

Abong, Sabrina
 Acevedo, Kaitlen
 Acevedo, Krystal
 Aguilar, Marina
 Alshami, Soni
 Alvarado, Colby
 Alvarez, Karolyn
 Arambel, Cynthia
 Arias, Monika
 Aju Diaz, Daisy
 Avila, Isaac
 Barnes, Donna
 Barreno, Albert
 Bartholomew, Candace
 Baylard-Sampson, Maggie
 Benavides, Alma
 Benavides, David
 Bier, Debbie
 Bradley, Jan
 Breth, Debbie
 Callister, Christine
 Cano, Kimberly
 Carlson, Mizhael
 Carlson, Rita
 Castro, Adam
 Cheeks, Corey
 Cheffer, Karen
 Coble, Andrea
 Colbert, Katelynn
 Cortez, Rafael
 Craig, Elaine
 Cuevas, Ana
 Downing, Sonja
 Dyas, Lynda
 Edmiston, Nancy
 Engel, Debbie
 Espinoza, Marlen
 Estrada, Monic
 Fleming, Henrietta
 Foley, Christie
 Fuentes, Diane
 Fuentes, Tony
 Garcia, Paola
 Garcia-Zaragoza, Paola
 Garretson-Merino, Cindy
 Gilliam, Crystal
 Gills, Jessica
 Gittens, Elyse
 Gonzalez, Celeste
 Gonzalez, Yalitz
 Gunter, Terry
 Halpin, Joan
 Hansford, Carissa
 Harcrow, Jolene
 Hargrave, Immanuel
 Harville, Luzie
 Hazlett, Juene
 Hendrickson, Brandon
 Herrera, Shar
 Hewitt, Gwendolyn
 Hoffar, Claudia
 Huff, Violet

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 begins Monday, April 12, 2021

Training Class 34



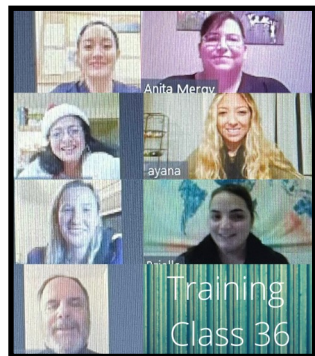
On October 6, 2020, six trainees and three board members from CASA's thirty-fourth training class were sworn in as Court Appointed Special Advocates. Pictures from left to right, starting from the top are Holley Moyes, Karla Seijas, Angela Miller, (Board of Directors) Krystal Acevedo, Judge Proietti, Heather Rushford, Nitza Pagan, Jolene Harcrow, Isaac Avila, & Immanuel Hargrave. Thank you all for your dedication to Merced County Foster Youth.

Training Class 35



On November 24, 2020, five trainees were sworn in from CASA's thirty-fifth training class as Court Appointed Special Advocates. Pictures from left to right, starting from the top are Brandon Hendrickson, Cindy Kelley, Marlen Espinoza, Monika Arias, Judge Proietti, & Donald Bergman. They are a fantastic addition to our group of Volunteers.

Training Class 36



On December 22, 2020, six trainees from CASA's thirty-sixth training class were sworn in as Court Appointed Special Advocates. Pictures from left to right, starting from the top are Laurin Paskin, Anita Mergy, Rhapsodie Altieri, Ayana Nuno, Stephanie Lain, Brielle Procko, & Judge Proietti. We are so excited to welcome these amazing individuals into our organization and look forward to the positive outcomes for their kiddos.

Hurtado, Nereida
 Hyde, Jewel
 Irvin, Sharon
 Jacobs, Tina
 Johnston, Debbi
 Jones, Luwanda
 Jones, Tim

Kalmin, Claudia
 Kelley, Cindy
 Kolb, Tim
 Kuster, Catherine
 Latronica, Jason
 Lawrence, Dondi
 Legg, Debra

Legg, Tomas
 Livingston, Tanya
 Lorenzi, Jan
 Lowrance, Diana
 Maldonado, Julissa
 Marciochi, Helena
 Marciochi, Helena

