



Spotlight on an Advocate: Kathy Scoto



Kathy Scoto is a born and raised Merced local who is committed to her community. Kathy learned the importance of helping others from her mother's selfless acts. "My mom was a nurse and taught my brother and me early on about compassion, giving, and helping others."

Kathy and her husband of 32 years, Joe, are high school sweethearts. They have two children, a 29 year-old son and a 25 year-old daughter. While her husband is out running the farm, Kathy enjoys staying busy in the community. In addition to being an Advocate, Kathy also volunteers with Make a Wish, Catholic Charities and the Farm Bureau's various functions. In her spare time, Kathy enjoys gardening.

Kathy has been a CASA Volunteer since March 2017. She wanted to become an advocate to give back to those less fortunate and give friendship to a child who needs a constant support person in his or her life. Kathy's most memorable moment with her CASA youth was holding her hand and coaching her as she delivered her baby. Kathy shared, "I cried for her and her strength and trust she had in me to help guide her through this process and for the beautiful baby and the journey she will be on." Kathy affirms that she will always be there, no matter what the problem, behavior or situation is.

"My best advice for new advocates is to really remember that these children have many people coming in and out of their lives. So sometimes, keep it light and easy with a little hug to break the ice, or a compliment that might put a smile on a child's little face. These kiddos' lives are so turned upside down with different placements, different social workers, and different foster parents that a CASA's constant support, even just an hour a week, can make a difference."

Kathy Scoto received the 2018 Advocate of the Year Award in recognition of her advocacy services for her CASA youth. Kathy has been the consistent adult in her CASA child's life since March of 2017. She has advocated for mental health assessments to promote emotional well-being. She has diffused many tough situations and been a voice of reason. Though her youth has been moved to various placements, even sometimes to different cities and counties, Kathy has remained consistent to her CASA youth. Some of Kathy's greatest strengths are her motivation, positive attitude and determination. Thank you Kathy for your service and dedication to abused and neglected children in our community!

A Message from the Executive Director

Dear CASA Supporters,

It is not pleasant to think that child abuse and neglect is happening at this moment in our beautiful community, but sadly, it is. Right now, there are over 120 CASA volunteers advocating for over 150 of our community's most vulnerable children. I wish that number were zero; there are over 600 children in foster care. I am glad that CASA is able to provide volunteers to advocate for the abused and neglected children in foster care. It has taken years of growth to get to this point and we cannot slow down. Each week, more children are added to our waiting list. They come from homes where there is drug abuse, mental health issues, violence, and the list goes on. The thing that keeps me awake at night is the story we do not know, when there is no volunteer for a child. Therefore, we will keep our efforts strong and respond as needed so that in the future every child has the benefit of an advocate.

It's June! This is the time for Grads and Dads! Sadly, many of the foster youth in Merced County do not celebrate either graduation or Father's Day. Did you know that only 10% of high school seniors who are foster youth go on to college? Of that 10%, only 2% graduate from college. CASA of Merced County knows that foster youth do better with an Advocate! We are proud to share that we have 5 foster youth in college, one of whom is graduating with an Associate's Degree and transferring on to a 4 year university to earn a Bachelor's Degree! This school year we have 9 seniors in high school who have Advocates and every one of them will be graduating from high school! A huge thank you to our wonderful Advocates for helping their kiddos and a big applause to the students for persevering when at times it felt like the world was against you. We know our volunteers make a difference; we see it every day and our graduating seniors are only one of the ways we know Advocates make a difference.

If you are a CASA volunteer reading this - THANK YOU! If you know a CASA volunteer, I hope you will join me in thanking them! They are heroes in our community doing critical work every day. If you are a CASA donor - THANK YOU - we cannot do our work without your support.

Together, we all make a difference!

Thanks,
Cathie Lancaster
Executive Director

