



Where Home is **LOVE**

CASA OF MORRIS AND SUSSEX COUNTIES
ANNUAL REPORT FY21, JULY 2020 – JUNE 2021



CASA

AT THE ZOO



After a long year spent under COVID restrictions, we were thrilled to host a very different type of annual fundraiser. Instead of the usual Casino Night or fancy Gala, we decided it was time to plan something that our CASA children could enjoy as well. What started as a fundraiser raised over \$100,000 and became so much more!

Over 370 CASA supporters, foster children, Board, staff, and volunteers came out for an evening of childhood wonder beneath the stars at Turtle Back Zoo. With the park reserved just for CASA, guests were free to explore unimpeded by lines or crowds. Children rushed about gleefully, donning animal masks given out at the door. Spectators of all ages marveled at the extraordinary sights: majestic giraffes, curious pink flamingoes, lions lounging about regally, cheetahs licking their paws to groom their elegant coats, and a large black

bear lumbering about. Several peacocks roamed the sidewalks freely, taking guests by surprise when they opened their massive plumage to display vivid royal blue and iridescent greens.

Throughout the evening, more important than any thrilling sights or attractions, we bonded as one CASA family. Siblings who are placed in different foster homes ran side-by-side from one attraction to the next. Board members' grandchildren rode the carousel alongside our foster children. Volunteers enjoyed a scenic train ride with their Fostering Futures teens. Adopted families, once on our CASA caseload, attended for a "reunion" with their CASA advocates and Case Supervisors.

In the spirit of family, togetherness, and belonging, we gathered for a delicious buffet-style meal, complete with ice cream and, of course, animal cracker

cookie boxes. There was even a birthday cake to celebrate a ten year old's special day. Our talented Board member Regina, who is also a professional photographer, snapped photos as groups gathered to have a keepsake from the event. Best of all, foster children and families were able to leave behind their challenges and enjoy the wonder of nature, friendships, and a fun, safe, enriching experience.

These children and families left inspired to understand, appreciate, and protect the fragile interdependence of all living things, the joy of having spent time with family, and the knowledge that CASA is there for them. CASA added a new adventure to their story. At the end of this magical evening, there were many sleepy children, lots of smiles, and numerous guests asking when CASA would be doing this again.



SAVE
THE
DATE

*Saturday,
June 11, 2022*



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OUR MISSION

Our mission is to be a strong voice for the best interests of vulnerable children who have been removed from their homes or are under court supervision due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment.

We recruit, train, and supervise community volunteers to be advocates, mentors, and champions for each child on his or her journey to a safe, permanent, and nurturing home.





Where Home

Siblings Zaniyah, age seven, and Zyel, age two, were removed from their parents and placed in the care of their maternal grandmother by the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP). Their mother, Dawn, had been arrested for selling cocaine, while the children were left home alone. Their father was incarcerated on criminal charges and serving a long sentence.

Susan, a CASA volunteer, was assigned to advocate for the two children, but she ended up helping the whole family. She learned that Zaniyah had severe behavioral issues, and observed possible developmental delays in Zyel. Further inquiry revealed that while Zaniyah was seeing a child psychologist, Zyel's issues were not being addressed. Susan immediately contacted the Case Worker to recommend an Early Intervention Evaluation. As a result of Susan's

diligence, Zyel received a diagnosis of Sensory Perception Disorder. Because of her CASA Advocate training, Susan knew that early intervention services were publicly funded. She was able to connect grandma with the appropriate services that included physical, occupational, and speech-language therapies for Zyel.

Attending all Treatment meetings, Susan sought to learn as much as possible about Sensory Perception Disorder. Zyel's Occupational Therapist informed her that a compression shirt would be helpful in improving his body orientation. Knowing grandma had limited income, Susan first approached DCPP to pay for this shirt. They denied the request and it was not covered by Medicaid. With Zyel's best interest in mind, Susan searched online and found an affordable option that CASA purchased for him.

While the children were set on a positive path, Susan saw through her visits at the home that raising two young children with special needs was a serious challenge for grandma. Susan arranged several extracurricular activities to provide stimulation for the children and free time for grandma. A local library for a Polar Bear Express party, a Home Depot children's craft day, and various local community playground outings, allowed grandma to sit back and watch while Zaniyah and Zyel enjoyed experiences with other children.

“

It was through the CASA volunteer's diligent efforts and effective advocacy in looking out for the best interests of the two children that resulted in a family's reunification.



is **LOVE**

Looking to provide further relief, Susan looked into The Little Gym for Zyel and soccer lessons for Zaniyah. Susan put in a recommendation that DCPD fund these services. When this was only partially funded, CASA helped cover the balance. Both children were delighted with their new activities.

While Zaniyah and Zyel were making progress living with grandma, mom was complying with court orders to attend outpatient drug rehabilitation and parenting classes. From the beginning, Susan developed a positive relationship with Dawn, letting her know that her children loved her and they were rooting for her. As she progressed through her treatment, things were looking positive for Dawn to be reunified with her children, until she began a relationship with a new boyfriend who turned out to be very controlling.

He stole money from her and did not allow her to have weekly visits with her children. Susan also noticed bruises on Dawn's face.

Susan again got to work, providing Dawn with the contact for a Domestic Violence shelter. Over the next several months, they met weekly to plan for future reunification. To help Dawn restore control of her finances, Susan helped Dawn open a checking account and showed her how to create a budget. With Susan's support and encouragement, Dawn began attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings, and found a sponsor.

Dawn even re-established a relationship with her mother. Susan was the one who convinced mother and daughter to enter counseling together for the best interest of the children. After a long, difficult

journey, this family is moving towards a positive outcome. They lived in domestic violence subsidized housing for nine months until they were able to afford their own apartment. The children spent weekends at their grandmother's house, allowing Dawn to take on extra hours at her job as a taxi dispatcher.

Because of a dedicated CASA volunteer, a mom and her two children found their way to a better life. A CASA volunteer helped

Change a Family's Story!

Thank you for standing with us!



We could not do this work without donors like you.

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The Thursday Morning Club
The Woman's Club of the Denville-
Rockaway Area
We Are Loved

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Netcong Elementary School
The Peck School
West Morris Regional High School

A special thanks to the team at **REAL CHEMISTRY** for donating their time, talents, and friendship to CASA throughout the year. We especially appreciate their creative work in designing this Annual Report.

Our Community Partners donated throughout the year so our children and families can receive all new items including: birthday cakes and gifts, holiday gifts, backpacks and school supplies, clothes, books, bicycles and helmets, craft items, and gift cards to purchase essentials. This was vital for struggling families during this year of the COVID pandemic.

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Nancy and Megan Andreasen
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The Peck School Parents Association
The Thursday Morning Club
The Woman's Club of the Denville-
Rockaway Area
We Are Loved



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NOT HAVE DONE IT WITH OUT YOU.**

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CASA
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FOR CHILDREN
CASA OF MORRIS AND
SUSSEX COUNTIES, INC.

FISCAL YEAR REVIEW *2021*

130

CASA Volunteers advocated for 178 children

\$140,417

of advocacy services provided by CASA volunteers based on the NJ Independent Sector value of volunteer time

92%

of recommendations made by CASA volunteers in their court reports were approved by our family court judges

4,920

Hours of service provided by CASA volunteers

100%

of children in foster care in Morris and Sussex Counties were served by our organization compared to state average of serving 53% of children in care.

71 Children reached permanency with successful outcomes!

51% Reunited with Parents

35% Adopted

11% Kinship Legal Guardianship

3% Independent Living

FISCAL YEAR EXPENSE BREAKDOWN



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Sussex Counties

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