

*growing*  
**HOPE**  
OUT OF HURT



# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Advocates *for* Children



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## BRIEF ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

Advocates for Children provides services to children and families who have been the victims of abuse and neglect. We also offer multiple layers of personal care through an array of programs to reduce the incidence of child abuse. Advocates serves 11 Northwest Georgia counties offering safety, comfort, and hope.

## MISSION

Strengthening our community through education, advocacy, and prevention, empowering families to be free from child abuse.

## VISION

Ever family in our community is building a life where they are safe, thriving, and loved.

## VALUES

Service – We provide quality and excellence in all we do.

Love – We serve our families, children, and youth with care and passion.

Integrity – We work to build relationships built on trust and mutual respect

Hope – We believe our clients can be more than they are today.



# ABOUT

Dear Friends and Supporters,

2020 was a year to be remembered. It was a time unlike any other with so many challenges as we collectively learned to navigate a “new normal” due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our community was significantly impacted, and one of those impacts was a 17% increase in child abuse. Advocates services pivoted and adapted as we worked to meet these increased demands, innovating to make sure that we were able to meet these needs of the most vulnerable—our children. We worked to make sure their stories were heard, reducing trauma, and intervening to prevent child abuse before it could begin. We could not have done this without the support of our volunteers, donors, supporters, and partners. I am so thankful for each one of you. When I reflect on 2020, what I remember the most will be the community that heard silent suffering and came together to *grow hope out of hurt*.



Warmest regards,  
Rachel Castillo  
President & CEO

## AREAS WE SERVE

- CAC - Children's Advocacy Center
- CASA - Court Appointed Special Advocates
- FBCS - Flowering Branch Children's Shelter
- HIYH - Hope In Your Home
- RHY - Runaway & Homeless Youth
- RRH - Rapid Re-Housing



## 2020 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- |                      |                 |                 |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Cochran, Fain        | Jeanneret, Lara | Patel, Samir    |
| Culverhouse, Charlie | Jones, Chase    | Stewart, Deena  |
| Durham, Vicky        | McGivaren, Jud  | Tyra, Ginger    |
| Feuerbach, Marc      | Moss, Darnice   | Wilson, Heather |
| Hudson, Tina         | Newman, Nancy   | Wyant, Erika    |
| Hughes, Nicole       | (Emeritus)      |                 |

\*Pictured: Jud McGivaren, 2021 Board Chair



**13,336**

**TOTAL NUMBER  
OF INDIVIDUALS  
SERVED IN 2020**

**154**

**TOTAL NUMBER  
OF SAFEPLACE  
SITES IN 2020**



\* Due to COVID-19 regulations, SafePlace presentations were shifted to morning announcements where students received information regarding our programs & how to access help. Additionally, students were provided with information cards.



**6,139**

**VOLUNTEER HOURS IN 2020**

# REVENUE & REVENUE SOURCES

**\$51,395**

*CORPORATE  
PARTNERSHIPS*

**\$170,813**

*IN-KIND  
DONATIONS*

**\$185,787**

*FUNDRAISING*

**\$40,672**

*UNITED WAY*

**\$322,963**

*PRIVATE  
DONATIONS*

**\$1,749,813**

*GRANT REVENUE*

**\$2,520,874**

*TOTAL*

Advocates for Children would like to thank all of its partners who, through their generosity of time and dollars, enabled us to make a difference in the lives of children across Georgia. Without the support of businesses, corporations, foundations, faith partners and individuals in our communities, none of the work that we do to help children in need would be possible. To learn more about our supporters, visit [advochild.org/partners/](http://advochild.org/partners/).



