

*Celebrating 25 Years  
of Service*



**CASA**

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
**FOR CHILDREN**

**OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY**



**OUR MISSION:** CASA is a child's voice in dependency court, providing advocacy, stability, and hope to children who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned.

## Financials

### Statement of Activities

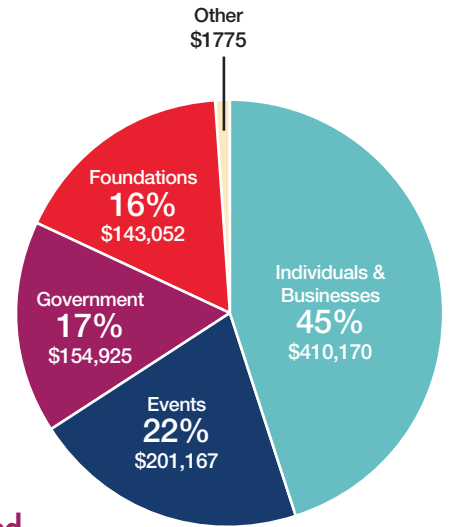
July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017

Gross Revenue .....	\$911,089*
Expenses .....	\$1,053,688
Planned use of Reserves .....	\$142,599

\*audited financial available upon request

### Your Support Makes a Difference

We count on the continued support of our generous donors, foundations and corporations to be the backbone of our successful program.



Income Sources

**84 cents** of every dollar donated goes to services that directly support the advocacy of foster children in Santa Cruz County.



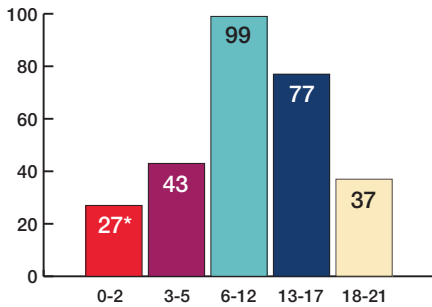
**Percentage of CASA High School Seniors** who completed their high school requirements (compared to less than 50% of all foster youth nationwide)



**Volunteer Information**  
 Volunteer hours ..... **21,958**  
 Inkind Value..... **\$605,821**

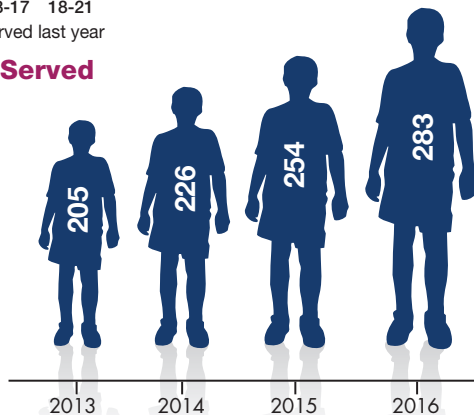
**Total Children Served 283**

**Active CASA Volunteers 264**

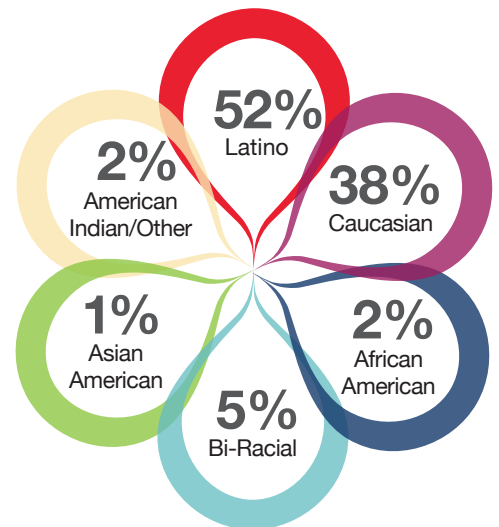


\*compared with 0 children served last year

### Ages of Children Served



**EVERY YEAR** we increase the number of children we serve.



Ethnicity of Children Served

## Outcomes



# A LEGACY: 25 YEARS OF SERVICE AND SUPPORT

Dale Johnson, Cynthia Rees, June Smith, Anne Wyant



As members of CASA's first graduating class of Advocates in 1992, and as current supporters, this amazing group has been with CASA since its inception. They took different paths to CASA – Cynthia and Anne were educators, and wanted to use the skills they acquired over the years. They saw “a wonderful opportunity to continue to serve children, but in a different capacity.” Dale was new to the community, and wanted to meet like-minded people. June heard Judge Black speak at her Rotary Club, and was moved to join the cause. Each of them took a case, and several of them are still in contact with their now-adult, former CASA children.

