



LOOK HOW

We've Grown!



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS

2016 IMPACT REPORT

Mission

To speak for the best interests of abused and neglected children in court.

Vision

To provide a CASA advocate to every child who needs one by 2020.

Founded in 1997, CASA of Northwest Arkansas promotes and supports quality volunteer representation for children to ensure each child a safe, permanent and nurturing home in Benton, Carroll, Washington, and Madison counties.

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A special thanks to our advocates and to the children of our staff and friends for participating in a photo shoot with our volunteer, Shipman Photography. Art layout and design provided by Catherine Hunt.



Dear Friends,

Look how we've grown! When I started with CASA, 13 short years ago, our program boasted 82 CASA volunteers who served 258 children. At the time, we advocated for 37% of the children in foster care. As the number of children in care continues to grow, so must we to achieve our vision to serve every child in need by 2020. CASA has reached many milestones since our founding in 1997, and this year was no exception.

We started off the fiscal year investing in additional staff, an overdue and necessary expansion. With two new advocate supervisors and an office manager on board, we increased our volunteer capacity to an all new high with 239 volunteers serving on cases. **This, in turn, allowed us to achieve and surpass our 12% growth goal for children served.**

To continue meeting and exceeding our program goals, fiscal responsibility will always be at the top of our minds. At the end of this fiscal year, we have a cash reserve of 2.5 months of operating expenses and a lead gift to open an organizational endowment. With every donation, we are making progress towards our goal of financial sustainability for the future of CASA of Northwest Arkansas.

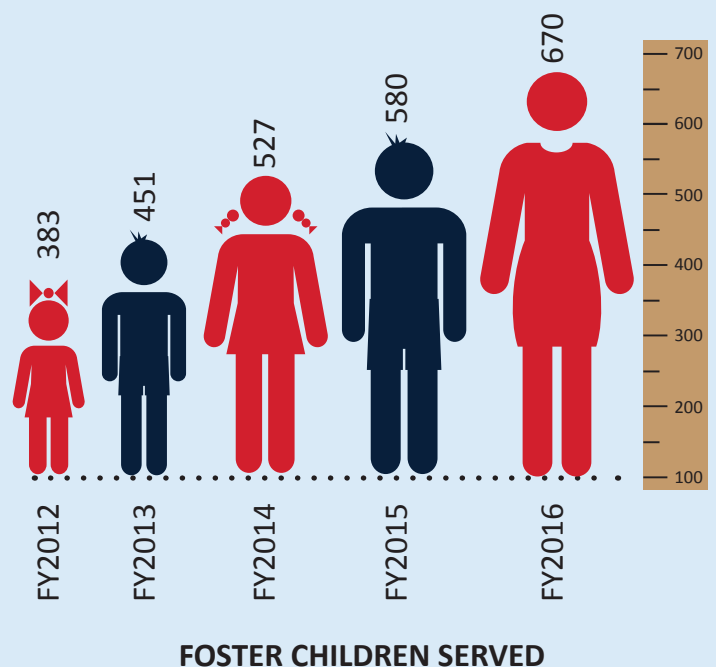
I am so proud of what our organization, **with YOUR help**, has accomplished for the children in our community. But, I am also regularly reminded that we still have a long way to grow. Just today, our office received a call from a biological mother who was desperate to have a CASA assigned to her case. Her attorney told her that having a CASA would mean better outcomes for her children. What mother doesn't want that? Unfortunately, her boys were two of the 50+ children currently waiting for an advocate in our region.

For that reason, we have to reach high and stretch further than we have before. **As a member of the CASA family, you give us the inspiration, commitment, and capacity to keep advancing.** Thank you. I hope this report reminds you of the important role you play in the lives of hundreds of very special children in Northwest Arkansas.

With our gratitude,

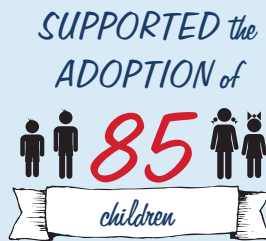


Crystal Vickmark
Executive Director

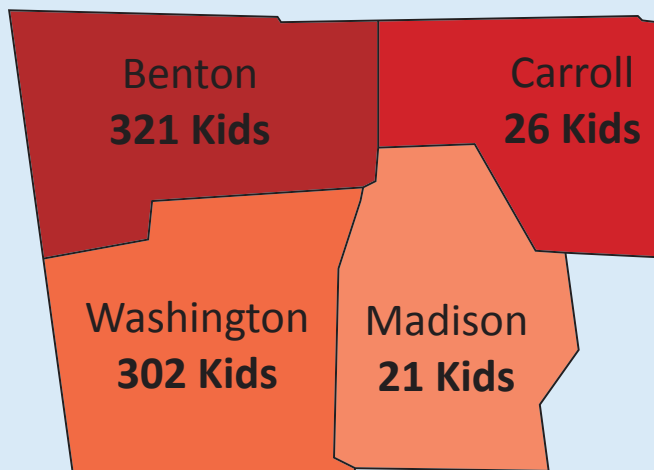


By the Numbers

Exceeding every growth goal set this year (July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016), we:



