

CASA of Middlesex County

# FY 2024 Annual Report



## Our Mission, Vision and Values:

CASA of Middlesex County is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving abused and neglected children who are living in out-of-home placements. CASA recruits and trains volunteers to advise the courts and advocate for the children's best interests.

### Our Vision:

All children deserve a safe, permanent home. *To that end, we value:*

- **Commitment** – We are committed to having a positive impact on the children we serve.
- **Quality** – We strive to achieve innovative and tailored advocacy for children and excellence in everything we do.
- **Collaboration** – We communicate and collaborate with advocates, children and families, stakeholders, and our governing board, while protecting and maintaining confidentiality and privacy.
- **Inclusiveness** – We ensure, to the greatest extent possible, an inclusive and equitable environment for the children and families we serve, advocates, staff, and the governing board. We treat everyone with dignity and respect.

## Who We Are

### Board Officers

Sharon Hoffman-Manning,  
**President**

Ellen Clarkson,  
**Vice President**

Dennis Doll,  
**Treasurer**

Amy Jumbelic,  
**Secretary**

Susanne Peticolas,  
**Member-at-Large**

### Board Members

Tawayna Bailey

Edina Brown

Alton Kinsey

Amy Krysienski

Norman Ng

Sandy G. Wilson

### Board Member Emeritus

Gerald Pomper

### Board Liaisons

Betsy Capp

Judith Martin Waterman

### Staff Members

Stephanie Brown,  
**Executive Director**

Colette Scozzafava,  
**Program Director**

Lauren Sikora,  
**Communications and  
Development Director**

Edith Dunn,  
**Program Coordinator**

Brian Shoaf,  
**Program Coordinator**

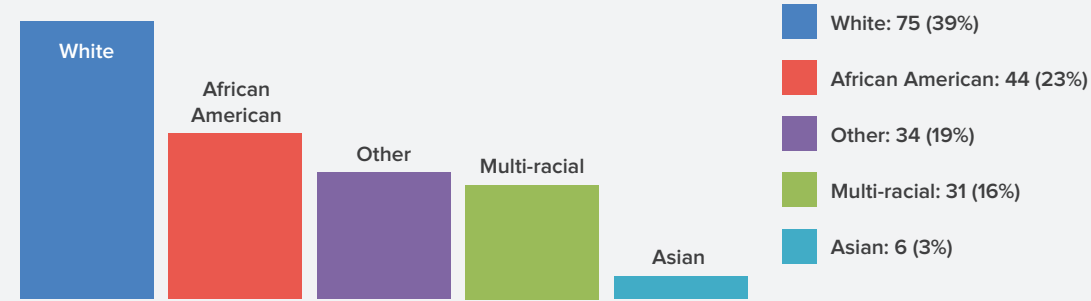
Khizran Pirmohamed,  
**Program Coordinator**

Patricia Gjoni,  
**Administrative Assistant**

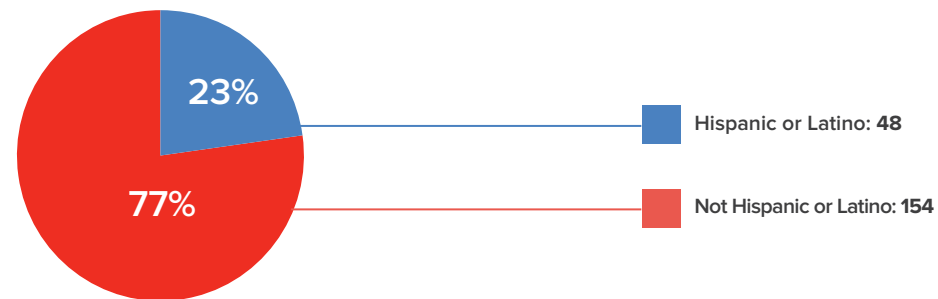
## The Children

CASA served 190 children in FY 2024, which equates to 68% of the 281 children from Middlesex County who were in foster care during that time.

