

Change a Child's Story.™



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

“[Dawn] completed
a part of me I didn’t
have”—Paola, pg 6



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OUR VISION

That all children are nurtured in the hearts and homes of safe and loving families.

OUR MISSION

CASA of Santa Cruz County advocates for children, providing court appointed volunteers so each child in the dependency court system feels cared for and connected with the people, families, and resources they need to heal and flourish into adulthood.

Hello Friends,

Looking back over the financial year 2019-2020, it is an understatement to say that a lot happened. We started the year by developing an ambitious 5-year plan, began implementing the plan, and as always, we started hitting our goals one after the other. Then the spring of 2020 arrived.

For CASA, since the pandemic started, we have witnessed a tremendous wave of community members wanting to make sure that we are okay and to ask how they could help our children and families during these times.

The generosity you have shown for the community is both humbling and inspiring. So, while this calendar year has been and continues to be hard, your generosity has once again let us have our most successful fiscal year ever. We are proud to share with you this impact report which shows how our work has continued through the pandemic and how CASA makes a difference in our community's most vulnerable children from birth through adulthood.

Like everyone, 2020 has forced us to change in many ways. We are primarily working remotely and cherishing any opportunity to see members of our community for quick socially-distanced visits on the CASA porch from time to time. Call us, we really would love to see you for a visit.

But many things have stayed the same; our Advocates are still advocating and visiting their youth. Except now, they advocate and visit much more virtually. And when they do visit, they adhere to social distancing guidelines.

In closing, we would like to share our biggest news: despite the pandemic and everything 2020 threw at us, this summer we met our biggest goal. We are now able to offer an Advocate to every baby, child, youth, or young adult who becomes a dependent of the court due to neglect or abuse on average in under 20 days. It's going to take a lot more than a pandemic to keep CASA and this community from caring for the youth we serve.

Thank you for all for being you,



Lynne Petrovic
Executive Director



Christopher Sheehy
Board President

Why CASA Matters



Nia, *Beach Day*, 2020, Marker on Printer Paper

CASA Advocates like Stacey did not let the COVID-19 pandemic hamper their relationship with the kids they support. Creative playdates continued and relationships strengthened.

Stacey met Nia* three years ago when Nia was 4 and her younger sister, Kiara*, was 3. Stacey supported both girls, getting to know them, their mom, and the extended family that was caring for them. The girls built a relationship with Stacey and over time became their “extra grandma,” spending time each week together. When it became evident that reunification wasn’t going to be successful, the girls shifted toward adoption by their extended family.

When COVID hit, Stacey began Zooming with the girls 5 days a week, holding a virtual story time, reading each other books. In addition, Stacey would drive to the girls’ home and put on a puppet show from her car. The girls, in turn, would tell short stories from the porch with their stuffed animals. And they soon found a path where they could safely walk to the beach and play together outside (see above). The girls were adopted in a virtual ceremony with Judge Schmal in August with Stacey, of course, being present over Zoom.

*Fictitious names

5 Key Actions of a CASA

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES HELP CHILDREN NAVIGATE THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM:



ADVOCATE

Speak up for the best interest of a child



SUPPORT

Provide a stable and caring relationship



INVESTIGATE

Gather important information



REPORT

Organize and present details



RECOMMEND

Offer ideas that will improve the situation

THREE KEY OUTCOMES

Safety

A Forever Home

Well-Being



Case Study Story

Dawn, Paola, and Paola's Daughter

Each year in our community, young people in the foster care system turn 18, but that doesn't mean they stop needing support from their community. CASA addresses the unique challenges faced by older foster youth and works to connect them with available resources so they don't fall through the cracks during this critical stage of development.

Paola has navigated some troubled waters. She was placed in foster care at 15 years old, and just three years later, at 18, her time as a minor in the foster care system came to an end. However, current California law allows young adults to get support from the Dependency System from when they turn 18 until they turn 21. This opt-in program for these Transition Age Youth provides social services, such as housing, counseling, and skill-building as well as a CASA. Paola joined into this Non-Minor Dependant program and moved into a studio apartment with her young daughter.