“There’s been such a change in how Social Workers and Advocates work together. Now, it’s a really strong and supportive team.”

Each has a unique perspective on CASA's development over the past 25 years. Dale said, “There’s been such a change in how Social Workers and Advocates work together. Now, it’s a really strong and supportive team.” They all remember CASA's first tiny office on Water Street. “The Executive Director’s office was so small, you couldn’t close the door!” They marvel at what a gift the CASA house is to the community, and to CASA's children. They said, “It’s really inspiring to see how CASA has grown.”

Twenty-five years after coming to CASA, each is still very involved with the organization, as supporters and donors. They said, “CASA is unique to the community. It’s very clear what the mission is.” As donors to CASA, they all felt that “our donations are changing children’s lives.”

Dale, Cynthia, June and Anne are committed to continuing to support CASA's future. Anne said, “It took a long time to educate the community about what CASA does. Now everyone knows what a wonderful organization it is.” And they all agreed that “the best people in the community are involved with CASA.”



## Serving Birth to 5: **KAREN SKILLICORN**



“Once I was able to understand Tony and his mom’s dynamics, I could help connect mom to helpful resources.”

**K**aren, a fourth-generation Watsonville resident and a RN at Watsonville Community Hospital, has seen first-hand how many families desperately need the resources that will help them and, as Karen said, “get that one step ahead, so they can keep moving forward.” After going through Advocate training, Karen initially thought she would choose to work with a pre-teen girl. But when she read 4-year old “Tony’s” file, she knew he was for her.

Tony was still at home with his mom (a case known as Family Maintenance), but Karen quickly realized she needed to communicate clearly with mom about her role as Tony’s CASA. “Initially, mom thought I was there to provide her time off or daycare. I explained that I was there, first and foremost, to make sure Tony’s needs were being met.” Karen watched the interaction between Tony and his mom. “Once I was able to understand Tony and his mom’s dynamics, I could help connect mom to helpful resources.”

When Tony’s mom relapsed with her substance abuse recovery, Tony was placed with a foster family. Karen stayed with him throughout this process. “Tony had a hard time with all the changes,” Karen said. “While keeping him as my number one priority, it was clear that if I didn’t also support mom in what she needed, she couldn’t provide Tony with what he needed.” Karen connected the family with the appropriate mental health services, and helped enroll him with a former daycare center that offered him safety and familiarity in an everchanging world. She also helped Tony branch out with social activities like Itty-Bitty soccer and basketball camps.

Karen said, “One thing I learned in my CASA training was that how I raised my children may have been right for me, but it doesn’t mean that it’s right for everyone. Everyone has a different style for raising their children, but everyone’s end goal is the same. We just have different ways of getting there. We want our children to be healthy, well-adjusted and happy.”

When asked what her dreams are for Tony now that he’s home with his mom, Karen said, “I want Tony to thrive. He has his mother’s heart – a heart of gold – and I want him to have a life with a mother who is nurturing. I want Tony to learn, engage, and have a full and happy life.”



**K**arina, now 18, first entered the dependency care system when she was three years old, and has been in and out of the system ever since. She is there because of a family history of substance abuse, and because she and her brother were neglected. At 15, she was again removed from her home, and has gone from multiple foster homes and group homes to a residential treatment facility, all the while battling to find a healthier way to live. “I felt like there was some magical solution out there that I couldn’t find.”

“Everybody wants me to be fixed. I think it’s more that I need to heal. So that’s what I’m doing – not to please anyone else, but just for me.”

Karina was hoping to get a young Advocate, “someone who could better understand what I was feeling.” She was matched with Caitie, age 24, who Karina said is “awesome.” She said, “I love that she chose me, and that she volunteers to spend time with me.” Karina speaks highly of her therapist, and respects the hard decisions that Social Workers have to make. “Now that I’m older, I really appreciate the team of people around me.”

