



2020 ANNUAL
IMPACT REPORT

“ *Hope is being able to
to see the light despite
all the darkness.*”

– Desmond Tutu

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

◆
Marshall Bruner, Psy.D



Like the rest of the world, as we began 2020 at Hall-Dawson CASA, we had no idea what was in store for us. The work of serving children in foster care is challenging even in “normal” years. But 2020 came with unique challenges. When society shut down back in March 2020, postponing recruitment and training for new volunteers was not an option for the staff. They quickly adapted the required training to an online format to enable new volunteers to begin their much-needed work. Our amazing CASA Volunteers found ways to continue their vital visits with children through porch visits and Zoom meetings. Court hearings quickly became virtual, and those advocating for children in foster care had to acquire new skills in order to serve. Our CASAs continue to provide hope to the children and families for whom they advocate – no matter the obstacles that stand in their way. In the midst of the pandemic, with creativity, technology and commitment, CASAs are safely connecting with foster children and advocating for their best interests.

“Our CASAs continue to provide hope to the children and families for whom they advocate – no matter the obstacles that stand in their way. In the midst of the pandemic, with creativity, technology and commitment, CASAs are safely connecting with foster children and advocating for their best interests.”

And those fundraising events that have been the life-blood of raising vital funds for Hall-Dawson CASA had to be canceled – and YOU STEPPED UP! Despite financial challenges and hardships in our community and all around us, our supporters provided what we needed to continue the pursuit of our mission – to ensure abused and neglected children have the right to a safe placement and permanent home.

The vital work of Hall-Dawson CASA is never done. We all have a part to play in taking care of the most vulnerable children in our community. If your name is listed here among our donors and volunteers, we say “Thank you!” I hope you will see in these pages that your support is more than a donation – it is an investment in these children. Frederick Douglas said, *“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken adults.”* Indeed, you are helping to build strong children and families through your investment.

With gratitude and much hope for the future!

MARSHALL BRUNER, PSY.D
2020 Board Chair

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

♦
Janet Walden



As I turned the page of my calendar from 2020 to 2021, I took a deep breath and I was filled with hope. There is an inherent feeling of hope each year as I turn the page on the old and welcome in the new. This year though, closing out 2020, a year filled with so much uncertainty, change, loss, and adaptability was something I had been looking forward to doing for months. For months, I had my eye focused on 2021, as if somehow turning a calendar page would be the magic that returned us all back to a sense of normalcy.

If 2020 did nothing else, the year gave me a sense of the unpredictability of life. As our travel to our hometown to visit parents became limited, and the weekly Sunday dinners with our adult children were abruptly halted, I became keenly aware of feelings of chaos, powerlessness, and uncertainty – the very feelings the children we serve experience each day.

Each child we serve has a unique set of circumstances and family story, with one shared thread. Not one child is at fault or the cause of what is happening to them and around them. Yet, it is the child who has been removed from their home, often away from their school and their friends. And it is the child who is the subject of a Juvenile Court dependency proceeding. How incredibly important it is for a child who is experiencing the uncertainty of foster care, navigating new surroundings and court to have a caring, consistent adult who has their back, who is fighting for their needs, and for their future.

As we move into 2021, the Hall-Dawson CASA Program is laser-focused on our mission to ensure every abused and neglected child in our community has the right to a safe and permanent home where they can thrive. We will build our capacity to serve more children by recruiting, training and empowering 30 new CASA Volunteers, who will advocate for our community's most vulnerable children. And we will continue to support and provide continuing education opportunities for our active CASA Volunteers so we can ensure each child has the best outcome possible in their journey through the child welfare system.

“Every child is one important adult away from being a success.”

Every child is one important adult away from being a success. A CASA Volunteer advocating for a child who is experiencing foster care is one way we live this out, and provide hope for a child during a chaotic time. As you turn the pages and hear more about the work we do, I hope you will join us or continue your journey with us in providing the children we serve with a caring, consistent adult who helps create success stories. Hope. One child at a time.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Janet Walden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

JANET WALDEN
Executive Director, Hall-Dawson CASA

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OUR
MISSION



To ensure children who have experienced abuse and neglect have the right to a safe placement and permanent home. CASA provides trained, screened and supervised volunteers to advocate for the best interest of children requiring court intervention as a result of abuse and neglect.



