

# FY 2023 Annual Report



**THE CHILDREN'S  
ADVOCACY CENTER**  
OF NORTH & NORTHWEST COOK COUNTY

*Empowering Voices. Inspiring Hope.*

# Brianna's Story

By Yesenia Hernandez, LCSW, Bilingual Trauma Therapist

Brianna and her two siblings were referred for Safe from the Start (SFTS) services by a DCFS Intact Family Worker as they witnessed domestic violence in their home and were consequently dealing with their father's incarceration. Brianna's mother, Samantha, expressed concern over 8-year-old Brianna as she was increasingly angry, aggressive and was grieving her father. Brianna and her siblings engaged in individual Telehealth sessions, and their mother participated in some parent support sessions.



At the onset of therapy, Brianna greatly struggled to discuss thoughts and feelings related to her father and further struggled to express emotions related to the witnessed violence. After several months of rapport building, feelings identification and emotional regulation, Brianna was able to express mixed and complicated emotions surrounding her parents' separation. Brianna believed her parents' separation was a positive event; however, Brianna greatly missed their interactions and time together.

Brianna was also able to engage in the creation of an art-based Trauma Narrative that focused on processing the witnessed abuse and on strengthening her current sense of safety and security that her mother built following the separation. Upon the release of her father, Brianna engaged in sessions that focused on identifying safe adults and helpers in her life, as visits with him were set to take place. Brianna's mother also worked with an SFTS Therapist to discuss ways of maintaining safety during visit exchanges and in strengthening her own supports.

After a total of seven months, Brianna was able to successfully complete therapy. Brianna's mother shared that Brianna was no longer inappropriately aggressive and was able to channel her energy through soccer and her social life. Brianna continued to have contact with her father upon his release from jail and expressed feeling safe in both of her homes.



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# CAC by the Numbers

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

**445**

FORENSIC  
INTERVIEWS  
WITH YOUTH  
AGES 3-17

**100+**

MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
TEAM MEMBERS  
FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT,  
DCFS, THE STATE'S  
ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
& MEDICAL STAFF

**38**

PRIMARY SERVICE  
AREA COMMUNITIES

**106**

TOTAL COMMUNITIES  
SERVED

**1,798**

TOTAL CLIENTS

CAC's mission is to serve as the leading resource to empower and heal children and families who have experienced abuse and to prevent violence against children.

**5,875**

HOURS OF MENTAL  
HEALTH COUNSELING  
PROVIDED

**213**

KIDS  
12 & UNDER  
STARTED HEALING  
JOURNEYS AT CAC

**19** STAFF

**8** BILINGUAL

**96%**

PARENTS WHO AGREED  
THEIR CHILD FELT SAFE  
AT CAC



# A Message of Hope from CAC's CEO

Melanie Pignotti, LCPC



Dear Champions for Children,

Fiscal year 2023 was a year of transformation and opportunity for the Children's Advocacy Center of North and Northwest Cook County (CAC). Following the retirement of the agency's long-serving Executive Director, a new leadership team with fresh perspective had the opportunity to assess the current state of the organization, identify areas of improvement with renewed focus on its mission and goals. This promoted a sense of excitement and motivation among the staff that led to improved connection, collaboration and communication, fostering a positive work environment and enhancing the overall organizational culture.

Despite the presence of refreshed optimism and momentum, the CAC encountered financial hurdles. Through diligent identification and proactive problem-solving, the organization successfully resolved and mitigated the financial issues it faced. The Board's financial committee was reinvigorated, and CAC initiated collaboration with an external accounting firm. CAC shifted focus to diversify revenue streams and boost individual and major donations. A dedicated Grants Coordinator position was established to ensure the acquisition of foundation and corporate funding. CAC's fundraising events have been successful, playing a crucial role in maintaining the financial stability of the organization. These events have not only raised funds but also created a sense of community and increased awareness about the importance of CAC's essential services.

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# A Message of Hope cont.

CAC staff have shown incredible resilience in the face of challenging circumstances. Despite unexpected situations that have arisen, they have consistently demonstrated unwavering determination and resiliency. They have remained steadfast in their commitment to their work, showing a remarkable level of perseverance even when facing adversity. Their resilience is truly inspiring and serves as a testament to their dedication and professionalism. In effort to better understand our clients' needs, programs and services were carefully evaluated. The Forensic and Advocacy Services program made changes to its schedule, extending its hours to better serve children, families, and our law enforcement partners. Several staff were cross trained in Forensic Interviewing to enhance unique abilities and availability.

