

## 2023 STATISTICAL CASE REPORT

Orion Area Youth Assistance provides confidential, short-term, family-centered counseling, casework, and referral services to youth and families who reside within the Lake Orion Community School District. Referrals are made to OAYA for a variety of prevention related reasons from changing family situations, struggles with emotional health and regulation, behavioral concerns, as well as diversion referrals, often first-time misdemeanor offenses, allowing the child to handle the situation without official court proceedings. In 2023, Orion Area Youth Assistance received 35 new referrals and 54 Information and Referral cases (I&R). I&R cases are referrals where an official referral is not opened but families meet with the caseworker for an average of 3 appointments and receive support and resources.

### AGE OF REFERRAL

AGE	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE
5	1	0	1
6	2	0	2
8	7	3	4
9	3	1	2
11	5	3	2
12	4	4	0
13	4	3	1
14	5	3	2
16	2	2	0
17	2	0	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>

### REFERRAL SOURCE

SOURCE	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE
POLICE	1	1	0
PARENT/GUARDIAN	4	3	1
SCHOOL DISTRICT	25	12	13
DHHS/CPS	2	1	1
INTAKE DEPARTMENT	1	1	0
OC PROSECUTOR	1	1	0
CIPT INTAKE	1	0	1

### REASON FOR REFERRAL

REASON	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE
PREVENTION	27	13	14
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	1	1	0
HOME INCORRIGIBILITY	2	2	0
POSSESSION MARIJUANA	1	0	1
RETAIL FRAUD	1	1	0
SCHOOL INCORRIGIBILITY	3	2	1

### INFORMATION AND REFERRAL CASES

Total	CWR	GWR	Re-entry Related
54	53	0	1

### Orion Area Youth Assistance Mission:

*To strengthen youth and families and reduce the incidence of delinquency, neglect, and abuse through community involvement.*

#### Orion Area Youth Assistance

CERC Building  
455 East Scripps Road  
Lake Orion, MI 48360  
PHONE: (248) 693-6878  
FAX: (248) 693-1494  
oaya@lok12.org  
www.lakeorionyouthassistance.com

#### Inter-Governmental Partners

- Charter Township of Orion
- Lake Orion Community School District
- Oakland County Circuit Court-Family Division
- Village of Lake Orion

#### Staff

Amber Kish, MA, YA Caseworker  
Lisa Gdowski, Office Manager  
**Oakland County Youth Assistance**  
Liz Csizmadia, Youth Assistance Chief  
Anna Torres, Area Supervisor

# ORION AREA YOUTH ASSISTANCE 2023 Annual Report



## FROM THE CHAIRPERSON



Orion Area Youth Assistance (OAYA) remains an essential organization within the Lake Orion community focused on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of youth and strengthening families. Our dedication lies in preventing juvenile delinquency, child neglect, and abuse through active community engagement and educational initiatives for families. As we progress through the post-pandemic environment, OAYA remains flexible, consistently adjusting to address the changing requirements of our community. In light of evolving family structures and the rise in youth mental health challenges, we provide casework services, family education, grants, scholarships, and various programs.

As we look forward to the upcoming year, OAYA remains dedicated to supporting youth and fortifying families within our community. I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to our donors, community partners, and all those who have graciously allowed us to benefit from their generosity. On behalf of our committed and skilled Board, I extend my sincere thanks. We at OAYA encourage you to join us in discovering how you can collaborate with us to further our mission of serving the youth and families within this community. I invite all to consider volunteering at one of our events in the year ahead and to connect with us on Facebook. I extend my gratitude for the vital role you play in our mission and urge you to invest in the youth and families of Lake Orion. As we progress on this journey, we are privileged to have you as a partner, supporter, and champion. —Dawn Ames, Orion Area Youth Assistance Chairperson

### SCHOLARSHIPS

One important part of Orion Area Youth Assistance's mission is providing scholarships for students to attend camps or participate in extracurricular activities. We are also excited to partner with the Long family to offer the LIV ON scholarships in memory of Olivia Long for elementary and middle school girls interested in sports. Our LIV ON scholarships provided 10 sports scholarships worth \$585 to students. With funding through Orion Township and various private donors, we were able to provide 33 "enrichment scholarships" totaling almost \$3,100, helping students participate in sports, robotics, band, scouting and dance. Those same funds allowed us to provide 45 camp scholarships worth just over \$9,300. We helped students attend camps through Lake Orion Community Schools, Orion Township Parks and Rec, Howell Nature Center, Heartfelt Impressions, and Oakland University. We believe that participation in these types of activities helps students learn new skills, make new friends, step outside of the comfort zone and feel like they are part of a community. Families are always immensely grateful for these scholarships that ease some of the financial burden while allowing their children to enjoy the activities that they adore.