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## AN UNEXPECTED YEAR: THE EFFECTS OF AND RESPONSES TO COVID-19

The novel coronavirus SARS-CoV2, more commonly known as COVID-19, has had an undeniable and resounding effect on so many people. For Advocates for Children, we saw these effects manifest in the disenfranchised communities that we serve at a disproportionate rate. In 2020, the need for our services was at an all-time high due to job loss, school closure for children, increased medical expenses, and increased mental health needs. These are some of the ways Advocates responded to these needs:

- The Children's Advocacy Center saw a 16% increase in reported child abuse cases. The center did not once shut down, and conducted interviews, provided referrals, and assisted non-offending family members.
- Our Court Appointed Special Advocates quickly utilized virtual court appointments and adopted necessary PPE and safety precautions to return to home visitations as soon as possible, reducing the risk of child abuse and neglect during quarantine and school closures.
- Hope in Your Home began providing resources such as diapers, formula, PPE, food, and hygiene products to their at-risk families to alleviate financial hardships.
- RISE Case Managers helped 96% of program participants find or maintain employment throughout 2020, and the program provided \$103,035 in rental assistance alone.



# 2020 BIG ACHIEVEMENTS



## COA ACCREDITATION

In August 2020, Advocates for Children achieved national accreditation through the New York based Council on Accreditation (COA). COA accreditation is an objective, independent, and reliable validation of an agency's performance. The standards driving accreditation ensure that services are well-coordinated, culturally competent, evidence-based, outcomes-oriented, and provided by a skilled and supported workforce. COA accreditation demonstrates accountability in the management of resources, sets standardized best practice thresholds for service and administration, and increases organizational capacity and accountability by creating a framework for ongoing quality improvement. It took our dedicated staff 12 months to prepare and implement the policies and procedures needed to achieve accreditation. Advocates for Children chose to pursue accreditation to demonstrate the organization's implementation of best practice standards in the field of human services over the past 37 years and to ensure quality service and standards in the years to come!

## FIRST YEAR OF RISE

The end of 2020 marks the first year of Advocates for Children's independent youth housing program, RISE. In its first year, RISE helped many youth and families in need. Their accomplishments included

- 9 partnerships that provided clients with employment services, education services, food & household items, transportation services, and other community support
- 8 housing partnerships within 4 different counties
- \$139,594 provided in rental & utility assistance, transportation costs, childcare, food, and emergency housing
- 2 clients successfully enrolled into secondary education
- 1 client enrolled in Georgia's first-time homeowner's program

Congratulations RISE! We look forward to another successful year in 2021.



### HOPE IN YOUR HOME ACHIEVEMENT STORY

Tiffany felt like her life was spiraling out of control. She was abusing illegal substances and felt “unstable.” She was on the brink of losing her daughter, who was only 4 years old at the time. Thankfully, Tiffany was able to find help through Advocates for Children’s Hope in Your Home program. Referred to the program by Family Dependency Treatment Court, Tiffany began the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) curriculum. This curriculum provides parents with skills, strategies, and confidence to sustain family management upon completion of the 10 week-long program.

Upon entering the program, Tiffany decided to take charge of her healing and her life by seeking assistance with food resources, affordable housing, and childcare. Tiffany was able to do this through the support of her case manager and other



caregivers participating in the program. With this support system in place, Tiffany was better able to cope with the stress of motherhood and life without turning to illegal substances.

Hope in Your Home helped Tiffany in so many ways, but the most important thing was the knowledge it gave her to be the best mother she could be. It taught her how to create structure in the home, what social and behavioral development skills were necessary for her daughter, and how to discipline appropriately.

Tiffany and her daughter graduated from the program, but they still participate in Hope in Your Home social events and stay connected with their new community. Thanks to Hope in Your Home, Tiffany was empowered to grow the hope of a stable, loving home and prevent the hurt of family separation.



## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Hope in Your Home is Advocates for Children's home visitation program designed to support families and children. This program provides caregivers simple and practical strategies to help them confidently manage their children's behavior, prevent problems, and build strong, healthy relationships. The program focuses on two curricula, Parents as Teachers and Positive Parenting Program, which provides assistance to families based on the child or children's age range.

Also under the umbrella of HIYH are the First Steps and Rainbows program. First Steps is a service that allows trained parent educators to provide support, parenting information, referrals, and services to any new mother. Rainbows for All Children is a counseling program that helps children through the process of healing from painful family transitions, including separation, divorce, death, illness, and military deployment.