CAC's mental health programs have made significant strides in enhancing their service delivery. They have revised their case criteria to better align with their scope of service, ensuring a more tailored approach to each client's needs. Additionally, they have adopted valid and reliable screening and assessment measures, which have proven to be effective in identifying and addressing mental health issues. Lastly, they have formalized a utilization review process, which allows for continuous monitoring and improvement of their services. These collective efforts have significantly improved the treatment outcomes and overall experience for clients.

Going forward, CAC's attention is centered on its vision and strategic planning while carefully considering our recently established core values. I feel a deep sense of honor and privilege in my role, as well in the opportunity to collaborate with a dedicated board of directors and a team of selfless staff members. In closing, I extend heartfelt appreciation to everyone who has contributed to the CAC throughout the past year, enabling us to offer the best possible services to child victims/witnesses and their non-offending family members who have survived various forms of violence.

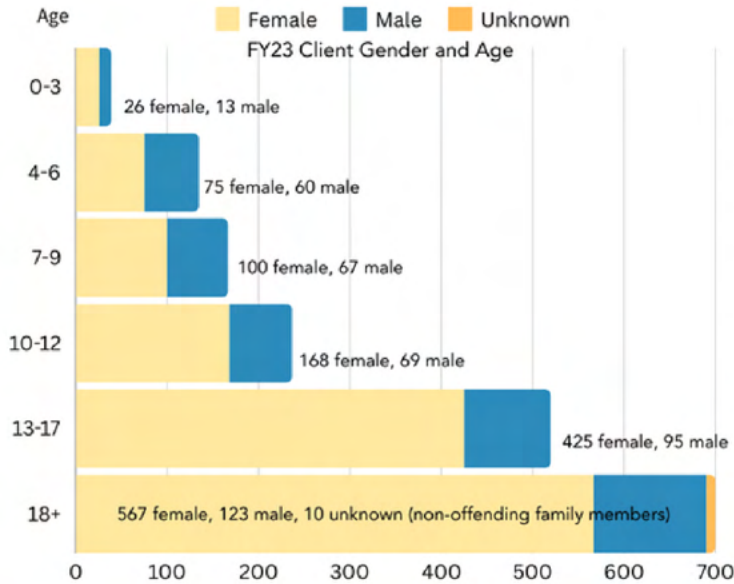
With gratitude,

*Melanie Pignotti, LCPC*



# Who We Served

## FY23 CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS



### Communities with the Most Clients in FY23

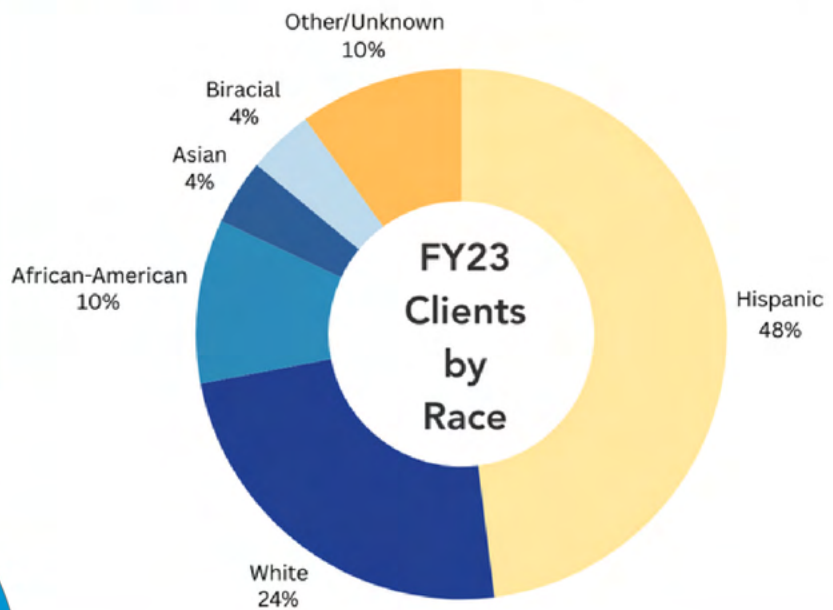
- Des Plaines
- Palatine
- Schaumburg
- Arlington Heights
- Chicago
- Elgin
- Wheeling
- Streamwood
- Evanston
- Hanover Park

CAC also served residents through law enforcement/DCFS referrals from 96 suburbs outside our primary service area.