CASA

VOLUNTEERS

◆
2020

Marie Allan	Vicki Dickson	Doug Langman	Michele Pulley
Barbara Allen	Han Dijsselbloem	Wendy Lavergne	Jean Rector
Patricia Allen	Elena Espy	Gail Lombardo	Gertrude Rhein
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Cheryl Baehr	Maureen Files	Christina Martin	Addrienne Session
Lisa Bates	Victoria Fortson	Jean Mason	Clyde Simons
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Rosemary Bell	Lawonia Freeman	Sarah May	Carol Smith
Dave Best	Jerry Gauerke	Robbie McCormac	Laura Smith
Margaret Blackstone	Ellie Gravitt	Lisa McCulloch	Pam Steiner
April Bloomer	Joyce Guyton	Kaycee McElveen	Jenna Strang
Kersten Brown	Richard Habgood	Tabitha McJunkin	Jill Taylor
Tony Burnham	Allan Harden	Arnie Miesch	Claire Thurber
Patricia Bursten	Dian Hatfield	Brigitte Miesch	Constanza Tironi Vernal
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Dana Cleveland	Bridget Jansen	Brenda Parker	Seth Vining
Jennifer Cleveland	Rita Johnson	Ben Payton	Linda Wagner
Cynthia Cooley	Lois Kemp	Dee Payton	Kaitlynnne Waits
Wakeitha Cunningham	Alene Kempton	Pam Phipps	Susan Walker
Connie Daniels	Kathy Kilgore	Gregg Pike	Michelle Wills
Tina DeWaart	John Kohl	Nicole Presa	

“

*A driving force for me is my belief that every child has the right to be loved, to feel safe and to have their basic needs met. Unfortunately, many children do not have this. I also believe in the power of one caring adult and that ‘every kid is one caring adult away from being a success story.’ As a CASA, what I do for every child I work with is important. **I am their advocate.**”*

– CASA Volunteer



Photo

*CAT Center volunteers (l to r):
Gail Lombardo, Dian Hatfield,
Robbie McCormac*

CAT CENTER VOLUNTEERS

We are grateful to CAT (Clothing and Toy) Center organizers and volunteers Robbie, Dian, Gail, and their team. They were able to quickly put protocols in place to keep the CAT Center up and running throughout the pandemic to ensure foster families had what they needed during this incredibly difficult time. Each week you'll find them sorting through the clothing, twin bed and crib donations and more, so our foster families and relative placements have a selection from which to choose for the children entrusted in their care. There are diapers and wipes available through our partnership with Junior League Diaper bank. Even in the midst of the pandemic, there were drives for school supplies and signups created for foster parents and relative placements to pick up the supplies needed for the new school year.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR CASAs

During the holiday season, **49 active CASA Volunteers** submitted a wish list for their kids, and with the help of generous donors like our friends at the Village at Deaton Creek, the CAT Center volunteers organized the gifts to be given from the CASA Volunteer to the **192 children** they serve!

IN MEMORY OF RICHARD HABGOOD

As a child who experienced foster care and emancipated from the system as a young teen, Richard Habgood came to Hall-Dawson CASA with a motivation to help children and youth in similar circumstances. As a young man, he struggled in and with the child welfare system with determination and resiliency. As an adult, he used that same determination to help youth navigate this very system.

During his time with CASA, Richard advocated for six children in four cases. In one case, he traveled more than 500 miles round trip to visit a young man. Richard drew from his own story for motivation to ensure every child and youth he served had an opportunity to thrive.

On Saturday, September 12, 2020 Richard lost his month-long battle with COVID-19. We grieve with his family and friends. We are filled with gratitude for his service and for the hope he gave to the children he served.

Nancy Nash, Chair
 Sandra Adams
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WOMEN WORKING **WONDERS**

Women Working Wonders (WWW) is a group of exceptional women who are committed to improving the lives of abused and neglected children in their communities. This group of women support CASA and the children they serve by sharing with their families, friends and neighbors information about the CASA program and the good work being done in our communities.

WWW dues gave hope to the children CASA serves through:

- ink and printer paper, school supplies, scientific calculators for the new school year
- Chromebook laptops for two children to complete their school assignments at home

when no other option was available, to ensure success for virtual learning during the pandemic

- afterschool gymnastics and karate lessons
- a birthday gift for each child from their CASA, including a gift card for teens in foster care, enabling them to shop for something special for themselves
- COVID-19 relief through the purchase of cleaning supplies and masks, enabling our CAT (Clothing and Toy) Center to remain open during the pandemic

If you'd like to join this group of women in making an impact, please contact us.

