

2022 Impact Report



TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	7
Letter from our Director & Board Chair	2022 Financials
4	8
Colorado CASA Advocate of the Year, Jane Dvorak	Our Donors
5	9-10
Our Volunteers	First Youth Alliance Participant Graduates Program
6	11
2022 Impact at a Glance	Youth Alliance Move-In Sponsorships



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When you see these square icons, scan them with your phone camera to be directed to a website with more information!

CASA Jeffco/Gilpin Staff

Leah Varnell
Executive Director

Vicki Pyne
Program Director

Betsy Bellisimo
Youth Alliance Coordinator

Christine Evans
Lead Advocate Supervisor

Debbie Gabriel
Program Manager

Tracy Hagelund
Training & Retention Coordinator

Mallory Hastings
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Alison Kimble
Development Director

Audrey Miklitsch
Community Engagement Coordinator

Diane Nichols
Office Manager

Moriah Nixon
Advocate Supervisor

Emily Thomas
Grants Manager

Charles Wentz
Youth Alliance Assistant Coordinator

Sarah Whetzle
Program Administrative Assistant

EVOLVING OUR IMPACT



Dear Friends and Supporters,

CASA of Jefferson and Gilpin Counties continues to think proactively and evolve to make an impact. We are not the same organization we were a few years ago, let alone when we were founded. While our mission continues to focus on providing support to children who have been neglected or abused, we know the needs of our volunteers, staff, donors, and, ultimately, the children we serve, continue to change. That's exactly why we deviate, innovate, and adapt.

Examples of this mindset play out in every aspect of our organization, from how we recruit staff, to our hybrid approach for volunteer training, and from fundraising to our work with older youth to provide support as they gain self-sufficiency (see more about our Youth Alliance program on page 9). We have been able to recruit more volunteers who might not have otherwise been able to engage with our organization, and we also learned that nothing beats in-person gatherings. We have amazing volunteers, like Jane Dvorak (see story on page 4) who go above and beyond to meet the ever-changing needs of children and youth. We also continue to collaborate with like-minded organizations to provide more robust and comprehensive services, like our pilot program for youth that is manifesting in the opening of AVi in 2023 (see page 11).

While we celebrate our past impact and accomplishments, it's imperative that we continue to look ahead, to evolve and change to better serve our community—and our children. We attracted and retained incredible, capable staff and board this past year who have stepped up to the challenge of being open to change. And, thanks to steadfast volunteers and donors like you, we have the momentum to continue to think outside the box, to lead when the path isn't always clear or certain, and to evolve to make a great impact. Thank you for an extraordinary year and for continuing to support CASA Jeffco/Gilpin as we evolve to make a greater impact.

Leah Varnell
Executive Director

Jan Podoll
Chair, Board of Directors

Board of Directors

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COLORADO CASA ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

For Jane Dvorak, volunteering with CASA of Jefferson and Gilpin Counties feels like a gift, not an obligation or duty.

“I’ve lived a blessed life,” said Dvorak, who grew up in Lakewood. “I have wonderful parents, an incredible husband, and three children who lead happy lives. I want every child to be as privileged, happy, and cheered for as my own children. Every child deserves to have someone who believes in them, who’s cheering for them and makes them feel valued.”

That sentiment is what has fueled Dvorak’s 10-plus years as a CASA volunteer, advocating for 14 children and counting (at the time of this publication, Dvorak had just taken on another case with two more children, bringing her count up to 16). It’s also why Dvorak was named Colorado CASA Advocate of the Year in October 2022.

“There is no one more deserving of this recognition,” said Leah Varnell, Executive Director of CASA of Jeffco/Gilpin. “Jane has impacted so many children’s lives and then to go over and above for our organization the way she has is incredible.”

In addition to serving as a voice and trusted adult for children, Dvorak also donates her time as a Public Relations professional.

“It’s overwhelming to receive the award,” Dvorak said. “It takes everyone in our community to make a difference and being recognized at the state level for my small part is amazing. I feel blessed that I can do the work and grateful that CASA has given me the opportunity to make an impact.”

Dvorak recalled a youth on one of her cases reaching out to her out of the blue. He was now 18 and had moved out of state when his case closed four years before. He ended up back in Denver and had no one to call except for Dvorak. She met with him and helped him figure out his next steps. “If a child trusts you enough to call you, what else can you ask for?” she said.

“I feel lucky to have been able to show my CASA kids a point of reference that’s different from the trauma they’ve experienced,” she said. “No matter who you are or what you do, you have no idea how you can inspire a child.”



Dvorak was recognized at the 2022 Colorado CASA Annual Convention, which took place on Saturday, October 8th at Denver Marriott South at Park Meadows.

OUR VOLUNTEERS



321 active volunteers contributed **9,638** hours

- 47 new volunteers were trained
- 70% of our volunteers work full-time
- 13% of our volunteers are male
- CASA Jeffco/Gilpin volunteers stay on a case for an average of 18 months

Scan here for a complete list of our amazing volunteers!