Karina is now working three part-time jobs, and, with Caitie’s guidance through the enrollment process, is going to Cabrillo College. She received a scholarship from CASA to help defray some of the costs associated with her education. Karina is living with a family, and continues to receive support as part of AB12 (Extended Foster Care), which allows her to stay in the system until age 21. She also volunteers every Friday in her little brother’s classroom, something she has done for three years. “Everybody wants me to be fixed,” Karina said. “I think it’s more that I need to heal. So that’s what I’m doing – not to please anyone else, but just for me.”



## Men in Advocacy: **NATHANIEL “NATTY” BUDKA**



**N**atty, one of CASA's youngest Advocates at age 25, fills one of CASA's greatest needs as a positive male role model for boys. In October of 2015, Natty was matched with 7-year-old "Hector," who had been in foster care for two years. "I remember the first couple of times we met, Hector wanted to hang out at his home, so that's what we did," said Natty. "As he got more comfortable with me, we branched out."

Natty could see that Hector was still deeply troubled by the turmoil in his birth family, and would act out with his foster family. Hector's foster family was committed to Hector and his sister, and Natty spent time with the father, offering encouragement and working together to help Hector adjust. Hector was behind in school, and Natty and the foster parents collaborated as part of a school support team. Natty was an integral part of that team, and attended meetings at Hector's school to ensure he was getting the academic support he needed. Natty's close relationship with Hector enabled him to write strong court reports, and be a voice for Hector at court hearings.

Natty and Hector's foster parents worked with Hector to become physically healthier. "Hector struggled with food choices, and wasn't getting the exercise he needed," said Natty. "So we played a lot of soccer, I got him interested in basketball, and now he chooses to be outside and active." Natty said it was a great day when Hector told him, "Instead of eating chips, I'm gonna start eating bananas. Much healthier!"

Mostly, Natty became Hector's friend. "These kids just need someone who actively wants to be their friend – just because," Natty said. "I've had so much given to me in my life that our CASA kids don't have. I'm happy I can provide that friendship to Hector. And I'll be with him until the end. He's my buddy – I'll never leave him hanging."

**"Hector struggled with food choices, and wasn't getting the exercise he needed. So we played a lot of soccer, I got him interested in basketball, and now he chooses to be outside and active."**

# These gifts have **changed children's lives**

**CASA of Santa Cruz County is grateful to the following individuals, businesses, foundations and government agencies whose contributions from July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017 made our work possible.**

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## CASA LEGACY SOCIETY MEMBERS

We would like to extend a very special thank you to the following generous individuals who have designated CASA in a bequest or as a beneficiary of their estate:

Dave and Kay Bartlett  
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 Joan Cook (realized)  
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 Adam Richter Charitable Trust (realized)  
 Karen Semingson  
 Nancy and Ray Sherrord  
 June Smith  
 Kent Thompson  
 Lonnie Truax and Ian MacGregor  
 Anne and Bob Young

Have you already included CASA in your will or made another legacy gift? Please let us know so we may thank you for your thoughtfulness and your belief in our future. Your visibility encourages others to step forward.



# Every Child Deserves **Someone Who Cares**



## Advocate Class of Summer 2016

CASA volunteers are everyday people from all walks of life. We are looking for people who are dependable, caring, and ready to commit a few hours a week to serve a child or youth who has been abused, neglected, or abandoned.

CASA volunteers must pass a background check, participate in a 35-hour training course, and agree to stay with their child until the case is closed (1½ years, on average). Volunteers are thoroughly trained and well supported by professional staff as they advocate for their child.

For many children in foster care, their CASA volunteer will be the one consistent adult presence in their lives.

