

2020: The Year of Changes

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CASA Director



This has been an unprecedented year for all of us.

With the onset of COVID-19, no one could have imagined all the changes we would have to adapt to in our lives. For some of us, this has been the most isolating time in our history.

During the pandemic, families have been quarantined and separated for months from their loved ones in an effort to stay healthy. Imagine what it's been like for thousands of children who were removed from their homes and placed in foster care during this time. Picture children having to relocate to a new home, new school, attend courtroom hearings with a revolving door of adults—all while coping with the trauma of abuse or neglect.

So many things have changed. But one thing that hasn't changed is the difference that a volunteer makes in the life of a child. Our programs and volunteers have seen first-hand the pandemic's impact on the children and families we serve. This includes the disruption of children's support networks and the suspension of critically important services like visitation with family, therapy and special education services.

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Like so many have experienced, 2020 brought significant changes to our fundraising and volunteer training.

Our 15th Annual CASA Senior Classic, historically a basketball event, was successfully changed to feature volleyball this year!

The preliminary games took place on a Sunday at the YMCA, with the finals a few days later at Warren Area High School. Youngsville brought home 1st place and Molly Dies Dance Express Company preformed! Thank you to all of the students and volunteers who helped make this year's event successful!

And our 5k benefit run also made a switch — going from

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Our member program staff and volunteers have been able to pivot to serve children and families in a different way. Programs continue to recruit, provide online training, and hold virtually and socially-distanced swearing-in ceremonies for new volunteers. Staff and volunteers are providing socially distant advocacy—Facetiming, texting, Zooming and “visiting” from the safety of the sidewalk. By being that caring consistent adult, CASA/GAL

in person to a virtual event. We wanted to see this event continue, but in a safe way. Thank you to all runners who helped make this years 5k a success!



Our advocacy training sessions have gone virtual, too! We're currently hosting a new volunteer training session in collaboration with PA CASA, Venango and Crawford Counties.

If anyone is interested in becoming a CASA volunteer advocate, and would like to participate a virtual training sessions. Please reach out casa.directorwf@yahoo.com to learn about upcoming dates.

volunteers have been the certainty in uncertain times for these children.

Next year holds the promise of endless possibilities for all of us. We are very hopeful for a brighter year and a return to a routine—one that includes being connected with our friends and loved ones again. Our volunteers are resilient, tenacious, and committed to supporting the children we serve. Regardless of what next year brings, we are equipped to handle it with your help.

New CASA

From the Warren Times-Observer Feb. 12, 2020

At least nine out of 1,000 U.S. children are abused or neglected in some way.

Organizations like CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) are founded to give these children a voice. For some children, it's a lifeline.

Melissa Sproveri has been inspired by impacting kids' lives, and will get that opportunity as the new CASA executive director. She was sworn in by President Judge Maureen Skerda Jan. 27.

Sproveri, from Youngsville, has been working with children since 2006 as Community Health Educator for Adagio Health in Warren. Her position with Adagio consisted of traveling to schools, visiting after-school programs, juvenile probation and residential facilities, and working across eight counties providing evidence-based programs.

She then moved on to work for the Warren County School District in the Special Education Department as a paraprofessional — continuing to provide evidence-based programming with the 21st Century program at WAEC and Youngsville Middle/High School as a Social Emotional Learning Counselor.

"I've always been a huge fan of seeing the small victories in my students," said Sproveri. "Right now, getting my feet under me is my biggest priority. I have huge shoes to fill."

She will be taking over for former director Lisa Thompson who has resigned from her position, but continues her work as a volunteer for the organization.

Sproveri said that, looking ahead, she would like CASA to have a larger presence in Forest County and eventually expand into other areas, if applicable. Knowing she will be able to continue to help kids in our area will be pretty amazing, she said.

She will soon be working on CASA's annual Senior Basketball Classic. The annual CASA Senior Basketball Classic brings together the community and celebrates the local youth. The idea behind the game itself is to



showcase the local seniors' talent in a fun, laid-back game. The score doesn't matter here, as they are just looking for the players to have a good time and enjoy an even better crowd.

The classic is the one time that the community can come together and celebrate the local graduates in an entertaining way. The event also supports children who do not have the same privileges that many of us take for granted. The final details for the game have yet to be announced, but is projected to be held in March.