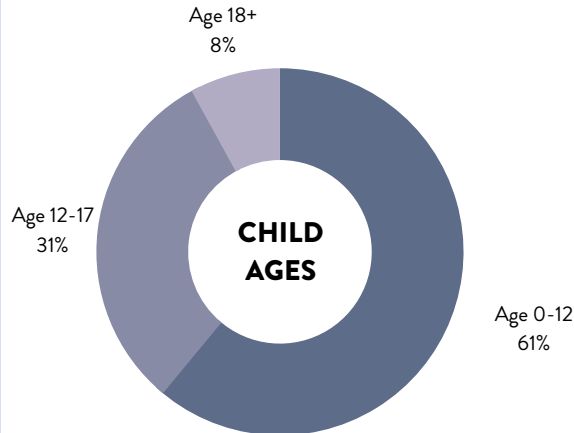
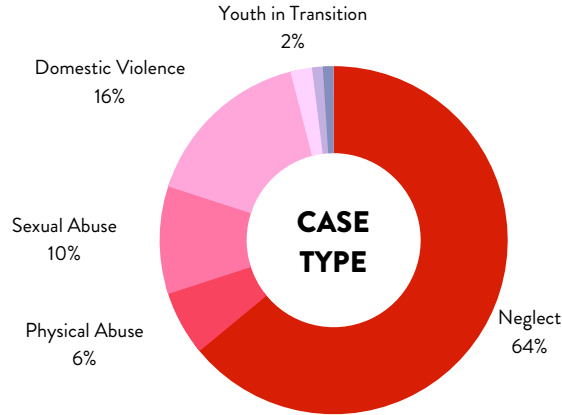
2022 IMPACT AT A GLANCE

409

children
served

256

cases
served



- Jefferson County ranked 5th of 22 districts in the state for number of new filings this past fiscal year.
- 50% of children served remained in their home or were reunified with their parents.
- 43% of cases served were closed this fiscal year.
- 44% of new cases opened in the district had CASA volunteers appointed to the children.
- Of the children served, 50% were male and 50% were female

Statement of Financial Position

Unaudited statement of financial position. If you would like to review CASA Jeffco/ Gilpin's Audit, please contact the office at 303-271-6535.

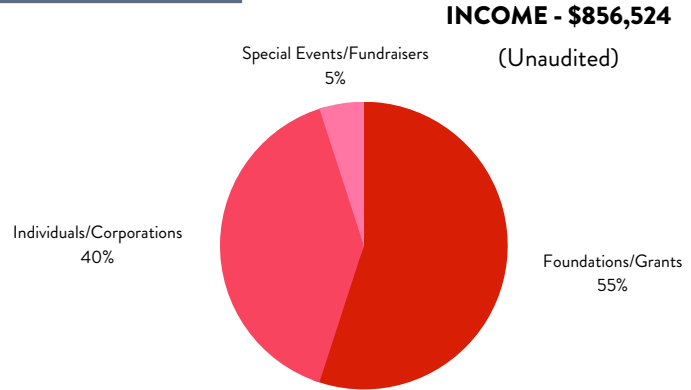
Assets	'21-'22	'20-'21
Current Assets	\$381,570	\$360,054
Other Assets	\$693,916	\$721,254
	\$1,075,486	\$1,081,308

Liabilities & Net Assets	'21-'22	'20-'21
Liabilities	\$69,527	\$69,701
Net Assets	\$1,005,959	\$1,011,607
	\$1,075,486	\$1,081,308

Financial Investments

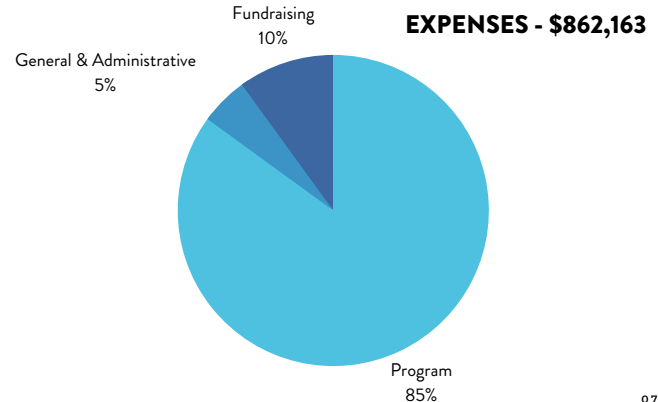
2021-2022 INCOME

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we rely on donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations. Approximately 55% of our annual budget comes from foundations and grants. Of the remainder, 40% comes from individuals/corporations and 5% comes from fundraisers.



2021-2022 EXPENSES

More than four out of every five dollars spent went directly toward programs and services for children. The remaining expenses encompass CASA Jeffco/Gilpin's management and essential fundraising efforts.

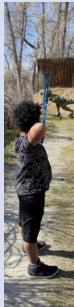


Generous donors continue to make CASA Jeffco/Gilpin's impact possible.

Scan here for a complete
list of our amazing donors!



A generous community member donated pre-season Broncos tickets, allowing volunteer Russ Rizzo and his CASA youth to experience Empower Field at Mile High together.



