



Annual Report

2022

Change a Child's Story





A message from the executive director

This year saw the beginning of a welcomed return to normalcy following the COVID pandemic. Our staff returned to the office, courts began to hold in person hearings, and we even conducted some volunteer trainings in person. It was also a year in which eighty-two of our CASA children were adopted or reunited with a parent or family member. These are life-changing events for the children and their families, *and we celebrate that.*

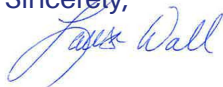
In addition to the hundreds of children who received the support our Advocates provided in the courtroom and community, CASA volunteers and staff did much more. They:

- ***Connected families to food banks and pantries***
- ***Connected families to free tutoring services***
- ***Attended medical appointments with parents***
- ***Found a diabetes summer camp, and secured payment to allow a child to attend***
- ***Helped a teen attend a summer basketball league***
- ***Facilitated home repairs for a teen living alone***
- ***Secured bus passes to school when a family health issue prevented them transporting the child.***
- ***Helped a youth get a bike needed to join a summer recreational program***
- ***Arranged and attended a teen's orientation at community college***
- ***Spent hours teaching a youth in a group home how to prepare meals***

All that we accomplish is through the support of hundreds of people – our volunteer Advocates, our partners at both the County and State level, our corporate and foundation supporters, our dedicated board and staff, and the many, many individuals whose donation of time and treasure help ensure our mission remains strong. Thank You.

If you'd like to learn more about becoming an Advocate or how get more involved in our work, we'd love to talk with you. A good place to start is by visiting our website at **Casamb.org**.

Sincerely,



Laura Wall, Executive Director

Board of Directors, Advisory Committee And Staff-- 2021-2022

Board of Trustees

Elizabeth Hampton, Esq. Co-President
David Wittenburg, Co-President
Greg Grimaldi, Vice President
Digesh Patel Treasurer
Tammy Hersh, Secretary
Hanifa Barnes
Deena Betze
Dan Haughton
Denyse Leslie
Jasmine Little
Patrice S. Martin
Jane Massi
Kimberly Smith

Staff

Laura Wall, Executive Director
Gina Balsamo
William Bastedo M.A., MAS
Harry Cassidy
Jill Duffy, Esq.
Laura Fitzgerald, Ph.D.
Tamika Francis, MSW
Lisa Oros
Ines Ramirez, JD
Tara Rizzolo
Tiffany Rozelle
Dana Schyman Kedar
Maureen Tyler

Advisory Committee

Marge Smith, Chairperson
Nicola Dolin
Betsy Lane
Denyse Leslie
Nancy Robins
Debbi Roldan
Karen Simpson
Andrea Stine
Roseann Vanella
Martha Wickenden

Our History, Mission and Vision

In 1977, a Seattle Superior Court Judge named David Soukup was concerned about trying to make decisions on behalf of abused and neglected children without enough information. He conceived the idea of appointing community volunteers to independently investigate the cases, make recommendations, and speak up in court about what was in the best interest of the child. He made a request for volunteers, 50 citizens responded, and that was the start of the CASA movement. News of the success of Judge Soukup's experiment spread like wildfire and CASA programs sprang up all over the United States. Currently there are approximately 950 CASA programs throughout the United States and CASA volunteers have helped more than 2 million children find safe, permanent homes in which they can thrive.

CASA of Mercer County became a non-profit organization in 2001. In 2011, CASA of Burlington County merged with CASA of Mercer County and the organization officially became CASA for Children of Mercer and Burlington Counties.

CASA for Children of Mercer and Burlington Counties advocates for children and youth in the foster care system to have their needs met and their rights protected. Our dedicated staff and well-trained volunteers connect each child in our care to resources that support their healthy growth and development, and advocate for the child's well-being and best interests.

CASA's vision is to be a widely recognized, financially self-sustaining organization striving to improve the lives of all Mercer and Burlington County children in out-of-home placement. We are committed to the highest quality of advocacy through trained community volunteers.