Arkansas Counties Served

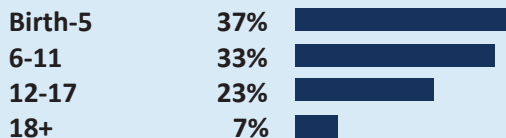


Children Demographics:

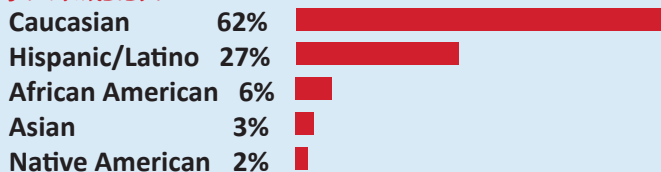
BY GENDER



BY AGE



BY ETHNICITY





Reunification

Your life can change in the blink of an eye. For Angelique Morales, she knows this all too well. One day in September 2014, a poor decision led to Angelique's three month old daughter being ripped from her arms and taken into custody. The agony of being separated from SaraGrace and her son Torin made Angelique physically ill. Well educated with a successful career, Angelique suddenly found herself immersed in a legal system she had never been involved with before. Angelique waited painstakingly between her arrest and the day she finally saw her daughter in court. After the hearing, the foster mom, Karrie Parker, embraced Angelique, cried, and prayed with her. Angelique was determined to be reunited with SaraGrace and Torin as soon as possible.

Before a case plan was even in place, Angelique voluntarily paid for her own assessments and anger management classes. She retained a private attorney who requested an emergency hearing to assess the possibility of home visits and to ask that a CASA be assigned to the case. In November, CASA volunteers John and Marilyn Cornwell were assigned. That is when Angelique saw a turning point in the case. CASA advocates serve as the eyes and ears of the court. Before John and Marilyn made their first visit, Angelique did not feel that the court was seeing how much she adored her

children and more importantly, that she could provide the safe and loving home they deserved. John and Marilyn were able to provide an objective third party opinion based on evidence they collected. Finally, in Angelique's words, "SaraGrace's voice could be heard."

By Christmas, the criminal charges were dropped, the foster care case closed, and SaraGrace and Torin were home with Angelique. A silver lining to this story was their celebrating the holiday with their newly extended family, the Parkers. With CASA's input, Angelique's family was spared additional months in foster care and further disruption of the parent-child bond. More than a year later, it is clear that this family bond is stronger than ever.

“Angelique did not feel that the court was seeing how much she adored her children and more importantly, that she could *provide the safe and loving home* they deserved.”



Adoption

When Tammy Carlton answered a call from DHS in January 2015 and was told there was a one year old needing placement, she pictured a baby. Instead, a 22 month old toddler named Luke walked into her life. And, she couldn't have been happier. She and her husband Brian were already proud foster parents to Justin, a nearly 3 year old who had joined their home a few months before. Their house was filled with the joy (and craziness) that only two little boys can bring.

Fortunately for them, both of the boys had CASA advocates working their cases. Justin's advocate, Dawn Tilman, was always coming by the house and could frequently be found playing on the floor with the little guys. Luke's advocate, Jade Gustin, would visit the home and check in on Luke during parental visits. Both Dawn and Jade were there to make sure the boys were happy and healthy in their placements and that their needs were met while in care. While the boys were stable, neither of their cases seemed likely to end in parental reunification. A turning point in Luke's case came when a family member stepped forward with an interest in adopting. Given the biological tie to Luke, this prospective placement seemed promising. But, things aren't always as perceived. That is why CASA exists. Advocates do not

investigate past abuse but rather gather information to ensure the future safety of the child. Hours before a critical court hearing, Jade learned that the prospective adoptive relative had mental health issues that could interfere with her ability to care for Luke. The judge agreed with the advocate's concerns.

