ZOOM HOLIDAY'S AT CASA

CASA Staff was making the best of the holidays this year from home. While it was not the same, we still did our best to make the most of it. Like many others, we have missed our office, our friends and most importantly, our volunteers. As much fun as these Zoom Holidays were, everyone at the CASA office is hoping 2021 is filled with in-person celebrations.

Happy Holídays!







Cookies for CASA

Cookies. cocoa and coffee! The SEVA organization handed out delicious cookies to anyone who wanted to stop by, in fun drive-through fashion. They did not ask for a set price, but instead asked for donations. This event was full of Christmas Spirit and we are so grateful to SEVA for thinking of us! We also want to thank everyone who showed up and purchased cookies and at the same time, supported Merced County Foster Youth.



am for the child™ **CASA of Merced County** P O Box 2362 Merced, CA 95344 Fall 2020 CASA Notes Newsletter **Follow us on** Social Media! **@ MERCEDCASA** Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Merced County advocate for the best interests of abused and

CASA Drive Through Christmas Extravaganza

The Christmas Spirit was alive on December 17 2020! Santa came to the CASA office and the staff put on a Drive-Through Extravaganza. At the various stations we had hot chocolate, stockings supplied by Dr. Thomas Lequia, cookies & rice crispy treats made especially for us by Carol Etcheverry, a craft item to take home and create, more stockings, head phones, and of course, SANTA himself passing out gifts to the kiddos! Even though we celebrated Christmas a little differently this year, we still had a wonderful time together! We want to give a special thanks to our neighbors Dr. Thomas Lequia and Berliner Cohen LLC, in addition to Gerald and Darla Soto, MID, Spinardi and Jones, Westmark, CHP, M-Mig Construction, Starbucks, UC Merced, Adam Castro and Rafael V. Gonzalez, our CASA board members, and all of those generous businesses who supported us, for all of their help putting on this magical event for our CASA foster youth! The finale to our Nonevent Fundraiser was celebrated the same evening when Santa drew the names of the lucky winners from our wonderful donors. The following are the lucky prize win-

ners: Pebble Beach Resort Gift Card won by: Westside Ag Consultants Mitch Arambel

Wine.com Gift Card won by: Anita Marquez

Crinklaw Fine Art original painting won by: John & Terri Rohrer Golf Package at Quail Lodge—Carmel won by: Curt & Gaye Riggs Blue Apron Gift Card won by: Randy & Agnes Bardini A BIG thank you to all who supported CASA via our Nonevent

Fundraiser!









lear Casa,

Thank you guys so for everything you Joh for Med Mar It really Make fercine in Kids/teens doin't even Khi recorded level that car This is MU Last be 18 next yrs and In have appreciated over yrs being able to have guys and my casa family now.

> Thank you love CASA Kiddo

Upcoming CASA of Merced County Events:

Monday, 1-18-2021	CASA Office closed for Martin
Tuesday, 2-2-2021	Zoom CASA Information Sessi
Friday, 2-12-2021	CASA Office closed for Lincoln
Sunday, 2-15-2021	CASA Office closed for Preside
Tuesday, 3-2-2021	Zoom CASA Information Sessi
Sunday, 3-14-2021	Daylight Savings Time Begins

neglected children within the court system.

In Memory of Skip Harris by Stephen & Sharon Wainwright

In Honor of Mike Cuchna by Pauline Cuchna

In Memory of Skip Harris by Brenda Hughes

In Honor of Chris & Natalie Butler by Mary Camper

In Memory of Elyse Etcheverry by Amador & Mary Zabalbeascoa

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Return Service Requested

- for Martin Luther King Jr Day
- ation Session at 12PM
- for Lincoln's Birthday
- for Presidents Day
- ation Session at 12PM

