Dear Friend,

The 2020-2021 financial year brought a lot of change to our community and that in turn offered us many opportunities to grow as individuals and as an agency. Our community’s generosity, kindness, and desire to support each other helped us all face the challenges and grow together. Thank you for being part of this community and for supporting CASA and the youth and families of Santa Cruz County.

CASA responded to the racial justice mandate by looking inward at ourselves, our practices, our policies, and by coming together to learn. We continue this work and are committed to our lifelong journey of learning and becoming better allies. As we firmly believe that all children should remain with their birth families if at all possible, we also celebrated state and federal renewed commitments to provide more resources for our families so that children can thrive in their care.

During this year, we re-started our Juvenile Justice Pilot Project and began providing Advocates to youth who are on probation. As the financial year came to a close we were positioned with the rest of California to re-open and the CASA house is once again welcoming Advocates, their youth, and our community supporters.

Our youth, their families, and our Advocates showed tremendous resiliency throughout this past year. It is our privilege and pleasure to support our Advocates who stand with a child who has experienced abuse or neglect so that they feel cared for and connected to the people, family, and resources that they need to heal and flourish into adulthood.

With respect and gratitude,

Lynne Petrovic
Executive Director

Andrea Carlos Willey
Board President

“[Give me] the kid that needs the most help”—Advocate Paul, pg 9
Child neglect is more likely in families that are experiencing an overload of stress. The weight of poverty can especially overload parents’ abilities to provide supportive relationships and basic needs for their children. This was the case with Tammy*, a 21-year-old single mother of four children, who found herself homeless and without a vehicle.

Tammy’s family was living in a homeless shelter when her four young children, all under the age of five, entered the Dependency Court System in May 2019. When the children were matched with CASAs, Tammy knew exactly what a CASA was; she herself had one as a youth in foster care. At first, the children remained together in the shelter with Tammy. However, when her boyfriend was incarcerated a few months later, Tammy was left on her own, feeling completely overwhelmed and unable to meet the needs of her four young children and, unfortunately, were removed from her care due to neglect.

The two younger siblings went to live with their paternal grandmother while the two elder children were placed with their paternal aunt, Mary*. Mary, a single mother, is also the legal guardian of her two younger brothers. Despite having her hands full with three children, Mary knew that she had love to spare and asked that her niece and nephew should live with her. Mary is determined to break the multi-generational cycle of foster care that her family had fallen into and provide the two siblings with a stable and loving home with family.

Another consistent and caring presence in these kids’ lives has been Advocates and married couple Torrey and Mark. They have not only teamed together to advocate for the children’s best interests in court and school; they have also become very trusted adults in these kids’ lives. Once a week for over two and a half years, they have helped Mary by picking the kids up from school and taking them out for the afternoon. One of the places they visit is the CASA house where they do homework, play games, or draw pictures, such as this rainbow. While the kids miss their mother and two younger siblings, they have shown incredible resilience and after two and half years in the system, Mary happily adopted them in October 2021.

Thank you Mary, Mark, and Torrey for showing us all the transformative power that love and dedication can make in children’s lives.
Unfortunately, children from ethnic minorities are overrepresented in the child welfare system. CASA has committed to working against the effects of this racial disproportionality and incorporating DEI principles into every layer of our organization. By doing this work internally, we are augmenting our ability to serve the diverse communities that make up Santa Cruz County.

To begin this journey, we hired consultants to help us assess our past and current relationship with DEI principles, giving us the framework, goals, and encouragement needed to move forward. The Board and Staff both started their own DEI committees to examine themselves, identify issues, and develop solutions.

We believe that the equitable sharing of power outside of our organization must first begin within. By creating staff-led committees with decision-making authority and purposefully inviting all staff members into policy and work-culture discussions, staff voices will be heard in the formation of CASA’s future.

Ensuring that those voices reflect the populations we serve, we decided to pay each staff member a livable wage for our county. The ability to work at CASA must not be reserved only for those who have the means and resources to live and work in the county. To further reflect our community, we created a new paid intern position specifically designed for young adults who have lived in the child welfare system. This position will help the intern to grow professionally and will bring a very important voice to the staff at CASA. Moreover, every new hire from the 20-21 fiscal year has been bilingual and our new Outreach Manager, Clarita Cortes, has emphasized appearances on Spanish-language media to better engage with the Hispanic community.

Research has shown that a Hispanic or Latino adolescent having a Hispanic or Latino mentor can result in a more positive ethnic identity and improve academic outcomes.

There is still work to be done. To integrate DEI principles into a long-running organization is to swim against a strong current and it will take sustained effort to make progress. Much of this year has been spent setting the stage for that continual work by getting our staff and Board to be more familiar with DEI principles and organized to pursue them. But now, with that foundation, the goal of ending racial disproportionality in the dependency system is easier to imagine. We hope to soon live up to our goal of being led by the people we serve.
The Need: Juvenile Justice

While many children internalize their reactions to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), some kids display more outward expressions. And a small portion does so to a degree that warrants law enforcement’s intervention. These kids have experienced many of the same traumas as their peers in the Dependency System, but in their cases, the Juvenile Justice System was the first to become involved. CASA has a new opportunity to broaden our support and help effect meaningful change in the lives of an even greater number of our community’s most vulnerable children.

