



**CASA**

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
FOR CHILDREN

JEFFERSON & GILPIN COUNTIES



CASA of Jefferson & Gilpin Counties

# 2025 IMPACT REPORT

THE NEXT CHAPTER

# MOVING FORWARD

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reflect on this past year, one word comes to mind: forward. We continued to adapt and evolve our programs to best meet the needs of the children and youth in our community. We introduced new, creative ways to engage volunteers and donors. We honored our past while looking forward to the next chapter in CASA of Jefferson and Gilpin Counties' existence with enthusiasm, confidence, and gratitude.

Thanks to the dedication and commitment of our staff and volunteers, we served 244 children through 181 cases. Our Youth Alliance (YA) program saw 2 youth graduate and receive their Program Completion Fund (PCF) stipends. Be sure to read about Jeremy's story and how John, his CASA volunteer-turned-YA coach, supported him. And our donors showed up in new and meaningful ways, including Ron, who donated stock to support our important work.

We celebrated decades of impactful leadership and contributions from our long-time Executive Director, Leah Varnell. We also honored two of our committed, long-term board members, Jan Podoll and Mark Duffy, who retired from the board this past summer.

As we turn to the next page of our story, we continue to be grateful for your steadfast support. Together, we will ensure our next chapter is as meaningful as the last.

*Melissa Hellmuth*

Melissa Hellmuth  
Executive Director



*Laurie Burkhardt*

Laurie Burkhardt  
Board Chair





## OUR STAFF

Melissa Hellmuth,  
Executive Director

Vicki Pyne,  
Program Director

Toni-Anne Nunez,  
Director of Development

Audrey Miklitsch,  
Engagement and Communications  
Manager

Jill Dalton,  
Volunteer Onboarding Supervisor

Debbie Gabriel,  
Peer Coordinator Program Manager

Christine Evans,  
Lead Advocate Supervisor

Sarah Jones,  
Advocate Supervisor

Tracy Naviaux,  
Youth Alliance Program Supervisor

Charles Wentz,  
Youth Alliance Coach Supervisor

Diane Nichols,  
Office Manager

Emily Thomas,  
Grants Manager

Leah Varnell,  
Special Projects Manager

Mallory Hastings,  
Program Support

*“The impact that you make is more valuable than anything. It does take a certain personality, but it is incredibly rewarding to help kids find their way and find their path and feel supported”.*

**CASA VOLUNTEER JILL HURLEY**

# BUILDING ON AN INCREDIBLE LEGACY

This past summer signaled a monumental transition in the organization. Leah Varnell, former CASA Jeffco/Gilpin Executive Director, retired after 20 years in the role and 25 years with the organization, and Melissa Hellmuth, former CASA Jeffco/Gilpin Director of Operations, stepped in to lead the next era of the organization.

“What excites me most about leading CASA is the opportunity to build upon the incredible work of Leah, our dedicated board and staff, and the amazing volunteers who have helped shape this organization to what it is,” Melissa said.

“I understand that leading CASA Jeffco/Gilpin is a privilege and a responsibility, and I'm looking forward to growing and expanding our reach. It's about staying true to our mission, while meeting the changing needs of the system and our community.”

*“Melissa came back with renewed passion for our mission, as well as a whole new arsenal of tools to take on the leadership role,”*

**LEAH VARNELL**

## NEW ROLE, UNWAVERING ENTHUSIASM AND EXPERIENCE

Melissa started her nonprofit career with CASA Jeffco/Gilpin, spending 5 years in volunteer recruitment and training and 5 years on our development team. Melissa continued to deepen her experience in nonprofit fund development, donor relations, and nonprofit management in Reno with Renown Health Foundation and United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra.

Melissa and her family moved back to Colorado in 2024 and she rejoined our organization as Director of Operations.

“We were so lucky to have found Melissa and to have found her at just the right time when she was ready to come back to Colorado and Leah was ready to retire,” said Laurie Burkhart, CASA Jeffco/Gilpin Board Chair. “With her background, she was well-equipped to hit the ground running.”