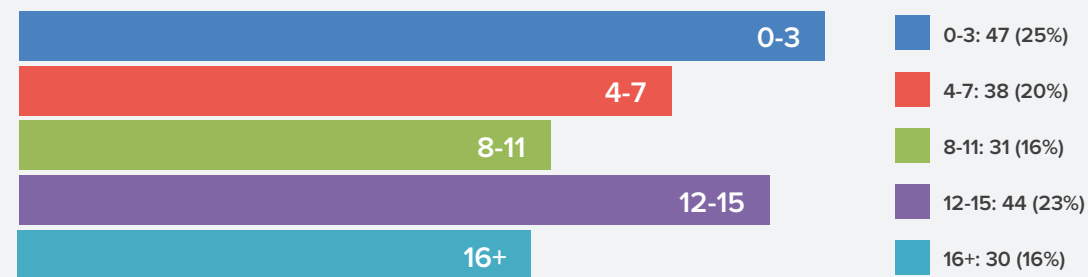
### Race of Children



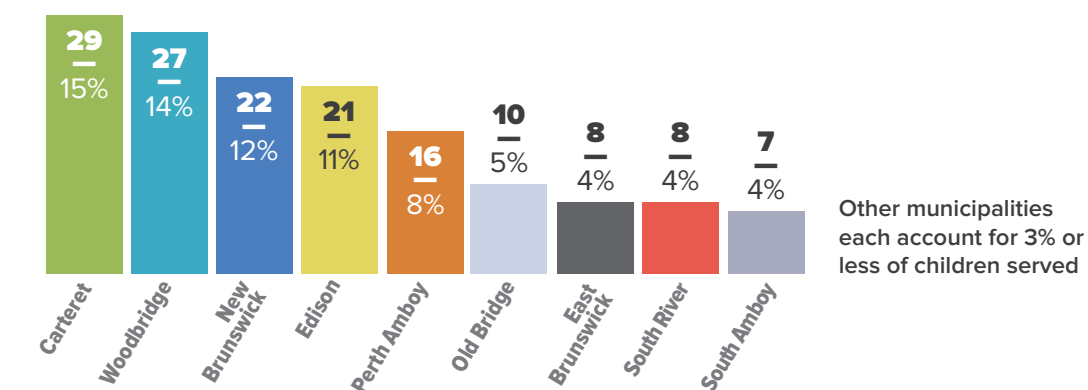
### Ethnic Origin of Children



### Age of Children



### Origin of Children



## Major Fundraisers

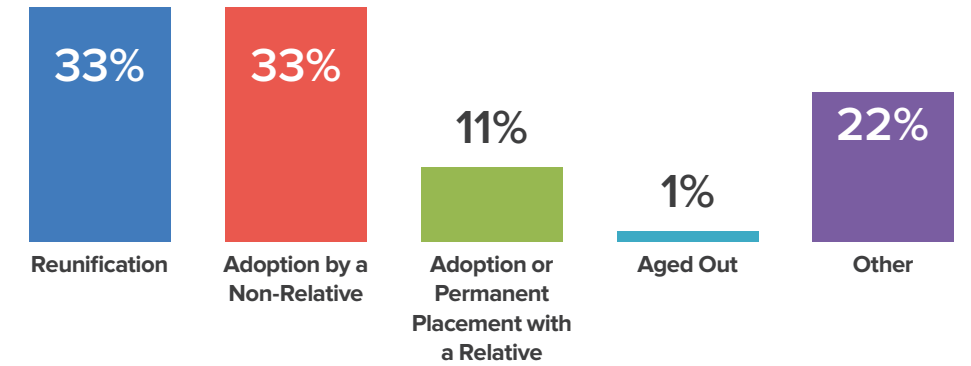
**Toast:** The Toast, honoring Dianne Roman, Sayreville School District and Betsy Goor raised **\$55,183**.

**Holiday Appeal:** The Holiday Appeal raised **\$24,006**.

## The Volunteers

CASA worked with 73 volunteers appointed to 190 children during the year. Volunteers donated a total of 4,752 case-related hours valued at \$168,696. They also drove 22,177 miles to visit children and gather information about them.

### Closed Cases (66 total)



## FY2023 Impact Highlights

- CASA represented **190** children in Court
- **93%** of CASA's recommendations were accepted by the Court
- CASA serves all **20+ communities** in Middlesex County, New Jersey
- CASA of Middlesex County is part of a national association of nearly **1,000 CASA programs**
- As of June 30, 2024, CASA reached **68%** of Middlesex County youth in foster care

### A few words from our volunteers

"CASA's presence demonstrates, to children, parents, judges, and counsel, how invested we are in advocating for the children's best interests. It also provides the judge an opportunity to solicit additional input from CASA during court hearings. There were several times that my advocacy efforts resulted in some really meaningful outcomes for the children. Some of them were simple, like ensuring that new glasses were provided to the child. Others are a little more complex, like soliciting input from a teacher regarding the child's needs and then using that information to address those needs."

— Eric Spierer, **CASA Advocate**

"CASA advocates bring a whole new perspective to the situation and often have information that no one else has. In my first case I was able to help the biological father understand his son more and fear the system less."

— Diane Wanat, **CASA Advocate and Peer Coach**

# Destiny's Story



When Destiny was born, she tested positive for illicit drugs and suffered from symptoms of withdrawal throughout her time in the NICU. Due to her mother's substance abuse issues, when Destiny was ready to be discharged, she was placed with her great grandmother. CASA Bridget was assigned the case.

Recognizing the fragility of Destiny's condition, Bridget was sure to make recommendations to the family court judge that centered on wellness visits to the doctor, follow ups with important specialists and a referral for early intervention as soon as possible. During one of her visits with Destiny when she was 7 months old, CASA Bridget noticed the baby was having issues with her eyes. She was able to bring this issue to the court right

away in her report and recommend a visit to a pediatric ophthalmologist.

Throughout the course of Destiny's time with her great grandmother, the Division of Child Protection and Permanency had been looking for alternative placement options in the family. This was because Destiny's great grandmother was not able to care for her long term. When Destiny was placed with her aunt, CASA Bridget was instrumental in communicating with both parties and ensuring that none of Destiny's health needs slipped through the cracks.

CASA Bridget continued to follow up with Destiny in her new placement, to ensure all her needs were being met. Important recommendations such as neurological evaluations, follow ups on Destiny's eye condition (which she eventually had surgery to correct) and the continuation of much needed early intervention services, were consistently noted in her reports to the court. When Destiny was two years old, she was adopted by her aunt.

## Sources of Income