Peer Coordinator Jim Hoyt is a member of Golden High Country Archers and offered up his time to allow Jessi Miller and her CASA child to enjoy an afternoon of archery.



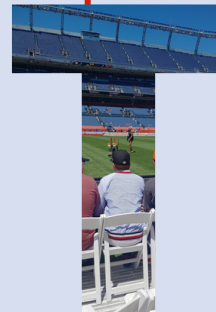
Because of amazing donors, many CASA children have made memories with their advocates watching the Rockies play at Coors Field over the years.

Foothills Art Center donated their space for a time of pizza and crafts for children and their advocates. Memories and art were both made that afternoon.



Our community partner, Dinosaur Ridge, allows our CASA children and their volunteers to experience their museum at no cost.

A donation of field suite tickets to a Denver Outlaws Lacrosse game allowed youth who have grown up in foster care to meet the players and enjoy the game.



FIRST YA GRADUATES FROM PROGRAM

The Youth Alliance program was started in 2019 to support youth, who were aging out or emancipating from foster care, to transition to self-sufficiency successfully. This past summer, the first YA young adult graduated from the program.

“Independence and self-sufficiency are the main goals of program, but that looks really different for each youth,” said Betsy Bellissimo, CASA Jeffco/Gilpin Youth Alliance Coach Coordinator.

For the young woman who became the first to graduate from YA, moving into the in-law apartment in her former foster family’s house while she completes her final year of college signified independence and self-sufficiency.

“This young person’s decision to make this move and give up her housing voucher shows she’s able to make adult decisions that are right for her at this stage in her life,” Bellissimo said.

The young woman is a refugee from Congo and has spent years apart from her biological family. She’s formed an incredible bond with her former foster family and wanted to be close to them as she completes her undergraduate degree.

“She’s gained confidence and accountability during her time in YA,” Bellissimo said. “She knows what she needs right now, and that’s family. Her tenacity and focus continue to be an inspiration.”

YA is a collaboration between CASA Jeffco/Gilpin Jefferson County, Department of Human Services and Foothills Regional Housing. In addition to housing, coaching, and support services, YA participants are also eligible to participate in the Program Completion Fund (PCF), which is a financial incentive program for any YA participant who is working toward financial independence.

PCF is funded through private donations and provides matching funds equal to the amount of rent the YA participant pays each month. As long as the YA participant works and pays rent any six months during their time on a supportive housing voucher, their funds will be vested in PCF and the youth will be eligible to receive the funds when their housing voucher ends.

To receive the funds, the young woman had to outline her intentions and present them before a committee. This ensures she would be using the funds in one of 4 ways: education and related expenses (tuition, room and board, books, etc.); transportation (car and related expenses); real estate (down-payment on property and/or related mortgage expenses); or a business venture. The young woman chose to use her funds to pay off her car debt as her educational expenses are covered through scholarships and grants.

“The committee was very impressed that this young woman is determined to graduate college debt free,” Bellissimo said. “It’s a clear sign of her maturity. Whether it’s \$4,000 or \$40,000, it’s still debt, and we are all really proud of her for wanting to be debt free.”

Another young woman is nearing completion of her participation in YA and hopes to use her funds to continue her education. Every participant has a unique committee who is carefully selected based on the YA participant’s interests and goals.

“Everyone needs support,” Bellissimo said. “All kids come into the program at different stages and our goal is to meet them where they are and get them to where they need to be.”

Through YA, CASA Jeffco/Gilpin aims to coach roughly 30 young adults in the program start of 2023 when housing becomes available at AVi @ Olde Town (formerly Allison Village).

YA participants have 3 years (which is the length of their housing voucher) to develop the skills to live independently and “graduate” from the program.

“We’re looking for self-sufficiency, which will be different for each youth, from schooling to work and from navigating transportation to managing the ups and downs of adulthood,” Bellissimo said.

Ultimately, the last sign that a YA participant is ready to be self-sufficient and live independently is when they are ready to apply for their PCF grant. While this young woman is the first to do so, she certainly won’t be the last.



AVi @ Olde Town is set to open its doors to 30 Youth Alliance participants beginning of 2023.

For some of our Youth Alliance participants, AVi @ Olde Town might be the very first place they get to call their own. Make sure they feel at home the second they walk through the door by choosing a move-in sponsorship level. Levels include a welcome basket, the essentials, furniture or filling an entire unit!



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Community/CASA Volunteer

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Jefferson County Commissioner

Jacqueline Greer

Senior SAP Solutions Manager, Great West Financial

Kellee Hasler

Hospitality Specialist - Retired

Chief Judge Jeffrey Pilkington

1st Judicial District

Ryland Percy

First Bank

Interested in joining CASA of Jefferson & Gilpin Counties' Board of Directors? Contact Leah Varnell, leahvarnell@casajeffcogilpin.com.



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Children and youth assigned a CASA volunteer reported significantly higher levels of hope. A child's hope has been linked to numerous positive outcomes such as academic success, overall well-being, increases in self-control, positive social relationships and optimism.

Give hope a helping hand by supporting CASA this Colorado Gives Day.

