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Boston CASA Winter 2026 Newsletter

A Letter from Our Executive Director

As we step into a new year together, I find myself reflecting on the extraordinary momentum that continues to carry Boston CASA forward. I am so grateful for the community of people who care deeply about the children and youth who have experienced abuse and neglect and the CASAs who provide them with hope.

First and foremost, to our CASA volunteers: you are beacons for the children we serve. In moments of uncertainty, transition, and vulnerability, you remain constant. Your presence, advocacy, and unwavering commitment ensure that each child's voice is heard and their interests are protected. The difference you make is profound, and it is felt every single day in courtrooms, in meetings, and in the lives of children who now have someone standing firmly beside them.

Our Fiscal Year 26 began on October 1, and we have witnessed remarkable generosity that strengthens our ability to serve more children in the years ahead. This community made Boston CASA a charitable priority, and the End of the Year Campaign grew by 12%. In addition, the McQuillan family made a transformational three-year \$450,000 commitment to support the expansion of our development office to ensure we raise the financial resources necessary to fulfill the Plan for Growth. Their leadership inspired the Powers family to make a \$100,000 commitment of their own – an incredible example of how generosity sparks generosity. We are also deeply grateful to our Angel Anonymous donor whose \$50,000 year-end gift reminded us that quiet acts of kindness often carry immense impact.

We were equally moved by the heart of Skyla, a former foster child and Brookline High School junior who found her forever home at age seven, who chose to spend her favorite holiday, Christmas, fundraising more than \$4,000 for Boston CASA. Her desire to pay forward the love and blessings she received is a beautiful testament to resilience and compassion. The funds she raised will allow our children to experience moments of joy they might not otherwise have, like attending a professional sporting event, a concert, or a special outing that simply allows them to feel like kids.

We are also delighted to continue our partnership with Teak Media whose public relations leadership has helped expand Boston CASA's visibility across the Commonwealth. They have amplified the critical role of a CASA through a wide range of media platforms, including Fox 25, the Boston Globe, and WBUR along with local media outlets, to reach a combined audience of 40 million. Additionally, our Lego partnership continues as the March volunteer trainees will be the second cohort trained in the Power of Play by The Lego Group. The innovative training is now integrated into our CASA training curriculum and equips volunteers with meaningful tools to build trust, connection, and strong, positive relationships through play with the children we serve.

We are incredibly grateful for the judges we work with for their tireless dedication to ensuring better outcomes for our children and youth. Their partnership, thoughtfulness, and commitment to justice are critical to the success of Boston CASA's work and the safety and permanency of the children we serve.

As I look ahead, I am filled with optimism and excitement for what is to come. I warmly invite you to join us at our **14th Annual Transforming Lives Gala on April 16th** at Artists for Humanity Epicenter. We are anticipating a spectacular evening of inspiration, celebration, and community that you will not want to miss!

Thank you for being part of Boston CASA's story. We are grateful for your efforts in helping us carry this momentum into 2026 and for standing with the children who need us most.

With deep gratitude,

Nicole Stewart
Executive Director

Former Foster Youth Skyla Luzzi-Porco Raises Funds to Brighten Foster Children's Holiday

Skyla Luzzi-Porco, a 17-year-old Brookline High School junior, dedicated herself in the month of December to raise funds for Boston CASA's annual holiday drive to provide a Merry Christmas to foster children. This was an effort near and dear to Skyla's heart, who spent ages 4 to 6 in foster care before being adopted by her forever family at age 7.

Skyla aimed to raise \$3,000 for Boston CASA to purchase experiences as holiday gifts for foster children and youth, and she promoted her campaign through social media and by creating a presentation about Boston CASA and her background to share at her church. She also reached out to friends, family, and neighbors to spread the word. Skyla's efforts were rewarded as she exceeded her goal with a total of \$4,100 – a portion of which will be used for birthday gifts as well. She fulfilled her Christmas wish to ensure that foster youth experience the joy of the holiday season and feel remembered during what can be a difficult time of year.