**Children ages 0-17**  
794 female | 304 male

**Caregivers age 18+**  
597 female | 123 male

**Total Clients**  
76% female | 24% male



"My wish is that no family has to go through what we had, but in reality it happens. I hope for the victims and families that they will reach out to the Center for help and guidance." ~FY23 Client Parent



# Forensic and Advocacy Services

445  
forensic  
interviews  
conducted

A forensic interview is available to all children ages 3-17 in cases of alleged sexual or physical abuse or other crimes involving children as victims or witnesses.

CAC uses a collaborative approach that is child-focused and trauma-informed. This model protects the child's well-being and allows the child to tell their story once to CAC's Forensic Interviewer in a safe, neutral space at CAC while the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) observes via a real-time live feed. The MDT includes law enforcement, DCFS, the State's Attorney's Office and mental health and medical personnel. They work together, using the forensic interview to determine the next steps in the investigative process.

All families using CAC's services are also paired with an Advocate who provides extensive support to the child and non-offending family members including:

- navigating the complex criminal justice system
- referrals to CAC's in-house mental health services (or outside medical or mental health care providers if needed)
- connections to other community resources for help with housing, food, legal or transportation needs

1,614  
total clients  
served

8,633  
total service  
hours

Top 5  
Des Plaines  
Palatine  
Schaumburg  
Arlington Heights  
Streamwood

"I have a great partnership with the CAC. They are great at what they do, very sensitive in nature and allow feedback if need be. The rest of my peers share a similar experience when working alongside members at the CAC. Keep up the great work!!!" ~2023 MDT Partner





# Mental Health Services

CAC's Trauma Therapists work collaboratively to develop individualized treatment plans for each child survivor and their non-offending family members that address and work through past traumas. The goal is to help clients process and resolve trauma, build resilience and break cycles of abuse/violence. All therapy is free and offered in English or Spanish. Staff accept both in-house and outside therapy referrals for clients who qualify based on an assessment screening.

Therapy services include:

- Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TFCBT)
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Play Therapy
- Art in Therapy
- Parent Support Groups
- Crisis Intervention



In addition, CAC's Safe from the Start program is a unique outreach for children birth to age 5 who have witnessed domestic abuse or are victims of abuse or neglect.

While "healing" looks different for every family, our goal is to ensure that they leave therapy knowing what happened to them is not their fault, that they feel safe in their world and that they are able to function better in daily life.



"... estuvieron pendiente de nosotras y fueron muy amable y su profesionalismo de todo el personal." ~FY23 Client Parent

# Safe from the Start

CAC's Safe from the Start (SFTS) program is unlike any other in the area. We work with families who have experienced abuse to help each member on their path toward healing in a safe, therapeutic setting. What's truly unique about the program is that our therapy is offered to children ages birth - five years who have witnessed domestic abuse.

This program is offered free of charge and in English and Spanish.

Our Trauma Therapists use age-appropriate, evidence-based techniques such as:

- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TFCBT)

In addition, they incorporate principles from play therapy, art therapy and Mindfulness, working both with individuals and the parent and child together.

Safe from the Start also collaborates with a network of social service partners for referrals and wraparound support.

SFTS is staffed by four trained Trauma Therapists, all of whom have participated in the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) 40-hour training program.