When she turned 21, her extended services came to an end and so did her official CASA support. However, CASA continued to help as she was forced to move out of her studio upon turning 21 and we knew she still needed assistance. CASA helped Paola find her own apartment with a room for her daughter that is all her own. And, on top of that, Paola is in a dental hygienist training program in the South Bay Area.

As Paola transitioned into adulthood, her CASA, Dawn, was there. As Paola put it, "having Dawn... I didn't feel alone." Dawn was with her during high school, when Paola was pregnant with her daughter, and as she navigated the process of being a young mother. Paola and Dawn stuck together through years of changes. But, through all of those changes, their bond remained constant. "[Dawn]," Paola said, "completed a part of me I didn't have."

CASA by the Numbers

ACCORDING TO CHILDREN'S ATTORNEYS AND SOCIAL WORKERS, CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH A CASA VOLUNTEER ARE MORE LIKELY TO:



Receive needed services in a timely manner



Be enrolled in an appropriate educational setting



Participate in extracurricular activities



Have long-term connections to siblings, relatives or other support people



Be on track to graduate high school on time



Enroll in post-secondary education

NO. CHILDREN SERVED

234

ACTIVE CASA VOLUNTEERS

209

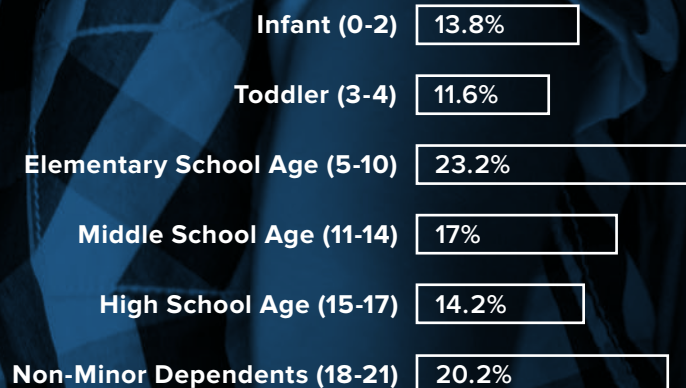
TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS

13,868

IN-KIND VALUE

\$436,980.68

AGES OF CHILDREN SERVED





A BEACON OF HOPE
FOR A FOSTER CHILD

The Need: CASAs for Infants

CASA of Santa Cruz recognizes the unique and paramount needs of the youngest children in the child welfare system and we are committed to advocating for infants in ways that truly make a difference. Our Birth to Five Program works to prepare Advocates to understand the specific needs of infants and work effectively with families and the court to improve outcomes for the youngest children.

Children under the age of five come into the child welfare system more so than any other age group, demonstrating their increased vulnerability to abuse and neglect. At any given time, more than half of the children waiting for an Advocate in Santa Cruz County are under the age of five. Rapid and formational infant brain development sets the foundation for later development, making it the most critical time to change the course of a child's life. Children who have experienced abuse and neglect in the early months and years have the potential for those harmful experiences to shape the foundation of their development for the rest of their lives, noting difficulty with relationships, school, and emotional regulation later in life.

However, with proper support and advocacy, we know that young children and their families have the immense potential to heal from early childhood trauma and grow and develop in healthy ways. Special attention to issues related to infant development, prenatal exposure, responsive relationships, childcare, and early intervention services all play a vital role in reducing the harmful effects of abuse and neglect.

In working closely with parents and caregivers and advocating for the unique needs of infants, we can better amplify the child's voice in court to meet their needs and to support safe and healthy reunification of families and permanency.

Infant Case Study

Baby Hailey* was removed from her mother's care at birth due to drug use, returned to her mom at 3 months, but unfortunately was removed again 4 months later due to a relapse. At this time, when Hailey was 7 months old, Barbara became her CASA Advocate.

