

CASA Notes

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A Member of the National CASA Association

Message from the Executive Director

This is my first article as Executive Director at CASA of Merced County. I am very excited to be a part of this awesome organization. Six months ago, when I retired from AT&T after 38+ years I would not have dreamed I would be in this position. I was looking for something to do in retirement; Elisa Pouncey a friend and advocate always spoke highly of CASA and enjoyed working with her CASA kiddo. At her recommendation, I applied to be an advocate. Timing is everything as they say; I submitted my application the beginning of January and was able to join the class starting at the end of the month. Listening to Debbi and the guest speakers during training I thought, "This would be a great place to work." During training an Advocate Coordinator position became available. I was not sure I was ready to start working again but with the encouragement of Debbi Johnston I applied for the job, went through the interview process and was hired. I was very nervous my first day at CASA, the job was like nothing I had done at AT&T; but it did not take long to feel very welcomed by the staff and realize CASA was a great place to work. Little did I know at the time that both Debbi and Shar would be retiring. I decided I enjoyed working at CASA so much that when I heard Shar was retiring I decided to apply for her position and the rest as they say is history. Shar, Debbi and the Board of Directors have built an excellent program at CASA. I feel like I have been entrusted with a precious gift and I want to continue to grow the organization. My vision is to continue in the path that has been created by Shar. I would like to make CASA a household word and increase the number of Advocates we have in the hopes that every child in foster care will be able to have a CASA of their own. I will continue to build on the great relationships that Shar has worked very hard to establish in the community. Shar was very patient working with me in May, but I still have a lot to learn. Karen Smith is a great Associate Director and has a lot of patience helping me now that I have officially assumed the role of Executive Director. Along with Karen's expertise and that of the rest of the staff (David, Jennika, Tammy and Heather) as well as our wonderful volunteers CASA will continue to grow and help foster children have a better life in Merced County. During the last few months, in addition to myself, we have had a few new employees join the staff; if you have not met Heather, Jennika, or myself please stop in and say hi. This year we have added 18 volunteer advocates to our CASA family (4 of which became employees). If you are interested in finding out how you can join us in making a difference for children in foster care, please call our office or go to our website at MercedCASA.org.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIFE OF A CHILD.

Sincerely,

Cathie Lancaster
Executive Director
CASA of Merced County



Spotlight on an advocate



Kay moved to Merced from Iowa when she was three years old. She has been here ever since. Her parents made raising their children their priority. Her mother was her best friend with whom she did everything. Dad was a mechanic and taught both her brothers the mechanic trade. He had a very kind heart for the less fortunate.

Kay has two children. Her son works for the McSwain school district. Her daughter works in admissions in the emergency room at the hospital. Kay gets to spend quality time with both her children. They loved to go camping when the kids were young; they had a lot of family time together. Kay has a grandson with whom she has spent much time. Her grandson has a child; Kay gets to take care of him one day a week. He melts her heart!

Kay retired three years ago and had a lot of free time on her hands. What she missed most was the personal relationships she had with all her staff. She really enjoyed mentoring them. Kay wanted to volunteer for an organization that had to do with children. She saw an ad in the newspaper about CASA and called immediately. After that call, she felt it was just what she was looking for. She



has been a CASA for 3 years and she loves everything about it!

Her first CASA kids were both autistic and didn't speak. They could understand everything she said, and they soon learned to communicate. Kay loved going to their school; they wanted to show

her everything they were doing. They were the teacher's best students. Their grandmother adopted them.

Kay's current CASA child is wonderful to be around. They trust and respect each other's feelings and they make each other laugh. She loved taking her to the Bubble Show in Modesto. Kay shared, "It was fun to watch her laugh and have a good time."

The advice Kay would give to a new advocate would be to really listen to your child. Sometimes they give little clues to how they really feel about what is happening to them. It's easy to take them out and have a good time, but to really get to know them they have to feel comfortable and trust you enough to open their heart to you.

**A CASA VOLUNTEER
MAKES A DIFFERENCE!**



THANK YOU ADVOCATES AND VOLUNTEERS!