2020 AWARDS OF **EXCELLENCE**



VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Lisa McCulloch

Lisa has served as a CASA since 2016. Lisa exemplifies the highest standards in every case. She ensures that the children have everything they need, and that the children experiencing foster care have the opportunities her own children had. Lisa was told by one family when the case closed that she would always be "their person". One of the judges frequently requests Lisa to be the CASA for difficult cases because she knows Lisa will get the job done and will do it well. Lisa serves as an inspiration to her fellow volunteers, the children she serves and the staff as well. We are grateful to Lisa for her commitment to serving children and families experiencing foster care.



BOARD MEMBER OF THE YEAR

Joel L. Williams

Joel has been a member of the Hall-Dawson CASA board since 2015. Joel's knowledge of CASA began when he and his wife became relative caregivers and then adoptive parents, calling himself a "recycled parent." Joel shares our goal of having children placed closer to their families, friends and schools. He advocates for folks to open their homes, and for support of our CASA program. He understands the importance of having a CASA in a child's life. His quiet demeanor and passion for CASA is evident and his efforts have been an encouragement for many to become first time and repeat donors. Joel gives generously of his time and resources, and is an impactful voice for CASA and for the children we serve.

CASA'S REACH
IN 2020

10

paid staff supporting

99

volunteers providing
advocacy services for

365

children in the Hall and Dawson
county child welfare system

CASA **ADVOCACY IN ACTION**

CASA Volunteers are ordinary people who become extraordinary voices for child victims of abuse and neglect both in the court room and in the community. CASA Volunteers stand in the gap between a child's challenging present and their promising future. During 2020, our CASA volunteers made a meaningful and significant impact on the future of children.

PERMANENCY **ACHIEVED**

99 children who experienced Juvenile Court intervention because of abuse or neglect achieved permanency in 2020.



53

Reunified with
their family



29

Adopted into a
new, forever family



17

Placed in the legal
guardianship of a
caregiver

“

For a child to experience permanency, this is more than finding a place to lay their head at night. Permanency means having the key to the house, having their picture on the wall in someone's house. It is knowing there is a seat at the Thanksgiving table. Every child deserves a family. Not just a family in which to grow and develop, but a family to leave when the time is right, a family to come home to when the need demands, and a family to be a part of when childhood is a distant memory.”

– Excerpts from *The Promise of Permanency training*,
facilitated by Jerry Bruce and Angela Tyner

2020

DONORS

Hall-Dawson CASA is pleased to recognize those whose support enables the work of advocating for children in foster care in Hall and Dawson Counties. Every effort is made to accurately reflect donor name and contribution between January 1 – December 31, 2020. Please contact us at 770-531-1964 to make us aware of any inaccuracies.

BEACON OF HOPE

(\$10,000 & up)

Rosalind & Frank Black
David & Shannon Hughs
Mar-Jac Poultry, Inc.
Bruce & Barb Mistarz
Thurber Family Foundation
Joel & Pamela Williams

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(\$5,000-\$9,999)

North Georgia
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The Jim Syfan Family
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PROTECTOR OF CHILDREN

(\$3,000-\$4,999)

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HERO FOR CHILDREN

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Jack & Linda Spencer

FRIEND OF CHILDREN

(\$1,000-\$1,499)

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for Children and Youth

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(\$500-\$999)

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Miles

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Methodist Church
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Julie Weaver
Philip & Mary Hart Wilheit

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(\$1-\$499)

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Raymond Lambert
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GRANTORS



MEMORIAL & HONORARIUM GIFTS

Memorial and honorarium gifts are listed in alphabetical order by the name of the honoree. Donors are listed after the name of the person in whose honor they contributed.