During the year Barbara spent with Hailey, she watched her grow from infant to toddler. It began with weekly visits with the resource mom, Mary*, and baby Hailey. After a few months, Hailey was placed back in full care with her mom Diana*. According to Diana, having Barbara there to buffer the transition from resource mom to Diana was awesome for baby Hailey.

Barbara was a consistent presence in baby Hailey's life, spending time with Hailey at Mary's and then visiting Hailey with Diana. Baby Hailey built trust and a bond with Barbara as shown with her hugs at visits. Barbara became the biggest support Diana had, providing a non-judgmental presence who would listen to her and truly cared for Hailey. Diana's case has now been closed but says Barbara has become their "fairy godmother," and that the relationship will continue.

*Fictitious name



Common Misconceptions about Infants and Trauma

"INFANTS ARE TOO YOUNG TO REMEMBER EARLY EXPERIENCES OF ABUSE, NEGLECT, OR TRAUMA."

False. Early childhood trauma alters brain development and neural connections. Trauma is stored in muscle memory and in our physical bodies.

"INFANTS ARE NOT AWARE, OR NOT LISTENING."

False. Infants understand what's happening around them before they can talk and fully express themselves. They are careful observers who are aware and deeply connected to parents' emotions.

"INFANTS WILL JUST GET OVER IT."

False. Infants can heal from early trauma, but healing happens through attentive, attuned, loving relationships and many children benefit from early intervention services to overcome developmental delays. Healthy relationships and family support services are essential in the healing process.

Additionally

- Children 0-3 make up more than 25% of all children who are abused or neglected.
- Infants are far more likely to be adopted than reunited with their birth families.
- Almost 33% of the infants who reunite with their birth parents will re-enter the child welfare system.

Source: A Call to Action on Behalf of Maltreated Infants and Toddlers © 2011 by American Humane Association, Center for the Study of Social Policy, Child Welfare League of America, Children's Defense Fund, and ZERO TO THREE. All rights reserved. Authors: Julie Cohen, Associate Director ZERO TO THREE Policy Center; Patricia Cole, ZERO TO THREE Director of Government Relations; Jaclyn Szrom, ZERO TO THREE Senior Federal Policy Analyst

Financial Summary

Statement of Financials

FY 2019-2020 & FY 2018-2019

REVENUES	FY 2019-2020	FY 2018-2019
Individuals	\$363,306.34	\$440,224.92
Multi-Year Pledges/Grants*	\$0	\$560,000
Foundations	\$84,000	\$69,000
Government	\$470,090.91	\$251,910.77
Corporate and Group Giving	\$156,075.67	\$43,358.12
Event Revenue	\$295,816.30	\$255,452.23
Total Revenue:	\$1,369,289.22	\$1,619,946.05

*Grants awarded to be used over two or more years

EXPENSES	FY 2019-2020	FY 2018-2019
Program	\$47,225.91	\$81,447.95
Fundraising and General Expenses	\$254,914.52	\$206,098.64
Personnel	\$1,009,741.55	\$888,748.73
Total Expenses:	\$1,311,881.98	\$1,176,295.32

83¢
of every dollar donated
goes toward the advocacy
of the children we serve.



With Thanks

CASA of Santa Cruz County is grateful to the following individuals, businesses, foundations, and government agencies whose contributions during the 2019-2020 Financial Year made our work possible.

\$100,000-\$250,000

The Meadow Fund

\$50,000-\$100,000

Cal OES-VOCA

Caroline's Non-Profit Thrift Shop

County of Santa Cruz

Judicial Council of California

Monterey Peninsula Foundation

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Anonymous

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The Bess Family Charitable Fund

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*As of 6/30/2020

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 Donna Ziel

With Thanks

CASA volunteers come from all walks of life and are truly some of our community's most impressive adults. We are honored to have such an amazing group of **volunteer Advocates** who have stepped up to serve the community in such a committed fashion. And our **Friends of CASA** are a dedicated team of volunteers, many of whom are former Advocates! They help tremendously with events, the **CASA Children's Fund**, and help educate the community on our work.

