

Are you interested in becoming a CASA volunteer and changing the life of a child in foster care?



Learn more by attending an Information Session. Sign up TODAY on our website or contact our Office!

www.mercedcasa.org/volunteer
209-722-CASA (2272)

Congratulations Class 33!

Pictured left to right
starting from the top:



Nancy Young-Bergman, Catherine Parr, Angelina Ortiz, Kaitlyn Kuster, Judge Proietti, Celeste Gonzales, Zohra Taiby, Daisly Diaz, Michael Wong, Bosco Ramirez Sr., & Kristen Thomas.

On June 29, 2020, ten trainees from CASA's thirty-third training class made history by being sworn in as Court Appointed Special Advocates via Zoom! The dedicated trainees waited almost 3 months before they were able to be sworn in. Our graduates completed 30 hours of training, 5 hours of courtroom observation, multiple background checks, reference checks and fingerprints. These wonderful community citizens will soon begin advocating for foster youth in Merced County. They have made a minimum commitment of 18 months to the child they will serve.

Thank you CASA Volunteers for never giving up on our Foster Youth in Merced County

- Abong, Sabrina
- Acevedo, Kaitlen
- Aguilar, Marina
- Alshami, Sonia
- Alvarado, Colby
- Alvarez, Carolyn
- Arambel, Cynthia
- Aju Diaz, Daisly
- 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
- Checks, Corey
- Cheffer, Karen
- Coble, Andrea
- Colbert, Katelynn
- Cortez, Rafael
- Craig, Elaine
- Cuevas, Ana
- Downing, Sonja
- Dyas, Lynda
- Aguilar, Marina
- Edmiston, Nancy
- Engel, Debbie
- Alvarado, Colby
- Estrada, Monic
- Fleming, Henrietta
- Foley, Christie
- Fuentes, Diane
- Fuentes, Tony
- Garcia, Paola
- Garretson-Merino, Cindy
- Gill, Jessica
- Gittens, Elyse
- Gonzalez, Celeste
- Gonzalez, Yalitza
- Gunter, Terry
- Halpin, Joan
- Hurtado, Nereida
- Huff, Violet
- Minor, Kristine
- 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
- Pouncey, Elisa
- Parr, Kaitlyn
- Paulo, Jane
- Lawrence, Dondi
- Legg, Debra
- Legg, Tomas
- Gills, Jessica
- Gittens, Elyse
- Livingston, Tanya
- Lorenzi, Jan
- Lowrance, Dian
- Maldonado, Julissa
- Marciocchi, Helena
- Ramirez Sr, Bosco
- Marks, Brooke
- Mattoon, Lyssabeth
- Reyna-Canales, Jill
- Young Bergman, Nancy
- Zalinski, Jon
- Reynolds, Carolyn
- Reynoso, Vilma
- Rivero, Stephanie
- Robledo, Valerie
- Sadler, Marge
- Salzberg Kirihara, Judith
- Mohr, Catherine
- Morgan, Kay
- Murillo, Karina
- Murphy, Linda
- Ngyuen, Namkha
- Nord, Rita
- Ortiz, Angelina
- Osborn, Lynda
- Parker, Lynn Kahn
- Kolb, Tim
- Kuster, Catherine
- Latronica, Jason
- Lawrence, Dondi
- Legg, Debra
- Legg, Tomas
- Gill, Jessica
- Gittens, Elyse
- Livingston, Tanya
- Lorenzi, Jan
- Lowrance, Dian
- Maldonado, Julissa
- Marciocchi, Helena
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- Zalinski, Jon
- Reynolds, Carolyn
- Reynoso, Vilma
- Rivero, Stephanie
- Robledo, Valerie
- Sadler, Marge
- Salzberg Kirihara, Judith
- Huff, Violet
- Hurtado, Nereida
- Hyde, Jewel
- Irvin, Sharon
- Jacobs, Tina
- Johnston, Debbi
- Jones, Luwanda
- Jones, Tim
- Kalmín, Claudia
- Kolb, Tim
- Kuster, Catherine
- Latronica, Jason
- Lawrence, Dondi
- Legg, Debra
- Legg, Tomas
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- Sadler, Marge
- Salzberg Kirihara, Judith

Upcoming CASA of Merced County Events:

Friday, 7-31-2020	Kona Ice Fundraiser
Monday, 8-3-2020	Training Class 34 begins
Monday, 9-7-2020	CASA Office Closed for Labor Day
Monday, 9-14-2020	Training Class 35 begins

Look out for an invitation to our 2020 CASA Norevent Fundraiser

Join our group!
Our VOICES4CASA are asked to support the organization with an annual donation. We welcome all support. 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. and financial partners to make its work possible. needed to recruit, train and supervise advocates.