Strategic Plan 2022

This year, CASA engaged in a facilitated strategic planning process that involved staff, board and our advocates.

The result is a years-long road map with goals and objectives that will help ensure CASA remains strong. To keep us on track, we have developed workgroups to implement the plan's strategies, goals and objectives, and track our success. Our big-picture goals are below, and we look forward to reporting on our progress in future newsletters and annual reports.

Goal #1: Ensure that all children who need CASA's support receive it.

Goal #2: Expand services for older youth to help them prepare for their transition to adulthood.

Goal #3: A strong Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan is critical to a healthy organization. CASA will build and maintain strong, diverse, and effective human resources across the organization.

Goal #4: Strengthen administrative capacity to maintain our stable organization.



Highlights of Fiscal Year 2022





*Interview With Ines Ramirez, JD,
Senior Advocate Supervisor
(Burlington)*

How long have you worked with CASA? I started working with CASA of Mercer and Burlington since June of 2015. Previous to that, I worked with a different CASA in another county.

What is your position with CASA?

I am the Senior Advocate Supervisor for the Burlington office. I help and support volunteers in their advocacy role by providing guidance and expertise on the child welfare system and on how to advocate for the children in court. I also provide support to our other advocate supervisors as they manage their caseloads.

What changes have you seen in the Child Welfare System?

When I began working with CASA, I saw many more children being placed in foster care. Over the last 2-3 years there has been a shift towards trying to keep families together. The system is working to avoid removals unless the child is in imminent danger. If a child is removed from the home, the Division of Child Protection and Permanency will seek family or friends they can place him/her with, before placing them in a foster home. They also work with families to provide services to reunify them as quickly as possible. I can attest to the changes they have made to avoid or decrease the disruption of family bonds.

What is the most rewarding part of the position?

As a supervisor I get to observe volunteers while they work their cases, and witness their commitment to their CASA child, how they set aside differences to work with other members of the child's team, and how they really make a lasting difference for a child in foster care. A "small" task can have a huge impact. Their efforts don't go unnoticed. It is rewarding to me when I hear a judge or an attorney commend an advocate's work because it made a positive impact on the child's case. It's also so rewarding when a child is adopted, and the family asks the advocate to be part of that special day because they were part of making it a reality. I am grateful to work with people who are passionate about the wellbeing and safety of children, no matter where they come from.

Are there challenges?

There are always challenges when working within any system; things do not move as quickly as one would hope. We are also working with families and people in high stress situations. We have to navigate that without losing focus on why we do this work, and on the eventual impact it will have on the children and families we serve.

Why did you decide to become a CASA Advocate?

I have always been involved in activities that have a positive impact on kids. When I graduated from Law School, I knew that I wanted to focus on child advocacy. I moved to NJ and learned about CASA, which seemed to be the perfect opportunity to help children not only in the social service field, but also through the court system.

What advice would you offer to someone considering becoming an Advocate?

If you have the heart and the time, you can be a child advocate. We do not need our volunteers to have any type of specific knowledge or background. What we do need are people who are committed to the child; it can be challenging, but also so rewarding.



CASA Story

Meet Evan

Four-year-old Evan was removed from his home due to his mother's substance abuse issues. CASA was assigned to the case and our volunteer got right to work. Evan's CASA Advocate spent a lot of time with the child, with his therapist and with all the other important people in his life. The Advocate learned that Evan spent most of his time in a crib with a TV and little interaction with people. Although he had significant development delays, Evan was still able to learn and identify things. Due to his placement in a special facility Evan's medical needs were met, but his educational, social, and emotional needs were not. He was languishing and unhappy.

Evan's CASA made regular and impactful recommendations to the court and painted a picture of the child's day. The Judge took that work seriously, ordering that Evan be placed in a special school that could immediately serve him.

Because of the support he received from his CASA Advocate, Evan received special education services, therapy, and other vital supports. Evan was recently adopted and is thriving!



