

Training Class 41



On Thursday, 1/13/2022 CASA's forty-first training class of twelve trainees were sworn in as Court Appointed Special Advocates. This was our largest class since the start of the pandemic and we were so thrilled! These wonderful individuals will not let anything get in their way when it comes to the safety and wellbeing of children in the Merced County Foster Care System. Starting from the top left and going clockwise, you will see Patrick Curry, Angelina Thompson, Cinthia Garduno, Lou Souza, Karla Medina, Lisa Mendoza, Jessenia Villanueva, Vangie Bennett, Hilaria Santana, Sofia Zamora Delgado, Erin Hestir, Shilpa Khatri, & in the middle, Judge Proietti. Congratulations to you all!!

Learn more about how to become a CASA Volunteer by visiting our website at www.mercedcasa.org or call our office at 209-722-2272.

Our next training class begins Monday, April 25, 2022

Our Everyday Hero's

Abong, Sabrina Acevedo, Krystal	Colbert, Katelynn Cortez, Rafael	Hendrickson, Brandon Herrera, Shar	McAndrew, Kimberlie McAuley, Kim	Reynoso, Vilma Rivero, Stephanie
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Aguilar, Marina Alshami, Sonia Altieri, Rhapsodie Alvarado, Colby Arambel, Cynthia Arias, Monika Aju Diaz, Daisy Avila, Isaac Avila-Vargas, Joseph Barnes, Donna Barreno, Albert Bartholomew, Candace Baylard-Sampson, Maggie Benavides, Alma Benavides, David Bennett, Vangie Bergman, Don Bier, Debbie Bradley, Jan Breth, Debbie Calbert, Brenda Callister, Christine Cano, Kimberly Carlson, Mizhael Carlson, Rita Castro, Adam Cheeks, Corey Coble, Andrea	Craig, Elaine Cuevas, Ana Curry, Patrick Donayre Nolasco, Alba Downing, Sonja Dyas, Lynda Edmiston, Nancy Engel, Debbie Espinoza, Marlen Fleming, Henrietta Foley, Christie Fuentes, Diane Garcia, Salena Garcia-Zaragoza, Paola Garduno, Cinthia Garretson-Merino, Cindy Gilliam, Crystal Gill, Jasjit Gills, Jessica Gittens, Elyse Gonzalez, Celeste Gonzalez, Yalitz Gunter, Terry Guzman, Jorge Halpin, Joan Hansford, Carissa Hargrave, Immanuel Harville, Luzie	Hestir, Erin Hewitt, Gwendolyn Hoffar, Claudia Huff, Violet Hurtado, Nereida Hyatt, Tania Hyde, Jewel Irvin, Sharon Jacobs, Tina Johnston, Debbi Jones, Luwanda Jones, Tim Kalmin, Claudia Kelley, Cindy Khangura, Amrit Khatri, Shilpa Kolb, Tim Kuster, Catherine Latronica, Jason Lawrence, Dondi Legg, Debra Legg, Tomas Lowrance, Diana Marciochi, Helena Marks, Brooke Marquez, Humberto Mattoon, Lyssabeth Maxey, Steven	McBride, Michelle Medina, Karla Mendoza, Lisa Meraz, Caroline Minor, Kristine Morgan, Kay Murphy, Linda Najar Perez, Debbie Nguyen, Namkha Nord, Rita Ortiz, Angelina Osborn, Lynda Pagan, Nitza Parker, Hannah Parker, Lynn Kahn Parr, Kaitlyn Paulo, Jane Payne, Sarah Piro, Robyn Pouncey, Elisa Purslow, Barbara Quall, Sheila Quien, Alane Ramirez, Christopher Ramirez Sr, Bosco Ramsey, Janet Reyna-Canales, Jill Reynolds, Carolyn	Robledo, Valerie Sadler, Marge Salzberg Kirihara, Judith Samuelson, Deborah Sanchez, Lisa Santana, Hilaria Scoto, Kathy Shay, Pat Silva, Joanna Silveira-Miller, Selina Smelcer, Erin Smith, Dan Smith, Karen Solis, Amanda Solis, Lindsey Souza, Lou Souza, Stephanie Stavrianoudakis, Stacey Steed, Casey Sullivan, Martin Taiby, Zohra Thomas, Kristen Thompson, Angelina Torres-Pinon, Daisy Torres, Krysteen Trevino, Crystal Trujillo, Daisy Van Lobensels, Patty
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I am for the child™

CASA of Merced County

P O Box 2362

Merced, CA 95344

Winter 2022 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.
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Upcoming CASA of Merced County Events:

Saturday, 4/9/2022	Week of the Young Child Event - Applegate Park
Monday, 4/25/2022	Training Class 43 begins
Tuesday, 5/3/2022	CASA Information Session via Zoom
Monday, 5/30/2022	CASA Office closed for Memorial Day
Tuesday, 6/7/2022	CASA Information Session via Zoom



Join the current group of **Voices4CASA** members!

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

You can help make a difference!



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 Honor of Bette Woolstenhulme by Brandy Lalouche

In Memory of Ron Wolff by Cathie Lancaster

In Memory of Buddy by Cathie Lancaster

In Memory of Larry Morse by Bette Woolstenhulme & Grey Roberts

In Memory of Kathy Hassett by Bette Woolstenhulme & Grey Roberts

In Memory of Laurel Eyrich by Mike & Pauline Cuchna

In Memory of Ron Wolff by Jim & Dana Kanabay

In Memory for John Lewis by Herky and Jayne Gonsalves

In Memory of Jerry O'Banion by Roger and Laurel Pruitt

In Honor of Judith & Randy Partch by Mary Camper

In Honor of Kayla Zolinski & Chris Randolph by Mary Camper

In Honor of Gail Brann by LOF Preschool Parents

In Memory of AliJaye Smith by Cathie, Ryan and Chelsea Lancaster

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CASA Notes

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



We just celebrated the first day of spring. To me this is always a beautiful time with longer days, warmer weather and a sense of new beginnings.