Fast forward to June 1, 2016. It's adoption day for the Carlton family - not just for one child, but two. Justin and Luke became brothers that day, and their lives were forever changed, thanks in part to CASA. When looking back, Tammy recalls a particularly dark day when Luke's future was so uncertain. She remembers Brian's words of comfort, "Prayer changes things." Their prayers were certainly answered.

“ Instead, a 22 month old toddler named **Luke** walked into her life. And, she couldn't have been happier. [...] Their house was **filled with the joy** (and craziness) that only **two little boys** can bring. ”



Program Highlight: Lifelong Links

In the state of Arkansas, foster teens can sign themselves out of care when they turn 18. Without a network of support and family, only 58% will graduate high school by age 19, only 50% will be employed at age 24, and nearly a third will face homelessness at least once by age 26. How can we break this cycle for the 125+ teenagers waiting alone in foster care in Northwest Arkansas?

One of CASA's answers is Lifelong Links, a new family finding program launched in 2015. Lifelong Links (LLL) seeks to reconnect older foster youth with biological relatives to give the child a sense of family, identity, and belonging. Once made, these connections may result in something as simple and meaningful as consistent contact between the child and a caring relative. Ideally, this program will result in identifying safe and loving, forever homes for these young adults. Permanent connections to an enduring network of people who know and love them improve outcomes for children in foster care.

Based on the work of Kevin Campbell, this family finding model has been successfully implemented by programs across the country. Similar to our traditional CASA advocacy program, LLL is supervised by staff but carried out by volunteers. Each case can

take months for the discovery and engagement of family members. In its first year, CASA of NWA trained 11 LLL volunteers to perform family finding for 13 teens. Sadly, two of the teens left care prior to the conclusion of these services. The other cases are still on-going. Two of our most exciting cases have already witnessed teens being reintroduced to their family.

With the program in its infancy, we do not have much data to report. But, we know that for any individual child who meets a relative who can invite them over for Thanksgiving dinner or share photos and stories from their childhood or provide a forever home, it will be well worth the investment.

A special thanks to the Walmart Foundation for investing in the launch of this important program.

“Lifelong Links (LLL) seeks to **reconnect** older foster youth with biological relatives to give the child a sense of family, identity, and belonging.”

Volunteers

This year's success is due to the love and nurture 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.**

Andrea Akin
Vlada Alaytseva
Melanie Alecusan
Eric Andersen
Morgan Atwood
Kim Autry*
Ron Autry*
Bryn Bagwell
Haven Bailey
Kemetric Bailey
Sharyl Barwick*
Christine Benson
Kara Biggs
Jeff Blaschke
Kristi Blaschke
Cari Bogulski
Pam Borth

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Jeremy Cupp
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Emma Dart
Katie Davis
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Marius de Waal
Jane Delahoussay
Ana Deras
Michelle DeRose
Sherry Dixon
Happy Douglas
Jason Dowd*
Stephanie Dreves
Susan Duke^

Joanie Dyer
Judy Eddington
Asha Edwards
Dale Ensinger*
Emily Espinosa
Elizabeth Estes^
Libby Estes
Janis Everett
Geri Felstul*
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Nathan Finch
Marla Fletcher
Jacob Ford
Kristyn Ford
Amy Fowler
Steffanie Fowler
Christian Franklin
Nick Fritsche
Randi Fritsche
Mark Fryauf
Joy Fuller
Lendee Fuqua*
Marcia Gaddy
David Garner
Monroe Garner
Leanna Gavin
Lindsey Gearhart
Tess Gibbs
Summer Glass
Ricky Goff
Maria Goostree

Tiajuana Gough
Robin Griffin
MacKenzie Grubbs
Pam Grudek^
Karen Grumme-Rodriguez
Jade Gustin
Christi Guthrie
Olga Hamilton
Wayne Hamilton
Karen Hamrick
Joe Haro
Kay Hatfield
Shaniqua Hatton
Pam Hayden
Diana Hearn
Johnathan Heasley
Sheila Heward
Sidney Hewgley*
Holli Hill
Morgan Hill
Cindy Hillabrand
Tina Hodne
Glen Hoffman
Julie Hoggard
Kacie Holiday
Melinda Holton
Wendy Housley
Jeff Howe
Lon Hudson
Marla Hunt^

June Hutton
Michelle Inlow
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Kristen Karpinski
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Kathleen MacLeod*
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Kay Magness
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Glenda Matney
Barbara McClelland*
Andrea McNeal
Chrystal McPherson
Tami McWhorter



