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Winter 2023



Boston CASA Quarterly Newsletter: Volume 1

A Note From Our Executive Director Nicole Stewart



Dear Boston CASA community,

As the end of this year approaches, many of us pause to reconnect with family, friends, and most importantly, ourselves. I find myself filled with gratitude that for the

past two years I have had the chance to serve as the Executive Director of Boston CASA. I feel encouraged about the future of Boston CASA, and full of hope for the beautiful children and youth we serve.

I must start by taking a moment to extend a special heartfelt thank you to our wonderful CASA volunteers. In the fiscal year 2023, a total of 290 CASAs dedicated their time to support over 300 children, contributing a remarkable 15,000 hours of volunteer service to advocate on their behalf. Your selfless commitment and tireless advocacy give hope and provide life changing opportunities to children every day! You make the mission of Boston CASA come alive, and we are incredibly grateful for your faithful service to our children.

Our compassionate and knowledgeable staff, dedicated Board of Directors, devoted Judges, generous partners and supporters energize me every day. Your unwavering commitment is compelling and has positioned us for tremendous growth and new opportunities. I am inspired by what we've accomplished together and the possibilities ahead.

Last year, Boston CASA was fortunate to be selected to work with Community Action Partners (CAP), volunteer alumni consultants of Harvard Business School and Kennedy School. CAP, members of our Board of Directors, staff, senior leadership, and a CASA volunteer completed eight months of extensive work and research to develop a comprehensive five-year sustainable strategic growth plan that we finalized in May of 2023. Implementing this growth model allows us to increase the number of eligible children we serve from 15 percent to 47 percent at annual growth rate of 20 percent through a focused 1.3 incremental budget increase. In addition to providing more of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable children with critical advocacy, the growth plan will increase Boston CASA's visibility and reduce the costs per child served.

The five-year growth plan is bold and audacious, and it is the right time to pursue it. To ensure we meet this goal, we have hired a Director of Development with over twenty years of successful strategic leadership, particularly in major gifts fundraising, and a Grants and Development Manager with extensive experience in marketing, research, and professional writing to carry out our fundraising goals. Both have extensive volunteer and professional experience working toward improving the lives and wellbeing of children. We have a committed staff, a solid plan, and crucially, overwhelming support from YOU, our partners.

Along with growth, the plan calls for a continued commitment to support Transitional Age Youth (TAY), ages 14-22 through the development of specific services to meet their needs, and an expansion of our Diversity Equity and Inclusion work.

- **Youth Advisory Board:** Fifty percent of those we serve are aged 14-22. These Transitional-aged youth (TAY), who are aging out of the foster care system, are among the most vulnerable children Boston CASA supports because they experience disproportionately higher rates of school dropouts, homelessness, substance abuse, and unemployment.

Our goal is to provide more specialized services for TAY that will aid them in achieving productive independence as an adult. To best serve them, the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) was established in 2023. YAB consists of current and former foster youth, aged 16-22. Through YAB, we aim to amplify, center, and uplift the voices of these youth and support their individual and collective growth. YAB provides feedback to the organization on their experiences working with CASAs and in the foster care system, and the council recommends practices that better serve TAY's needs.

- **Multicultural Advisory Committee (MAC):** Boston CASA was recognized and awarded in 2022 by National CASA for our dedication and innovation in establishing a Racial Equity Plan. Specifically, we made significant strides in promoting inclusivity and diversity among volunteers, staff, and board members, including developing a diverse leadership team that more accurately mirrors the racial and ethnic composition of our communities served. MAC is made up a group of volunteers who were selected to help guide us in achieving our Racial Equity Plan.

The same spirit, inspiration and hope that guided us through 2023 will be with us in 2024. It reminds me of a quote by Nick Vujicic, "The greatest rewards come when you give of yourself. It's about bettering the lives of others, being part of **something bigger than yourself**, and making a positive difference."

Wishing you Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year!

Warm regards,
Nicole

Boston CASA Named Finalist for \$1M Grant

Boston CASA joined tens of thousands of non-profit organizations last summer in applying for a \$1M grant from the Yield Giving Foundation's Open Call. Only 1,000 applicants from the original applicant pool were considered for a \$1M grant, and Boston CASA's application earned it a place among the finalists. 250 organizations will receive these special grants in early 2024. Boston CASA is very proud and encouraged its growth plan captured the imagination of the Yield Giving Foundation. The Yield Giving Foundation was established by MacKenzie Scott, and it has given away over \$14B to 1,600 organizations.

Join us at an upcoming Boston CASA Event



The 12th Annual Boston CASA Gala will be held on March 20th 2024 at Artist's for Humanity in South Boston. Find more information [HERE](#).



Missed our first golf tournament in August? Save the date for our 2024 Golf Tournament on August 12, 2024, at the William J. Devine Golf Course. Keep an eye out for more details to come!





Why our CASAs
volunteer:
“I became a CASA
because I believe that it
is the most effective
way to positively impact
the lives of children.”
-Claire, CASA of four
years

The Impact of the Erskine Fund

The Kenneth Erskine Fund was established in the memory of Kenneth “Uncle Ken” Erskine by his family. Giving preference to children with learning and intellectual disabilities (as well as other special needs), funds are allocated every year in an effort to supply children served by CASAs with goods and services they could not obtain on their own and that can help alleviate some of the particular struggles they may be facing at the time.