Our Extraordinary Advocates FY 2022

Pamela Ahlstrand	Heather Casparro	Sarah Fletcher	Clifford Jones
Alina Allakhveranova	Lisa Cereste	Melanie Foster	Christine Kanarick
Jeanne Andersen	Alex Chandler	Marla Freid	Lisa Kapsokefalos
Chris Anhut	Roxanna Choe	Martha Friedman	Shailaja Kasinadhuni
Debra Aniano	Kyoko Coco	Wendy Girer	Adina Kasof
Christine Antonelli	Sandra Cohen	William Goodwin	Lauren Kearns
Iclal Atay	Kristi Cole	Sherryl Gordon Hall	Debra Keeney
Laticia Bailey	Ellyn Cominetto	Cheryl Gordon	Phyllis Kepner
Aneesh Bakshi	Kathleen Coppins	Miriam Greene-James	Donald Kernan
Annika Barber	Lisa Corvo	William Griffith	Tracy King
Christine Barranco	Veronica Coyle	Gregory Grimaldi	Courtney Kinloch
Christy Bartels	Lee Curcio	Sumit Gupta	Regina Kneib
Susan Bartolozzi	Beth Curtiss	Joanne Gusweiler	Catherine Kolator
Madeline Bayliss	Taylor D'Ottavio	Kaleigh Haar	Mary Kowlessar
Stacey Beasley	Giada Damen	Ellen Hackman	Carole Kraemer
Marlyn Bennett	Elaine Davis	Chris Hackshaw	Jonathan Krejci
Mary Berridge	Eric Davis	Rose Haggerty	Denise Landy
Janet Betz	Christopher Deflece	Kimberly Hall	Susan LaPooh
Delores Beverly	Lauren Delehey	Merodie Hancock	Karen Larochelle
Bindu Bhalla	Shanere Deloach	Ann Hannon	Cynthia Lee
Marlise Bickel	Joann DeRosa-Sanderson	Adriana Hansen	Teena Lerman
Bozena Blix	Lucianna DiMeglio	Susan Hansen	Brian Levey
Tracy Bond	Diane DiMola	Gloria Harrigan	Lois Levey
Kerry Bonsteel	Karen Donnelly	Crystal Harris	Judy Levy
Erika Boots	Peter Doyle	Julie Harris	Chris Lewis
Alex Bove	Debbie Drachman	Mary Hayes	Eugeneia Lewis
Mesina Brees Rutstein	Rebekah Duchette	Paula Hearle	Denise Linskey
Susan Brennan	Patricia Dunn-Jones	Victoria Hersh-Bruker	Eileen Lippman
Janet Burdsall	Amy Dwyer-Tierney	Mary Hibbs	Christine Livingston
Jaimie Burnside	David Earling	Shara Hofing	Miguel Lopez
Kathleen Byers	Alice Eckel	Keith Hofmann	Regina Lordan
Christina Byrne	Joy Elliott	Jean (Nina) Hoover	John Lutz
Alexandria Calabro	Denise Falnes	Flora Horvath	Anne Lyon
Audrey Camel	Patricia Farrell	Chavonne Hurdle	Sarah Macken
Janet Caniglia	Carolyn Featherson	Behroze Jaikaria	Lise Mainor
Jennifer Capozzola	DBrickashaw Ferguson	Simone Jarvis	Charlotte Malpeso
Felicia Cappuccio	Lisa Ferguson	Lizanne Jenkins	Deborah Marinsky
Susan Carson	Brenda Fischer	Debra Jobs	Jenette McCourt
Tom Casola	Kayo Flamini	Antoinette Jones	Mystique McDonald