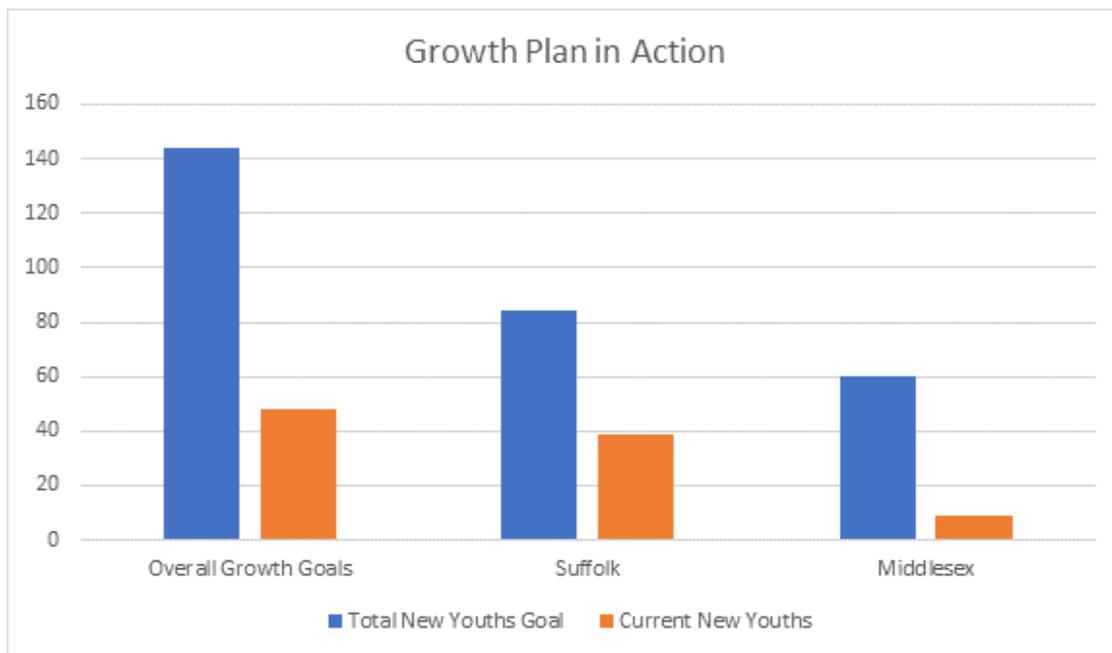
"Christmas is my absolute favorite holiday, which I celebrate all year long," said Luzzi-Porco. "I'm so grateful to everyone who took care of me, from my foster mom Karen to social workers, DCF, family, and friends. Now I want to give back and help kids currently in foster care feel loved and create joyful memories this holiday season."

"Skyla's campaign represents the very best of what we hope to inspire in young people who have experienced foster care," said Nicole Stewart, executive director of Boston CASA. "Her desire to give back and ensure other children feel loved during the holiday season shows the remarkable difference one person's kindness can make."



The 5-Year Plan for Growth

Our Plan for Growth in action reflects a deep commitment to ensuring that every child and youth in Suffolk and Middlesex Counties has a voice, a champion, and a pathway to hope. By strengthening recruitment and training of volunteers, deepening partnerships with courts and community organizations, and investing in staff capacity, we are reaching more children and youth with trained, compassionate volunteers who stand beside them during some of the most challenging moments of their lives. In FY 26, we continue in our growth plan by aiming to serve a total of 144 more children. With a growth goal of pairing CASAs with new cases before the court by 20% year over year, the target is to serve 84 children with new cases in Suffolk County and 60 more in Middlesex County in this fiscal year, with a total of 425 children with new and existing cases benefiting from the essential support of a CASA. We are well on our way in completing and exceeding this goal. As of this month, we have been referred 48 new children: 39 children from Suffolk and 9 children from Middlesex. This growth is not just about numbers—it is about transforming lives, shortening the time children wait for an advocate, and creating brighter, more stable futures for the children and youth who depend on us.



TA Realty Delivers Holiday Joy

TA Realty's Boston Office once again provided a great deal of holiday joy to foster children in Suffolk and Middlesex Counties. For the second year in a row, CASAs got lists from their children, and we passed them on to the good people of TA Realty. Our offices were filled with sacks of gifts in early December that gave the CASAs the opportunity to serve as Santa Claus. Here are some of the stories our special advocates shared:

I delivered gifts to the 3 CASA children assigned to Sue and me. Their "Mom and Dad"

Let them open all the gifts immediately. They were overjoyed with all of them. The boys started making things with LEGOs; they all tried the scooter and adored the flashing lights, and the girl used the beauty salon items on her doll while mom set up the movie camera.