### FOUR COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT



OAYA applied for a grant at the end of 2023 from Four County Community Foundation with the goal of expanding Camp SPLAT for 2024 to a second location. We are so grateful to have been selected for a \$20,000 grant from 4CCF's Dora & Toos Ondersma Fund. We are proud to partner with Four County Community Foundation in meeting their mission of investing for the long term by bringing people and organizations together, convening diverse voices to address local issues and opportunities. Learn more about Camp SPLAT inside on pages 4-5.

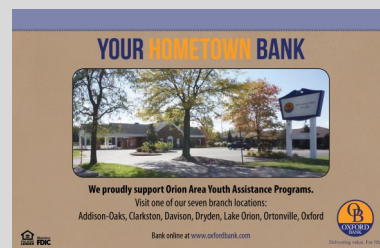
## YOUTH RECOGNITION

In May 2023 OAYA honored ten young community members at a ceremony attended by their families, community leaders, and OAYA Board members & staff. The Orion students were given their awards for one of three categories: Community Service, Personal Achievement, or Good Citizenship. The eight students honored with a Community Service Award showed a passion for volunteering and exceeded expectations by consistently volunteering at school, church, or community organizations beyond basic graduation or other service hour requirements. The one student who received a Personal Achievement Award achieved a dramatic positive change in attitude or behavior, overcome a significant obstacle (health, family situation, etc.), or made a strong, positive academic turnaround. The one student who received a Good Citizen award demonstrated consistent behaviors that contributed to a kind, accepting, and inclusive environment in her classroom, school, or other community groups. The award winners not only received a certificate and yard sign from OAYA but also certificates of recognition from local and State elected officials.

The speakers for the evening were Anna Torres of Oakland County Youth Assistance and Jerry Narsh from the Village of Lake Orion. In addition, Ben Kirby, Lake Orion Schools Superintendent, sent a video message for the event. All speakers not only warmly congratulated the honorees but spoke of the overall significance of the awards and their importance for the community. The evening celebration was rounded out with cupcakes and further congratulations to all the honorees!



Abbie Colquitt received a Good Citizen Award, Aleigha Brouhard received a Personal Achievement Award, and Angelina Brown, Adam Herron, Andrew Herron, Aidan Maxfield, Maddox LaMothe, Vivien Burke, Paavo Nurmi, and Ella Johnson all received Community Service Awards. We thank Kara Hill, Amber Kish, Lori Morris, Doris Fornasiero, Lynn Foss, and Lizbeth John for nominating students. We invite the community throughout the year to submit nominations for outstanding young people by contacting our office for a nomination form. **Special thanks to our event sponsors:**



## MEET OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Julie Monroe**— I am a retired LOCS Special Education teacher and school counselor. Having had the privilege and joy of serving this wonderful district for 35 years, I felt the need to stay connected. OAYA was an incredible support and resource for my students and myself throughout my career. In May of 2018, I presented one of OAYA's student scholarship awards at their Youth Recognition ceremony. The presentation of this camp scholarship was as exciting for me as it was for the deserving student. That evening, on the verge of retirement, I asked to be considered for membership on the board. I have been serving for over 6 years and today I am just as committed to OAYA's mission of helping strengthen our youth and their families through community involvement.

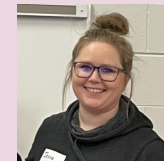


**Lauren Smith**—I currently serve on the Orion Area Youth Assistance Board of Directors and am the Principal of Paint Creek Elementary in Lake Orion Community Schools. I am passionate about access and equity in regards to the resources, services and programs available for children and families in our community. I am committed to life-long learning and community service and was honored to receive the 2023 Champion of Youth Award from Oakland County Youth Assistance Coordinating Council for my work.



I have two adult children who I am so very proud of: Ryan, who is a 2nd year HS teacher and Reagan, who is in her 2nd year of graduate school. When not enjoying time with my families, I love to work in my garden, read anything and everything and spend time traveling to new locations.