Memorials & Honorariums

- In Memory of Anne Groefsema Hurd*
Mike Stearns & Anne Willis
- In Honor of Dorothy Meneses*
Dominic & Sally Carlucci
- In Honor of Dorothy Meneses*
Anthony & Diane Neves
- In Memory of Elyse Etcheverry*
Maurice & Carol Etcheverry
- In Honor of Bette Woolstenhulme & Marge Sadler*
Rick & Karen Albright
- In Memory of Anne Hurd*
Dean & Linda Marques (MARFAB)
- In Memory of Carol Zavala*
Mary Ann Post
- In Honor of Brian McCabe*
Mary Camper
- In Memory of Elyse Etcheverry*
Harry & Debbie Fawcett
- In Honor of Adria Sargent*
Teresa Saldivar-Morse
- In Memory of Elyse Etcheverry*
Bette Woolstenhulme & Grey Roberts
- In Honor of Sandra Stevens*
Steve & Victoria Gomes
- In Memory of Elyse Etcheverry*
Maurice & Carol Etcheverry
- In Memory of Elyse Etcheverry*
Mary Ann Post & Joan Van-Deelen
- In Honor of Dorothy Meneses*
Mike & Katherine Crinklaw
- In Memory of Elyse Etcheverry*
Maurice & Carol Etcheverry



If you would like to make a donation in Honor or Memory of a special someone who has impacted your life, please use the enclosed donation envelope to submit your gift.



CASA of Merced County
P O Box 2362
Merced, CA 95344

Follow us on Social Media!
Spring 2020 CASA Notes Newsletter



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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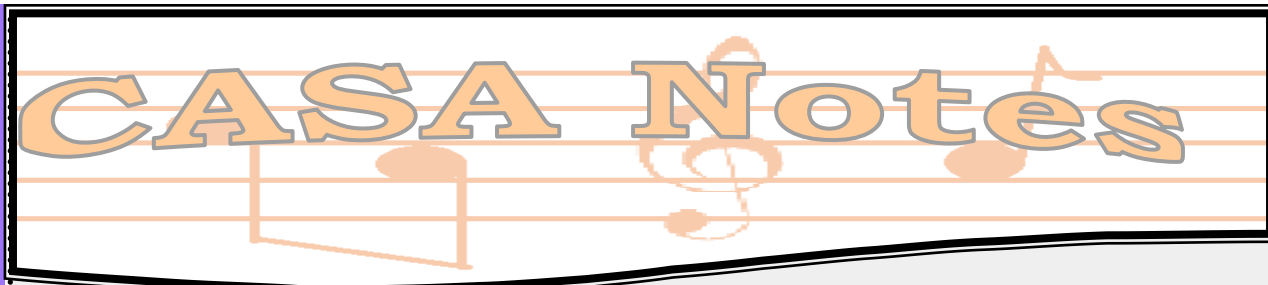
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Volume 8, Issue 2 Spring 2020

A message from our Executive Director, Cathie Lancaster



Friends of CASA,

2020 promised to be an exciting year for CASA of Merced County. We were looking forward to celebrating our TENTH anniversary of serving foster children in Merced County, planning two in person fundraising events, taking our CASA youth on fun summer adventures and training new Advocates. In what seemed like an instant, our work schedules, our social lives, so many of the patterns and rituals that make up our daily lives changed. We were thrown into a crisis, and we felt scared—for ourselves and for our loved ones. Everything changed. We had to quickly become a remote work force to comply with state and CDC guidelines. We knew we could make it work and we have. We are still here every day to support our volunteers who are on the front lines of social work, making sure our kids are safe.

The children we serve, all victims of abuse and neglect, experience a similar sense of fear with the chaos of sudden change. Sadly, the stress is often woven into the fabric of their young lives, creating patterns that may define their future, their story. Imagine if you can how you would feel if, in the middle of this pandemic, you were told that you could not live with the person you love, that your new home would be with strangers in a different city, and maybe your siblings would be in a different home in a different town.

This is the crisis our children deal with every day, often for years, before a sense of calm is finally restored. This is their reality, and this fear has affected more than 600 children in Merced County!

Even COVID-19 cannot stop our mission to assure a safe, nurturing home for all abandoned, abused and/or neglected foster youth by providing a highly trained volunteer to advocate for them in the court system. Our volunteers have continued with their regular visits, even though they look a little bit different right now. Volunteers have learned how to use Zoom, FaceTime or Skype to communicate with their kiddos as well as calling and texting. They have learned to play games and do craft projects over the phone. Some are even having "socially-distant" conversations from across the lawn. Through the entire crisis, CASA volunteers have had their eyes on the kids.