Hello 2021



MEMORIALS & HONORARIUMS

CASA

In Honor of Dorothy Menezes by Diane Neves

In Memory of Linda Erickson by Daniel & Cynthia Arambel

In Memory of James Areias Sr. by Daniel & Cynthia Arambel

In Memory of John Forte by Daniel & Cynthia Arambel

In Honor of Dorothy Menezes by Mike and Katherine Crinklaw

In Memory of Skip Harris by Lutie Reid Harris & Sharon Reid



A message to Advocates, Board of Directors, Donors, Staff and

By Executive Director, Cathie Lancaster

rose to the challenge with every new obstacle, and I cannot be more proud or thankful. determination to continue the important work of serving children and families. It bears repeating everyone Merced County Board of Directors, staff and volunteers have demonstrated resilience, creativity and accomplished during these difficult times. I have a deep sense of gratitude for the myriad of ways the CASA of As 2020 ends (finally), I would like to take a few minutes to reflect on what CASA of Merced County

CASA volunteers stayed the course, we were able to ensure the safety of hundreds of children. violence, child abuse, neglect, and abandonment as well as dealing with a pandemic. Because our wonderful a source of hope for children suffering from the challenge of living in this world, living with the trauma of domestic that has not changed is the difference that a CASA volunteer makes in a child's life. CASA volunteers have been So many things have changed in the way we had to do business in 2020 and the start of 2021. The one thing

The office closed to the public on 4/1/2020 and staff started working remotely, the same day our new Instructor Angela McKellar started We had to cancel our spring fundraiser and did not plan our fall event. But we had a successful Nonevent Fundraiser. important to pause and reflect on some of our accomplishments (there were many firsts): Our Advocates have made a heavy year lighter for the children being served by CASA. Though we have had many challenges this year, it is

children and we embraced Zoom. The staff had to make changes to continue to assist Advocates and Advocates had to be creative in order to continue to serve our ner employment.

We held Zoom Information Sessions, Zoom pre-training interviews, Zoom Continuing Education Training, and Zoom Board of Director We were able to continue to recruit new volunteers and provide training while working on our soon to be online training platform.

We created a Facebook page for our Advocates to sately "chat" with each other and to share ways to remain involved while keeping We held Zoom swearing-in ceremonies for new volunteers so we could serve more children. We had to reduce the class sizes to comply with pandemic guidelines, but we still have people waiting to become Advocates.

uncertain times for the children we serve. safety of the window or sidewalk. Our Advocates continue to be that caring, consistent adult, and have seen the certainty in Volunteers continue to provide stability to their youth, through socially distant advocacy—FaceTime, text, Zoom and "visiting" from the We created a page on our website devoted solely to COVID-19.

We held a Zoom Advocate Appreciation so our volunteers would know how much we value what they do for the children we serve. seniors and eight grade graduates wonderful gifts to celebrate their "Pandemic Graduation." All of our high school seniors graduated this year and thanks to generous board members and friends, we were able to provide all of our

We had several business reach out to us to conduct successful fundraising events – Kona Ice (twice), Dutch Bros, Mix Bakery, Idris and

MID, Spinardi & Jones, Dr. Lequia, Berliner Cohen, Westmark, CHP, M-MIG Construction, UC Merced, Adam Castro, Rafael Gonzales, Estelle Bath Co LLC, Ravellos, Hot Cuts and SEVA

We continued to have children come into care and we continue to assign Advocates to these children. We held our first (and hopefully only) Drive through Christmas Extravaganza and it was a success! Carol Etcheverry and Starbucks all contributed to make sure our children had a wonderful Christmas.

