



**2023**

**Annual  
Report**

**CASA of the Mid-Shore**

Court Appointed Special Advocates of  
Talbot, Dorchester, Queen Anne's, and Kent Counties

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## From the Executive Director



I offer warm greetings from CASA of the Mid-Shore, along with the hope that you enjoy reading our Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2023.

Over the past two years, our efforts at resuming life in the office post-pandemic focused on our commitment to supporting our Court Appointed Special

Advocate volunteers. With guidance from our staff members, our CASA volunteers did their utmost to fulfill their responsibilities to their appointed children even when they could not see these kiddos in-person. We wanted to do something special to honor the dedication they demonstrated during the pandemic, as well as to inspire them. But what?

Then I met Melissa Roshawn Potter, or MelRo. A professional fashion model, MelRo is also a child advocate who works with the Ohio CASA program. Upon hearing her personal story, I knew she was exactly the person to connect with and inspire our CASA volunteers, staff, board, and our local judiciary.

Born to a 13-year-old young woman unable to care for her, MelRo was raised by a relative until being placed in foster care at age 10

because of severe, ongoing abuse. Within the next 5 years, MelRo lived in 23 foster and group homes. She says, "I was constantly changing schools. Constantly wishing for love and a family. Experiencing more horrible emotional, physical, and sexual abuse along the way. No one wanted to adopt me." She had no one in her corner.

By age 17 MelRo was homeless with a newborn baby when good fortune shone on her via the appointment of her CASA volunteer. With her CASA's perseverance, advocacy, and guidance, MelRo and her infant son were placed in a shelter for young, single mothers. Over a period of years, the support from her CASA, shelter staff members, and others helped change the trajectory of her life. She received the professional help necessary to address the many traumas endured throughout her childhood, paving the way for her to dedicate her adult life to inspiring advocates for children and improving the foster care system.

Today, MelRo is a top fashion model who has been featured on major magazine covers and on runways of elite fashion shows. She gave a TED Talk. She built schools for children in Ghana. Yet her heart remains with children and with CASA.

Imagine our delight when in April, MelRo joined us at the Temple B’Nai Israel in Easton at a Volunteer Appreciation Reception to surprise, inspire, and celebrate our CASA volunteers. In speaking candidly and movingly about trauma, resilience, forgiveness, and healing, MelRo’s deep connection to CASA was clear and unwavering. Her overarching message to CASA volunteers? CASA volunteers make a difference every day. CASA personifies hope for children.

And that, my friends, is the heart of the matter. As CASA volunteer Kim Finger mentions in the Volunteer Spotlight later in this report, CASA plants seeds of hope for a brighter future.

With gratitude,

*Robin*

CASA volunteers, board members, and staff hold pinwheels, a symbol of prevention of child abuse, as they pose with MelRo (Front row, 2nd from the right)

To learn more about MelRo, please visit Inspirational Speaker, Foster Care Advocate ([melrosvoice.com](http://melrosvoice.com))





## 2022-2023 VOLUNTEERS

Eve Aistis  
Thomas Arnold  
Howard Bernstein  
Katharine Bonner  
Deanna Boston  
Norman "Tommy" Boston  
Alice Carr  
Michele Cheyne  
Forrest Daniels  
Cherry Dearie  
Gadis Effendi  
Francis Feagins  
Beverly Ferguson  
Kim Finger  
Peggy Ford  
William Griffin, Jr.  
Brandy Guy  
Janet Healy  
Jason Howard  
Alison Irvin  
Corrie James  
Rebecca Johnston  
Christine LaMonica  
Natalie Lewis  
Bonnette Macklin  
Terrence Mangan  
Cathleen Massey

Sarah McCoy  
Karen McLaughlin  
Julia Miller  
Kathleen Miller  
Thomas Murphy  
Wyritya Myster  
Margaret Parker  
James Pinkett  
Blair Burns Potter  
Steve Rideout  
Sharon Robinson  
Molly Sause  
Geoff Searle  
Laurinda Serafin  
Laura Serkes  
Lisa Skibenesh  
Martha Slaughter  
Lisa Stone  
Kathryn Swann  
William Thomas  
Dawn Wilson  
Linda Wilson  
Hanna Woicke  
Sally Woodall

*Graphic Design*  
Sherry McAllister

CASA makes a difference.