-Caryl

My CASA youth sends her thanks for the gifts. She needed a new coat, hat and gloves and was very happy to receive them as well as a gift card toward new winter boots. It was all very much appreciated!

-Erin

My CASA youth was thrilled when I walked in with her packages, and it made her super excited for Christmas morning. It was particularly welcomed as I brought them

on a day when she was feeling sad about some family news, and it helped make her feel more positive and cared for. She told me later that she had a great Christmas and she loved her presents! She particularly loved receiving a doll to care for.

-DeAnna

My CASA youth was blown away by the gifts she received. She had fun trying to shake the package and guess what the gifts were, and she ran to show her dad after she had opened them. One of the gifts, which was a manicure kit, she wanted to start using right after she opened it. Thank you so much for your generosity!

-Amanda



Youth Advisory Board Forum

The Boston CASA Youth Advisory Board Forum featured three youth presenters who led powerful conversations on issues impacting youth in foster care on November 1, 2025. Their topics included “More Than a Placement: Understanding the Whole Child in Foster Care,” a look at seeing youth beyond their case file; “Substance Use and Its Interference with Teens Diagnosed with Diabetes,” addressing foster youth with health conditions; and “Out of Reach: The Disconnect Between Youth and DCF,” highlighting gaps in communication and support. Their presentations offered direct insight into real challenges and reinforced the importance of youth-led advocacy. We loved seeing them incorporate their own personal stories, utilizing their voices, and encouraging change for the foster care system.

Please see this one-pager outlining the various resources and recommendations they presented on these topics. [YAB Forum 2025 One Pager - 1](#)



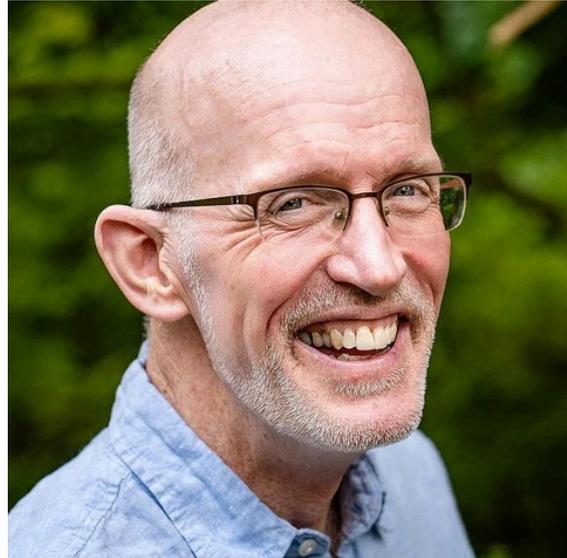
CASA Spotlights

During the first quarter of the fiscal year, Boston CASA was proud to recognize our CASAs of the Month for their exceptional dedication and advocacy on behalf of

children and youths in our community. Each of these CASAs were nominated by their Advocate Supervisors as CASAs who went above and beyond—showing up consistently, building trusting relationships with their assigned youth, and providing thoughtful, well-informed recommendations to the court. Their compassion and unwavering commitment embody the heart of the CASA mission and display a powerful example of how one volunteer can make a lasting difference in a child’s life. Below are our three CASAs of the months for the 1st quarter of our fiscal year:

Paul Eldrenkamp

I’m really energized by working with young people, and by the collaborative problem solving that youth work often entails. Boston CASA offered the opportunity to do some extremely high-stakes youth work with a really talented, experienced, and committed support team. It was impossible to pass up the chance.



Lori Benjes

I was a caseworker with foster children at age 23, during my gap year before starting medical school. I loved that job so much I wanted to find a way to return to that mission now over 30 years later.



Elizabeth McQuillan

I became a CASA to give young people the kind of support and advocacy every child deserves, especially when their parents may not be in a position to offer it. I’m

especially committed to teens, helping them access necessary services, offering them reliability, and encouraging ideas and dreams that go beyond the case file as they prepare to age out of the system.



We have also had two incredible CASAs recently spotlighted on the news

CASA Ricardo Franco: [LOCAL SPOTLIGHT Bringing Cultural Insight to the Courtroom: Ricardo Franco's Work as a CASA Advocate - Advocate News](#)

CASA Marlowe Farrar: [Foxboro man volunteers as a CASA, helping children in foster care system | Local News | thesunchronicle.com](#)



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