While I cannot say that I am surprised by the unwavering dedication our volunteers have to the children they serve, I will say that I am so thankful we have a committed group of over 100 volunteers who have been fiercely advocating for children throughout this pandemic. I am so grateful for their steadfast commitment.

Thanks to you our wonderful supporters, most of these children do not have to face this crisis alone. CASA of Merced County has advocated for over 100 children in 2020. We hope we can count on you to continue your support of CASA this year, just as we count on CASA volunteers to continue their advocacy. Even the COVID-19 pandemic cannot stop our volunteers from making sure their CASA children are cared for in a safe environment, and have what they need to thrive.

In this time of uncertainty, there is hope - that together we can do extraordinary things. We know we are in this together, with our neighbors, family, friends, co-workers and that brings some comfort. It is a crisis, but we will get through it together.

During a time when so much is unknown, I realize you must have plenty on your mind. It is not easy to ask you to also think of the hundreds of children we serve every year. However, I am asking, for them, for every child we are serving today, and for the children on our waiting list. Each of them has a story, and we want them to be safe through their crises. CASA will be there for these children because of, and thanks to our generous donors. Please consider making a gift today and help CASA help many more children.

If you are interested in becoming an Advocate and helping foster youth, please contact the CASA office at 209-722-2272 or visiting our website www.mercedcasa.org.

Spotlight on an Advocate: Janet Ramsey



Janet grew up in a small town in southern Illinois, called Sparta. She lived in Sparta until 1992, when she transferred to World Color Merced (currently Quad Graphics) as an Account Manager. Janet is an active member in her community. She is Director in the Greater Merced Kiwanis Club, while also volunteering at Kiddieland in Applegate Park. She also enjoys volunteering as an usher at Playhouse Merced and Merced Theater.

Janet works as a substitute Campus Supervisor for the Atwater School District. In her spare time, she enjoys going to movies and visiting other retirees. She is a mother of two adult children, as well as a grandmother to two teenage children. Her granddaughter is attending college and her grandson is about to be a senior in High School.

Janet joined CASA after reading an article in the local newspaper. She was drawn to become an advocate after seeing that there was such a great need for supportive adults to work with foster youth.

Today, Janet enjoys supporting the CASA Staff at the many functions and events they host. Witnessing the joy on the faces of the children and the advocates when they all come together brings true happiness to Janet.

For a child to know that a caring person is always there supporting, encouraging and mentoring them is one of the reasons CASA is so important for our foster youth. Janet is a caring, outgoing, compassionate individual who is willing to support the organization and the child. These are just a few qualities that make a wonderful CASA Volunteer.

Janet says, "My advice to a new advocate visiting their youth for the first time would be to realize they are going through a very traumatic time and to demonstrate a willingness to show them that you are there for them by conveying a genuine concern for their wellbeing by smiling and listening to them." She also advises new volunteers to be themselves; try to make your new relationship with the child as comfortable for them as possible. The children will open up to you in their own time.

CASA thanks Country Fair Cinnamon Rolls & Catering!

During the month of June, the Merced County Fair hosted Fair Food Friday. Vendors set up at the fair ground and sold delicious fair food such as corn dogs, cotton candy, kettle corn, slushies, funnel cake and cinnamon rolls.



CASA would like to thank **Country Fair Cinnamon Rolls & Catering** out of Oakhurst. They were one of the delicious vendors that participated in Fair Food Friday's. They donated \$900 of their profits to CASA! At a time when everyone is struggling to keep their business open, their families safe and life as normal as possible, it is wonderful to be the recipient of an act of kindness! Thanks to Country Fair Cinnamon Rolls & Catering, CASA is able to help put smiles on the face of our kiddos, the abandoned, abused and neglected foster youth in Merced County!

Thank you to our Anonymous Donor!

CASA of Merced County has continuously built on its strong foundation to recruit, train and support dedicated and committed volunteer advocates and our success depends upon recruiting volunteer Advocates to serve the more than 600 foster children in Merced County.

We believe human connection has the power to change lives. Our work advocating for children who are in the protective care of the court draws its strength from the incredible individuals in our community who step forward - in good times and bad - to let our most vulnerable population of children know that they are not alone.

Merced CASA depends on the generosity of the community for financial support. This year two annual fund raisers (one

in Merced and one in Los Banos) have been cancelled due to COVID-19. As with many other businesses, the loss of funding brings concern. CASA was very blessed this year and last year by an extremely generous anonymous donor. We received a donation of \$15,000. The timing could not have been better. Even COVID-19 cannot stop our mission to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children within the court system by providing a highly trained volunteer to advocate for them. The \$15,000 donation helps us to continue to provide well-trained Advocates for the abandoned, abused and neglected foster youth in Merced County.

It is our hope our wonderful and generous anonymous donor receives our newsletter so he or she can see how much we appreciate this wonderful act of kindness and generosity!