188

total clients  
served

2,219

total service  
hours

Top 5

Des Plaines  
Elgin  
Streamwood  
Hoffman Estates  
Schaumburg

"We were made to feel at home and that was very important. Good to be in a safe space." FY23 Client Parent



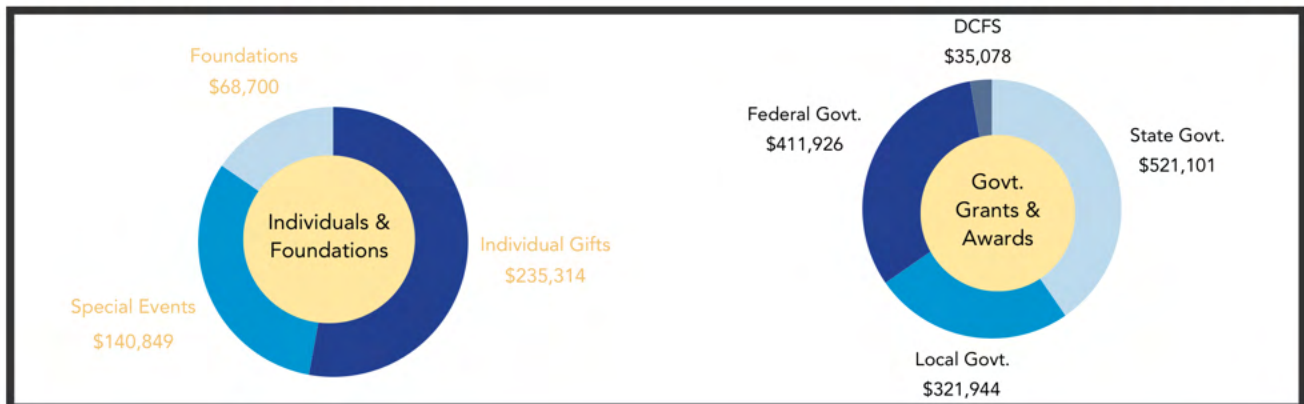
# Connecting with Community

Generous donors and partners help fund CAC's services so that they are free for families. To learn more or get involved, contact Taylor Kanara, Director of Development, at 847-885-0100 or [tkanara@cachelps.org](mailto:tkanara@cachelps.org).



# Financials

	FY23	FY22
<b>Assets</b>		
Current Assets:		
Cash & cash equivalents	\$534,011	\$526,405
Certificates of deposit	\$0	\$201,888
Contributions and grants receivable	\$198,183	\$76,610
Prepaid insurance	\$0	\$4,687
Other prepaid expenses and deposits	\$11,610	\$7,065
Noncurrent Assets:		
Property & Equipment	\$188,657	\$194,296
Security Deposits	\$6,977	\$0
Operating lease right-of-use assets	\$168,028	\$0
Donated facilities	\$310,575	\$69,770
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$1,418,041</b>	<b>\$1,080,721</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Current Liabilities:		
Accounts payable	\$33,485	\$4,942
Accrued payroll	\$53,674	\$56,087
Accrued vacation	\$55,868	\$101,177
Current portion of operating lease liabilities	\$65,736	\$0
Noncurrent Liabilities:		
Operating lease right-of-use liabilities	\$110,037	\$0
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$318,800</b>	<b>\$162,206</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>		
Unrestricted	\$707,226	\$823,745
Temporarily restricted	\$392,015	\$94,770
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$1,099,241</b>	<b>\$918,515</b>
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$1,418,041</b>	<b>\$1,080,721</b>



# Empowering Voices. Inspiring Hope.

# New Donors	# Donors by District	# Total Donors	# Total Gifts	# Reactivated Donors	Average Gift Amt.	# Volunteers	# Vol. Hours
314	D2 - 61 D3 - 195 Other - 488	744	1,360	108	\$355	63	238