Volunteer Advocates

Sarah Amador
Monica Ambriz
Erika Anderson
Prateek Arora
Esther Arvizu
Guinevere Ashley
Roxanne Aspesi Areias
Daniel Atler
Maria Bahena
Tracy Baker
Laurie Barbin
Mitchell Barlas
Rachel Beauregard
Marta Beckwith
Chamene Blanco
Stacey Blasing
Cassandra Blom
Gary Bloom
Ashley Boatwright
Alondra Bonilla
Jill Borba
Ana Borraro
Ki Bowman
William Brigham
Marisol Briones
Peter Brown
Nathaniel Budka
Jerome Bullert
Amber Burke
Maria Campos
Concepcion Carrillo
Emily Chambers
Tanya Champagne
Erica Chapin
Laura Chiavola-Larson
Christina Colmenero
Amy Connolly
Stacey Cooper
Sugey Cortez
Stacey Costello

Harry Cozad
Emily Crandall
Julia Crawford
Yesenia Curiel
Amelia Cutten
Suzie Dailey
Valeria Daki
John David
Kristen Davis
Teresa Delfino
Rebecca S. Dew
Crystal Diaz
Magi Diego
Lisa Dilles
Elena Dobb
Patrick Donnelly
Nora Dougherty
Mark Ebaugh
Torrey Ebaugh
Judith Elder
Gabriele Estill
Ellen Ferguson
Suzanne Feutz
Shannon Fidiom
Gabriela Figueroa Rico
Doug Fischer
Kevin Flowers
Gail Fontana
Elizabeth Forrest
Les Forster
Marjorie Freeman
Liliana Galvan
Miranda Ganci
Rebecca Garcia
Mary Guakel Forster
Alicia Gaytan
Michael Geluardi
Karen Gill
Lani Giovanetti
Patricia Golditch
Emma Gordon
Susana Gueye

Brenda Guzman
Brian Harrison
Lacey Harrison
Laurie Hartsfield
Marsha Heidt
Heather Henricks
Naydelin Hernandez
Rosalie Hershberger
Teri Hessel
John Himelright
Kathy Hundemer
Melanie Hunt
Wendy Hurst
Jose Ibarra
Gail H. Jack
Jazmin Jauregui
Jennyn Jefferson
Robert Johnson
Janet Kass
Kevin Kelem
Janet Kennedy
Peggy Kenny
Haley Kepler
Brian Kimball
Rebecca "Becky" King
Mary Koehring
Nate Koretz
Pam Kotler
Steven Lange
Joe Lavelle
Mindy Lawrence
Lynda Leigh
Uriel Leon
Quentin Levy
Johanna Lighthill
Mark Linder
Devon Linneman
Barbara Lockwood
Brittany Loisel
Jocelyn Lopez-Marinez
Michael Loreda



Barbara Lorimer
Mary MacLellan
Steven Macramalla
Raquel Magadan-Sanchez
Alexander Malaspinas
Lyn Malto
Nancy "Caroline" Mann
Cindy Margolin
Alicia Marquez
Lisa Martin
Rachel McCullough-Sanden
Kerry McDonald
Patrick McDonald
Peter McGinn
Tim McGirk
Corey McVeigh
Rita Medina-Bahena
Corina Mejia
Mike Melville
Rebecca Meredith
Cindy Messer
Hannah Mixter
Molly Moran
Johanna Morris
Marsha Muir
Veronica Murguia
Damian Musante
Kimberly Mygatt
Linda Myrick
Brandon Napoli
Jenny Nevarez
Stacy Nieminen
Rebecca Oesterle
Anne Olson
Amy Orlando
Elizabeth Osborne
Leticia Perez
Shoshana Perrey
Lilie Pham
Brenda Picone
Patricia Plascencia
Jean Poulos
Jane Prince
Ashley Ramirez
Nicole Ramirez