Our Extraordinary Advocates FY 2022

James McGinn
Mary McMahon
Veerja Mehta
Patricia Mikes
Vinessa Milando
Kelly Miller
Michelle Miller
Elaine Monticollo
Carole Moore
Denise Moorhouse
William Morad
Stephanie Morrison
Karol Moss
Long Mui
Katherine Mullin
Reem Nasser
Deepika Nath
Maria Neels
Heidi O'Neil
Terry O'Neil
Catherine O'Rorke
Karen O'Rorke
Jennifer O'Connor
Kimberly Owens
MaryBeth Parker
Hollis Pearson
Jane Pedinoff
Marlene Penn
Linda Pernia
Janet Phillips
Robin Pollack
Rita Polonsky
Julie Potthoff
AnnMarie Potts
Laurie Powsner
Martha Press
Yasmin Qazilbash
Felicia Rackowski
Jeanne Radimer

Ellen Radow Sadat
Ronnie Ragen
Susanne Rainier
Chandini Ramaiah
Julianna Rankel
Robert Revelle
Daniel Reynolds
Mary Reynolds
Timory Ridall
Kenneth Ritchey
Jennifer Roberts
Melissa Root
Theodocia Rovira
Jeffrey Rozelle
Sara Rukenstein
Patricia Russell
Ashima Saksena
Bessie Sanders
Martha Sapp
Susan Savoca
Mary Schaeffer
Jackie Schnapp
Mary Schroeder
Rosa Schuh
Wendy Schutzer
Amy Searles
Janice Sedes
Lori Seigal
Margaret Seitter
Christopher Shafer
Alyssa Sharkey
Aakash Sharma
Rachna Sharma
Denise Shaughnessy
Meghan Shay
Christine Shimp
Robin Shoblock
Fern Silverman
Ronald Simpkins
Wendy Simpson

Dixie-Ann Sinnette
Colleen Sitzler
Carly Slutzky
Erica Smith
Amber Sosa
Kathleen Spivey
Marsha Stencel
Wilma Stephenson
Diane Stern
Brian Stewart
Crete Still
Eileen Stokley
Jami Szafranski
Lydia Tattory
Albert Varga
Ann Vershbow
Priya Vimalassery
Susan Vogler
Dianna Wacławski
Renee Walsh
Ah'ree Warren
James Webre
Denise White
Susan Wilczewski
Maria Williamson
Margaret Wilson
Mary Winkelspecht
Amy Winston
Laura Wojcik
Carol Wolkiewicz
Suzanne Woodard
Theresa Wrobel
Joanna Wuehr
Chiemi York
Hester Young
Mary Zwiebel

Our Generous Donors FY 2022

Up to \$249

Mark Addeo
ADP Employee Match Program
Bill and Martha Anderson
Donna Antinori
Kelly Apple
Joan Arkuszewski
Aneesh Bakshi
Ruxandra Balescu
Henry Balikov
Madeline Bayliss
Mark and Margaret Beissinger
Dan and Michele Ben-Asher
Rachel Benevento
Deitz and Berko
Deena Betze
Bindu Bhalla
Susan Brennan
Barbara Brizzee and John Hunt
Warren and Debra Broudy
Barbara Brubaker and Henry Smith
Thomas Burt
Maria Bush
Judy Capozzola
Scott Chasalow
Linda Chew
Roxanna Choe
John and Lucinda Cochrane
Karen Cohen
Catherine Cook
John and Paula Covello
Veronica Coyle
James Cryan
Stephen Czajka
Kazuki Daimo
Erin Delaney
Carmela DeNicola and Roseann Vanella

Jonathan Diorio
Nicola Dolin
Bianca Doran
Marsha and Joel Dowshen
Jerome Dropcho
Richard and Joan Druckman
Elise Duncan
William Dunigan
Patricia Dunn
Landis Eaton
Wesley English
Wendy Evans
Dalton Featherston
Eliot & Marsha Freeman
Romy Gelle
Barbara and Michael Gerwel
Lee and Wendy Girer
Michael and Naomi Goldin
Cindy Gordo
Michael Greco
Barbara and Fred Greenstein
Karen Gullett
Bjorn Haines
Jennifer Hall
Kathryn Hampton
Elizabeth Hampton
Alan and Laurie Hardy
Jacob Harley
Daniel and Beverly Harman
N. Hilary Hays
Sarah Hill
Hill Wallack LLP
Debra and Gerard Hische
Jeanette Hooban
Jean Hoover
Guo Hou
Anne Baxter Humes