## IN 2020, HOPE IN YOUR HOME...

**100%**

OF CLIENTS REPORTED AN IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR SITUATIONS

FIRST STEPS

**501**

PAT

**65**

TRIPLE P

**88**

RAINBOWS

**215**

=

**869**

CHILDREN, YOUTH, & FAMILIES SERVED



### **CAC ACHIEVEMENT STORY**

When a child is referred our Children's Advocacy Center (CAC), it is for allegations of severe physical abuse or sexual abuse. For many, reporting their abuse can be painful, terrifying, or invoke feelings of shame. In some cases, the child still fears retribution from their abusers and are hesitant to provide the testimony that will put an end to their suffering.

Thankfully, our dedicated and highly trained forensic interviewers at the CAC and their multidisciplinary teams are there to intervene, support, and follow up with the children and their non-offending family members every step of the way.

On December 1, 2020, justice was finally served for one brave soul. This child was victimized by someone in their family, and they bravely disclosed their abuse to the CAC in June 2019. Over a year later, the offender finally plead guilty to 1 count Aggravated Sexual Battery and 3 counts Child Molestation. The offender received a sentence of 13 years minimum to serve in prison, with 40 years probation. Since disclosing their abuse, the child did not once have to come in contact with their abuser.

From our forensic interviewers and family case managers to our law enforcement partners, medical personnel, and child protective services, every member of the CAC works to grow the hope of intervention and safety out of the hurt of abuse.





## Program Description

Advocates for Children serves children and youth who have made allegations of sexual or severe physical abuse through its Children's Advocacy Center (CAC). The CAC serves as the site for forensic interviews. The reporting process is designed to be a single event overseen and followed up by a multidisciplinary team that includes law enforcement, medical personnel, and child protective services. Through this model, the child goes through an investigative interview, which is conducted by a trained forensic interviewer. The session is recorded to reduce the need for the child to tell his or her story repeatedly.

In addition to conducting the forensic interview, Advocates also provides services to the non-offending caregivers, child victim, and other family members. Services include a needs assessment, referrals to various community resources, connection to the local victim's rights agency, client education, and ongoing support throughout the investigation, intervention, and treatment process. Referrals are also made to the appropriate medical and therapeutic providers as needed

## IN 2020, THE CAC...

CONDUCTED  
**385**  
FORENSIC  
INTERVIEWS

**83%**

OF CLIENTS FELT MORE  
CONFIDENT LOCATING  
RESOURCES IN THEIR  
COMMUNITY

**82%**

OF CLIENTS HAD A  
BETTER UNDERSTANDING  
OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILD  
ABUSE VICTIMS



## CASA ACHIEVEMENT STORY

Lynne always dreamed of being a positive light for children. After teaching for 30 years, Lynne retired to a quiet life. However, she still felt called to provide her experience, knowledge, and support to the children she had served for so long. In November 2019, Lynne was officially sworn in as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA).

Lynne found this new experience to be challenging but rewarding. She received her first case and was guided through the visitations, paperwork, and court reports by her CASA coordinator.

“I absolutely love being a CASA. The children bring me joy and a purpose. They need love, guidance, listening ears, and another person on their side. We get to draw, color, read books, and talk. I get to be their voice and advocate through my court reports. I also follow up at their school, with teachers and counselors. My goal as a CASA is to continue to grow my knowledge and expertise and to be an asset to this great cause—finding the best solution for families in crisis.”

CASA volunteers, like Lynne, are asked to make a minimum 18-month commitment to the program. Without the help of these dedicated and passionate volunteers, it would be so much harder for us to grow the hope of a safe and permanent home out of the hurt of neglect and abuse.





## Program Description

Advocates for Children provides support to children in foster care through affiliation with the national CASA program. Trained volunteers help abused and neglected children in the juvenile court system by assessing the child's situation and reports to the judge what is in the best interest of the child. Our goal is to advocate for a safe, permanent home for each child.

The highly trained volunteers for CASA are the independent voice for abused and neglected children during court proceedings. CASA volunteers are the most intensely trained of Advocates' volunteers, with over 30 hours of class time and 10 hours of court observation, as well as experience with DFCS, juvenile court, and other entities. The CASA office serves as a home for our CASA employees and more than 75 CASA volunteers who act as a much-needed voice for children who have been placed in DFCS care.