Michele Redmon
William Rentz
Maureen Ricketts
Joani Rieger
Lark Ritson
Jackelin Rodriguez
Laurie Romero
Mette Rubin
Linda Rugg
Kammy Ryckman
Gavin Sandford
Savanna Sandusky
Brian Sanford
Dawn Shoemaker
Yevgeniya "Jane" Shtalenkova
Guillermina Silva
James Smith
Ruth Smith
Melanie Sobel
Robert Spisak
Joel Spray
Prentice Steffen
Patricia Steinfurth
Michael Stevens
Sorcha Strnad Conneely
Christi Suchil
Alice Talbot
Franco Tandoi
Betsie Tanza
Rebecca Tas
Judith Tollner
Vanessa Tomasello
Regina Vaggioli
Mary Lou Vaiz
Susan Walton
Dawn Wells
Sholeh Westfall
Suzanne Williams
Larry Willis
Gail Wingert
Linda Wolbers
Casie Wright

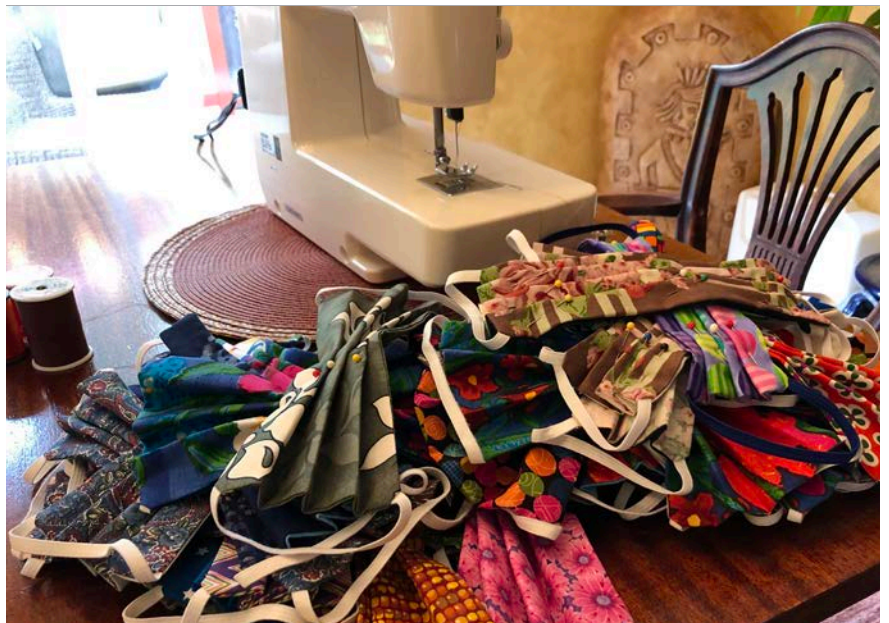
Friends of CASA
Laurie Aiello
Harmoni Akao

Tricia Baker
Kay Bartlett
Mary Berghold
John David
Mary Dean
Diane Deaver
Bonnie Farrar-Dunbar
Jenni Fox
Jennifer Gardner
Ron Goodman
Margaret Gordon
Ashley Halderman
Nick and Sandy Hartman
Lynn Hawkinson
Wendy Hurst
Meg Janes
Dale Johnson
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Heidi Schacher
Mary Shartle
Linda Simpliciano
Bob Smeenk
Sally Stogden
Esther Sylvan
Portia Tanaka
Kent Thompson M.D.
Nancy Whaley
Anne Young