**Jesse Sampson**—I grew up in Oxford, then moved to Lake Orion after college, and recently relocated to Ortonville, although I still spend a lot of time in Lake Orion. I graduated from Central Michigan University in 2013 with a degree in Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Services Administration. After completing my studies, I worked in the event industry until I found my home at Orion Township Parks and Recreation. I am married and have a daughter named Olive, who was born in July. In my free time, I enjoy horseback riding with my horse, Murphy, as well as kayaking, hiking with my dogs, Milo and Mumford, and golfing with my husband, Bob. I've been a recreation programmer at Orion Parks for the past eight years. Recently, I began volunteering with Orion Area Youth Assistance, and I find it immensely rewarding to make a positive impact in our community through both Orion Parks and this organization, which helps me forge strong connections with others.



## COMMUNITY EVENT SPONSORS/DONORS 2023

**SPLAT Financial Donors:** \* Anonymous Donor \*Meijer \*Aldi \*Costco \*Neiman's Market \*Cyrowski Real Estate \* Johnny Black's \*Robert Reighard Construction \* Valentino's \* Shirley's Wigs \*Broadway Dance \* Counelis Agency Farm Bureau Insurance \*Wine Social \* Gdowski Family \*Subway \*Joe & Lois Gdowski

**SPLAT In-kind Donors:** \*Collier Lanes \*Upland Hills Farm \* Parkhurst Estates \*M&B Graphics

**Youth Recognition Donors:** \*Milsoch's Chrysler Palace \*SkalneK Ford \*Oxford Bank \*Nutz About Chocolate

**Holiday Mart Donors:** \*Dollar Tree (Lapeer Road, Lake Orion), \* Dollar Tree (Baldwin Road, Orion)

**Family Fun Fest Donors/Participating Organizations:** \*Lake Orion Schools Enrichment Services \*Graphic Takeover \*Counelis Agency Farm Bureau Insurance \* Orion Township Public Library \* Robotics Team 302 \*Orion Township Fire Department \*Oakland County Sheriff's Office \* GQT Movie Theaters (Oxford 7) \*Cookies and Cream (Sprout Bake) \* Awesome and Unique Special Needs Foundation \*Practically Perfect Vacations \*Abigail Rennels \*Terry Schneider

**General Fund Supporters:** \*Michael & Jillian Nolan \*Linda McAleer \*Long family \*Kroger Cares Foundation \* Janice Hammond \*Steven & Stella Britt \*Stadium Drive Elementary PTO \*Golling GMC \*Todd Moreman

Special thanks to Lake Orion Printing who manages all of our printing needs.

**Thank you for your support**

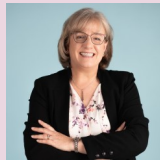
MEET OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Dawn Ames, Chairperson**—I have served on the OAYA Board of Directors since June 2017 and have held the position of Chairperson since 2019. My most recent role was as Executive Director of the Michigan Abolitionist Project (MAP), an organization dedicated to anti-human trafficking education, awareness, and advocacy. Prior to my tenure at MAP, I was the Director of Family Ministry and Community Outreach at the Lake Orion United Methodist Church. I possess extensive experience in program management, particularly in the coordination and development of programs and events for children and youth. Notably, I established the Blessings in a Brown Bag FREE Summer Lunch Program at Lake Orion United Methodist Church, which addresses food insecurity among children during the summer months. In recognition of my contributions, I was named Lake Orion’s Citizen of the Year in 2018, received the Youth Impact Award from the Orion Chamber of Commerce in 2019, and was honored with the Unsung Hero Award by Zonta of Pontiac-North Oakland County in 2019 for my advocacy work on behalf of children in our community. I hold a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Central Michigan University and have accumulated ten years of experience in Human Resources at General Motors Corporation.



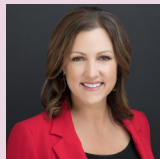
I became engaged in the anti-human trafficking movement in early 2017 and quickly recognized the link between trafficking and various childhood vulnerabilities, including homelessness, poverty, child abuse, juvenile delinquency, and substance abuse. To maximize my impact in the Lake Orion community, I chose to partner with Orion Area Youth Assistance, as I am convinced that their effective casework services and prevention programs are essential in mitigating risk factors and fostering protective factors that enable youth and families to flourish.

