

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2017-2018



You make the difference

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.

YEAR IN REVIEW: 2017 - 2018

Statement of Activities

July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018

Gross Revenue	\$745,020*
Expenses	\$1,112,137
Planned Use of Reserves	\$206,434
Unplanned Use of Reserves	\$160,683**

*Audited financial available on request

**Due to corresponding decrease in donations

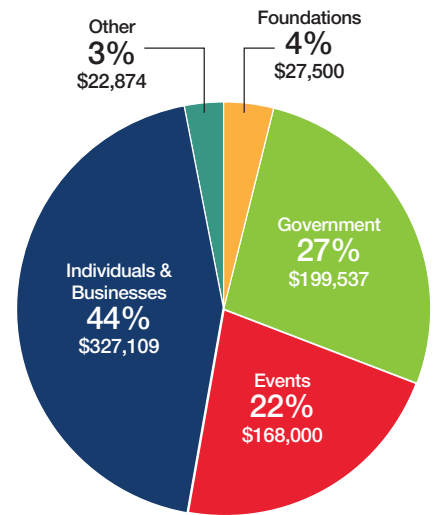
Your Support Makes a Difference

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

84 cents

of every dollar donated

goes to services that directly support the advocacy of foster children in Santa Cruz County.



Income Sources

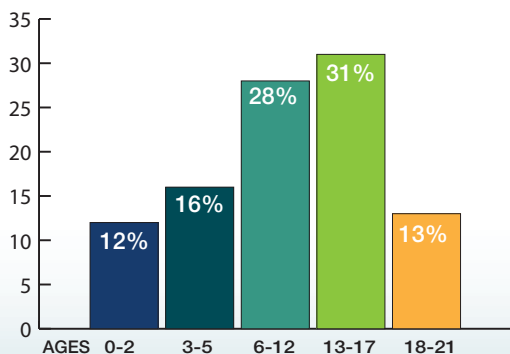
Financials

Outcomes



Volunteer Information

Volunteer hours **17,315**
 Inkind Value..... **\$427,507**



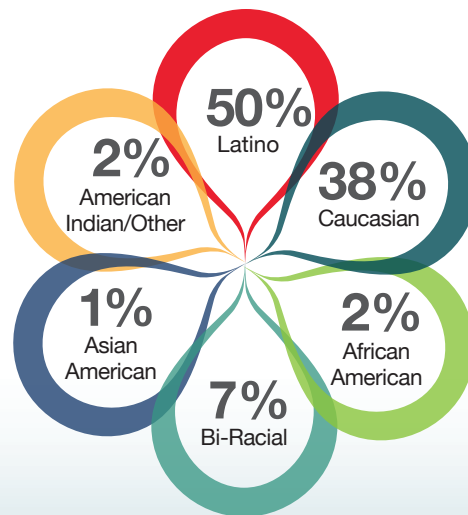
Ages of Children Served



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

Total Children Served 232

Active CASA Volunteers 235



Ethnicity of Children Served

YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE for CASA Children

As the new Executive Director and President of the Board of Directors of CASA of Santa Cruz County, we have been inspired and amazed to learn how supportive the community of Santa Cruz has been of our children over the last 26 years. We thank you for investing the time, effort, and resources that enable CASA of Santa Cruz County to be successful year after year.

Last year was no exception. The outcomes for the children we serve continued to improve and we were able to do this while ensuring that 84 cents of every dollar donated went directly to support the advocacy we provide. However, we saw a decrease in individual donations and in order to provide the much needed services for children, we had to dip further into our reserve funds than planned in order to cover a \$160,000 budget gap. We are exploring the reasons why revenues decreased and have already taken steps to streamline our processes to cut costs without affecting the quality of services delivered to the children.

We speak for our staff, Advocates, and Board when we say that we sincerely appreciate the investment you have made to bring CASA to where it is today. And we need your support now more than ever. Your past generous gifts, under retired Executive Director Cynthia Druley's leadership, enabled the CASA team to do a remarkable job achieving the goals in the 2015-2019 strategic plan. The primary remaining goal is to have a waiting list of diverse culturally competent Advocates who reflect the diversity of the children we serve. This will not be simple, and we need your continued support to accomplish this task. Currently, children who need bilingual Advocates wait two times as long to be matched with a caring adult as those who do not. Throughout the next year, we will be recruiting and training bilingual Advocates so that all of our children get the advocacy and support they need.

Please join us in our ongoing work to provide advocacy, stability, and hope for children in foster care by making a donation today. Your contributions will ensure that our community's most vulnerable children receive the advocacy and support they need to thrive.

In gratitude,



David Fulton
President, Board of Directors



Lynne Petrovic
Executive Director

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The CASA 2017 – 2018 Annual Report covers
July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018.

CASA – Court Appointed Special Advocates of Santa Cruz County

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

www.casaofsantacruz.org
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BRENDA GUZMAN: Bilingual Advocate



Brenda is one of those people who finds caring for others very natural and easy. As the eldest sibling in a large family, she was used to looking out for her younger siblings and cousins. When we asked her why she chose to volunteer with CASA, she said, “When you know what the need is, why wouldn’t you help?” She has been an Advocate for three children and feels so much gratitude for the time she has spent with each child. She says there is something truly special about being “the one person who is solely for that child while they are in the system.”

One of the children she worked with was a young boy, Mario, living in a home with many foster children. Brenda could relate to being one of many, so she was particularly happy to be able to make him feel special and let him know that she “chose” to spend time with him and just him. She was also incredibly helpful because Mario’s foster family was Spanish speaking and Brenda is fluent in Spanish. Therefore, she was able to speak with his foster mom in her own language, which

she felt helped her build trust. The family had been quite used to working with translators, but this direct communication helped build a deeper relationship and enabled them to work together as a team to meet Mario’s needs.