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*Celebrating 5+ years of service with CASA
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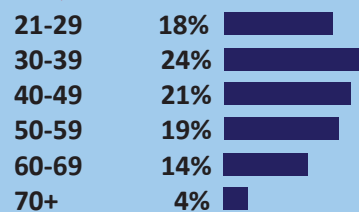
I am for the child®

Volunteer Demographics

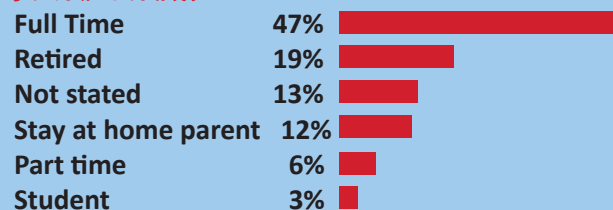
BY GENDER



BY AGE



BY EMPLOYMENT

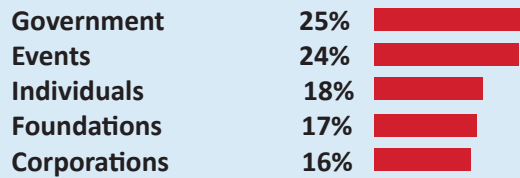


Financials

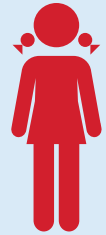
EXPENSES*



REVENUE*



COST TO SERVE ONE CHILD PER YEAR: \$1,232



*These numbers represent unaudited financials for the FY2015-16, ending June 30, 2016.
For the most recent audited financial information, please visit www.guidestar.org.

The Efficiency of the CASA Model



1 staff member



supports
30
volunteers



serving
75
children

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Shelley Hart, Program Director
Colleen Smith, Development Director
Arbor Buchanan, Training Specialist
Nikki McDaniel, Office Manager
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Ryan Brashears, Advocate Supervisor
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Darin & Loyce Akerman
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Jill Allen
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Gordon Allison
Christopher Alsip
AmazonSmile Foundation
Donna Anderson
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Art Center of the Ozarks
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Toyin Babatunde
Janice Baccus
Keith & Julie Bachmayer
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Susie Baker
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| Jennifer Champlin | Patrick Fitzgerald | Jerry & Charlotte Hudlow | Logan & Krystyl Maienschein |
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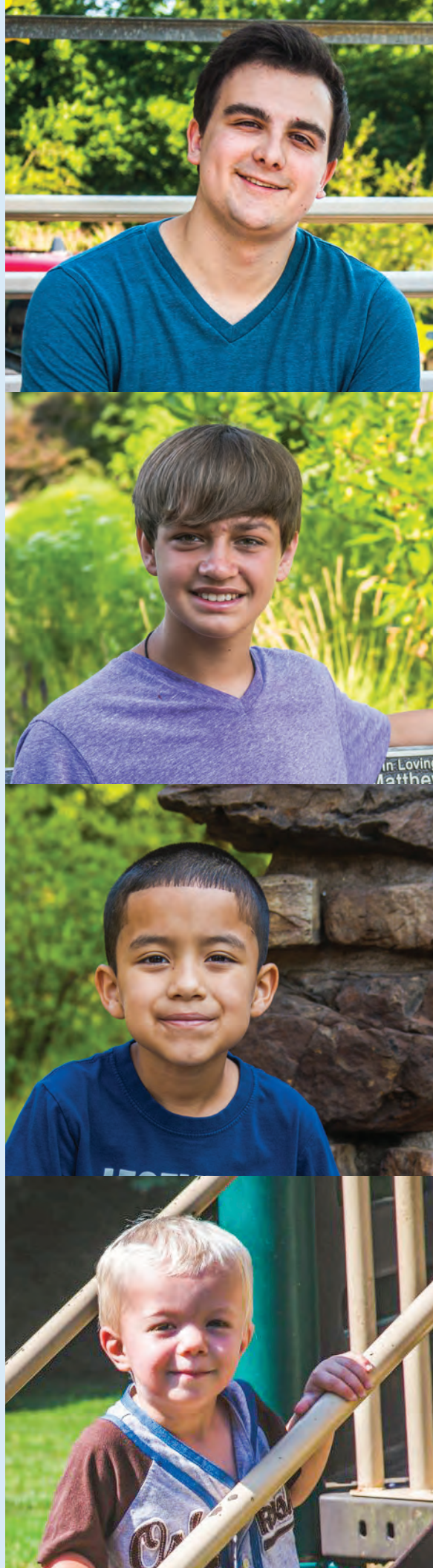
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