## IN 2020, CASA...

ADVOCATED FOR

**147**

CHILDREN  
& YOUTH

**100%**

OF YOUTH EXITING THE  
PROGRAM ACHIEVED  
PERMANENCY

**75**

VOLUNTEERS DEVOTED  
**4,699** HOURS TO  
THE PROGRAM



## **FLOWING BRANCH ACHIEVEMENT STORY**

Jackson\* was only 17 when his mother was arrested. At the time of his mother's arrest, he lived with his younger brother and grandfather, who was, unfortunately, too sick to care for the two boys. Rather than enter into foster care, where the brothers would potentially be separated, the two boys were able to stay at the Flowering Branch Children's Shelter together through the shelter's emergency shelter program, RHY (Runaway and Homeless Youth).

Jackson and his brother stayed in the shelter for the month of December while waiting for their mother's release, and during that time, Jackson participated in the Education and Independent Living program. "Because of the help I received at the shelter, I was able to catch up on several missing assignments and improve my grades. The staff taught me better work habits with school and now I am able to use those skills to stay on track." Today, Jackson and his brother are reunited with their mother and once again living as a family.

Although Jackson's stay was short, he wants to continue using the skills he learned at the shelter to graduate high school and attend college. At the Flowering Branch Children's Shelter, we grow the hope of shelter, stability, and guidance, out of the hurt of loss and neglect.







### Program Description

The Flowering Branch Children's Shelter is a residential program for at-risk youth who have been abused, neglected and/or sexually exploited or who have runaway and are homeless. The children's shelter provides a nurturing, supportive home for children ages 10-17 years old. Flowering Branch's dedicated staff provides 24-hour care, 365 days a year. Youth receive trauma informed case management services, individual and family counseling, youth development activities, social and independent living skills, and assistance with achieving a high school diploma, GED, and college entrance.

Residents are enriched by additional services such as after school tutoring, educational field trips, job readiness and employment assistance, recreational outings and involvement in activities such as campus clubs, school sports, faith-based opportunities and extracurricular activities.