Brenda tries her best to be the “voice” for each child she works with and she has learned to do that by listening and gently encouraging them to share their feelings. She is patient and kind and willing to be present and just be with them. Her first CASA child recently came back into the dependency court system for the second time. When we asked her if she would take the case again, she was quick to respond, “I’m her CASA - of course I will.” Brenda says the best part about being a CASA is that she gets to spend time with “a really cool kid.” From a child’s perspective, the best thing about Brenda being a CASA is that they have someone who understands them and who they can count on for the long term. Brenda, we are so glad our children can count on you!

"She's my person"



Conny grew up in Watsonville with five siblings. It was not an easy start to life, as she witnessed a lot of violence and gang activity. She says, "No child should have to go through what I went through." She was four years old when she was placed in foster care and then moved around a lot – there was rarely a sense of stability or safety. It was incredibly hard to trust anyone, and she wasn't so sure of Wendy, her CASA, when she met her at age 13. She says that when they met, she assumed that Wendy was just another person paid to supervise her or watch her "case," who would do their job, and leave. She didn't realize that Wendy was a volunteer.

It took about a year for Conny to let down her guard and begin to see Wendy as a friend, mentor, and base of support in her life. When you see them together now, it's difficult to imagine these two ever not being close. Wendy was there for Conny when she was pregnant, helping her through birthing classes and preparing for her son to be born. Wendy

encouraged Conny to finish high school once he was born, even though it meant a bus ride from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and child care for her son. It was definitely a challenge, but she was committed and in fact graduated early.



Conny says that Wendy has been there for all of the major milestones since they met and now she calls Wendy "my person." Conny is taking classes at Cabrillo Community College and figuring out the next steps for her and her little boy. She is very grateful to Wendy and CASA for being in her life and helping her get on a different path. Wendy says she is incredibly proud of the woman Conny has become.



Joe joined our team to become a CASA in November 2016. He had a highly successful career with NASA and as a retiree, he wanted to contribute within his local community. He was paired with David who was eight years old when they met. David was removed from his home due to abuse and safety concerns and went to live first in foster care and then with his grandmother. He had experienced a significant amount of trauma and was struggling in school, and his school wasn't sure how to manage his behavior. Joe spent time attending meetings at school to discuss what would be best for David. In addition, he would spend time with David at school when David's anger got the best of him and the school was at a loss as to how to help. Joe showed up when times got hard and was really there for him. Fortunately, David is now thriving in a new school. He has made friends, improved his grades, and getting much better at controlling his anger. Joe appreciates the opportunity to make a difference with David and is so thrilled to see how well he is doing in this new situation.

Joe and David spent time together doing a variety of fun activities. Joe helped David learn to enjoy physical activity, which was something new for him. They would go to the park together and play around with a soccer ball, or play baseball or basketball. While David resisted at first, it

became something they both looked forward to, especially basketball. Joe also taught David how to play the ukulele, and they would play and sing together at the CASA house, sometimes with David's sister and her CASA too. It was a real treat for the CASA staff as well.

Joe really didn't know how he was going to make a difference; he just knew he wanted to help. He has learned that simply being consistent by showing up each week is incredibly valuable. Joe says

he has been so glad to have the CASA house as a place to bring David. It's been a warm, comforting place for them to spend time together, a place of consistency, and the fact that it is across from the park where they can shoot hoops is ideal. Joe is also grateful for the connection with David's family and being able to be a part of their lives. While David's case is closed, they keep in touch and Joe remains a stable and consistent adult David can count on. Joe said he wanted to be useful, but we think he is so much more than that - Joe, you are terrific!

Joe really didn't know how he was going to make a difference; he just knew he wanted to help. He has learned that simply being consistent by showing up each week is incredibly valuable.

Janis continues to support CASA as a donor because she knows first-hand the difference Advocates make for children.

Janis heard about CASA twenty years ago during her career as a teacher. She has always had a passion for helping kids. She became an Advocate to work with babies and very young children. Through the Advocate training, she found learning what youth in foster care go through and how it impacts their development to be eye-opening. She was inspired and eager to support her first CASA child. She had a lot of love in her heart to give, even though she was experiencing her own grief. Janis lost her family in a plane crash just a few years prior to joining CASA. She also had her own three-year old son to care for, but it didn't stop her drive and ability to be of service to others.

Janis continues to support CASA as a donor because she knows first-hand the difference Advocates make for children. In addition to being



an Advocate, she served on the Board of Directors for six years. She says that working with CASA has changed her perspective on how much volunteers can do – she has taken on multiple roles in the community including working with the Young Writer's Program and becoming a Victim's Advocate through the Santa Cruz Police Department. She is truly a role model for community service. She even brings a home-cooked breakfast to CASA staff and volunteers when they have to work long hours on event days. She says she will always support CASA and will be back as an Advocate for another child very soon! Janis, we thank you for your incredible support in so many ways.

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, 2017 through June 30, 2018 made our work possible.

\$50,000 - \$99,000

County of Santa Cruz
Judicial Council of California

\$30,000 - \$49,999

Anonymous
Rotary Club of Santa Cruz
Santa Cruz Volunteer Center

\$10,000 - \$29,999

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\$1,000 - \$2,499

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Bilingual Volunteers

CASA's biggest unmet need is having enough bilingual volunteers.

Children who need a Spanish speaking Advocate wait two times as long as other children to be matched with a caring adult volunteer. We're not looking for people with special experience – just people who have a few hours a week to listen and be there for a child, and who happen to speak Spanish.

That person could be you, your neighbor, your friend, or co-worker. Call us today to learn how to help.

Watch Conny's story at
casaofsantacruz.org/share
and contact CASA today.
cita@casaofsantacruz.org
(831) 761-2956, ext. 102.