Studies have shown that a child with a CASA volunteer:

- Is moved less frequently from placement to placement
- May spend less time in foster care
- Is more likely to be placed with siblings
- Has their needs identified sooner, resulting in quicker service provision to meet those needs
- Performs better in school
- Is less likely to re-enter the child welfare system after their case closes
- Knows their CASA to be a steady, consistent adult role model in their life

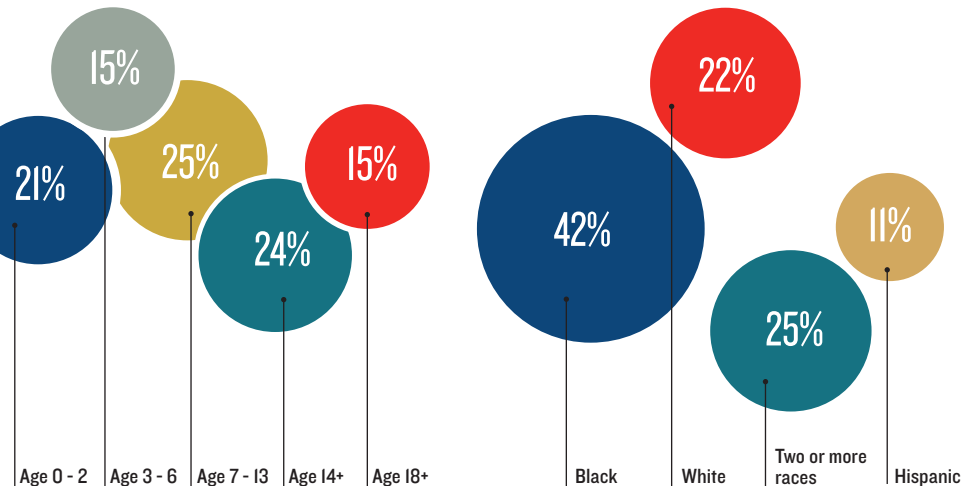
# THE CHILDREN WE SERVE

We strive to serve all of the children referred to us by the Circuit Courts in Talbot, Dorchester, Queen Anne's, and Kent Counties. Due to confidentiality laws protecting their privacy, we are unable to show photographs or provide identifying information about

the children we serve. We can, however, share statistics and demographics about them. This page provides a snapshot of the ages, gender, and racial identity of the children served by Court Appointed Special Advocates between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023.

Female 43%

Male 57%



## Our Successes Count!

**5** new CASAs joined the team!

**Over 700** recommendations were in our court reports about what our kiddos need to thrive.

**93%** of our recommendations about what children need were accepted by the courts.

Our CASA volunteers invested *hundreds* of hours advocating for children.

### Of the children whose cases closed:

- **6** reunified with a parent
- **2** turned 21 years of age and are living independently
- **1** is living in a special needs facility
- **7** have new adoptive families
- **2** are under the guardianship of a loving family

### Too many to count:

miles driven, emails, phone calls, text messages, hours spent in meetings with agency partners, hours writing court reports, attending court hearings, brainstorming with CASA supervisors, continuing education opportunities, and visits with our appointed kiddos all helped facilitate positive outcomes for local children.

“TO GIVE A CHILD  
A CASA IS TO GIVE  
THEM A VOICE. TO  
GIVE THEM A VOICE  
IS TO GIVE THEM  
HOPE, AND TO GIVE  
THEM HOPE IS TO  
GIVE THEM THE  
WORLD.”

A CHILD SERVED  
BY CASA



## Comments from the Judiciary

"We write to express our deep support of the unique and valuable services provided to vulnerable children by CASA of the Mid-Shore (CASA) and to state our appreciation to members of CASA for their continued dedication, commitment, and mission-driven approach to serving children and assisting this Court. We continue to see positive outcomes for Talbot County's at-risk children when CASA is involved."

The Honorable Stephen Kehoe and The Honorable Jamie Adkins, Talbot County Circuit Court

"CASA operates from a very unique perspective and provides an otherwise unmet service to local children and to the Court. I know that the active participation of CASA routinely leads to more and greater positive outcomes for children. . . I have observed your helpful collaboration and cooperation with many local partners, and I thank you for the time you and your staff dedicate to Dorchester County."