- In honor of Jordan Allen Patsy Kilmartin
- In memory of Mike Anton Lanierland Duplicate Bridge Club
- In honor of Evelyn Asher Marisa Monks-Unger
- In honor of Evelyn Asher Valerie Weingrad
- In honor of Linda Camp. Cynthia Daubenspeck
- In honor of Mary Jane Davis Cynthia Daubenspeck
- In memory of Mary Jane Dollar Beirne Family Giving Fund
- In memory of Mary Jane Dollar David Lynn Smith
- In memory of Mary Jane Dollar Andrea & Phillip Williams
- In memory of Mary Jane Dollar Lori Ashley & Gary Miller
- In memory of Mary Jane Dollar Michael & Kitty Hazelkorn
- In memory of Richard Habgood Rita Johnson
- In honor of Sam and Robin Harben Texys Morris
- In honor of Lauren Bradley Hayes. Christine Bradley
- In memory of Linda Larmon Mike & Tracy Verrigni
- In honor of Scott Lippman Valerie Ross
- In honor of Dale Spivey Cynthia Daubenspeck
- In memory of Robbie Swenson Kelly Anderson
- In memory of Robbie Swenson Impact Assets
- In memory of Robbie Swenson John & Stephanie Copeland
- In memory of Monica Seibel Georgia Rowe
- In memory of Marshal Rowe Georgia Rowe
- In memory of Louise Vandiver Jack Bell
- In memory of Louise Vandiver Reece & Patti Gilmer
- In memory of Louise Vandiver Wayne Seabolt
- In memory of Louise Vandiver Connie Stephens
- In honor of Jan Watts Cynthia Daubenspeck



THE GIVING TREE

Each year, Hall-Dawson CASA partners with Edmondson-Telford Child Advocacy Center (ETCAC) in hosting The Giving Tree, which provides a way for community members to honor and remember loved ones with a donation to the Giving Tree. The funds raised in this effort are used for needed repairs and upkeep to *The Little House*, home to Hall-Dawson CASA and ETCAC. We are grateful to our donors for your support each year which enables us to maintain this shared space where we operate to serve abused and neglected children in our communities.

GIVING CHILDREN A BRIGHTER FUTURE

BE THE LIGHT OF HOPE

You can be the light of *hope*.

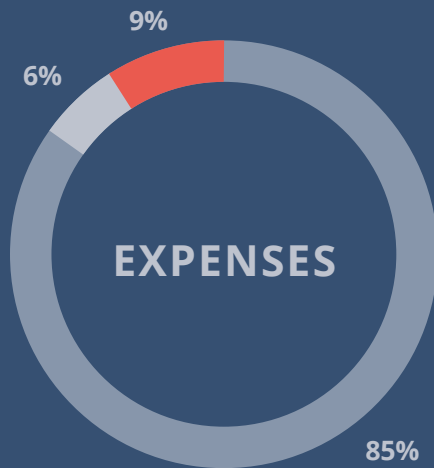
As we reflect on the names listed on these pages, and give thanks for all you have made possible, we also look ahead at the children we have yet to serve. YOU can give **hope** to these boys and girls who are the most vulnerable in our community.

- ◆ Set up a recurring gift on a monthly basis. These gifts support our ongoing needs throughout the year, and can add up to substantial giving.
- ◆ Consider naming Hall-Dawson CASA as a beneficiary in your will or estate plan.
- ◆ Join an informational session to learn more about what is involved in becoming a CASA.
- ◆ Help us share our story. Invite us to speak to your civic or church group.
- ◆ Do you have ideas on how you can help? **Give us a call.**



2020 FINANCIALS

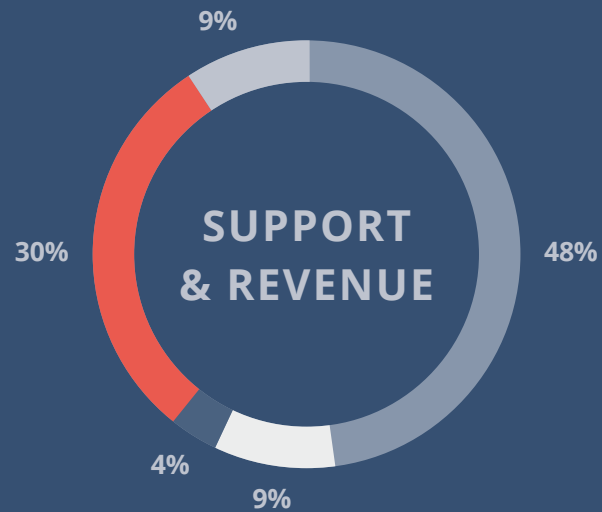
The condensed statement of activities is reflective of the fiscal year ending December 2020. Hall-Dawson CASA prides itself on prudent financial practices, diversity of funding sources and the highest level of transparency. Our funding uses are reflective of all costs to operate our programs and include recruiting, training and empowering volunteer advocates who make a meaningful impact on the lives of the children we serve.