Spring is also a busy time for extracurricular activities, spring break, summer vacation planning, and more. We recently observed Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day, and many kids had fun in school sharing valentines, wearing green, making leprechaun traps, and possibly searching for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Easter is just around the corner bringing family traditions of dressing up to attend church, coloring eggs and a receiving a basket full of treats from the Easter Bunny.

Spring is certainly in the air, but for some foster children, so is a feeling of depression, a feeling of missing the joys of spring. At the CASA office, we hear countless stories of foster children having to quit an extracurricular activity because of lack of transportation or not having funds to participate. We even hear stories of foster children not having valentines to pass out to friends or not having green to wear on St. Patrick's Day or not being able to celebrate Easter.

While all of these things may seem like a blip on the radar to some of us, it can quickly become overwhelming to a youth when it happens repeatedly. Especially when they are also learning to live without their family and their own traditions.

One of the roles of a CASA volunteer is to help the child navigate their new world, the small stuff as well as the large stuff. Someone to know if they have valentines to pass out, notice when a green shirt is missing from a closet, when a recent move in placement makes it harder to attend a sports practice or when any form of a celebration will not take place. Our CASA volunteers are creative, can do people! I cannot tell you how many times I have heard imaginative and quick solutions that our CASA volunteers have come up with in situations like these. It is truly heartwarming and brings joy to all of us here in the CASA office.

As we move into this season of hope, I would like to express to all of our CASA volunteers how grateful we are for their service. All of your small acts of kindness add up to big acts of happiness for kids who need it most.

To our donors, your contribution, no matter the size, contribute to changing a child's life! You make it possible to recruit and train our CASA volunteers. Thank you!

CASA has Face Masks

In partnership with Famous Footwear, Ticket to Dream Foundation sent a shipment of Sof Sole masks to CASA of Merced County. The boxes were filled with 3-pack masks in assorted patterns and solids for CASA's foster youth and non-minor dependents.

Thank-you Famous Footwear and Ticket to Dream!



Brenda is a Merced native who was raised on a dairy farm with her two brothers and two sisters. She loved the country life with horses, wide-open spaces and lots of freedom. She was active in 4-H where she showed cows and baked goods in the Merced County Fair. Brenda loves to travel and before COVID and becoming an advocate, she was on the road or in the air a few times each month. Throughout the 2000's, she retired, obtained a private pilot's license and an airplane and flew throughout North America. She does not have the plane now, but she does continue to plan getaways. Brenda is a widower and a mother to two adult sons. She lives in a retirement community; she enjoys writing, knitting, and reading. She also enjoys taking classes through Merced playhouse and she is part of a readers' theatre where she lives.

After Brenda first heard of CASA, she was very interested, but the words, "court appointed" scared her. Once she had more time to learn about the organization and had a friend who was involved, she thought maybe it was the right time to join herself. Brenda was always looking for a meaningful and purposeful way to spend her time, and so she has been a CASA since September 2021. CASA provides so many resources for the child individually and provides a hub to connect all the many efforts of many people that are working for the child so that the CASA can make sense of what is going and communicate that to the child. The CASA provides a quiet time, a place for just the child. My kiddo lives with nine other people with no quiet time available so she appreciates and values time just for her and her enjoyment. The child's life has been chaotic and confusing. CASA provides consistency and dependability with a person who is not judgmental nor has another agenda.

Anytime Brenda and her kiddo go to a concert, hit golf balls, get lunch, or simply hang out at Barnes & Noble, her kiddo's eyes sparkle and she cannot wait to go. At an event at the college, her kiddo could not contain herself and she exclaimed, "This is amazing. I can now have the life I want!" Brenda's advice to new advocates is, "do not hesitate to share your experiences with your CASA PC and advocate coordinator. Ask many questions. Set up good communication with the foster parents (this make take time, but totally worth it). Celebrate that you are making a difference and enjoy your life, too".

EVERY DAY HERO: BRENDA CALBERT



In support of Child Abuse Prevention 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/>



CASA in the news - ABC 30

Did you see that CASA of Merced County was in the news? In an attempt to increase the numbers of advocates due to the alarming number of children entering foster care, CASA introduced TeamCASA! TeamCASA is the term used for individuals who go through the Advocate Training and take on a CASA case together. We advertised and encouraged every day citizens to team up with a spouse, family member, friend, neighbor, or coworker and head to the CASA office to attend an information session and sign up for the training. ABC 30 saw our TeamCASA ad's and wanted to report on it in order to help spread the word!

"Valley residents can take action by making a difference in the lives of hundreds of children in foster care."

A local group is looking for volunteers to help a record number of kids navigate our local court system. Court Appointed Special Advocates, or CASA, of Merced County, work with abused and neglected children to get them on a path to a better life. Right now, CASA of Merced County says there are more than 800 kids needing guidance, and that number is only increasing. The executive director said this is the highest number of children in the last three years. In response, the organization is kicking off the Team CASA Campaign. It encourages people to volunteer in teams to take part in training to become an advocate.

"When we read the case files, it is shocking some of the things that go on in these children's lives. It is just terrible. It is a wonderful thing for a child to have an advocate step in and be the person in their life that is there for them. One young man celebrated his 18th birthday with his only advocate. If not for the advocate, he would have celebrate alone. This advocate truly made a difference not only on his birthday but also in his life!" said executive director Cathie Lancaster.