EVENTS

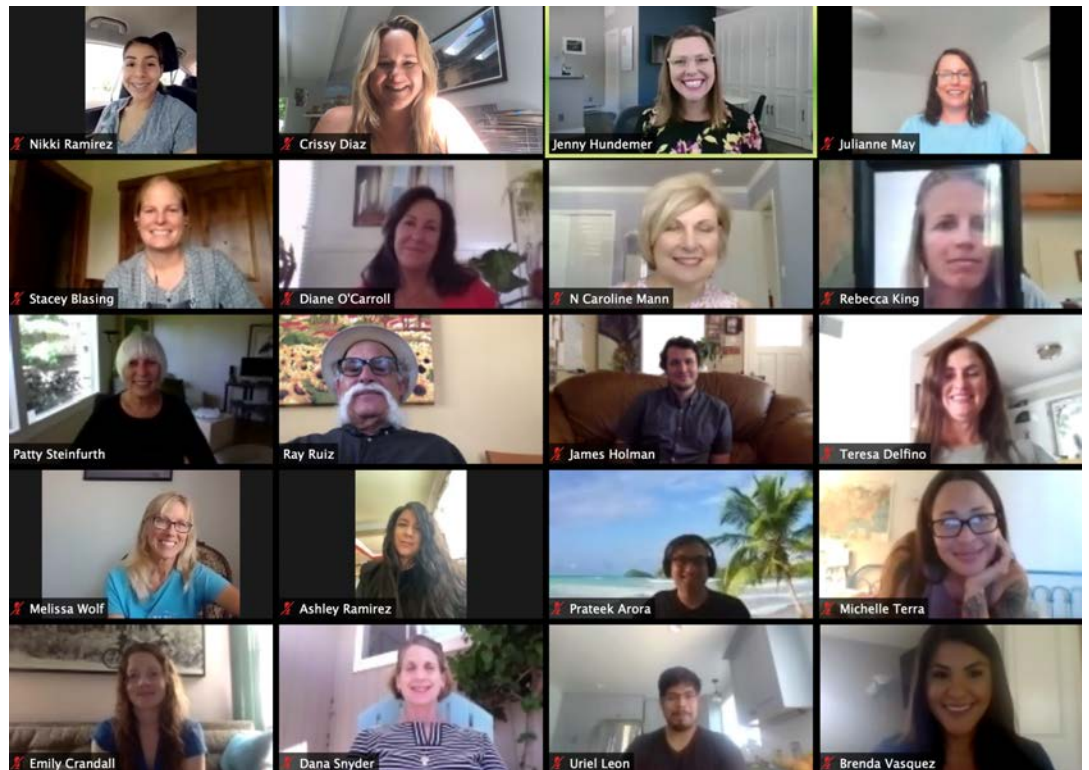
Driscoll's Charitable Giving

At the beginning of the shelter-in-place, when masks were still hard to come by, 11 Driscoll's employees took it upon themselves to create a Sewing Brigade. Their original goal was to sew 500 masks, but with such great need, they finished and directly distributed 1300 to essential workers. For some recipients, it was their only mask. Driscoll's Charitable Giving program matched their volunteered time and material costs. And the Brigade, in yet another act of tremendous generosity, donated half of the fund to CASA. We are forever grateful for this gift and to be part of such a wonderful community who stood up to the challenge the pandemic presented.



Online Training

While the shelter-in-place orders were a dramatic change for us all, the need for new Advocates remains crucial. CASA Trainer Jenny Hundemer and the rest of the team quickly moved our entire training process online, from our Information Meetings that serve as an introduction to CASA, to potential advocate interviews, the lessons themselves, and even the final swearing-in ceremony.