**Jillian Nolan, Treasurer**—Born and raised in Scotland, I have lived in Michigan since 1999 and in Lake Orion since 2005. I live on the border of Lake Orion/Oxford with my husband, Michael (an Irishman). Our two “kids” are now grown and flown but both went through Lake Orion schools right from Kindergarten and are Dragons through and through. I consider myself an “adopted Dragon.” In a prior life, I was a risk analyst for a large, international insurance and risk management company, working in Scotland, London (UK, not Canada!) and finally Detroit. Currently, I work at the local chamber of commerce. Outside of work, when I get the time, I enjoy reading, walking our dog, gardening (although I don’t exactly have a green thumb) and watching UK crime dramas.



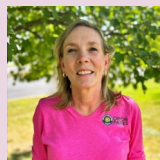
I was very lucky to have had a wonderful childhood and I hope my kids feel the same way about their younger years. But I am very aware that there are others who are not so lucky. Via my work at the Chamber, I got to know more about OAYA, the work they do and the fantastic people who make it all happen. When the opportunity to be on the Board came about in 2020, I saw it as a great way to help support OAYA and all the great things the organization does in our community.

**Nicole Quandt, Secretary**—I received my undergraduate degree from Oakland University in 1996 and my Juris Doctorate from Wayne State Law School in 2000. I began my legal career working for the Legal Aid and Defender Association in Detroit, where I focused on indigent criminal defense. In 2004, I entered private practice, first as a partner in a small firm and then in my own solo practice, practicing predominantly criminal, family, probate and juvenile law, including significant work in child abuse and neglect cases. In 2009, I was hired as an attorney-advisor for the Department of Defense at TACOM in Warren, Michigan. In 2017, I was appointed to my current position as a Federal Administrative Law Judge, where I primarily hear disability cases. I reside in Oakland County with my son, Kam, and dogs, Matilda and Ingrid. I am a licensed foster parent and a member of the Michigan Foster Care Review Board. My interests include tennis, child and animal welfare, outdoor activities and the Detroit Tigers.



I joined OAYA because I am passionate about supporting and empowering young people in our community. Through this role, I strive to contribute to initiatives that provide essential resources and guidance to help youth thrive.

**Jennifer Vezina**—I’ve lived in Lake Orion my entire life, moving here in the early 70’s when this area was still very much a small community heavily populated with corn fields and dirt roads. I graduated from Central Michigan University with a degree in Elementary Education but only taught for a handful of years before finding a full-time position with Orion Parks. I’m married with two sons and a stepdaughter. When we are not working, we enjoy camping, hiking and kayaking with our 4 legged companion. I’ve been a recreation programmer with Orion Parks for the past 25 years. Recently, I started volunteering with Orion Area Youth Assistance, and I find that making a positive impact to our community through Orion Parks and OAYA is very fulfilling and helps me to develop strong connections to others.

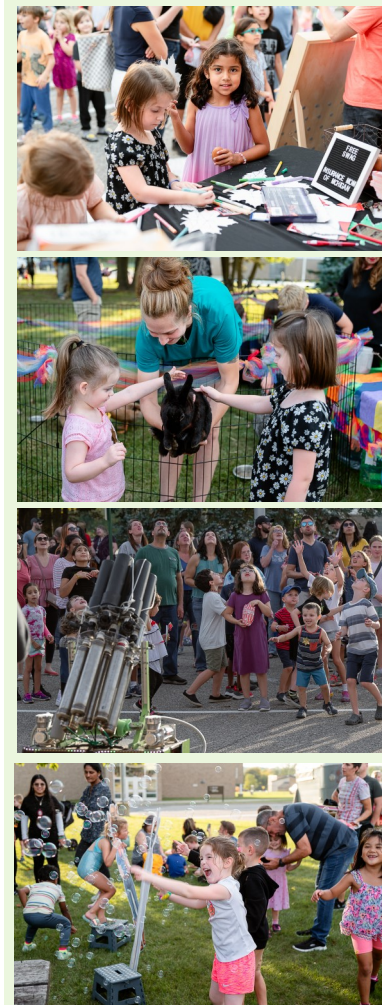


HOLIDAY MART

Once again, Dollar Tree stores in Lake Orion along with Operation HomeFront provided us with a generous donation of toys for our Holiday Mart. Shoppers at the Lapeer Road and Baldwin Road Dollar Trees were asked to donate a gift for a military family or a family in need during the month of November. Our community donated over 800 toys! The Lake Orion Community Schools Early Childhood Center allowed us to set up a holiday “shopping” event in the Gross Motor Room for preschool students from families with financial need. Students worked with Helper “elves” from Orion Oaks Elementary School to select gifts to give to their immediate family members. The preschoolers were so proud to select special gifts for the people they loved. We had 55 students “shop” over the course of the day for more than 250 family members.