*Melissa (left) and Leah (right) in 2010.*

## LEAVING A STRONG FOUNDATION

Melissa stepped into the role with years of experience and mentorship from Leah.

“Leah’s mentorship has meant the world to me, and I wouldn’t be where I am today without her guidance,” Melissa said.

Leah was CASA Jeffco/Gilpin’s second employee in 2000 and then became Executive Director in 2005.

“Leah took this organization from a very small non-profit, struggling to fund the programs necessary to serve our children, to a well-funded and efficiently run nonprofit, with an engaged donor base capable of providing a full range of services,” Laurie said. “Without Leah’s passion, determination, and ingenuity, none of this would have been possible.”

## LOOKING AHEAD

With unprecedented changes locally and nationally, CASA Jeffco/Gilpin plans to remain consistent, while adapting to the needs of the community.

*Melissa (left) and Leah (right) at Champions for Children, May 2025.*

## What Melissa is most looking forward to as Executive Director:

- Working closely with the courts to explore how CASA volunteers can provide support in additional divisions.
- Expanding continuing education opportunities for volunteers to better understand the issues facing the community.
- Strengthening fundraising and recruitment efforts in all areas.

“I’m excited to listen and learn, meet the children and families we serve where they are, and provide the support they need to thrive,” Melissa said.

“I’m especially looking forward to finding new ways to support our volunteers, strengthen relationships with the courts and community, and raise awareness, so no child ever feels alone during such an uncertain and scary time in their life. There’s so much possibility ahead, and I’m truly honored to help lead CASA into this next chapter.”



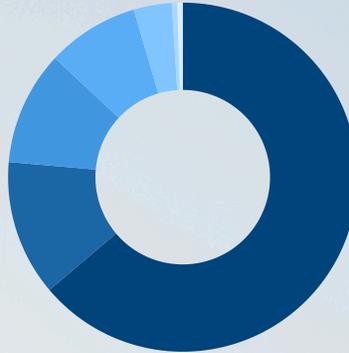
*“Leah has shown me what it really means to lead with heart, passion, and integrity. From her, I’ve learned how to stay grounded in our mission and how to balance the urgency of our work with calm, thoughtful leadership.”*

**MELISSA HELLMUTH**

# CASA BY THE NUMBERS

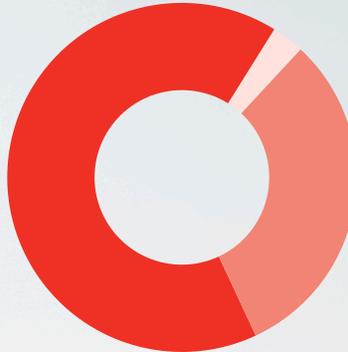
## CASE TYPE BREAKDOWN

- Juvenile Delinquency (<1%)
- Youth in Transition (<1%)
- Truancy (4%)
- Physical Abuse (9%)
- Sexual Abuse (11%)
- Domestic Violence (13%)
- Neglect (64%)



## AGE BREAKDOWN

- Age 0-12 (66%)
- Age 12-17 (31%)
- Age 18+ (3%)



244

CHILDREN SERVED

181

CASES

CASA VOLUNTEERS  
SERVED ON

32%

OF NEW CASES FILED

5,480

CHILDREN SERVED  
SINCE 2001

*"I grew up with a difficult home life, living on and off with my parents and foster homes. I never had anyone to advocate for me, so I hope to help kids in a similar position as mine."*

**CASA VOLUNTEER SABASTIAN MOORE**

# CASA IN THE COMMUNITY

This past year, we created new ways to engage with our community and rally support for our mission. This included introducing two new fundraisers, Comedy for CASA and Putt Fore CASA. We also expanded recruitment methods, with efforts like Pints & Purpose and more outreach through local community events.



