

CASA: BY THE NUMBERS

CALIFORNIA	62,000 Children in the Foster Care System	MERCED	500 Children in the Foster Care System
	12,000 Foster Children Served by CASA Volunteers		148 Foster Children Served by CASA Volunteers
	7,400 Active Casa Volunteers		89 (+14 new trainees) Active CASA Volunteers



In 2016, Merced CASA trained 27 new volunteer advocates. For 2017, we just finished training a group of 14 new volunteers. They are our twentieth class. We will now have more than 100 advocates and will be that much closer to matching all Merced foster kids with an advocate.



CASA of Merced County
P O Box 2362
Merced, CA 95344

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Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Merced County advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children within the court system.

JOIN



CASA relies on individual and corporate volunteers and financial partners to make its work possible. Financial support is needed to recruit, train and supervise advocates. Our VOICES4CASA are asked to support the organization with an annual donation. We welcome all support, including volunteers who can donate time for even just a few hours throughout the year.

Join the current group of 163 VOICES4CASA.

Call our office or go to www.MercedCASA.org You can help make a difference!

I am for the child™



2017 Memorials & Honorariums

In Memory of Mary Sirsi
Diane and Anthony Neves

In Memory of Norman Miranda
Diane and Anthony Neves

In Memory of Mariland Boucher
Stephanie Lucich

In Memory of Mary Bertao
Diane and Anthony Neves

In Honor of the Johnston Family
John and Leigh Walth

In Honor of Lori Hill
Stephanie Lucich

2017 CASA CUP

A Night at the Races

Saturday, April 1, 2017

Gates open at 6:00 PM
Merced Fairgrounds Pavilion


Derby-Style
Hats & Attire
Admired




TICKETS
\$75
Per person

Tickets available at www.MercedCASA.org/casacup or call 722-2272.



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Contact:
Phone: (209) 722-2272
Fax: (209) 722-2270

2824 Park Avenue, Suite A
Merced, CA 95348

PO Box 2362
Merced, CA 95344

MercedCASA@gmail.com
MercedCASA.org

CASA Notes

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Message from the Board President

This is my first article for the CASA newsletter as president of the Board of Directors. It was approximately seven years ago that I was invited to join the effort to establish a CASA of Merced County. I attended the very first Board meeting and participated in the very first CASA training. At that time, Stanislaus CASA provided the training. Today, I am so proud of our role in helping the Foster Children of Merced County. Shar Herrera's leadership has been superb and I am so grateful for her passion and willingness to work long hours over many years to improve the lives of Foster Children. It is with mixed emotions that I wish Shar the very best in retirement. Even though I know that she deserves a rest I am very sorry that she is retiring during my year as president!

During the first year of Shar's job as ED she was also the Program Manager and provided the training for our new Advocates. I remember her telling me about one of her trainees that she thought might be a good employee. I knew who she was talking about because this person was also my pilates instructor. Many of you probably know I am talking about Debbi Johnston! Of course, she was hired and there has been no better team than Shar and Debbi. I can personally attest to the superior quality of Advocate training that Debbi has provided over the years. She also deserves a rest but I am going to miss her enthusiasm and dedication to CASA. Debbi told me it is going to be hard to leave because she has been so impressed and inspired by our volunteer advocates.

Although Merced CASA is currently in a period of transition in leadership I am comfortable knowing that Shar and Debbi will continue to help with whatever needs to be done. I am pleased that Karen Smith will be assuming the role of Associate Director. Karen has been working in the CASA office for almost a year and has earned the confidence of the staff, Board and Advocates. As always, we are indebted to Shar who has agreed to continue on a part time basis as Executive Director until a new person is hired.

I am looking forward to another successful CASA year. I want to end this article by thanking Mary Miller for her three years of service as president of the CASA Board. Her skills, leadership abilities and determination to build Merced CASA have been tremendous. Last, but certainly not least, thank you Advocates for your dedication to the Foster Children in Merced County. You are the BEST!

Sincerely,

Bette Woolstenhulme, President
CASA of Merced County



Spotlight on an advocate



Rita was born and raised in Santa Clara. Sixty years ago, the semiconductor industry had not yet taken root in the Santa Clara Valley, so when she was born, the Valley was not yet known by the name she hates and refuses to use: "Silicon Valley". When she grew up, the Valley was an idyllic community with orchards, clean air, good schools, and affordable housing.

Rita is the youngest of ten children. The kids would play baseball in their backyard, ride their bikes all day, swim at the numerous community pools and slide on cardboard boxes down the creek bed near their house. Rita loved to read books borrowed from the library's bookmobile that toured the neighborhood during the summer.

Rita spent nearly 28 years as a Deputy District Attorney with Merced County District Attorney's Office. For more than 8 of those years, she was the sole prosecutor of child molestation cases. In January 2016, four years after retiring, she saw a newspaper ad seeking CASA volunteers. She felt drawn to, once again, work with abused and neglected children, albeit in a far different capacity.

She began working with her CASA child, a five-year-old adorable little boy, in April 2016. She enjoys taking him to

do things he has never done before, like going to the movies, the library and swimming lessons. After he dove off the high dive at the conclusion of his swimming lessons at the college last summer, she told him that she was proud of him. He smiled broadly and said, "I am

proud of myself."

Rita is single and has never had children but she has a large family in the Bay Area where she spends a good deal of her time attending sports games, dance recitals, and drama performances with her many great-nieces and nephews. Besides spending time with family, she keeps busy attending the theatre, hiking, traveling, going to movies and reading.

She thinks CASA is important in the life of a foster child because the advocate may be the only person in the child's life whose number one priority is the best interest of the child. The best advice she would give someone is to just let the kid take the lead with something he/she wants to discuss. She feels that the main strength she brings is a deep affection for children.

**A CASA VOLUNTEER
MAKES A DIFFERENCE!**



THANK YOU ADVOCATES AND VOLUNTEERS!



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