Marks, Brooke
 Mattoon, Lyssabeth
 Maxey, Steven
 McAndrew, Kimberlie
 McAuley, Kim
 McBride, Michelle
 McKellar, Angela
 Meraz, Caroline
 Minor, Kristine
 Mohn, Catherine
 Morgan, Kay
 Murillo, Karina
 Murphy, Linda
 Nguyen, Namkha
 Nord, Rita
 Ortiz, Angelina
 Osborn, Lynda
 Pagan, Nitza
 Parker, Lynn Kahn
 Parr, Kaitlyn
 Paulo, Jane
 Paz, Ivette
 Piro, Robyn
 Pouncey, Elisa
 Purslow, Barbara
 Quall, Sheila
 Quien, Alane
 Ramirez, Christopher
 Ramirez Sr, Bosco
 Ramsey, Janet
 Reyna-Canales, Jill
 Reynolds, Carolyn
 Reynoso, Vilma
 Rivero, Stephanie
 Robledo, Valerie
 Rushford, Heather
 Sadler, Marge
 Salzberg Kirihara, Judith
 Samuelson, Deborah
 Sanchez, Lisa
 Scoto, Kathy
 Sevilla, Sandie
 Shay, Pat
 Silveira-Miller, Selena
 Smelcer, Erin
 Smith, Dan
 Smith, Karen
 Souza, Stephanie
 Stavrianoudakis, Stacey
 Steed, Casey
 Sullivan, Martin
 Taiby, Zohra
 Thomas, Kristen
 Torres-Pinon, Daisy
 Trujillo, Daisy
 Van Lobensels, Patty
 White, Mary Elizabeth
 Wood, Jan
 Workman, Deborah
 Bergman, Don
 Young Bergman, Nancy
 Zalinski, Jon



I am for the child™

CASA of Merced County

P O Box 2362

Merced, CA 95344

Winter 2021 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 neglected children within the court system.
VOLUNTEER. DONATE. GET INVOLVED.

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Upcoming CASA of Merced County Events:

Monday, 4/12/2021 Training Class 38 Begins

Tuesday, 5/4/2021 CASA Information Session at 12PM

Monday, 5/31/2021 CASA Office closed for Memorial Day

Tuesday, 6/1/2021 CASA Information Session at 12PM

Monday, 6/21/2021 Training Class 39 Begins

Our **VOICES4CASA**

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

You can help make a difference!



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.



Memorials & Honorariums

In Memory of Skip Harris by Stephen & Sharon Wainwright

In Honor of Dr. Sima Asadi by Phil & Carol Hamm

In Memory of Sandra Woolstenhulme Scholl by Bette Woolstenhulme, Nelda Schofield & families

In Memory of Skip Harris by Peter and Marilyn Tinetti

In Honor of Dr. Sima Asadi by Diane Neves

In Memory of Glenda Fagundes by Bette Woolstenhulme & Nelda Schofield

In Memory of James Areias Sr by Robert and Diana Pfitzer

In Honor of Bette Woolstenhulme and Marge Sadler by Karen Albright

In Memory of Loretta Daguerre by Robert and Diana Pfitzer

In Memory of Clarence Cotta by Daniel & Cynthia Arambel

In Memory of Linda Erickson by Jim and Cyndi Roelofs

In Memory of Nello Ferretti by Daniel & Cynthia Arambel

In Memory of Rich Gipson by John and Judith Kirihara

In Memory of Loretta Daquerre by Daniel & Cynthia Arambel

In Honor of Dr. Sima Asadi by David Long & Pamela Whiteley

In Honor of Dr. Sima Asadi by Ruth Wax

In Memory of Elyse Etcheverry by Bill and Eileen Vaughn

In Honor of Dr. Sima Asadi by Al & Shirley Sietsema

In Honor of Dr. Sima Asadi & Staff by Curt and Pamela Royer

In Memory of Skip Harris by Phil & Carl Hamm

In Memory of Paul Thomas Sr. & Todd Thomas by Phyllis Thomas

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Dena Traina

Treasurer
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Executive Director
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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

CASA Notes

Volume 9, Issue 1 Winter 2021

A message to Staff, Volunteers, Donors, and Advocates By Executive Director, Cathie Lancaster



If you had to make a hard decision tomorrow, whom would you turn to? When you are struggling, who is it that you most want to speak to first? When you want to share exciting news, who is the first person you want to call? Most people will answer that it is their family. For many of our foster children, the answer to these questions is simple, "their CASA volunteer!" Sometimes it is important to remember that the best experiences are the basic ones... a relationship you can trust and someone that you can count on. For foster youth, this person is their CASA volunteer. To me, this tells us how important and valued CASA volunteers are.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) make a life-changing difference for children who have experienced abuse or neglect. CASA volunteers are specially trained individuals who speak in the best interest of children in the child welfare system.

