



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS

STANDING TALL THROUGH IT ALL



CASA OF NORTHWEST ARKANSAS
2021 IMPACT REPORT



MISSION

Court Appointed Special Advocates of Northwest Arkansas provides compassionate volunteers who advocate for abused and neglected children. We are committed to ensuring a consistent voice, safe home, and promising future for children in foster care.

VISION

Every child in foster care will have a fierce and skilled CASA champion by their side.

NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It's been a year and several months since our CASA office was shuttered amid a global pandemic. Sadly, abuse and neglect didn't end. Kids didn't stop coming into foster care. Our work, advocating for those without a voice, was as important as ever.

Thanks to **YOUR** loyalty and commitment, our staff, board, and volunteers did what they do best – persevered. They refused to let circumstances, outside of their control, take their focus away from what is most important: the safety and well-being of the children we serve. It was never a question of “if,” only a question of “how.”

Together, we waded through the storm and continued to speak up for every child assigned by the courts this year. I hope you enjoy reading the impact of your efforts and are proud to be a part of the backbone of this organization. **You've empowered us all to stand tall.**

With gratitude,

Crystal Vickmark
National CASA/GAL's
Kappa Alpha Theta Program Director of the Year, 2020



BY THE NUMBERS

FOUND PERMANENCY

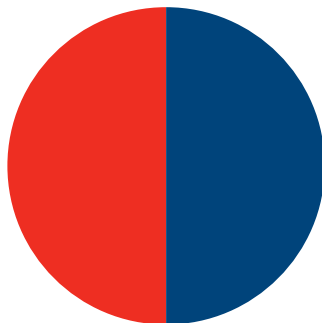


86% OF CHILDREN HAD **2** OR FEWER PLACEMENTS FOLLOWING CASA'S ASSIGNMENT

CHILDREN DEMOGRAPHICS

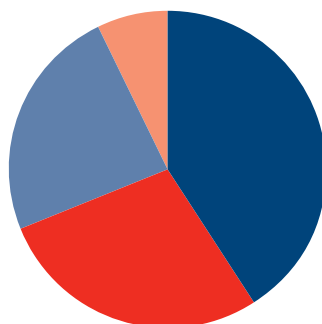
Gender

Male 50%
Female 50%

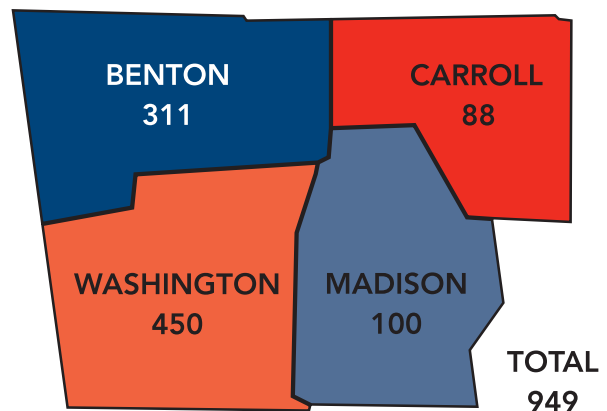


Age

0-5 41%
6-11 28%
12-17 24%
18-20 7%

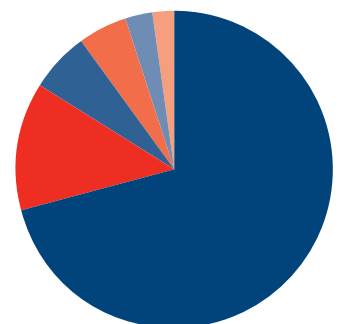


County of Origin



Ethnicity

Caucasian 71%
Hispanic/Latino 13%
Native American 6%
African American 5%
Multi-Racial/Other 3%
Pacific Islander 2%





Kristy and family

RISE TO THE OCCASION

Sometimes the wind blows so hard you feel like you might topple over. And then along comes the right support to keep you standing tall.