The Honorable William Jones, Dorchester County Circuit Court

"I write to express my appreciation for the valuable services provided to maltreated children by CASA of the Mid-Shore (CASA) and to thank the members of CASA for their continued dedication, commitment, and thoughtful approach to serving children and assisting this Court. The information provided to the Court from CASA is consistently thorough and represents the best interest of appointed children. I believe we will continue to see increased positive outcomes for local children when CASA is involved."

The Honorable Lynn Knight, Queen Anne's County Circuit Court

"Your CASA volunteers have a unique and profound role. They present important information that helps this Court develop decisions about the best interest of local children, and they provide support to some of the most vulnerable members of Kent County's community. I appreciate the depth of knowledge that CASA volunteers have about their appointed children."

The Honorable Harris Murphy, Kent County Circuit Court

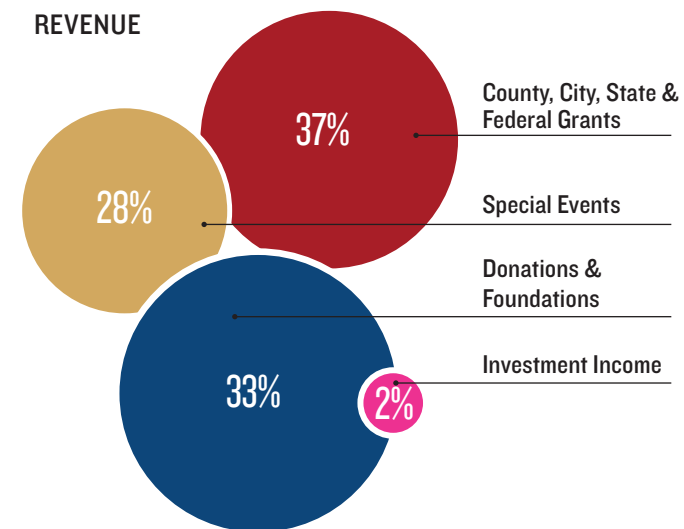
# 2023 FINANCIALS

*Adjustments and modifications may be identified during the annual audit.*

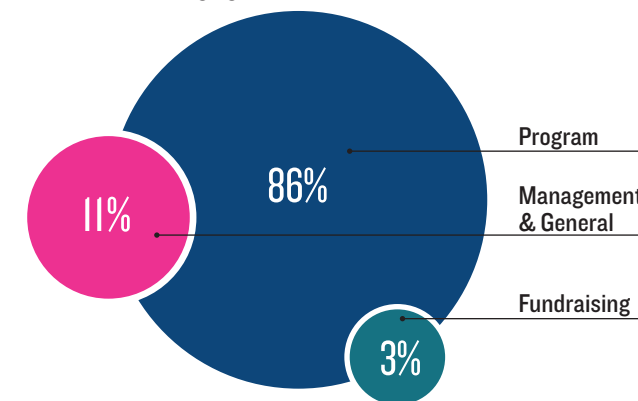
Since 1990 a strong Board of Directors, staff, and volunteer corps have enabled us to advocate on behalf of vulnerable children to improve the quality of their lives. Upholding our work is the generous financial support of individuals, businesses, civic and faith-based groups, and grantors.

CASA of the Mid-Shore is committed to managing our finances with integrity, and we maintain high standards in all program areas. This report is presented with profound gratitude for the financial and in-kind support that we received between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023.

## REVENUE



## EXPENSES



*Our Generous Donors: Report of Fiscal Year 2023 (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023) to our donors and friends is on the following pages.*

# OUR GENEROUS DONORS

REPORT OF FISCAL YEAR 2023  
TO OUR DONORS AND FRIENDS

We offer deep thanks to those individuals and businesses choosing membership in our **Champions of Hope Giving Society** through their annual donation of \$1,000 or more!

## Leaders

### \$20,000 & above

The Commissioners of Cambridge  
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Susan Mandl  
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Scott and Courtney Pastrick  
Talbot Family Network

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George and Lisa Neall

# CHAMPIONS OF HOPE

For the fourth year in a row, and with the assistance from the elves at Crackerjacks, we provided holiday gifts for our appointed children in honor of the members of our Champions of Hope Giving Society.