**\$2,500**  
average cost per client for mental health counseling



**\$2,500**  
cost per client for one forensic interview



**\$100**  
cost for weekly client transportation to/from therapy

## CAC Service Area (D2 suburbs | D3 suburbs)

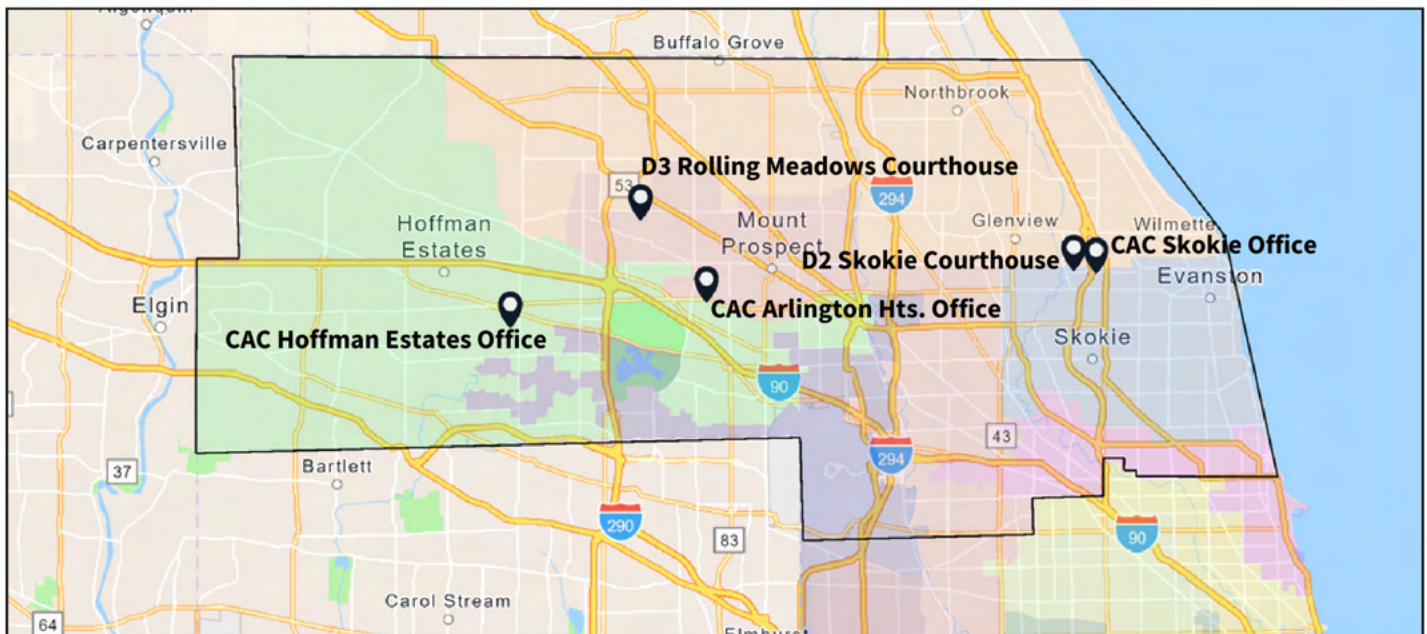
Arlington Heights  
Barrington  
Barrington Hills  
Bartlett  
Buffalo Grove  
**Des Plaines**  
Elgin  
Elk Grove Village

**Evanston**  
**Glencoe**  
**Glenview**  
**Golf**  
Hanover Park  
Harwood Heights  
Hoffman Estates  
Inverness

Kenilworth  
Lincolnwood  
**Morton Grove**  
**Mount Prospect**  
**Niles**  
Norridge  
**Northbrook**  
**Northfield**

Palatine  
Park Ridge  
Prospect Heights  
Rolling Meadows  
Roselle  
Rosemont  
Schaumburg  
Schiller Park

**Skokie**  
South Barrington  
Streamwood  
Wheeling  
**Wilmette**  
**Winnetka**



# Our Staff



**CAC  
STAFF  
FAST  
FACTS**

- 19 staff
- 100% female-led
- 8 bilingual English-Spanish
- 13 with Master’s degrees
- 3 in graduate school
- 9 staff have been with CAC 5+ years
- 1 staffer has been with CAC 10+ years
- 75+ years combined CAC work experience





# Our Board

## BOARD OFFICERS

Roy Picciuca - President  
Eddie Cisneros - Vice President  
Dr. Jeff Foreman - VP, Fund Development  
Bob Tucker - VP, Board Development  
Gretchen Peters - Secretary  
Pooja Bansal - Treasurer

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jamie Brown  
Chief Bill Caponigro  
Damita Cravens  
Don Duffey  
Herb Horn  
Lynn Ludaway  
Lisa McComb  
Adam Newman  
Jennifer Saperstein  
Bonnie Sidran-Mollison  
Kurtis Todd  
Dr. Janet Tomezsko  
Tracy Tucker

## EMERITUS BOARD

Joe Crimmins  
Brian Burke

## LEADERSHIP BOARD

Dr. Jerry Bernstein  
Jim Burke  
Representative Fred Crespo  
Eugene Faut  
Jim McKenzie  
Mayor Bill McLeod  
Joane McLeod  
Senator Laura Murphy  
Troy Triphahn



