



Maryland CASA Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Maryland CASA Raises Nearly \$50,000 at Baltimore Running Festival To Support Advocacy for Abused & Neglected Children

BALTIMORE (October 18, 2016)—On Saturday, Oct. 15, 2016, more than 190 runners (and walkers) joined **Maryland CASA Association** and **local Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs** as “superheroes for children” at the **16th Annual Baltimore Running Festival** and raised nearly \$50,000 to expand their advocacy services for abused and neglected children.

Maryland CASA Association supports the work of 15 CASA programs throughout the state that recruit and train volunteers who serve as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). CASA volunteers are compassionate individuals who care about the well-being of abused and neglected children and work to ensure they find safe, permanent, and loving homes.

“Team CASA” was comprised of 192 CASA volunteers, staff, board members and other supporters who ran to raise awareness and funds to support CASA’s work. **3D Communications**, a strategic communications firm with offices throughout the U.S., served as the team’s “Extraordinary Sponsor.”

“We were thrilled to have a record number of runners on this year’s team,” said **Ed Kilcullen, Maryland CASA’s state director**. “This was our eighth year as a charity team and the enthusiasm was palpable at the Team CASA tent, where we offered breakfast before the race and lunch, massages and a leader board competition for runners after their races.”

“The event serves a dual purpose,” commented **Tara Berrien**, co-president of Maryland CASA Board of Directors. “As a fundraiser, Team CASA helped us to raise money in support of our mission of ensuring victims of child abuse experience safe and loving homes; as a friend-raiser, Team CASA helps us gain visibility and meaningful connections within our communities to help recruit more child advocates to serve.”

Wearing “Team CASA” race shirts, this year’s team included runners of all ages, including:

- **Tristan Scott** – a 2nd grade boy from Brooklyn (South Baltimore) who this year decided to forego birthday presents and instead asked for donations to support children and youth who weren’t safe at home with their families. Instead of a birthday party, Tristan celebrated his 8th birthday with Team CASA at the Baltimore Running Festival with four of his classmates who all participated in the Kids Fun Run.
- **The UnBOHlievables** – a relay team for Team CASA, headed by Team Captain, Elizabeth “Lily” St. Denis of **Fells Point**. St. Denis, 28, heard about CASA from a friend and was compelled to join the team. A survivor of child abuse, St. Denis had to navigate the child welfare system without the benefit of a CASA volunteer. A current bartender at **The Point in Fells**, St. Denis organized a fundraiser at the bar/restaurant on October 12th and raised more than \$750 in tips, which she donated to Team CASA.

- **Chantelle Bowen** – a three-time Team CASA runner from the **Crofton** area who ran this year with her mother, Alice Tomlin, who was displaced from her home in New Jersey after Super Storm Sandy in 2012. The duo trained together before the event and went on to raise over \$750 for Team CASA.

“We’re so appreciative of the many people who showed their commitment to children by coming out to run or walk early on a cool Saturday morning,” said Kilcullen. “We’re always amazed at the number of people who choose to run or donate to Team CASA and provide the critical support that we need to reach the many children who need us.”

How to Help

Despite having over 900 volunteers serving in Maryland, only 1 in 5 of the approximately 5,000 children under the protection of the courts has an advocate speaking up for their best interests. To learn how you can help children in your community, [find your local CASA program at MarylandCASA.org](http://MarylandCASA.org). Volunteers must be 21 years of age or older and willing to commit to at least one year of advocacy. No special educational background or experience is required.

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About Maryland CASA Association

Towson-based Maryland CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) Association is the statewide organization of 15 local CASA programs that recruit and train volunteers to advocate for children in the child protection system. Last year, 980 well-trained volunteers served 1,589 children in 21 of the 24 Maryland jurisdictions. Maryland CASA supports the local CASA programs by advocating for effective public policy for children in the child protection system and by providing training and technical assistance to program staff, board and volunteers.

CASA volunteers are everyday members of the community doing extraordinary work by choosing to speak up for abused and neglected children in their communities. They are screened and trained, then appointed by the court to advocate for the best interests of a child or sibling group in the foster care system. Often the CASA volunteer is the one constant in a child’s life while he or she goes through the overburdened system. CASA volunteers work to move the children through foster care and into safe, permanent homes as quickly as possible.