## CASA FUNDRAISERS

WINTER  
Comedy for CASA



SPRING  
Champions for Children



FALL  
Putt Fore CASA



**2026**

CASA Jeffco/Gilpin Celebrates 25 Years of Serving Children



# PLAYING POOL, CREATING CONNECTION

Nearly a decade ago, John Maxfield decided it was time to slow down from his law practice. His wife Colleen suggested he consider volunteering with CASA Jeffco/Gilpin. John had also heard about CASA from one of his law partners.

“They had a good experience and felt like they could make a difference,” he said.

John, who had volunteered on the Alzheimer's Association board of directors, was looking to make a difference in a single individual's life. John went through training and was appointed to his first case, which ultimately closed when the child was reunited with their birth mother. Then John was approached by Debbie Gabriel, CASA Jeffco/Gilpin Program Manager, about taking on a case with a teenage boy.

“Jeremy was at a point in his life where he could benefit from a male mentor and Debbie thought of me,” John said.

## About John:

John moved to Colorado in 1983 after finishing law school. He has spent his entire career with Holland and Hart, LLP. He and his wife have been married for 46 years and enjoy spending time with their 3 kids and 4 grandkids. They love to travel the world with their good friends. John also enjoys mountain biking, socializing, playing poker, and being there for his family, friends, and Jeremy.

*“Jeremy has been such a gift to me. We’ll be friends for life. I’ll always be there for him.”*

**JOHN MAXFIELD**

John and Jeremy Chavez connected over their mutual love of pool and good conversation.

“He’s made all the difference in my life,” Jeremy said. “He has been a guiding light—he’s shown me how a man should act by seeing how he operates. He’s made me want to give back and share my story.”

John and Jeremy continued their relationship when Jeremy joined the Youth Alliance, CASA Jeffco/Gilpin’s program to support youth emancipating from foster care, to help ease the transition to a healthy and self-sufficient adulthood. Jeremy completed the YA Program this past year, and he and John still stay in touch.

“Jeremy has been such a gift to me,” John shared. “We’ll be friends for life. I’ll always be there for him.”



# CHOOSING COMPASSION, CHANGING HIS TRAJECTORY

Jeremy Chavez hasn't had an easy life, but you wouldn't know it if you met him. Positive, kind, compassionate, eager to help—Jeremy is determined to lead a meaningful life and inspire others. Jeremy was introduced to CASA when he was 11 years old. He found his groove two years later when John Maxfield became his CASA volunteer.

*“John came into my life when I needed it most. He became a mentor and now also a friend. We connected on a deeper level. He’s made a huge impact on life.”*

## JEREMY CHAVEZ

The two grew their relationship by playing pool and having fun. Jeremy started trusting John and leaning on him for advice and support, something Jeremy lacked in his life.

When Jeremy joined the Youth Alliance, CASA Jeffco/Gilpin's program to support youth emancipating from foster care, to help ease the transition to a healthy and self-sufficient adulthood, John became his coach.

This past year, Jeremy completed the YA Program Completion Fund (PCF), a financial incentive program for any YA participant who is working toward financial independence. The funds were used to pay down the debt on his truck, as he works to establish enough credit to purchase his first home.

“The most remarkable thing about Jeremy is not that he's smart, resilient, and determined (all of which he is), it's that he's compassionate, even for people in the face of betrayal,” John said. “I've seen him be betrayed by people who should have been the closest to him. He never wanted to inflict trauma or pain back on people. I saw that in different shades throughout my involvement with him. I found it remarkable.”

For children and youth uncertain about CASA or YA, Jeremy shared, “Not everyone can see outside their world. Look out and accept that help, take advantage of all the resources that CASA and Youth Alliance can give them. I took advantage of everything they could give me. Be open-minded and accept help.”

Jeremy and John plan to remain lifelong friends. They text or talk regularly.



## About Jeremy:

After graduating from YA, Jeremy is thriving as a self-employed insurance contractor. This fall, Jeremy moved to Georgia and bought his first home.