This fall, the Erskine Fund was able to assist a 12-year-old girl, “A”. She does her best to cope daily with anxiety and sensory issues, and the Erskine Fund provided the money for the purchase of a Beddy. This all-in-one bedding system provides two benefits to her. The bunk bed in the room “A” shares is difficult to make, and not getting it perfect makes her anxious. With a Beddy, she just zips the comforter like a sleeping bag and she is done. The material inside the comforter is Minky, which is soothing to her, and she can zip herself in at night to gain the comfort one receives from a weighted blanket.

The impetus for establishing the Erskine Fund was described lovingly by his family: “In many ways – the best ways – Uncle Ken was a child all of his life. He grew up in the Boston area, surrounded by a large family who loved him dearly. Uncle Ken lived for holidays, the New England Patriots and his family. He embodied honesty,

individualism, and loyalty like no other. We know he would be proud the Erskine Fund and the children it helps.”

The Boston CASA staff would like to thank the Erskine family for their continued support of the work our CASA volunteers do each day. Our work would not be possible without supporters like you!



FY2023 By The Numbers



FY2023 was a busy year for Boston CASA! Our volunteers provided approximately 15,000 hours of advocacy on behalf of the children and youth they serve.

We held two new CASA volunteer training cohorts and provided monthly training sessions to our current volunteers, totaling over 80 hours of training throughout 2023.

We are looking to continue to grow the number of volunteers and the youth

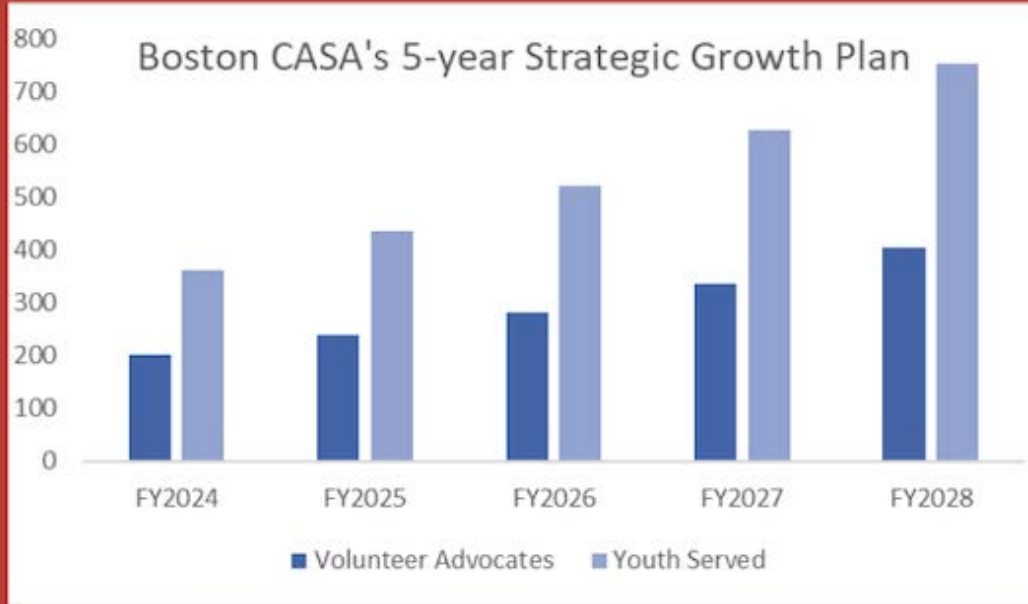
CASA can serve every year. Will you support us in this growth?

A Plan for Growth

Boston CASA developed its Plan for Growth through eight months of intensive study with the assistance of Community Action Partners (CAP). Boston CASA's current budget limits the available special advocates to only 15% of the children eligible for their services in Suffolk and Middlesex Counties. Through expanded philanthropic support, CAP's modeling showed that as Boston CASA approaches serving 50% of this vulnerable population, it reaches a critical tipping point. By raising the funds necessary to hire more staff who will train and support a larger pool of CASAs, two benefits beyond assisting more children occur. The cost per child served begins to (and continues to) decline as the organization becomes more economically efficient, and it creates a greater visibility of Boston CASA's essential and important work which will lead to greater fundraising opportunities.

The Plan for Growth calls for Boston CASA to increase the number of CASAs by 20% year over year for five years through an incremental increase of the budget by \$1.3M. Following this ambitious plan, by 2028 Boston CASA will be able to train and support special advocates to 47% of the eligible children in Suffolk and Middlesex Counties, serve each child at a lower cost per CASA and become a household name in the community.

With your help, Boston CASA will be able to support 339 volunteers to advocate for 751 foster youth by 2028



Help us reach our goal

Interested in Other Ways to Support Boston CASA?

Become a CASA! We host monthly information sessions to learn more about the CASA role. Our next training starts in March.

To sign up for an upcoming information

Purchase an item from our Amazon Wishlist.

We are building a library of supplies and resources for our CASAs and youth from activities to do during visits to birthday and

Is your company or organization interested in learning more about CASA? Our staff can either come to your office or conduct a short session about CASA and the amazing work

session click the button
below:

other special occasions.
You can also mail gift
cards directly to our
office.

our volunteers do with
your staff. Reach out
today!

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