chester County Department of Children Youth and Families
Delaware County Department of Human Services
National CASA Association
Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency

We’ve made every effort to appropriately acknowledge our donors’ generosity, and we sincerely apologize for any errors or omissions. If you notice an error, please contact Jacquona Blackwell, JBlackwell@delcocasa.org.
DelFera Heating and Cooling

Since our inaugural Superhero 5K Run and Walk in 2016, DelFera Heating and Cooling has helped CASA’s fundraising keep pace with our vision. Not only have they sponsored the race at the Black Panther level for the last four years, company owner Ray DelFera and his daughter have also competed in the event. Ray’s even placed in his division!

When the company first heard about CASA Youth Advocates, they knew CASA was doing something they needed to be involved with. Not only did they believe in the importance of advocating for children who can’t speak up for themselves, the Aston-based company liked that CASA’s work was helping kids in their own community. They’ve also been impressed with the passionate people they’ve met along the way who have first-hand experience with the work CASA does, like 20-year CASA volunteer Terry Yannuzzi, who also happens to run the Aston Business Association.

“The children are the future, and they deserve the best shot possible. CASA tries to give them that support and that shot that they might not have otherwise,” explains Margaret DelFera, Vice President. “The fact that we’re able to help means the world to us.”

The Higgins Group

The Higgins Group is an executive search and consulting firm with offices in Cambridge, MA and Chesterbrook, PA. When someone has been newly hired by one of the firm’s clients, the Higgins Group sends a congratulatory gift that includes a charitable donation made in the person’s name. This past year, the Higgins Group started making those honorary donations to CASA. It’s a gift that not only helps fund the work of CASA, but one that also helps us spread the word to even more people!

The Higgins Group became aware of the impactful work of CASA through Carol Cottone, who has worked with Donna Higgins over the last 20 years, and has been a long-time CASA volunteer. The Higgins Group was impressed by the volunteer work she was doing and the success of the young man for whom she advocated who went on to enroll in college.

Turnaround Management Association – Philadelphia-Wilmington Chapter

The Philadelphia/Wilmington Chapter of the Turnaround Management Association (TMA) is part of a global organization of nearly 10,000 members in 52 chapters worldwide seeking to strengthen the economy by protecting stakeholders of distressed businesses, assisting management to navigate off-plan events, and helping healthy companies avoid pitfalls.

David Cramer, CASA Youth Advocates Board Chair and a TMA member, introduced the association to CASA in 2014. For the past five years, TMA has donated proceeds from its annual Summer Charity Classic to CASA Youth Advocates.

“I always thought our relationship with CASA was a great match, and I’m very pleased that we have continued supporting them throughout the past five years. Their mission aligns with ours – they support kids in need, and our Chapter’s members support clients in need.” –Neil Gupta, Board Member and Charitable Activities Chair, TMA
THANK YOU!

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casayouthadvocates

Delaware County CASA Youth Advocates