Our Generous Donors FY 2022

Up to \$249

Federico Ibarra
Jonathan Ingram
Ellen James
Johnson and Johnson Consumer Products
Johnson and Johnson Matching Gifts
Jeffrey Jones
Adina Kasof
Beth Kayros
Dana Kedar
Cuneo & Kesselhaut
William Talbot and Song Kim
Marni Kirby
David and Diane Kniefel
Elizabeth Koehler
Charlene Koshland
Elliot Krauss
Anne Labate
Mindy and Corey Langer
Glenn and Karen Laub
Vincent Leonti
Denyse Leslie
Joan Levin
Howard and Riva Levy
Angela Librizzi
Susan Lindeboom
Jasmine Little
Mary Loetscher
Sharon Lorenzo
Patricia Lutz
Gay and Donald MacQueen
Lise Mainor
Patrice Martin
Frank & Martha McDougald
M. Katherine McGavern
Nancy & John McGinnis
Stephanie McKee

Mark Mezzanotte
Patricia Mikes
Michael Minoff
Judi Mitchell
Brett Mossman
G. Peyton and Leslie Ann Neatrour
Peggy Nix
Vincent and Janice Noonan
Jane Nutt
Emily O'Hagan
Digesh and Sonal Patel
Hollis Pearson
Honey Perkins Family Foundation
Carolyn J. Phillips Fund
Robert and Mary Pickens
J. Dean and Marte Pierson
Caroline and Victor Pisaniello
Megan Policastro
Kathrin Poole
Real Possibilities
Presbyterian Women of Morrisville
Robert Prunetti
Caroline Purnell
Ruby Qazilbash
Christina Quinn
Jeanne Radimer
Ellen Radow
Jacqueline Raftery
Ronnie Ragen
David and Barbara Reiff
Peter Retzlaff
Daniel and Mary Reynolds
Mike Richmond
Sarah Ringer
Kenneth Ritchey
Tara Rizzolo

Our Generous Donors FY 2022

Up to \$249

Mary Roenbeck
Linda Rosenberg
Miles Dumont and Llewellyn Ross
Victoria and Jeffrey Russo
Sarah Scanga
James and Sheila Schnell
Karen Schotland
Carrie Schroen
Michael and Ellen Schwartz
Marc Schwarzman
Pamela Shafer
Kathryn Shaw
Christina Sheane
Dorothy Simms
Fern Slom
Michael and Susan Smith
Alison Snieckus
Jaime Snoy
Carl and Melinda Sonnenfeld
Alexander Pron and Allison Sorebo
Karen Leigh Spears
Stop & Shop
William Strough
Anthony Svach
Alan and Geraldine Swetz
Carol Talbot
Cecelia Tazelaar
Jasna Tholens
Nithyanandan Thyagarajan
Tiffany Tobias
Janis Todd
Carole Townsend
Jeanne Turner
Maureen Tyler
Barbara Vannerson

Terry Veiga
Sandra Webel
Stephanie Wedeking
Mary and Gary Wells
Gregory Wheeler
Nell Whiting
Willig and Mason
Claire Wittenberg
Jeanette Wolfe
Samantha Wynne
John Yates
Hester Young

\$250 to \$999

AmazonSmile Foundation
Anonymous Donor
Rachelle Bin
Zachary Boger
Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation
William and Janis Charkow
Roger and Linda Cholewiak
Melanie and John Clarke
Michael Coppins
Magdalen Crawford
Jonathan and Jenny Crumiller
Cunniff & Thurston
Robert and Virginia Diaz
Arielle DiGiacomo
Carol Doyle
Marc Duchette
Joanna Rodriguez Dugan
Sara Gogolak
Gregory and Norma Grimaldi
Debora Haines
Susan and Jorgen Hansen
Daniel and Helen Haughton