Jewel Acosta	Jacqueline Cook	Cathy Keegan	Lydia Pasillas	Selena Silveira-Miller
Christina Aguirre	Jerry Lou Davis	Cathie Lancaster	Jane Paulo	Nadine Smaby
Faria Alamkhel	Lynda Dyas	Tanya Livingston	Robyn Piro	Erin Smelcer
Tammy Alvarez	Nancy Edmiston	Justin Lopes	Elisa Pouncey	Karen Smith
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Cynthia Arambel	Taylor Fugere-Cale	Teresa Martinez	Sarah Reel	Jennika Uribe
Yvette Arroyo	Jessica Garcilazo	John Matzenbacher	Heather Reyes	Patty van Lobensels
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Jan Bradley	Skip Harris	Stan Mollart	Judy Rose	Jon Zalinski
Brenda Bravo	Juene Hazlett	Kay Morgan	Marge Sadler	
Karri Brazel	Diane Hockersmith	Linda Murphy	Judith Salzberg	
Rita Carlson	Caitlin Imelio	Karina Murillo	Ernee Sanchez	
Jalissa Chambers	Ashley Johnson	Rita Nord	Kathy Scoto	
Youa Chang	Debbi Johnston	Blanca Ojeda	Kayla Serratto	
Susan Chappell	Veda Jones	Lynda Osborn	Pat Shay	
Karen Cheffer	Claudia Kalmin	Ashley Otani	Julie Sickenger	



A CASA Adoption Story

When Frankie was five he came to school with bruises and burns on his little body. The school called the authorities who questioned Frankie about what had happened to him. Frankie let them know that his dad had burned him, hit him and yelled, "I am going to kill you." The Human Services Agency placed Frankie in a wonderful foster home where he would be safe. One of our wonderful CASA advocates took this case and started an amazing journey with Frankie. The Agency also set in motion a plan with parenting classes and an anger management program for the father so he would be able to have Frankie returned to him. After 18 months, on June 23rd, Frankie was returned to his father on "Family Maintenance" where the social worker would still be involved.

On September 25th, the father let the social worker know that he could not handle Frankie anymore, "I tried, but I can't so I will sign him over to you guys." Frankie was just 7 years old. Frankie went to another foster home. The one constant in his life was Jean, his wonderful CASA. Jean worked diligently with the school to help get Frankie academically in line with his peers. Jean actually took on the education rights for Frankie.

Frankie went into foster care again. In three months he was moved to yet another foster home. These foster parents fell in love with Frankie. He had a loving home with chickens, goats and dogs. The agency and CASA collaborated tirelessly to make this Frankie's "forever home." A year and a half later Frankie was adopted by this loving family and he became one of three brothers. He enjoys fishing, camping, basketball and tennis. He is doing well in school and has received several awards for academics and behavior. A happy ending for a very deserving young boy.

Message from the Board President

Dear CASA Supporters,

A lot has happened at Merced CASA since our last newsletter. We had the most successful ever CASA CUP-A Night at the Races fundraiser on April 1st. The evening was well attended by close to 400 CASA supporters. The event cleared approximately \$85,000! We are so grateful for the generosity of all our supporters. THANK YOU to everyone who contributed to our fundraiser. Your ongoing commitment allows us to continue our work promoting the health and wellbeing of foster children in Merced County.

Perhaps the most exciting news is we have hired Cathie Lancaster as our new Executive Director. Cathie is a native of Winton, California. She comes to us with a Master's in Business Administration and almost 39 years of organizational experience at AT&T, most recently as a Senior Business Manager. We discovered Cathie when she came to the CASA office to be an Advocate. Following training she was hired as an Advocate Coordinator. Her demonstrated expertise in management and friendly personality led to her successful bid for the Executive Director position.

After six plus years of superb leadership Shar Herrera has retired. However, she is still providing training and guidance to the office staff as we transition to a new administration! I am very impressed with the work and cooperation of all the office staff to keep everything going as usual as we change leadership. I feel confident that CASA will continue to grow and be a strong force in protecting the rights and lives of foster children. Please remember that we cannot do our work without the community support that we continue to appreciate on a daily basis.

Bette Woolstenhulme, President
Merced CASA Board of Directors

JOIN

CASA relies on individual and corporate volunteers 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, including volunteers who can donate time for even just a few hours throughout the year.



Join the current group of 163 **VOICES4CASA**.

Call our office or go to www.MercedCASA.org

You can help make a difference!

Memorials & Honorariums

In Honor of Dorothy Menezes

Mike, Mary Ann & Jack Charters

Save the Date
CASA Casino Night
Los Banos O'Banion Auditorium
September 9, 2017



Court Appointed Special Advocates
of Merced County Presents:

CASINO NIGHT

GAMES & MUCH MORE



SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER
9TH
2017

LOS BANOS
FAIRGROUNDS
O'BANION BUILDING
6:00 pm

TICKETS

\$50

Per Person

\$800

To Reserve a table for 8

TO PURCHASE TICKETS:

MercedCASA.org/casinonight
or by calling the following
CASA of Merced County
(209) 722-CASA
Carol (209) 761-6600
Diane (209) 704-0369

Delicious Food Stations Provided By:
The Kitchen at The Mission, Espanas, M&M Italian Restaurant,
Pimentel's Kreative Katering and Baskin Robbins
No Host Bar

CASA serves children in the Merced County Foster Care System
What greater purpose could there be? Thank you for your generosity.