Kristy, a mother on one of our cases, made mistakes and lost custody of her three children in late 2018. Her battles, with drugs and the law, had put her family at risk. But, having her children removed from her home was the push Kristy needed to make life-altering changes.

into the lives of each of the kids – uncovering their individual strengths, passions, and specific ways to support them. Seeing how bonded the children were to their mom, Emily invested the time to get to know Kristy too and was inspired by the immense progress she had made.

Soon, Emily reported Kristy's efforts to the court team. According to Kristy, that was when the tables began to turn in the case; people were finally listening. Emily continued advocating for the children's educational, medical, and therapeutic needs while Kristy fulfilled her parenting classwork and recovery. Kristy was such an inspiring student that she now serves as a facilitator for such coursework for other struggling families!

With the family reunified and case closed in summer 2020, Kristy can stand taller than ever.

Despite her efforts in the first six months of the case, Kristy felt the child welfare team was passing judgment without getting to know her. People seemed unwilling to give her another chance. She felt defeated and was quickly losing hope.

When CASA volunteer Emily Jost took the case in spring 2019, she was the first court-related person to visit Kristy's home. Emily arrived with an open mind and a commitment to connect with both the children and their mother. Emily delved deeply

With the family reunified and case closed in summer 2020, Kristy can stand taller than ever. While she boasts Emily's unwavering support as a reason she could "keep her head up and stay motivated during such a hard time," Kristy has so much to be proud of! The way she has turned her life around to provide a better life for her kids is phenomenal. Emily agrees, "I was so impressed with how Kristy carried herself, facing incredible obstacles, and defying the odds. She is a beautiful example of what we hope for with the parents on all of our cases."



Kristy and daughter with CASA Emily

A STEADY SUPPORT

Danyele and Charlie never once considered being foster parents. They had three kids of their own, and lots of family around to keep them busy. But, when they got the call that one of their cousins was removed from his home, they didn't skip a beat. It wasn't 24 hours before Brantlee was safely in their arms.

Being new to foster care, Danyele and Charlie had never heard of CASA. But, they remember meeting Ms. Barri. CASA Barri Tulgetske told them she was there for Brantlee, first and foremost, and that included trying to help the biological family reunify. That was a relief to hear because that's what everyone wanted.

Brantlee had already been through a lot in his first ten years of life. He was a "little man" with much responsibility and life experience. He lost his Grandma a few years before. To Danyele, Barri kind of took on that role for Brantlee. At their first visit, Brantlee was a little reserved and not terribly trusting. But, it didn't take long for Barri to break down those walls. When he couldn't talk to Danyele or Charlie about his feelings or emotions, he could confide in Barri. "She truly became the best person for him at that time."

While our CASA and her kiddo bonded, through treasured school lunches and football games, behind the scenes, Barri was monitoring the case plan and his parents' progress closely. She was a consistent influence on Brantlee, never wavering as five different DHS workers cycled through his case. Barri was instrumental in getting answers from the DHS and reporting when orders weren't being followed. "She looks sweet," Danyele chuckled, "but she can be sassy too."

Unfortunately, there came a time when it was clear that this young man would not be able to return "home." Luckily for Brantlee, he was already there. It took 822 days, through an appeal and Covid-related court delays, for it to be official. On adoption day in December 2020, Danyele shared an incredibly gracious post, thanking all of those who supported them on this journey. In closing, she shared, "Thank

She was a consistent influence on Brantlee, never wavering as five different DHS workers cycled through his case.

you so much Barri, thank you for always being there for our son and our family....Barri was there from the very beginning and I have no doubt she will stay with us. She is much more than just a worker. She has become part of our family."



CASA Barri (left) next to Brantlee and his family

COPING THROUGH COVID

Adapt, adjust, pivot. When everything in your world changes, it's what you do to survive. Our kids in foster care have known this for years. To better understand the impact of the pandemic on these resilient young people and their cases, we interviewed veteran advocates, Becky and Scott Richards. Between the two of them, they served five unique cases since March 2020.

Q. How has the pandemic impacted the children you serve?

A. Perhaps the biggest challenge was the isolation. Babies weren't seeing as many people so their social skills suffered. As a CASA, it was difficult to build relationships with a little one when they couldn't see your face through your mask and their tears!