### Q&A with Herb Horn, Immediate Past Board Chair

*Q: Where did CAC grow in FY 23?*

*A: Growth significantly occurred in the agency being more efficiently restructured. Responsibility and authority was given to defined areas managed by directors reporting to the newly hired CEO. An outside financial agency was hired as an acting CFO, thus unburdening the CEO and being financially more competent.*

*Q: How did CAC respond to challenges?*

*A: 3 Words...Change Saved Us*

*Q: What was your biggest achievement as the Board Chair?*

*A: Helping guide our agency and the Board as its chair to make the necessary changes and support the new agency leadership throughout the year. In addition, overseeing successful succession planning in securing new board leadership.*

*Note...I'm really relieved FY 23 is behind us, but I do not regret having survived the experience.*





# Our Volunteers



Thank you!  
We couldn't  
do it  
without  
you!

# Our Supporters

Thank you!

## Volunteers

### Event Volunteers

Alex Kanara  
Adam Newman  
Anna Levin  
Bonnie Sidran-Mollison  
Brianna Murphy  
Chelsey Shoemaker  
Corky Jacob  
Dani Cawley  
Darrin Hildebrandt  
Derek Alvalle  
Grace Ording  
Ian Levin  
Jaclyn Bailey  
Janet Starmach  
Jim Cawley  
Kamilla Krzeminska-Kenrich  
Kasia Cawley  
Leesa Kanara  
Lisa Edmunds  
Mark Rohde  
Medha Pael  
Melissa Michael  
Michael Pignotti  
Mike Ornelas  
Rachel Hubsch  
Roberta Fitzgerald  
Sandy Jacob  
Soham Jaswani  
Su Montavon  
Susan Hildebrandt  
Suzanne Levin  
Tyler Krause  
Wendy Paszkiewicz



2023

**Mark Parr**

**Champion for Children**

Hoffman Estates Mayor  
William McLeod

(pictured with Melanie Pignotti,  
CAC Chief Executive Officer)

### Committee Volunteers

Angela Tribuzio  
Billie Larkin  
Eduardo Cisneros  
Gretchen Peters  
Heather Humphrey  
Herb Horn  
Jaclyn Bailey  
Jim Burke  
Kathryn Cawley  
Mark Wondolkowski  
Matthew Park  
Phillip Giacone  
Roy Picciuca  
Susan Hildebrandt  
Suzanne Levin

## In Kind Donors

Adam and Jennie Newman  
Beverly Lane  
Bill Barry  
Billie Larkin  
CAC Board of Directors  
Chatham Imports  
Chef BnbEats  
Chicago Bears  
Chicago Cubs  
Cinema Star Grill  
Costco  
Crumbl Cookies  
Eddie and Terri Cisneros  
First Trust  
Float Sixty & Salt Escape  
FT Cares Foundation  
Gail Cohen  
Georgios Pizza  
Gretchen Peters and Andy Stump  
Herb and Bonnie Horn  
Impact Makers of Palatine  
Janet Tomezsko  
Jeff Foreman  
Jim Burke  
Lisa McComb  
Lynn Ludaway  
Main Event  
Mario Tricoci Salon and Spa  
Mayor William D. McLeod  
McDonalds  
Michael and Melanie Pignotti  
Michelle Mussman  
Northern Décor  
NOW Arena  
Patty Errera  
Peterson's Tasty Delight Bakery  
Pinot's Palette  
Pollyanna Brewing Company  
Roy and Maria Picciuca  
Ruth's Chris Steak House



# Our Supporters

Thank you!

## In Kind Donors cont.

Schaumburg Boomers  
Schaumburg-Hoffman Estates Rotary Club  
Something Blue Photography  
Studio Winery  
Sydney Kunz  
The Aliados Team at Ally Insurance Co.  
The Hampton Social  
The Humphrey Family  
The LINKS Technology Team  
Tracy Tucker  
Vince DiBenedetto  
WSHE Radio

## Businesses

3D Extreme, Inc.  
Abbott Laboratories  
AbbVie Inc.  
Addison Green Meadows, Inc.  
Advanced Urogynecologic Care  
Ally Financial Inc.  
AmazonSmile  
Ameriprise Financial  
Amway  
Anonymous  
Arc-Tronics, Inc.  
Ascension Saint Alexius  
Assurance Agency  
AT&T  
Bank of America Charitable Gift Fund  
Berry K. Tucker & Associates, Ltd.  
BHS Robotics  
Boeing  
Caterpillar Inc.  
Central Auto Body  
Costco  
Counseling and Diagnostic Center  
Craig Brown Insurance Agency  
Dickson Design Studio, Inc.