FAMILY FUN FEST



Family Fun Fest, sponsored by Orion Area Youth Assistance and Lake Orion Community Schools Enrichment Services, was held on October 4, 2023, and drew over 300 attendees to the CERC building for a free night of family fun.

The event offered a variety of food, crafts, and activities that delighted the entire community. Families had the chance to interact with special guests, including the Lake Orion Dragon, local emergency personnel, and one of our school resource officers. The evening also featured games, a petting zoo, music and opportunities to engage with the local library and Team 302 robotics. Families enjoyed free pizza, water, popcorn, and ice cream as well. The event provided entertainment and enrichment for youth and their entire families. A good time was had by all, as attendees enjoyed an evening full of connection, learning, and fun. Family Fun Fest brought the community together, underscoring Orion Area Youth Assistance’s mission to support youth and their families by providing essential resources and opportunities for growth. This unforgettable evening strengthened our commitment to ensuring a bright future for everyone in our community.



Photo credit: Terry Schneider

See page 7 for a complete list of event sponsors

### CAMP SPLAT! (STUDY, PLAY, LEARN AND TALK)



SPLAT (Study, Play, Learn And Talk) began as a small summer school program offered to students in one mobile home community within the Lake Orion Community Schools boundary. SPLAT ran for two months during the hottest part of the summer for several years prior to COVID. Children attending SPLAT received breakfast and lunch every day, participated in academic instruction and camp-like activities and built strong connections with school staff. The goal of SPLAT was to build a strong connection between families, the community and our school while removing barriers for the children and their adult family members. The children participating in SPLAT were neighbors and schoolmates and were eligible for the program based on their address. The families served by SPLAT often struggled to participate in traditional summer camps or summer school due to income, transportation, or logistical concerns. As SPLAT was hosted in the neighborhood within walking distance to the children’s home and at no cost to the families, children could more readily participate. The SPLAT program eventually ended to due the lack of funding that was necessary to support this level of intensive programming.

Several years ago, a student who had attended SPLAT shared her positive experience with a school volunteer. This seemingly innocent act would have amazing implications as it led to a very generous financial contribution made to Orion Area Youth Assistance earmarked for SPLAT to return during the summer of 2023. The OAYA Board of Directors made the commitment to bring SPLAT back to the same neighborhood in which it had been previously offered. Lake Orion Community Schools provided technology, access to current curriculum, and other needed school supplies. Parkhurst Mobile Home Community gave access to the community center as a space for the students to participate. Meijer, Aldi, Costco and Neiman’s Markets all donated gift cards to provide meals for students. Many local businesses provided donations to create tee-shirts for the students and other local businesses offered discounted food and services for student field trips. Please see our complete list of donors on page 7 of the Annual Report. In the summer of 2023, the return of SPLAT ensured all children from the Parkhurst Community in grades K -5th had a safe, caring learning environment with regular meals provided for the course of the 6-week program. Children participated in weekly field trips within our Lake Orion Community. They also built trusting, lasting relationships with the two licensed teachers and social worker, all of whom are employed by LOCS during the school year, and who invested their time and energy to support these young learners.

SPLAT- Summer 2023, was a great addition to our OAYA youth programming filling a gap for those students that traditionally cannot attend summer academic or camp programming. In the Summer of 2023, SPLAT served 28 elementary-age students who have one or more risk factors as defined by www.youth.gov. ALL students attending SPLAT grew academically as measured by pre/post assessment data in the area of Reading Fluency. Students received breakfast and lunch daily, participated in six local field trips, and learned and played numerous outdoor games focused on cooperation and teamwork. All students participated daily in small group instruction building skills in social/emotional learning, including problem-solving, being an active listener and growing their capacity to engage in respectful/caring behavior. Students and their families received food weekly from Blessings in a Backpack to supplement meals and snacks at home and most importantly, built trusting connections with the adult SPLAT staff that carried over into the 2023-24 school year. We are hopeful that with generous donations again in 2024, we can actually expand the SPLAT program to include a second location.