- Direct Services: \$665,894
- Fundraising: \$50,660
- General Operating: \$70,333

TOTAL EXPENSES

\$786,887



- Federal and State Grants : \$409,011
- Local Grants: \$79,383
- Foundations: \$30,658
- Corporate and Individual Giving : \$253,353
- Other: \$76,863

TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE

\$849,268

Full financial statements provided upon request. A complete copy of the audited financial statements is available at www.halldawsoncasa.org.

PROVIDING HOPE TO FAMILIES



Our CASA Volunteer was appointed by the Juvenile Court Judge to advocate for a 10-year-old boy when his mother went into a residential treatment center for substance use and he was placed into foster care. The CASA Volunteer immediately began getting to know him, and his mother too.

The CASA closely followed the progress of the child and his mother while she was receiving treatment in the residential treatment center. This meant communicating closely with the treatment center staff, the DFCS Case Manager, the foster family, and the child's school, and creating written reports with recommendations for the child's best interest at each court hearing. After one year of treatment, Mom was ready to successfully complete her program and was looking forward to reunifying with her child as a sober and stronger mother. There was one problem. She needed to complete her Parenting Classes as ordered by the Judge, but the center did not offer parenting classes. The CASA Volunteer worked collaboratively with the DFCS case manager to find her the opportunity to complete the classes, and graduate, too. What a joyous day when she and her son were able to live together again! A joyous time, and a time where Mom's doubts began to resurface. Will I be able to stay sober? Will I be able to parent well? Can I do this on my own? These were the questions filling her head. It was the CASA Volunteer who continued to encourage her in her journey – for Mom, and more importantly for her son. What a wonderful outcome! Mother and son reunified, are loving their healthy life together.

MORE THAN A VOICE IN COURT

In the fall of 2018, our CASA Volunteer was appointed by the Juvenile Court Judge to advocate for a brother and sister who were living with their aunt. Family dynamics can sometimes be tricky. When children are removed from a parent and placed with a family member, as these children were, communication and clarity of roles becomes vitally important. Add to the mix difficulty in receiving services, a lack of understanding of what is expected, and deciphering school special education services and the CASA Volunteer's role as Guardian ad litem quickly expanded to facilitator, coordinator, mediator, encourager, and educational advocate.

When there were questions about a child's educational services, the CASA Volunteer was there to help the mom and aunt better understand the process and expectations. When the supports and services ordered for the children did not happen in a timely manner, the CASA Volunteer followed up with service providers and the DFCS case manager. And when there was a lack of clarity in the expectations of mom and aunt, the CASA Volunteer ensured the court orders and the results of meetings were sent to each in writing.

Without the patience and persistence of the CASA Volunteer, the placement of these siblings would have likely moved from foster care with a relative to foster care with strangers. In the end, the children were able to maintain their family connections and achieved permanency through a legal guardianship with their aunt, and have been able to maintain contact with their mom.



“

Early in her placement with us, it seemed she simply did not possess the early literacy skills that other kindergarten students had, but over 18 months we came to realize her academic challenges required intervention on several levels. The support and assistance from her CASA Volunteer was invaluable during this time. The CASA attended meetings with the school, advocated for necessary assessments, supported her diagnosis, and worked through the extensive process of creating a 504 plan that would remain with this child throughout her academic career. Once the necessary interventions and plans were in place, she started progressing rapidly and her CASA was there at every stage to celebrate her successes. It is rare to watch a child blossom and grow during a placement as significantly as this one did – we couldn't have done it alone, and we thank the CASA Volunteer for her commitment to advocating for what she thought was right and necessary.”

– A Foster Mom

HALL-DAWSON CASA

P.O. Box 907471
Gainesville, GA 30501

Non Profit Org
US Postage
PAID
Gainesville, GA
Permit #82

“

*What CASA gives to families and children, they also give to DFCS Staff. CASA cultivates hope. **CASA cultivates hope above all else.** For families as well as DFCS Staff we take that hope and allow it to permeate our lives and seep into our hearts. There are times when we are on top of the world and others where we find ourselves in a heap of tears. Both are necessary, but without hope, nothing else is possible. CASA gives hope. Hope becomes our resource and when the world around us seems too dark to bear CASA becomes our beacon of light and our reminder of hope.”*

– A DFCS Supervisor



HALL-DAWSON CASA

603 Washington Street SW
P.O. Box 907471
Gainesville, GA 30501

Phone
770-531-1964

Website
www.halldawsoncasa.org