When children are placed in foster homes, it is a revolving door of uncertainty and emotions. They are placed in homes with strangers, separated from their family and the only life they have known. Enter their CASA! The advocate stays with the child no matter where they move to, or how often they move, becoming the consistent adult in the child's life.

When an individual signs up to be an advocate, they sometimes have concerns and are frightened. They may have raised children, but being an advocate is a different experience; however, as with their own children they want to do the best they can for their CASA kiddo. When a volunteer becomes a sworn officer of the court, they become the voice of the child, a concerned adult, the eyes for the court and a person that is always 'there' for the child they serve. An advocate is able to tell a child they listen, are in their corner and they positively "help change a child's story!"

The past year this has been a little more challenging than normal, but thanks to our awesome advocates, brilliant board members, dynamic donors, and selfless staff we have continued advocating for foster youth in Merced County. It looks a little different than it has in the past, but we creatively moving forward with the goal to protect and insure each foster child's right to a safe, supportive and permanent home. We have all been resilient during these times and want to find safe and innovative ways to make a difference for the children we serve and we continue to move forward with our mission to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children within the court system.

If you know someone with a caring heart (or maybe that is you) who wants to make a difference in the life of a child, it is never too late to apply. Please consider helping an abused, abandoned and neglected foster youth. If you cannot volunteer, would you sponsor an advocate? Your donation will help recruit and train a volunteer to make a difference in the life of a child.

Thank you for everything you do to help us help children.

- Cathie Lancaster



Rafael moved to Washington State from Mexico at age fifteen. He grew up with a large family and has six brothers and one sister. In order to help support his siblings, Rafael worked in the fields. After graduating High School, Rafael joined the army. In his adult life, Rafael has a wife (who is also a veteran), two children, and four grandchildren. He volunteers with an organization called "Team Rubicon USA" which specializes in responding to natural disasters throughout the U.S. and other countries. He also serves as a strike team leader and deploys when able to; his last deployment was in April 2019. He enjoys reading and his job in Corrections. He is currently attending Sam Houston State University studying criminology; he expects to graduate in the spring of 2021.

Rafael grew up in a home, which unfortunately gave him a long-lasting experience on child abuse. He believes that being a victim of child abuse has made him more resilient and helps him understand the pain that other children endure. Rafael has been with CASA of Merced County since June 2018, but had roughly six years of prior experience working with CASA in North Carolina. He feels that a child with a CASA can learn many tools and skills that would help them be successful in life. CASA's are often the only person a child can trust and we must empower these children to rise up, be strong, independent, and resilient.

Rafael's best advice to someone interested in becoming a Volunteer is, "Be a good listener, don't try to be someone who thinks that all problems will be resolved by one person. It takes a team to help a child. Do not make any promises, be firm, but gently set expectations. Seek guidance from your Peer coordinator and CASA staff." He also adds, "Don't take anything personal. Do not get emotional and too involved. Let the process work, as it should, be professional and respectful at all times, enjoy your work and know that you will be a positive example for someone for life. You are CASA, be proud of the agency and your accomplishments. Remember that there is always someone with the right answer."

EVERY DAY HERO: RAFAEL CORTEZ



VALENTINES GOODIE BAGS



Valentines Day was extra special in the CASA Office! This year we filled goodie bags full of toys and candy for our CASA youth!

Did you know? Today, according to the Greeting Card Association, an estimated 145 million Valentine's Day cards are sent each year, making Valentine's Day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year (more cards are sent at Christmas).

EASTER GOODIE BAGS



Similar to Valentines day, The CASA Office created goodie bags with a fun bunny craft (created by Charity Mocklin), games, toys, and eggs filled with candy for our foster youth. We want to give a special thanks to our volunteers for donating plastic eggs & candy.

Did you know? The worlds largest Easter Egg weighs 5,000 pounds and took 12,000 hours to complete. This 31ft tall egg can be found in Canada.



In support of Child Abuse Awareness month, CASA is selling fabulous t-shirts to raise awareness. Our hope is that everyone who purchases a t-shirt will wear it every Friday in April.

T-shirts are \$25 each and are on sale now!

Please contact the CASA office at 209-722-2272, or email clancaster@mercedcasa.org to purchase a t-shirt.

You can also purchase online at:
<https://mercedcasa.org/donate/>