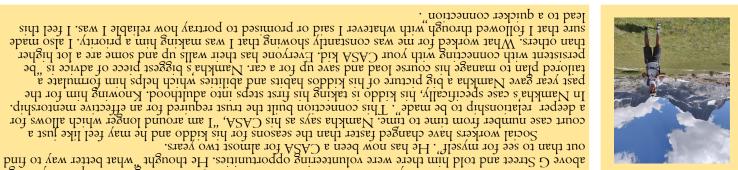
first apartment! These are just a few of our success stories. Advocates work has been incredible. B's! Shorther Advocates was the only person to wish her CASA child Happy Birthday! Several of our Advocates helped their youth move into a One of our Advocates recently told me that when he started working with his child, the child was failing in school. He is now getting all A's and

the help of our staff, volunteers, Board of Directors, our generous donors and supporters we are equipped to meet the challenges. are resilient, tenacious, and committed to supporting the lives of the children we serve. Regardless of what next year brings, I know that with brighter year and a return to a routine —one that includes being physically connected with our friends and loved ones again. Our volunteers volunteers and supporters for helping us through them. 2021 holds the promise of endless possibilities for all of us. We are very hopeful for a I, personally, will be happy to never use the terms "unprecedented times" or "pandemic" again, but in the meantime, I want to thank our

of our program benefits us all, especially the foster youth in Merced County and I am grateful for the role you play! The staying connected to all of you and to hearing your perspectives about opportunities and issues facing CASA of Merced County. The strength circumstances and to remain focused on our mission. As we continue with our strategic planning process in the year ahead, I look forward to for good things to come. It will be critical for CASA of Merced County to continue to be flexible in our planning as we adapt to changing Thank you for working alongside and supporting CASA of Merced County. 2021 still holds some uncertainty, but it also brings a sense of hope







EAERY DAY HERO:

lead to a quicker connection.

NAMKHA NGUYEN

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us and check out our new & improved office soon! for a make over inside as well! We hope you can all visit beautiful stickers to the outside windows and has plans a little face lift! The CASA office has already added Despite the many negatives of this year, CASA is getting



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tailored plan to manage his course load and save up for a car. Namkha's biggest piece of advice is "be persistent with connecting with your CASA kid. Everyone has their walls up and some are a lot higher than others. What worked for me was constantly showing that I was making him a priority. I also made sure that I followed through, with whatever I said or promised to portray how reliable I was. I feel this

She made him curious and concerned about displaced children, which led him to wonder about how foster care was in Merced County. On the drive home after that talk, a CASA sign serendipitously hung.

volunteering. Namkha prides himself on being a positively exuberant person. Volunteering in the ER has taught him a great deal about how a positive outlook can uplift someone experiencing seriously unfortunate circumstances. A good attitude is contagious and it helps in all sorts of situations.

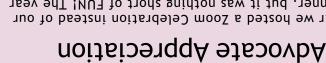
been drawn to the outdoors (hiking, snowboarding, and swimming). He is currently pursing his Master's

Namkha grew up in Folsom, Ca where he spent most of his childhood being a competitive swimmer and a developing pianist. He enjoyed playing all kinds of sports and traveling with his family within and outside of the United States. Namkha has always had an adventurous spirit; he has always

Namkha became an advocate from a coincidental series of events. He was talking to a friend

who was passionate about the unfortunate circumstances that children in the foster care system faced.

Department Volunteer Program Coordinator at Mercy Medical Center and this will be his 7th year Degree in Quantitative and Systems Biology at UC Merced. Outside of school, he is the Emergency



our foster youth. But, our amazing Advocates have not 2020 has been a difficult time for everyone, especially usual dinner, but it was nothing short of FUN! The year This year we hosted a Zoom Celebration instead of our

were still so excited to be able to celebrate with we could not enjoy each others company in-person, we support and advocate for their kiddos. Even though let COVID-19 stand in the way of their promise to

this without them! everyone! We LOVE our Volunteers and could not do

səlim 886,1 382 hours Rita Carlson Lynn Parker Debbie Breth Year: Most Miles Driven: Most Hours Spent: Advocate of the

loin the current group of 163 Voices4CAA members!

VOICES Financial support is needed to recruit, train and supervise advocates. CASA relies on individual and corporate donors and financial partners to make its work possible.

annual donation. We welcome all support. Our VOICES4CASA are asked to support the organization with an

You can help make a difference!



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