# OUR VOLUNTEERS

**180**

VOLUNTEERS

**31**

YOUTH ALLIANCE  
COACHES

**7,883**

VOLUNTEER  
HOURS

**17%**

MALE VOLUNTEERS

**68%**

OF VOLUNTEERS  
WORK FULL TIME

**15** MONTHS

AVERAGE ASSIGNMENT  
TO A CASE

**56** MONTHS

AVERAGE LENGTH OF  
VOLUNTEER SERVICE



*"It will enhance your mind, heart and spirit.  
It takes a community to do the best for the  
children we serve."*

**CASA VOLUNTEER STEVE ELKINS**

Thank you to all our amazing volunteers for their handwork and dedication!  
Scan here for a complete list of our volunteers.



October 2024



November 2024



February 2025



February 2025



May 2025

28

NEW VOLUNTEERS  
SWORN-IN

4

TRAINING CLASSES

# SHARES OF IMPACT

---

Ron Glandt spent his career in education, where he served as a teacher, principal, and in leadership roles focused on serving kids who are high-risk. After hearing about CASA through various experiences with the youth he taught, Ron became a volunteer with CASA Jeffco/Gilpin in 2009. He continued in the role until 2014, advocating for children on 4 different cases.

“I enjoyed connecting youth with role models and learning more about the court process,” Ron said. “I also really enjoyed working with the CASA staff, who are very dedicated to their work and the clients they serve. I felt at home with the CASA staff, much like I did with my former team at McClain Community High School.”



Fast-forward to this past summer, more than a decade since volunteering on a case, Ron was looking to make a meaningful contribution to an organization serving at-risk youth. He immediately thought of CASA.

“It was time for me to give more consideration to the assets I have and how they can best make a difference,” he said. “I still have an interest in serving at-risk kids, and I know CASA is experienced in directing resources to best meet their needs.”

Ron donated shares of stock to CASA Jeffco/Gilpin. The stock was then sold, with the funds being used to support our programming. This allowed Ron to give more than the original value of the stock, as it eliminated any capital gains taxes he might have otherwise paid had he sold the stock himself.

*“I had the great pleasure of training Ron as a volunteer back in 2009. He was such a compassionate, wonderful volunteer. It’s so exciting finding new ways to get people involved after volunteering.”*

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MELISSA HELLMUTH**

## About Ron:

Ron grew up on a cattle ranch in Wyoming. After initially thinking civil engineering was his calling, Ron took a detour and spent his career working in education in Colorado. Retired now and wrapping up a business, Ron enjoys traveling. He also regularly hears from former students.

*“You are never alone as a CASA. There is an entire team of people that are all working towards the same goal and who are there to help.”*

**CASA VOLUNTEER ALYCE OHSER**



## EVERGREEN GIVING

Give each month to grow your support over time. There is no set amount required to start your donation. Evergreen donors help ensure our sustainability for years to come.



# 140

PEOPLE DONATED FOR THE  
FIRST TIME THIS FISCAL YEAR

# \$47

AVERAGE MONTHLY  
EVERGREEN DONATION

# 410

FAMILIES SERVED THROUGH  
OUR HOLIDAY WISHES  
PROGRAM

Thank you to all our wonderful donors for making our work possible!  
Scan here for a complete list of our donors.



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Laurie Burkhart, Chair  
Chief Financial Officer,  
CORE Electric Cooperative

Greg Dickson, Vice Chair  
Owner, The Accounting  
Department for Nonprofits

Megan Anderson, Treasurer  
Fractional VP of Finance, Ascent  
CFO Solutions, LLC

LaDawn Sperling, Secretary  
Realtor, Coldwell Banker

Allie Barker  
Senior Director of Talent  
Management, Ibotta, Inc.

Cindy Baroway  
Business Owner, Office Evolution

Duncan Griffiths  
Shareholder, Griffiths Law P.C.