The older kids who live in facilities were basically on lockdown for months. We struggled getting in-person access. With virtual school and house restrictions, even those in foster homes felt isolated. You can imagine that if your parental and sibling ties had already been severed, this was an even lonelier time. It's impossible to predict the long-term effects that the quarantine will have on the social and emotional well-being of our kids.

Q. How have your CASA duties changed this past year?

A. Seeing our kids in person, regardless of the distance, is extremely important to us. It hurt to know we were the only people who visit a couple of them and weren't allowed to for many months. We used technology as much as permitted but were relieved when we were finally allowed outdoor visits.

Besides the changes to visitation, much of our work stayed the same; the pandemic just made getting things done a bit harder. One of our girls desperately needed a new pair of eyeglasses. After she finally saw an eye doctor and had a prescription, it took several weeks and relentless communications to find someone at the facility to pick them up when they were ready. Not being in person meant the wheel had to squeak a little louder.

Q. What are you most anxious to "return to normal"?

A. While Zoom court hearings were necessary, we will be very happy to have court return in-person. It's not the same online. In Madison County, the CASA volunteer sits right next to the Attorney Ad Litem, the child's attorney. That allows us to communicate and share critical information throughout the hearing. Virtual court was also distracting, an unfortunate outcome given the stakes are so high. We really missed the in-person interactions and observations and are anxious to return to the courtroom later this summer.

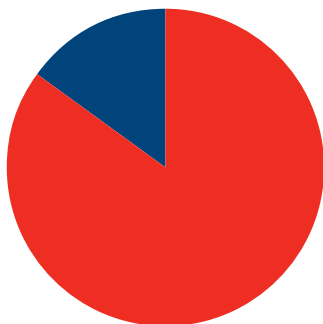


CASA volunteers, Scott and Becky

VOLUNTEER DEMOGRAPHICS

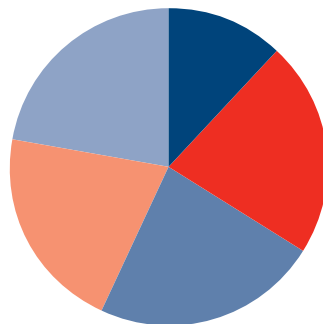
Gender

Female 85%
Male 15%



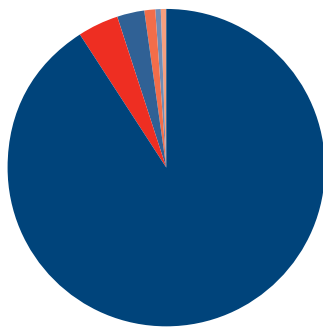
Age

20s 12%
30s 22%
40s 23%
50s 21%
60s+ 22%



Ethnicity

Caucasian 92%
Hispanic/Latino 3.9%
African American 2.4%
Multi-Racial/Other 0.9%
Native American 0.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander 0.4%



VOLUNTEER RETENTION RATE **83%**
83 NEW VOLUNTEERS



VOLUNTEERS

This year's success is due to the love and commitment our advocates bring to the cases they serve. **Thank you to these individuals who gave of themselves to make sure our children's voices were heard.**



Kim Aaron
Alexis Acello
Dawn Adams
Julie Allison
Sarah Allred
Lindsey Aloia
Shelby Anthony
Alyssa Antuna
Diana Antuna
Melissa Arndt
Abigail Arnn
Kim Autry ★★
Ron Autry ★★
Bryn Bagwell ★
Meredith Baltz Drake
Theresa Barrera-Shaw
Amber Barrett
Rebecca Baugher
Joe Bebout
Sharon Becker
Tana Beenken ★
Camila Bejarano
Christine Benson ★
Kara Biggs ★
Mary Blankenship
Jeff Blaschke ★
Kristi Blaschke ★
Cari Bogulski ★
Tracy Bohannon
Whitney Bohn
Mary Book
Megan Boring
Emily Bost ★
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John Bradley
Laurie Brady
Abigail Breckenridge
Hannah Breckenridge
Susan Breese
Rick Brekelbaum
Mandy Broadstreet
Ashley Brown
Helen Brown
Jenny Buchanan