For the Love of Children Luncheon

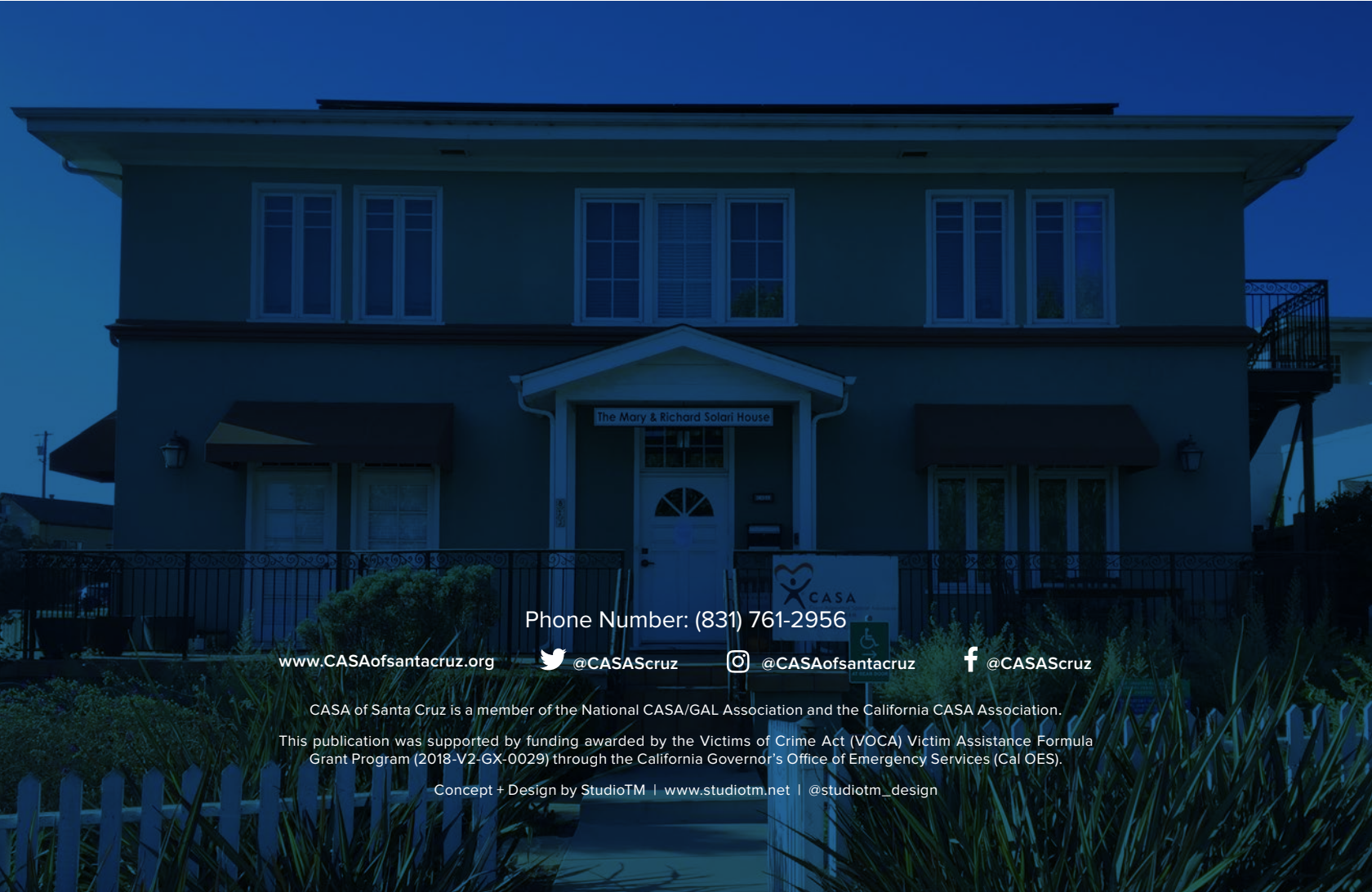
Our 16th annual event on February 19th to support the CASA Children's Fund, which provides special or emergency items to CASA youths, was a tremendous success. We heard inspirational stories from CASA youths and their Advocates. Judge Denine Guy gave us an update on the court and introduced the new Dependency Court Judge, Hon. Timothy Schmal. Thank you to all who could attend for making our final in-person event before shelter-in-place so memorable.



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CASA of Santa Cruz is a member of the National CASA/GAL Association and the California CASA Association.

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