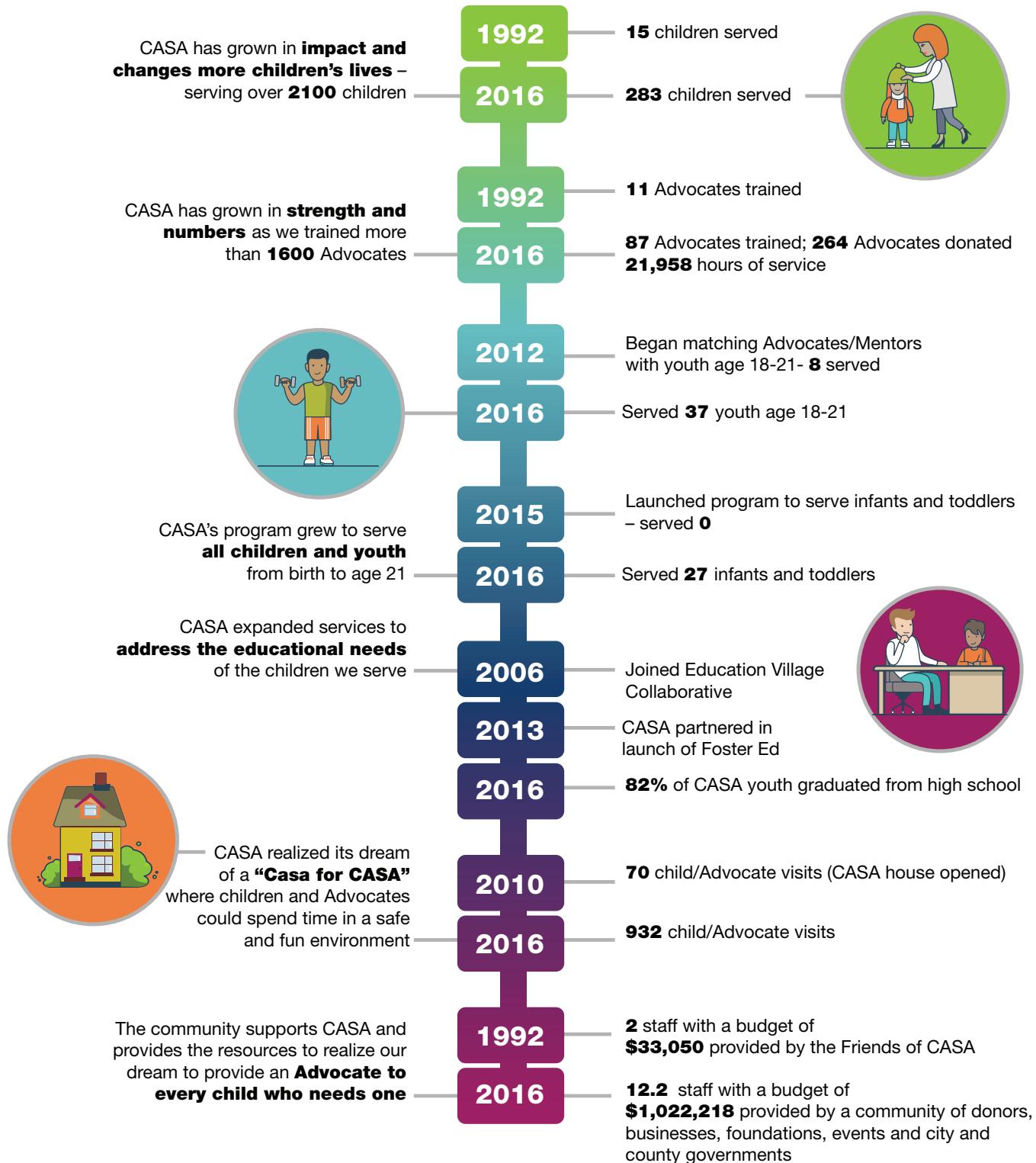
For many volunteers, CASA is a life-changing experience.

**Sign up to learn more at [www.casaofsantacruz.org/volunteer](http://www.casaofsantacruz.org/volunteer)**

You can make  
a difference.

As CASA celebrates its 25th anniversary, volunteers speak up for more children than ever before. Our work brings volunteers, partners, donors and leaders together in collaboration to advocate for vulnerable children. CASA continues to gather strength and move forward.

## Since our beginning in 1991







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**The CASA 2016-2017 Annual Report covers July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017.**

**CASA – Court Appointed Special Advocates of Santa Cruz County**

T: 831.761.2956 F: 831.761.2913  
Non-profit Tax ID # 77-0305354

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