## FISCAL YEAR 2023 REPORT TO DONORS AND FRIENDS

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Chris and JoRhea Wright

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#### \$100 to \$499

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William and Gertina Batson  
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Roger and Jane Bollman  
James and Mary Campbell  
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Peggy Ford  
Geoff and Lee Ann Fox  
William and Marian Herb  
Robert and Joanna Holden  
Juan Ianni





## FISCAL YEAR 2023 REPORT TO DONORS AND FRIENDS

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Kay Schaar-Wagenblatt  
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Maris Wicker  
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Christine Williams  
James and Margaret Wood  
Sandy Wood

### **Gifts were made in memory of the following individuals:**

Alex Mandl  
Michelle Smith

### **Gifts were made in honor of the following individuals:**

Joan Crowley  
Robin Davenport  
Christine McWilliams  
Chad and Stephanie Nagel  
Karen Orem

### **Gifts in Kind**

All of our Court Appointed Special Advocate  
Volunteers, Board of Directors and  
Committee members  
Attraction Magazine  
Crackerjacks, Inc  
Susan Courtney  
Peggy Ford  
Sally Fronk  
Daniel and Kayla Fuoco  
Ed Furman  
Garden Treasures  
Gourmet by the Bay at The Village Shoppe  
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MelRo Potter  
Susan Rabenhorst  
Temple B'nai Israel  
Trident Aircraft / John Galdieri

**We are very grateful for donations of all sizes and thank all of our donors for supporting our work!**

**Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of our donor report. We apologize if there is an error and ask that you let us know by contacting Karen at 410-822-2866, ext. 4.**

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS 2023



L to R: Roland Finger, Robin Davenport, Kim Finger at the Volunteer Appreciation Reception

## GROWING HOPE

*Court Appointed Special Advocate Kim Finger shares her reasons for volunteering with CASA of the Mid-Shore. [Editor's note: Kim's comments have been condensed and edited due to space factors.]*

I am blessed with a wonderful husband, two daughters who are great young women, two beautiful granddaughters, an awesome son-in-law, and I am a dog mom and grandma. The idea of service was instilled in me very early. Upon retirement [as the Director of Student and Family Services at Wicomico Public Schools] I knew I wanted to continue to work with and support children. After taking some time to recharge, I read about CASA and immediately knew this is where I am supposed to serve.

In order to be a good advocate, I try to get to know parents, foster parents, social workers, therapists and educators who are involved with my children. Age and where a young person is developmentally have guided me in building relationships.

I have observed that trust is a natural by-product of being consistent and present. Hope is like seedlings that are planted, and the CASA may get to see sprouts. But we keep planting, watering, and fertilizing, believing that when our part is done, another person comes to the support the child in growing hope.

Seeing the growth and potential in children that they did not recognize existed inside of them has been my greatest joy as a CASA volunteer. Children are a gift to the world and our hope for a future – that is the fuel that keeps me going.

[Being a CASA volunteer] is not as time consuming and difficult as people think. If you are interested, ask questions, ask to speak with a current CASA volunteer. If you love children, the rest is easy and fulfilling.



Bob Cattaneo



Joe Anthony



Michael Clark



Chief Anthony Smith



Colleen Ryan

## GOODBYE AND HELLO!

We bid a fond farewell to some important members of the CASA family, including Board officers **Bob Cattaneo** and **Joe Anthony**. They will be missed, as will Executive Assistant **Kay Lister**, who retired in September. We also said “good-bye” to **Stephanie Nagel**, who, after retiring from the Board last June, agreed to serve as our Outreach Coordinator for one year. We thank all of them for their talented, dedicated service.

In July 2023 we welcomed two new Directors, **Michael Clark** and **Chief Anthony Smith**, to the Board of Directors. Mike and Tony bring a robust range of skills and experience to the team. We also welcomed **Colleen Ryan** to the staff in January. As our new Program Assistant, Colleen quickly got up to speed and continues to awe us with her many skills. We look forward to working with Mike, Tony, and Colleen as we move our program forward!

## YOU CAN CREATE A LEGACY

PLEASE CONSIDER A PLANNED GIFT TO CASA OF THE MID-SHORE AND HELP IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR LOCAL CHILDREN.

### DONATE

You can help children who need CASA by their side. Your support helps us provide unique assistance to abused and neglected children. Your gift can mean the world to a child. There are many ways to give:

- o A donation in memory of or in honor of someone
- o Our Endowment Fund at the Mid-Shore Community Foundation
- o A bequest in your will
- o From your Retirement Account
- o Through a Life Insurance Policy
- o Gift Annuities

**You can be a Champion of Hope** with your annual gift of \$1,000+. Champions are honored at a special reception and acknowledged in our Annual Report. Holiday gifts to children are given in honor of our Champions of Hope.