Sproveri said she will also soon be ready to recruit new volunteers. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) are community volunteers who help speak and stand up for abused and neglected children. The organization works to find a loving and safe home for every child.

Today there are more than 50,000 advocates serving more than 940 state and local program offices nationwide. Since the inception of the CASA advocacy, volunteers have been able to help over 1,000,000 children across the U.S. find safe and permanent homes where they can thrive.

For the latest news and updates, follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/CASAOofWarrenandForestCounties

GIVING TUESDAY

December 1, 2020

CASA of Warren and Forest Counties Celebrates GivingTuesday by joining millions around the world participating in the global generosity movement on December 1, 2020.

GivingTuesday was launched in 2012 as a simple idea: to create a day that encourages people to do good. Annually held the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving following "Black Friday" and "Cyber Monday", it has grown into a global movement to inspire people to give, collaborate and celebrate generosity.

For over a decade, your local CASA organization has filled a vital need for our communities most vulnerable children by giving them a voice! This CASA is part of a national network of community-based, non-profit organizations that recruit, screen, train, and supervise volunteers to "Speak Up for a

Child" removed from home due to abuse or neglect. CASA works one-on-one with an abused or neglected child, advocating for his or her best interests and working towards achieving permanency in a safe, nurturing home as soon as possible. Our vision is to have a safe and loving home for every child. The need is still great, and with your generosity our mission will succeed.

GivingTuesday is a global generosity movement, unleashing the power of people and organizations to transform their communities and their world. GivingTuesday will kick off the generosity season this year by inspiring people to give back on December 1, 2020, and throughout the year.

To support CASA of Warren and Forest Counties' GivingTuesday initiative, please visit

www.casaofwarrenandforest.org/donate

The National CASA 2019 Annual Report is now available

Donors are encouraged to review the full report here:

<https://nationalcasagal.org/about-us/reports/national-casa-gal-association-for-children-2019-annual-report/>

Donating to CASA of Warren & Forest Counties is easy as 1234! Head on over to Follett Run Bay Wash to get your car sparkling! 1234 is our donation code! Select the \$10 wash, insert your payment, and enjoy your clean vehicle! We make \$2 for each wash purchased! Pass this code on to your family and friends and help support local foster children.



To our friends and generous supporters,

Although this has been an unprecedented year for all of us, I want to say thank you. I want to personally thank you for your generous support of CASA of Warren and Forest Counties. I hope you will continue to support us by making a gift this holiday season to change a child's story.

With the onset of COVID-19, no one could have imagined the dramatic changes to which we would all have to adapt. Some might say this has been the most isolating time in our history.

During the pandemic, families have been quarantined and separated for months from their loved ones in an effort to stay healthy. Imagine what it's been like for thousands of children across Pennsylvania who were removed from their homes and placed in foster care during that time. Picture more than 13,000 children across the commonwealth having to relocate to a new home, new school, attend courtroom hearings with a revolving door of adults—all while coping with the trauma of abuse or neglect.

So many things have changed. But one thing that hasn't changed is the difference that a volunteer makes in the life of a child. Our program and our volunteers have seen first-hand the pandemic's impact on the children and families we serve. This includes the disruption of children's support networks and the suspension of critically important services like visitation with family, therapy and special education services.

Our program staff and volunteers have been able to pivot to serve children and families in a different way. They continue to recruit, provide online training, and hold virtually and socially-distanced swearing-in ceremonies for new volunteers. Staff and volunteers are also providing socially distant advocacy—Facetimeing, texting, Zooming and “visiting” from the safety of the sidewalk. By being that caring consistent adult, these volunteers have been the certainty in uncertain times for the children we serve. The determination of our staff and volunteers has truly inspired me, and I hope it inspires you.

Next year holds the promise of endless possibilities for all of us. We are very hopeful for a brighter year and a return to a routine—one that includes being connected with our friends and loved ones again. Our volunteers are resilient, tenacious, and committed to supporting the lives of the children we serve. Regardless of what next year brings, I know that your help, our staff and volunteers, are equipped to meet the challenges.

To change a child's story, visit <https://www.casaofwarrenandforest.org/donate>.

Warmly,

Melissa Sproveri

Director,

CASA of Warren and Forest Counties