Linda Buckner
Max Buckner
Brennan Bullock
Brienne Burford
Happy Burgmeier ★
Brittany Burks
Sara Burns
Shelby Burns
Hannah Butler
Maggie Butler
Valerie Buttn
Debbie Bzowski
Aly Camacho
Nicholas Camper
Cindy Capobianco
Candice Carlsen
Kim Carlson
Carolyn Carney ★
Lacey Carney
Belinda Carpenter ★
Rick Carpenter ★
Shannon Carpenter ★★
Annie Carroll
Haley Carson
Hannah Carter
Karen Casey
Katie Chapman
Kristi Chapman
Brittany Chase
Sylvia Chesser ★
Kim Chrisman
DeAnne Christoffersen
Hannah Chudy
Deanna Cicatiello ★
Terance Clark
Brandi Clifford
Sara Coatney
Judy Cockrum
Ashley Coffman
John Cogger
Kim Coker
Melissa Cole
Tanae Coleman
Tina Cone

Dayna Cook ★
TJ Cook
Tonia Cook
Kelly Cope ★
Teresa Cornett
John Corso
Debbie Corter
Francisco Cortez
Lenore Cottrell ★
Amanda Cousins
Ann Covington
David Covington
Courtney Cox
Thad Crawford ★
Craig Crismon
Ashlee Cross
Kristin Crowswhite
Jim Crouch
Kelley Cullen ★
James Curtis
Shannon Daniel
Kelly Daniels
Doris Davis
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Linda Davis ★
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Morgan Davis Hill ★
Elise de Waal ★
Marius de Waal ★
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Tracy DeLeon
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Matthew Dickson
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Deborah Doerr
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Michelle Doles
Morgan Dooley
Priscilla Dorado
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Candis Drechsler
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Kristen Dunavant

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Amber Duran
Tom Dyal
Blair Dyer
Caroline Eastep
Judy Eddington ★
Asha Edwards ★
Adam Ellzey
Lexie Emerson
Michelle Faucher
Hannah Favorite
Amy Ference
Connie Fettes
Jessica Files
Zach Files
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Kristyn Ford ★
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Megan Higerd
Teresa Hilliard
Noah Hinchliffe
Glen Hoffman ★
Barbara Hogberg
David Hogberg

★ Celebrating 5+ years of service with CASA
 ★★ Celebrating 10+ years of service with CASA
 ★★★ Celebrating 15+ years of service with CASA

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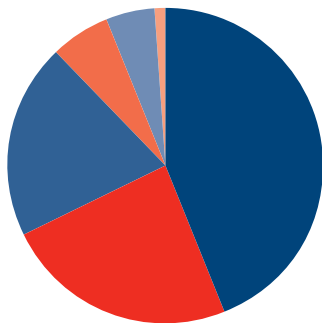
Wayne Hamilton
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Term: July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

FINANCIALS

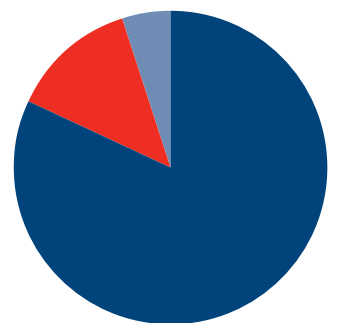
Revenue*

Government	44%
Events	24%
Individuals	20%
Foundations	6%
Corporate	5%
Other	1%



Expenses*

Programmatic	82%
Fundraising	13%
Administrative	5%



COST PER CHILD:

\$1,310



THE EFFICIENCY OF THE CASA MODEL

1 staff member

} supports
30
volunteers



serving
75
children

*These numbers represent unaudited financials for the FY2020-21, ending June 30, 2021.
 For the most recent audited financial information, please visit www.guidestar.org.

ANNUAL DONORS

INVESTOR

Arkansas State CASA
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Philip & Katie
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Cunningham
Marius & Elise
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Gilbey Enterprises, Inc
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