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CASA Notes

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A Member of the National CASA Association

Message from the Executive Director—Cathie Lancaster



It is hard to believe that I recently completed my first year as Executive Director for CASA of Merced County! As I reflect back on the past 12 months, I have experienced many firsts in my career and have created wonderful memories.

I am excited to share that CASA was able to increase our staff by two employees this year. We have two new positions Early Childhood Coordinator and Recruitment / Outreach. The Early Childhood Coordinator will provide services to meet the educational and social/emotional needs of dependent children 0-7 years of age. Recruitment / Outreach will be reaching out to the community more, looking for volunteers all over the county to advocate for the best interests of abused and

neglected children within the court system and educate the community about Court Appointed Special Advocates.

CASA Board of Directors created the Carolyn Jones Memorial Library in memory of Carolyn Jones; her husband Stephen was a founding Board Member for CASA. Stephen and Carolyn generously donated to CASA over the years and the library has been established in Carolyn's name to commemorate her love of children and education. We will soon have a Wish List of books on our webpage for anyone that would like to contribute to the library.

I traveled to the state capital twice in June. Once to receive the Nonprofit on the year award on behalf of CASA advocates, Board of Directors and staff, the second time in support of Senate Bill 925 introduced by Senator Beall. I am happy to say this bill has passed and makes a great difference for our foster youth. This bill requires a foster child to have a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) present at the Child and Family Team meetings to protect the child's best interest. SB925 goes into effect January 1, 2019.

The most special memory is also the most recent. I was able to attend an adoption ceremony for one of our CASA children. Our outstanding advocate was unable to attend the ceremony due to medical reasons so I attended to represent CASA. It was truly a heartwarming experience to see a child that had been removed from family at birth be adopted by the only family the child has known. This innocent child was surrounded by so much love and support from the new family, friends and interested parties; it was truly an emotional experience. The courtroom was packed with over 30 guests attending the ceremony conducted by the Honorable Judge Don Proietti.



The kids who need the most love will ask for it in the most unloving of ways—author unknown

THESE CHILDREN
THAT CHILD
THOSE KIDS

THEY ARE ALL
OUR CHILDREN



CASA is doing something special for our Fall Fundraiser this year. Watch your mailbox...a fun new creative way for you to help CASA is heading to your door. CASA raises funds to assist in recruiting and training advocates to help the abandoned and neglected children in Merced County.



CASA of Merced County

P O Box 2362

Merced, CA 95344

Follow us



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



As of July 2018, CASA has sworn-in 20 new advocates!
Would you like to be a part of our next 20?



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CASA of Merced County Executive Director Cathie Lancaster, Former Board President Bette Woolstenhulme, and Founding President Nancy Young-Bergman pose with Assemblymember Adam Gray during California Nonprofit day on Wednesday, June 6, 2018, in Sacramento. CASA of Merced County was honored as the 2018 California Nonprofit of the Year from Assemblymember Gray's district.

Spotlight on an Advocate — Anali Makoui

Anali was born in Tehran, Iran. Her family moved back and forth between Spain and Iran until she finished 5th grade. Anali completed grades 6th through 11th in Spain. Her family then moved to the U.S. where she started her university studies. Anali was a very polite and active child. She loved to ride her bicycle, play all sorts of physically active games with her friends/neighborhood children, and loved to watch TV. Both of Anali's parents are physicians and she has one brother. Anali's parents have been her biggest supporters, they always went above and beyond to protect and help her and her brother.

Anali's work keeps her very, very busy! She is employed at the Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning at the University of California in Merced. She has no children – just two fur-babies, Milu and Newton. She also enjoys helping her family in Los Angeles, tending to her plants at home and spending time with her friends.

Even as a child, Anali was always very aware of how lucky she was to have been born to such dedicated parents. As she grew older, she realized that she wanted to give back and help children that had not been as lucky as she had. One day she came across one of CASA's pamphlets and although it caught her attention, she did not pursue CASA right away. Late last year one of her colleagues asked Anali if she knew what CASA was. The colleague knew how strongly Anali felt about foster children's issues and about her desire to help. She had come across a CASA ad, thought that Anali would be a "Kick-@&% Advocate!" and wanted to share the information with her.

Because Anali and her CASA youth live about 40 minutes away from each other, she has not been able to spend as much in-person time through. She was proud of him for having the courage to talk



with him as she would like. One of her favorite moments was when he opened up to Anali about a tough situation that he was going through. She was proud of him for having the courage to talk about it and happy because it meant that he had started to trust her a bit more.

We asked Anali why she thinks a CASA is important for children in foster care. "There are many reasons. The most immediate and direct reason is because the CASA advocate is a consistent and reliable presence in their lives, something that all children need but foster children often lack. The less immediate and more indirect, but equally important reason has to do with the system being overburdened. As a CASA advocate we can help by making sure that our child's needs are met and nothing important is falling through the cracks."

The best advice Anali would give to new advocates getting ready to visit their youth for the first time is, "Trust the training. Share your fears and concerns with your peer coordinator and/or advocate coordinator – crowdsource potential solutions with them. Listen more than you ask when you are with your child. Be patient, kind, and consistent with everyone - child, social worker, etc.; we are all trying to do our best under the circumstances and sometimes we just don't know any better."

Children are great imitators. So give them something great to imitate.

CASA would like to welcome Charity Mocklin to our family as the new Advocate Coordinator / Social Media staff member. Charity came to CASA from Aspiranet and started training July 9. Charity's "biggest joy comes from helping those that need it the most." What a better way to bring joy into your life then by helping an abused and neglected child through CASA? If you are in the neighborhood, stop by the office, welcome Charity, say hi to the rest of the staff and find out more about how meaningful becoming a Court Appointed Special Advocate can be.

Memorials & Honorariums

In Honor of Marge Sadler
Karen Albright

In Memory of Luana Ladd
Scott & Nelda Schofield



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!**

Call our office 209-722-2272 or go to www.MercedCASA.org



THANK YOU ADVOCATES AND VOLUNTEERS!



- | | | | | |
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