Karli Huff  
Assistant Vice President, First Bank

Jenny Nikaido  
Sr. Specialist Community and State  
Government Relations, Terumo  
Blood and Cell Technologies

Curtis Subia  
VP Asset Management and Supply  
Chain, United Power

Tim Ziman  
Retired, Oil & Chemical Industry  
Leader

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Assets	'24-'25	'23-'24
<b>Current Assets</b>	\$1,321,502	\$1,524,806
<b>Other Assets</b>	\$122,974	\$118,694
	<b>\$1,444,476</b>	<b>\$1,643,500</b>

Liabilities & Net Assets	'24-'25	'23-'24
<b>Liabilities</b>	\$107,526	\$147,130
<b>Net Assets</b>	\$1,336,950	\$1,496,370
	<b>\$1,444,476</b>	<b>\$1,643,500</b>

**THANK YOU TO BAIRD AND MARK  
DUFFY, OUR ANNUAL STAR SPONSOR!**



**Private Wealth  
Management**

Mark Duffy  
Financial Advisor

303-270-6391  
mduffy@rwbaird.com

## ADVISORY BOARD

Megan Bertrand  
Development, Frontdoor, Inc.

Lesley Dahlkemper  
Jefferson County Commissioner

Mark Duffy  
Senior Vice President, Baird

Jacqueline Greer  
Senior SAP Solutions Manager,  
Empower

Kellee Hasler  
Retired, Hospitality Specialist

Chief Judge Jeffrey Pilkington  
1st Judicial District

Jan Podoll  
Retired, Oil & Gas Land Consultant

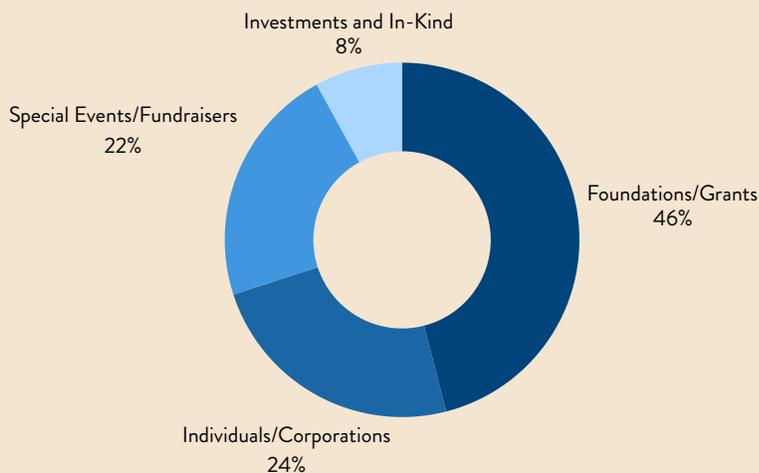
## 2024-2025 INCOME

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we rely on donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations. Approximately 46% of our annual budget comes from foundations and grants. Of the remainder, 24% comes from individuals/corporations, 22% comes from fundraisers, and 8% from investments and in-kind donations.

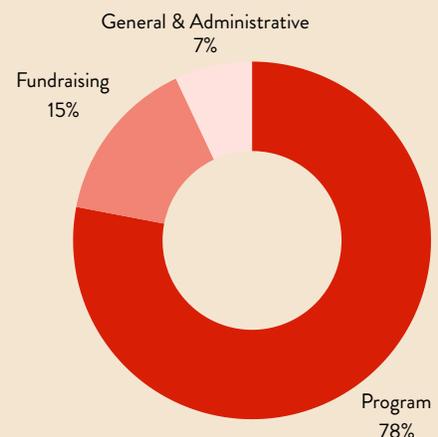
## 2024-2025 EXPENSES

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.

### INCOME - \$1,007,278



### EXPENSES - \$1,166,698



**SAVE THE DATE!**

**COMEDY FOR  
CASA**



**LEARN MORE  
HERE**



**FEATURING**

**PHIL PALISOUL**



**FRIDAY JANUARY 30, 2026  
LAKEWOOD CULTURAL CENTER**

**food & drink | paddle raise | silent auction**

