

Golf outing supports CASA DuPage County so organization can help kids in need



Participants in the CASA Golf Classic 2022 event at Cantigny include, from left, John Adams, Bryan Adams, Jim Moore, Scott Drumheller. This year's fundraiser to benefit CASA DuPage County takes place Wednesday, May 17, at Cantigny in Wheaton. (courtesy of Alison Baughman)

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Consistency. That is what a child needs.

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That's where CASAs come in. Court Appointed Special Advocates serve children ages 21 and younger who find themselves in the juvenile court system. CASA, a national group, has organizations in Lake, Cook, Kane and DuPage counties.

According to its website, dupagecasa.org (<http://dupagecasa.org>), CASAs visit once a month and observe the child where they live for the duration of the court case, as well as other settings where needed; attend court hearings, school and interagency meetings; communicate with caseworkers, foster parents and family members; gather and record information from each interaction; review agency reports, service plans, court orders and other documents; and prepare written reports for the court of information obtained from visits.

Those appointed to a child must attend 30 hours of pre-service advocate training; spend, on average, 10 hours per month on casework; maintain at least 12 continuing education requirements per fiscal year; and remain on the case from acceptance until the case is closed, which on average is two to three years.

Consistency. The one person a child can look to for comfort and understanding during a dark time.

"Emotional damage caused by child abuse follows children into adulthood. They can develop post-traumatic stress, depression, and struggle with mental illness," said CASA DuPage County Executive Director Suzanne Skala in an email.

"By building strong children, we can avoid years of trying to repair broken adults. We express our sincerest gratitude to the entire DuPage County community for supporting our vision that every child deserves a safe, permanent, and nurturing home."

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The day includes 18 holes of golf (scramble format) with contests and games, raffle items and live auction items. Registration and the box lunch start at 11 a.m., with a noon shotgun start, followed by cocktails and hors d'oeuvres at 5:30 p.m. and dinner and program at 6:30 p.m.

Cost is \$250 for golf, \$1,000 for a foursome; \$60 for dinner only.

Sign up at bidpal.net/casagolf2023 (<http://bidpal.net/casagolf2023>). For information, visit dupagecasa.org.

There are also sponsorships available.

Vicki Shaw, development director for CASA DuPage County, talks about how you can become a volunteer to help kids in need.

Q: What is CASA DuPage County? Give a brief overview of what the organization does and who you serve.

A: CASA of DuPage County supports children in the foster care system who have been removed from their unsafe homes because of abuse and neglect. CASA recruits, trains and supports volunteer advocates to effectively speak to the best interests of children in the court system and in the community. CASA's vision is every child deserves a safe, permanent, nurturing home.

Q: How many people per year do you serve?

A: CASA of DuPage serves about 400 children in DuPage County annually.

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CASA DuPage County holds various fundraisers to help with its programs, including this Masquerade Gala in 2022 at Marriott Naperville. Pictured are, from left, Arynn Graham, Jamie Matalka, Rachel Hare, Kate Matalka. CASA DuPage County helps neglected and abused children in the juvenile court system. - courtesy of Karly Tearney Photography

Juvenile Abuse/Neglect

Children who have been removed from their unsafe homes because of abuse or neglect are appointed a CASA volunteer who will get to know them and advocate for their best interests. The CASA volunteer advocate will visit children regularly, connect them with resources and support them through this traumatic time in their lives.

Guardianship Assistance

As an alternative to foster care, a responsible family member or family friend may be granted legal guardianship when a parent is unable to care for their child. CASA is also appointed to children in these cases to assess circumstances and report to the court regarding the best interests of the child.

Educational Advocacy

Advocates work with caregivers and parents to ensure children are enrolled in school and receiving needed educational services. Volunteers establish relationships with teachers and help connect children and families with tutoring and other community resources.

Empowering Futures

Older youth can face daunting obstacles, as they often do not have a consistent adult to guide and prepare them for adulthood. This program trains advocates to assist youth ages 13 and older with education, life skills, employment, housing, physical/emotional health, and relationship building as they move toward independence.

Empowerment Grants

with starting a new job.



DuPage judges help CASA of DuPage recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month in April by tying blue ribbons at the entrance to the courthouse. From left are Alison Baughman, Suzanne Skala, Kathie Paravola, Judge Chantelle Porter, Chief Judge Kenneth Popejoy, Judge Ann Celine Walsh, Judge Demetrios Panoushis, Tammy Cetina, Jackie Rankin, Judge James Orel, behind, Stacie Coaker. - courtesy of Vicki Shaw

Q: Where do the majority of your funds come from to support your work and what are they used for?

A: CASA of DuPage's annual operating budget is just under \$1 million. We are privately supported by grants, special event fundraising and direct support from individuals.



Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer, visit dupagecasa.org/get-involved/.

Q: How can readers help CASA DuPage if they can't volunteer?

A: There are a few different ways to support CASA of DuPage. You can make a donation online at dupagecasa.org. Other ways include sponsoring an event, donating a vehicle or stock, naming CASA in your estate plan, or donating gift cards for foster youth. You can view more information on these ways to support CASA of DuPage at dupagecasa.org/support-casa/.

Q: What else would you like readers to know?

A: This year marks CASA of DuPage County's 30th anniversary!

Because of our long-lasting partnership with the DuPage County court system that began in 1993, we are proud to have provided advocacy to more than 3,000 children. We started 30 years ago with 15 volunteer advocates who were the voices of 33 children.

Today, CASA has grown into a strong and impactful organization in the DuPage County community -- with experience, expertise, and resources, now supporting more than 400 children with 180 volunteer advocates in the past year.

CASA of DuPage will celebrate at its upcoming Golf Classic Wednesday, May 17, at Cantigny, and at its Pearl Gala on Saturday, Oct. 21 at the Sheraton in Lisle.

For more information about our upcoming golf outing, visit bidpal.net/casagolf2023 or contact Vicki Shaw at vicki@dupagecasa.org.

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