You can scan this code to donate online or use the enclosed envelope to mail your gift. Thank you!



# GENEROSITY ABOUNDS AT CASA ROYALE

After a 3-year hiatus, we were pleased to welcome friends at our spring gala, CASA Royale! On May 20th, Easton's Trident Airplane Hangar was transformed into a casino serving as a backdrop to support our work with children under court protection due to abuse or neglect. The generosity of gracious sponsors covered all CASA Royale expenses, paving the way for funds raised during the evening to go directly to our advocacy work with local children.

Joie de vivre was evident throughout the night. Guests embraced the evening's theme, many coming attired ala "Bond, James Bond." Twinkling lights glittered from crystal chandeliers and blood red roses gleamed in glass vases while guests enjoyed casino games, talking with old and new friends, and savoring delicious cuisine provided by Gourmet by the Bay.

After viewing a poignant video presentation by MelRo Potter (please see the Volunteer Appreciation Reception article to learn more about MelRo), a compassionate and generous



guest was moved to make a thrilling surprise announcement. Chip Akridge, a long-time friend and CASA patron, stepped to the stage to offer a challenge gift of \$10,000, causing applause throughout the room. Accompanied by cheers, 3 generous donors each pledged to match the Akridge Challenge!

Following these stunning acts of kindness, the announcement of another \$10,000 Challenge Grant offered by prior CASA Board member and amazing benefactor, Susan Mandl, brought people to their feet in delight. In a room charged with the spirit of giving, the Mandl Challenge helped to raise an additional \$30,000 within a matter of minutes!

Deeply grateful for the outpouring of support, Executive Director Robin Davenport states, "This incredible generosity from our supporters serves as a legacy of hope. We thank our sponsors and guests for caring about the lives of local maltreated children. We know that advocating now for these children helps improve their outcomes and futures. Simply put, CASA gives hope to children."



## CASA ROYALE



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS 2023

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION IN ACTION

For the 2nd year in a row, funding from the Talbot Family Network gave our Board members, staff, and CASA volunteers the opportunity to participate in a daylong workshop entitled Bias Awareness Training to Address Disparities and Inequities with Dr. Maria Mercedes Avila, a nationally renowned trainer in this topic.

We also enjoyed hosting a table the 23rd Annual Multicultural Festival on May 6, 2023 in Easton, where our staff and volunteers joined other festival-goers in celebrating the cultural diversity within our communities.



We are moving toward utilizing less paper in an effort to be more environmentally friendly.

Please provide us with your email address to help us with this gradual transition!

Our Commitment to CORE VALUES -

We approach all people and situations with:

**COMPASSION:** We approach people and challenges with empathy, honesty, kindness, and openness. We care and want the best for all people.

**HOPE:** We are optimistic, knowing good outcomes can grow from difficult situations. We believe one person has the power to make a positive difference in the life of another.

**ADVOCACY:** We are proactive, strategic, and courageous. We thoughtfully persevere, using creativity and diplomacy.

**INTEGRITY:** We strive for excellence, both individually and collectively. We steward others' faith in us, and we are trustworthy and accountable. We strive for equity.

**RESPECT:** We listen. We empower others by valuing their opinions. We treat everyone with esteem.

**INCLUSION:** We acknowledge the importance of teamwork and collaboration. We value diversity and the unique qualities of individuals, recognizing we are stronger together than alone.

**ADAPTABILITY:** We commit to being flexible under ever-changing circumstances while remaining focused on our mission.

# THANKFUL FOR YOU!

YOU CAN HELP US ON **GIVING TUESDAY!**

#GivingTuesday (November 28, 2023) is a day of global giving, a day to practice gratitude and pay it forward. On the Tuesday following Thanksgiving, please join in this day of giving by supporting CASA of the Mid-Shore, a cause close to home.

For your support, we are thankful.





**CASA OF THE MID-SHORE**  
TALBOT • DORCHESTER  
QUEEN ANNE'S • KENT

**NEW ADDRESS**

111 N. West Street  
Suite B  
Easton, MD, 21601  
410-822-2866

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Easton, MD  
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Current Resident Or



info@casamidshore.org  
www.casamidshore.org