Estee Lauder Companies  
Fidelity Charitable  
First American Title  
GWC Injury Lawyers LLC  
Hansen Plastics Corporation  
Harris Harris & Cabrera LLP  
Highland Park Lincoln and Ford  
HomeSmart Connect  
Horizon Therapeutics  
Inspirate Advisory Services LLC  
Intuit  
Kilwins Arlington Heights  
Kimberly-Clark  
Law Offices of Jeffery M. Leving, Ltd.  
Law Offices of Julia McConnahay  
Links Technology  
Mesirow Financial  
Meyers & Flowers LLC  
Motorwerks of Barrington  
Network for Good  
Nicor Gas  
Polsinelli  
Principal Life Insurance Company  
Puzzle Wealth Solutions  
PwC  
R.J. Augustine and Associates, LTD. CPA's  
Redmon's Village Towing, Inc.  
Robert Marketing, Inc.  
S & C Electric Company  
Schaumburg Toyota  
Schwab Charitable  
Staffing Network LLC  
Storino, Ramello & Durkin  
Supporting Strategies  
Supreme Lobster and Seafood Company  
TK Concrete, Inc.  
TransUnion  
TVG-Medulla, LLC / Chiro One Wellness Centers  
United Health Group  
Wintrust Commercial Banking  
Woody Buick GMC of Naperville  
WT Group  
Zurich North America



# Our Supporters

Thank you!

## Tributes

### *In Memory Of*

Faith Antonia Buettner

### *In Honor Of*

CAC Staff

Taylor Edmunds

Jeff Foreman

Arlene Leshner

Herb & Bonnie Horn

Erin Merryn

Linda Morris

## Townships & Municipalities

Barrington Township

Cook County Government

Elk Grove Township

Elk Grove Village

Hanover Township Mental Health Board

Maine Township

New Trier Township

Niles Township

Northfield Township

Palatine Township

Schaumburg Township

Village of Bartlett

Village of Hanover Park

Village of Hoffman Estates

Village of Schaumburg

Village of Streamwood

Village of Wheeling

Wheeling Township

## Faith Organizations, Foundations, Community Organizations & Schools

Aliados of Ally Insurance

Bob's Discount Furniture Charitable Foundation, Inc.

Catalina Marketing Charitable Foundation

Charities Aid Foundation America

Elizabeth Beidler Tisdahl Foundation

Friedman Foundation

GFWC Northwest Suburban Womans Club

Give Lively

Givinga Foundation Inc.

Goldman Sachs Philanthropy Fund

GoodCoin Giving Fund

Hoffman Estates Fire Department Local 2061

International Paper Foundation

Kiwanis Club Of Streamwood

McCormick Funds

National Christian Foundation

Northbrook Woman's Club Fdn., Inc.

PNC Foundation

Rotary Club of Palatine

Rotary Club of Schaumburg-Hoffman Estates

Schaumburg-Hoffman Estates Lions Club

St. Mark Lutheran Church Foundation

Tony's Charitable Organization

The Canning Foundation

The McKenzie Foundation

The TJX Foundation, Inc.

United Way of Greater Cincinnati

United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County

United Way of Northeast Florida

Verizon Foundation

Village Treasure House

WACO

Wings Program

Z Zurich Foundation





# THE CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER

OF NORTH & NORTHWEST COOK COUNTY

*Empowering Voices. Inspiring Hope.*

## Main Office

640 Illinois Boulevard, Hoffman Estates, IL 60169  
847.885.0100 | [info@cachelps.org](mailto:info@cachelps.org) | [cachelps.org](http://cachelps.org)

### Skokie Office

9933 Lawler Avenue  
Suite 207  
Skokie, IL 60201

### Arlington Heights Office

657 E Golf Road  
Suite 310  
Arlington Heights, IL 60005

