anything is possible
WHEN SOMEONE CARES

annual report

‘17
Dear Friends and Partners,

Thank you for your unyielding support for the mission of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association. It is because of you - our committed volunteers, dedicated state and local program staff, and generous donors - that we have made a positive impact on behalf of children in need.

As we celebrate 35 years of advocacy for children, we reaffirm our commitment to addressing a growing need and increasing our impact throughout our communities. Our multi-year strategy is built on a framework that includes five enabling focus areas: 1) Strong Support to Programs, 2) Effective Partnerships with State Organizations, 3) Planning, Research and Analysis, 4) a Platform for Financial Stability, and 5) Governance Effectiveness.

This framework offers the necessary platform to enable state organizations to provide strong support to local programs. We are working on four initiatives to support this structure: 1) Network Development, 2) Organizational Development, 3) Quality Service and Performance Measurement, and 4) Stakeholder Engagement and External Affairs.

A GROWING CAPACITY

As part of the network development initiative, we began building a highly effective standards model, strengthening our support to local programs and enhancing our training delivery standards. These initiatives, along with a new governance excellence program, will help members of our network enhance their capacity to serve local communities.

Maintaining the quality of service to children is paramount to achieve our mission. Working with and through our state organizations, we are conducting a gap analysis that assesses areas where we do not currently have program coverage. This work explores where there are the poorest outcomes for children and where programs have the capacity to expand.

A GROWING NEED

The number of children removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect continues to increase, rising by more than 40,000 nationwide from 2012-2016. At the same time, we know the issues that children face continue to evolve. To address these needs, we know we must increase our volunteer base. We understand the importance of accelerating the implementation of our strategy to serve more children. The strategy includes recruiting and training thousands of dependable and trusted advocates who offer hope and stability at a time when a child’s life hangs in the balance.

We are improving our training programs. This includes updating our approach to training volunteers and facilitators, enhancing training materials, and developing new components, such as flexible, online learning options. Our new curriculum addresses the challenges that children face, like substance abuse, trauma, and economic disparity.

A GROWING IMPACT

Last year we received the results of an independent study that examines the caliber of our advocacy, as well as the effectiveness of our service model. The results showed that children with a CASA volunteer fare much better than those without; they spend 25 percent less time in foster care and are much less likely to return to the child welfare system. Our volunteers helped to close more than 100,000 cases in 2017, providing permanency for vulnerable children.

Looking ahead, we will continue to work to support our strategy, to achieve our mission and to ensure children who have experienced abuse or neglect have a CASA volunteer speaking up for their best interests.

Thank you for your caring, your advocacy, and your partnership.

Sincerely,

Tara Perry
Chief Executive Officer

William “Bill” Collins
Board of Trustees Chair

‘17 board of trustees

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A child with a CASA volunteer finds a forever home 25% faster.

Volunteer advocates help change children’s lives every day.

Children have a CASA volunteer advocate speaking up for their best interests.

A child with a CASA advocate is much less likely to re-enter the foster-care system.

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**LEAVING A LEGACY**

Barbara Cooper grew up in England during World War II - one of the 800,000 children sent away from their homes to protect them from aerial bombing raids. While it meant that Barbara had to be separated from her family in Bristol, west of London, it also meant she was safe.

Until her passing in 2017, Barbara opened her heart to reach beyond her extended family and touch the lives of children in foster care, because she understood what it felt like to be separated from her family as a child.

Barbara and her husband, Ken Ravenna, have been long-time contributors to National CASA. In honor of his late wife, Ken recently established The Barbara Cooper Fund to enable National CASA to create an internship program for youth transitioning out of foster care. The program is designed to provide critical work experience for these young adults, while improving their job prospects.

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**LIGHTING THE DARKNESS**

Alise’s life was chaotic – she stole to buy drugs, leading her to the darkness of a jail cell. When Alise gave birth to Rebekah, her baby was whisked away within minutes because she had been exposed to drugs. Alise and Rebekah would not see each other again for almost a year.

But when Alise met her daughter’s CASA volunteer, Michelle, her life changed. Michelle was the first person to show Alise a picture of Rebekah and share information about her. She encouraged Alise. Through this process Alise was able to see that there was hope and she did everything needed to be reunited with her daughter, including substance-abuse treatment and parenting classes.

Today Rebekah is a bright, energetic child who loves school and says she has the best mom ever. Alise earned a bachelor’s degree in behavioral science and now works with birth parents across the nation whose children have been placed in foster care.

Alise shows those parents that there is hope - just like the light of hope a CASA volunteer gave her when all she could see was darkness.
THANK YOU TO ALL OUR DONORS, WHO MAKE GROWTH AND PROGRESS POSSIBLE. TOGETHER, WE ARE A POWERFUL VOICE FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN.

To donate, visit casaforchildren.org/donate
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