Our Generous Donors FY 2022

\$250 to \$999

Jennifer Hilton
Gail Houlihan
Christine James
Jewish Community Foundation
Kaufman Zita Group
Kathy Klockenbrink
Paul and Karen Lalli
Betsy Lane
Brad and Barbara Lawrence
David Levy
Judy Levy
Lindenwold Advisors
Matteo Family Charitable Fund
James and Kim Millar
Stephanie Morrison
Christine Nast
Lise and Stephen Pacala
Stephen Paneyko
Jane Pedinoff
Carolyn Phillips
Porsche Princeton
Melanie Rauch
Louis and Kathleen Russo
Erin Sanchez
Mark Schlawin
Christine Shaw
Dixie-Ann Sinnette
Marjorie and David Smith
Kathleen Spivey
Joel and Karen Steinberg
Robert Stengel
Brian Stewart
Laura Todd
Albert Varga
Jessica Vieira

David and Barbara Vilkomerson
Jim King and Laura Wall
Diane Warfel
Michael and Angela Weaver
John and Louise Wellemeyer
Dave Wittenberg
Arlene Wittenborn
Stephen Witthuhn
Theresa Wrobel

\$1,000 to \$4,999

Jeffrey Albert
America's Charities
Asterion
AvalonBay Communities, Inc.
Black Rock Inc.
June Chamberlain
Citizens Bank
Credit Union of New Jersey
David Mathey Fund
James and Judeth Finn
Ky Flamini
Jorgen Hansen
Thomas and Evan Heitzman
Tammy Hersh
Investors Bank
Investors Foundation
Barbara Ann Krouzecky
Lawrence Township Community Foundation
Duncan and Nancy MacMillan
Mark and Julie McLaughlin Foundation
Jane Massi
Mercadien

Our Generous Donors FY 2022

\$1,000 to \$4,999

Carole Moore
Kathy Mullin
Nassau Presbyterian Church
Susan and David Paterson
PNC Bank
PSE&G
Robins Family Fund
Michael Kelly and Alison Saife
Abraham Silverman
Todd and Karen Simpson
Stark & Stark
Richard and Andrea Stine
The Princeton Group of Wells Fargo
The Schaefer / Batterman Family Fund
Charles R. Beitz and Ann R Vershbow
Martha and James Wickenden
William Penn Bank Community
Patrizia Zita
Greg and Paula Zollner

\$5,000 to \$9,999

Anonymous Donor
Borger Matez, P.A.
Dow Foundation
Fox Rothschild LLP
Harold Kramer Foundation
Mathematica Policy Research
Michael Nachamkin
WSFS Community Foundation

\$10,000 to \$24,999

Bristol-Myers Squibb
Bunbury Fund
Church & Dwight
The David Earling & Maria Nicolo Fund
ETS Cares Fund
Holman Automotive Group, Inc.
Janssen Pharmaceutica
Mackay Shields LLC
New Jersey Manufacturers Insurance
Orcosa
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
President's Grant Fund
George H. & Estelle M. Sands Foundation

\$25,000 and Above

Fund for Women and Girls
Mercer County Department of Human Services
State of New Jersey

CASA of Mercer and Burlington Counties is also deeply grateful for contributions from individuals and organizations (including many longtime supporters of our work) who wish to remain anonymous.

Key Figures



3452
**Hours of training
provided to potential
volunteers**



82
**CASA children
adopted/reunited**



98%
**Recommendations
accepted by courts**



62
**New advocates
sworn in**



9509
**Hours of volunteer
service to our children**

Revenue

Corporate/Foundation: \$154,250

Government: \$513,682

Individuals: \$118,808

Special Events: \$78,353

Contributed Services: \$289,009

Expenses

Program Services: \$966,394

Management: \$142,985

Development: \$83,985

Change a Child's Story

To sign up for an information session
or learn more about volunteering for CASA,
please visit:
www.CASAMB.org



@CASA_MercerBurl



@CASAMercerBurlington



@CASA_MercerBurl



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

MERCER

BURLINGTON