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CASA Notes

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A Member of the National CASA Association

A Message from the Executive Director

Fall is upon us and so is the start of the holiday season and the time to be thankful. This is the time of year when individuals share why they are thankful. November and December bring to mind Thanksgiving, Christmas, family gatherings, celebrations and making wonderful new memories together.

When children are taken from their homes and placed in foster care, they no longer have the familiar anticipation many other children enjoy. For many children in foster care, this holiday season will be the first one they spend away from the home they know, away from their parents and siblings, extended family, and friends. Imagine how difficult it must be to be living in a different home, with new people all around you, wondering when you will see your family again or where you will be this time next year. It can be difficult for these children to build relationships with the new people in their lives and adopt others' holiday traditions. Enter a Court Appointed Special Advocate. Someone to be there for the child, to help them navigate these uncharted waters, to be the consistent person in a foster child's life, someone the child can count on to always be there for him or her.

During this time of year, I can safely say that I am thankful and grateful for all of our wonderful CASA volunteers and Board Members, not just during the holiday season but also all year long. CASA volunteers are ordinary people with a desire to make a difference, who give from their hearts to others less fortunate every day, all year long.

As you are spending the holidays with your family and friends, shopping for that hard to buy for person, or becoming stressed over all of the planning and organizing, consider giving the gift of love and trust and join our next training class on January 10, 2019.



Cathie Lancaster
Executive Director



The CASA Fall Fundraiser is currently underway!

You may have recently received an invitation from CASA, to our Fall Fundraiser. Instead of our usual Casino Night Fundraiser in Los Banos, we are holding a Non-Event Fundraiser! Donors will be entered into a special prize drawing with a chance to win one of four amazing prizes!

Donate at: www.mercedcasa.org/noneventfundraiser

Available Prizes:

- One week stay in Cabo San Lucas Resort
- Crinklaw Fine Art Original Painting
- Golf Package for 2 Quail Lodge Golf Club in Carmel, CA
- Monterey Plaza Spa Package for Two

Please remember to return your donation by December 3, 2018 to participate in the prize drawings!

Spotlight on an Advocate: Eva Martinez



Eva was born in San Jose, California. Her family has previously lived in Bay Point and Turlock. Eva enjoys spending time with her family. She has one older sister and a younger brother. When she was younger her family would take trips to Mexico during summer and winter breaks to visit relatives. As a kid she enjoyed being in gymnastics, taking long car rides to new places and spending weekends watching movies with family. Eva brings to CASA an educational background in Psychology as well as professional experience working with foster youth. In addition to volunteering with CASA, Eva stays busy at her job as a Family Services Support Counselor. Eva has been a CASA for over a year. She wanted to become a CASA Volunteer to learn more about the foster care system and to help a child in need. A great memory Eva created with her CASA youth, is when they went to Rockin' Jump, a trampoline park. They had a great time on the rock wall, wipe out zone and jumping on all of the trampolines.

Why do you think CASA is an important part of the experience that children in foster care endure?

"I think CASA is an important part of the experience to foster kids because they are a consistent person in their life. Foster kids need someone consistent that will be there for them unconditionally."

What is some advice you would share with a new CASA Volunteer?

"The best advice I could give a new advocate is to be patient, non-judgmental, and consistent."

"A lot of people have gone further than they thought they could because someone else thought they could."
- Unknown

Sabrina Abong	Rafael Cortez	Ashley Johnson	Kay Morgan	Nadine Smaby
Jewel Acosta	Jerry Lou Davis	Debbi Johnston	Karina Murillo	Erin Smelcer
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Candace Bartholomew	Crystal Gilliam-Bowers	Yadira Lopez	Janet Ramsey	Kimberly Wright
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Gwendolyn Boykin	Carol Hamm	Helena Marciochi	Marge Sadler	
Jan Bradley	Skip Harris	Eva Martinez	Judith Salzberg	

THANKS TO

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Karen Cheffer		Stan Mollart	

THANK YOU CASA VOLUNTEERS!

We send our most appreciative thanks and gratitude to our remarkable CASA Volunteers. Without you, we could not conduct the incredible service that CASA of Merced County provides to local foster youth.

The Camping Kids — Connecting Foster Youth with Lost Relatives

The following story is based on a case on which I worked. I changed some of the details of the story for reasons of confidentiality. As a Family Connections Coordinator, I operate under the belief that every child has a family. I try to apply this assertion for every child with whom I work. In the case of the “camping children” this was no exception. A social worker sent me a referral for twin girls who had been “camping” out in a park with their parents. While their parents insisted that they were just “camping,” a history of referrals revealed that this family had been “camping” in the park for an extended amount of time. The children were finally detained from their parents after an emergency social worker assessed the situation and decided that the children could not safely stay in their current situation. The girls appeared to the social worker as malnourished and unkempt. After she did some research, she also discovered that none of the local schools had any record of attendance for them. The social worker asked the parents if there was any family who could safely take in the children, but the parents claimed they had no one. After they were detained, the parents then disappeared, failing to show up to court and not returning phone calls. The social worker tried to ask the girls if they had any family, but neither girl had any memory of any family they could call. The social worker asked me to find out any information I could about the children’s family. I did some research and found names of potential family members on both sides of the family. I then started calling them. To my surprise, I had multiple family members return my phone calls, frantically asking how they could help. Family on both sides wanted to care for these children and were shocked that the parents had not asked for their help. Next, social services has to figure out which home to place the girls now that family has stepped up to help.



Charissa Beardsley

Family Connections
Coordinator



Follow us on
Social Media!



@ MERCEDCASA

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

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Memorials & Honorariums

In Honor of Debbi Johnston
John and Leigh Walth

In Honor of Laura Gargano
Mary Camper

**In Honor of Bette Woolstenhulme
and Marge Sadler**
Rick and Karen Albright

In Memory of Charles Wilson
Lenice Wilson

In Memory of Mary Lamoglia
Cindy Nocito

In Memory of Maribeth Boise
Penelope Sawyer

In Memory of John Schneider
Don and Karen Smith

In Honor of CASA Volunteers
Merced Couples Benefit Bridge
Sharon Jerry

In Honor of Nancy Czapinski
Mary K Camper

In Memory of Frankie Montgomery
Bette Woolstenhulme



Congratulations CASA Class 26!

Lammi Adem
Maggie Baylard-Sampson
Gwendolyn Boykin
Christine Callister
Crystal Gilliam-Bowers
Gwendolyn Hewitt
Luwanda Jones
Charity Mocklin
Jan Wood

Nine community citizens will soon begin advocating for Merced County foster youth. Graduates of CASA’s twenty sixth training class have completed 30 hours of training, 5 hours of courtroom observation, multiple background checks, multiple reference checks and will make a minimum commitment of 18 months to the child they will serve.

A CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) is a trained volunteer who is appointed by the Judge to represent the best interests of a child currently in foster care. The CASA Volunteer provides the presiding Juvenile Dependency Judge with recommendations that help the Court make difficult decisions about the child’s future. No specific type of background is required to become a Volunteer. CASA of Merced County provides all necessary training needed to become a Court Appointed Special Advocate. Learn more about how to become a CASA Volunteer by visiting our website at www.mercedcasa.org or calling our office at 209-722-2272.

Our next training class starts January 10, 2019; would you like to join us?

Join the current group of 163 Voices4CASA members!

CASA relies on individual and corporate donors 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. **You can help make a difference!**