### IN 2020, THE FLOWERING BRANCH CHILDREN'S SHELTER...

CARED FOR **20**  
CHILDREN & YOUTH

**93%** OF RESIDENTS  
ACHIEVED PASSING  
GRADES AT REPORT  
CARD TIME

**100%** OF RHY  
RESIDENTS  
EXITED THE  
SHELTER INTO  
PERMANENCY

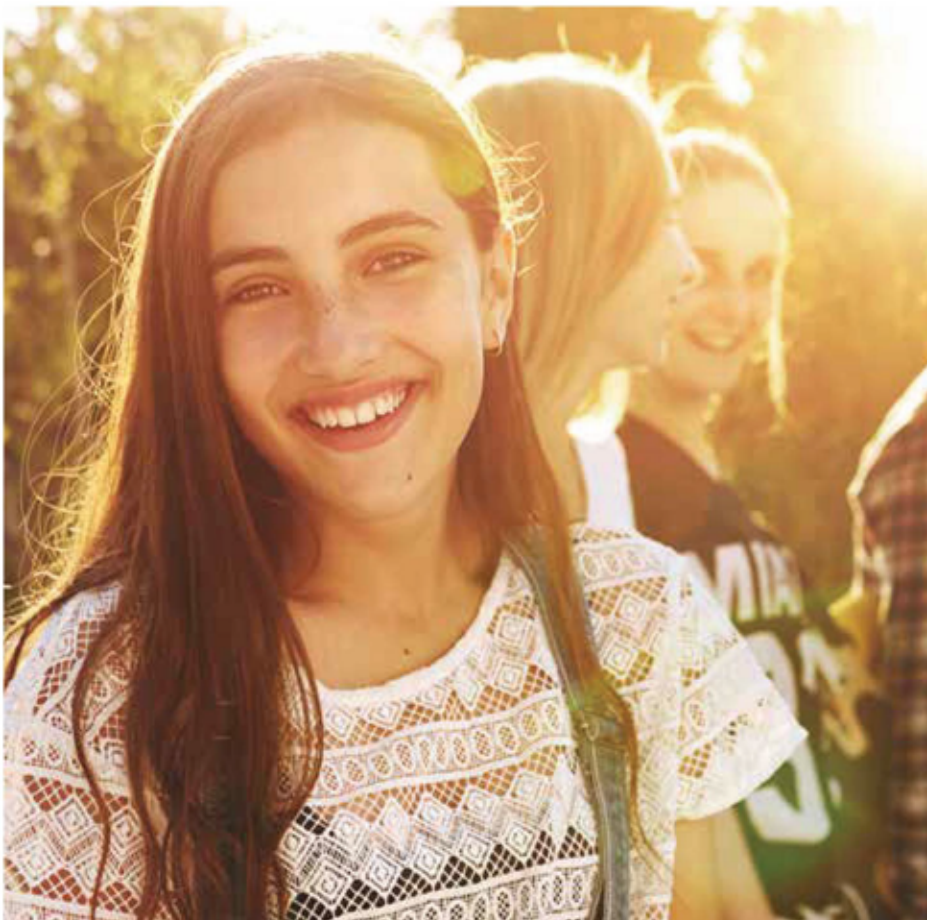


## RISE ACHIEVEMENT STORY

Lucy\* entered the RISE program in January 2020. Before, Lucy lived with her 2-year-old son and her mother. Amidst the struggles of caring for a toddler and helping her mother with her chronic medical issues, the apartment complex they were living in raised the family's rent. Shortly after, Lucy and her son lost their home.

The small family of two stayed in a local shelter, until they were connected to the RISE program. They were quickly placed in their own apartment where they would receive rental assistance for the next 12 months. Thanks to a partnership between with the Bless Coalition & Red Door Food pantry, RISE also provides monthly donations of cleaning supplies, toiletries, and canned goods to program participants.

Since entering RISE, Lucy got a full-time job, opened a checking account, built her savings, repaired her credit score, and financially contributed to her rent. She even learned about Georgia's first-time home buyer program. She now feels prepared to provide for both herself and her son, thanks to the support of her case managers.



“My [case managers] helped me understand the importance of mending family relationships too. My mom and I are now in a good place. I would not have made the steps if it were not for my [case managers] pushing me forward.”

One of Lucy's goals for the future is to buy a house that is big enough for the family of four she dreams of having one day. Thanks to the RISE program, Lucy was empowered to grow the hope of self-sufficiency and independence out of the hurt of homelessness.



## Program Description

Advocates for Children's newest program, RISE, expands the organization's capacity to assist youth ages 18-24. The purpose of this service is to assist young people who do not have a permanent home obtain and maintain housing, become self-sufficient, and grow into independent and successful adults. The acronym, RISE, comes from four core words: Resilience, Independence, Success, and Empowerment.

The program services include, but are not limited to, assisting youth find permanent housing, providing temporary rental assistance, transportation, childcare assistance, and helping participants obtain and enhance life skills, which may differ from client to client. RISE provides clients with job readiness and employment assistance, GED or higher education assistance, and other social and independent living skills.

## IN 2020, RISE...

HOUSED

41

CHILDREN,  
YOUTH, &  
FAMILIES

96%

OF ELIGIBLE  
PARTICIPANTS  
GAINED  
EMPLOYMENT

\$103,035

PROVIDED IN RENTAL ASSISTANCE



**Advocates**  
*for* **Children**

# 2020

## ANNUAL REPORT

### MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 446, Cartersville, GA 30120

**PHONE** 770.387.1143

**FAX** 770.606.0732

**EMAIL** [info@AdvoChild.org](mailto:info@AdvoChild.org)

### ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

49 Monroe Crossing SE, Cartersville, GA 30120

### CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER (CAC)

113 Douglas Street, Cartersville, GA 30120

### COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES (CASA)

654 Joe Frank Harris Pkwy, Cartersville, GA

[WWW.ADVOCHILD.ORG](http://WWW.ADVOCHILD.ORG)