California CASA has partnered with the University of Michigan and selected CASA of Santa Cruz, among three other counties, to implement a pilot program to study the effectiveness of advocacy for children in the Juvenile Justice court system. Much like with foster youth, specially trained and paired CASA Advocates began supporting children in the Juvenile Justice System, providing mentorship, helping the youth attend school, and/or obtain a job. These Advocates also help the youth comply with the terms of their probation, completing mandated community service, and strategizing the payment of restitution—a significant economic burden on an already struggling youth or youth’s family.

While it is still too early to report any data, anecdotal evidence hints at positive outcomes similar to those found with youth in the Dependency System and meaningful change in these kids’ lives has already occurred. Many more Santa Cruz County children in the Juvenile Justice System are in need of support and stability and when the pilot program concludes in December 2022, CASA of Santa Cruz County will be ready and at the forefront of what may well become a national movement.

Juvenile Justice Case Study

Jackson* experienced things no child ever should. When the Dependency Court intervened, he was adopted, but the healing process is long and often winding. In a not all uncommon expression of trauma, Jackson lit a fire and was arrested and charged with arson. His adoptive mother didn’t want him in her house anymore and Jackson was alone to navigate the labyrinthian Juvenile Justice System on his own. Until he met Paul*.

Long-time Advocate Paul has always asked to be paired with the “kid that needs the most help,” so Jackson was a perfect fit. While initially shy, his humor always slipped into conversation. Now they’re inseparable. Paul taught Jackson how to drive a manual transmission and once he got his learner’s permit, Jackson began to drive Paul to his favorite restaurant for chicken fettuccini alfredo. Unless, of course, it was the third Thursday of the month. That day is reserved for haircuts.

Now the 17-year-old Jackson is in a stable foster home. He works a full-time job, opening the business at 6am on the weekends. In January 2022, when he graduates from high school—early and with all A’s—Jackson plans to pursue a trade career and join a union. Paul will be there every step of the way.

*Fictitious Name

While it is still too early to report any data, anecdotal evidence hints at positive outcomes similar to those found with youth in the Dependency System and meaningful change in these kids’ lives has already occurred. Many more Santa Cruz County children in the Juvenile Justice System are in need of support and stability and when the pilot program concludes in December 2022, CASA of Santa Cruz County will be ready and at the forefront of what may well become a national movement.

Juvenile Justice by the Numbers

- 67.5% of youth have at least one diagnosable mental health disorder*
- 70% have experienced a traumatic event²
- 30% have a diagnosed learning disability²
- 48% function below their academic grade level⁴

Children and Youth In the Santa Cruz County Juvenile Justice System

- 138 on probation or in diversion services
- 80% are male
- 101 are wards of the court
- 13-17 average age range
- 15 daily average in Juvenile Hall
- 9 in Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Homes for children that need intensive emotional and psychological care
The Need: Infants and Toddlers

Due to the dual stresses of poverty and the pandemic, the number of babies and toddlers entering dependency court has increased. Therefore, the need for CASAs who can step in to support such a young child has never been greater.

This support looks very different than with a school-age or teenage youth, since visits with infants and toddlers under the age of 3 must be within the presence of their caregiver or parents. Advocates instead spend time with those adults in the child’s life and gets to know them and support them as they work together to ensure the child’s needs are being met.

In many cases a baby will be placed with an extended family member, oftentimes a grandparent. These family members face unique challenges and can often times be overwhelmed as they might not be prepared with the necessary resources to care for an infant and the official requirements of becoming a resource (foster) family. This is where an Advocate can step in and help; securing items they may need such as car seat, stroller, crib, or diapers or helping enroll in daycare, preschool, or other programs.

The pandemic has presented challenges for our Advocates supporting families as COVID restrictions meant a reduction to face-to-face visits. Unlike with older youth who can FaceTime with their Advocates, this does not always work well with a non-verbal one- or two-year-old. Instead, check-ins frequently happened over text with the caregiver and Advocates would drop off supplies as needed. Advocates continued to provide amazing advocacy and support for our community’s youth and their families.

Infant Case Study

After participating in the first Zoom training session offered, Stacey Blasing became an Advocate in June of 2020. She was soon matched with a 17–month-old toddler. Adhering to COVID restrictions, Stacey reached out by text or phone to all the adults in the child’s life—the resource family, the birth parents, the social worker, multiple therapists, day care providers—to gather information to assess the child’s needs and to advocate for needed resources. She held a Zoom call every other week with the resource family and was able to see the toddler, play peek-a-boo, and ask him questions about his toys, what he was eating, and his interests.

Stacey met the child’s father, Matt*, during a Child Family Team Meeting over Zoom. Matt was given a 30-day trial custody of his son, which he successfully completed. Stacey started having Zoom calls with Matt and supporting him with his transition to full custody. Stacey was able to get to know the needs of the family to help the child thrive in his development, advocating for therapy and making sure he was enrolled in preschool. When the child got sick over one weekend and Matt didn’t know where to go for help, he reached out to Stacey who quickly found the information he was looking for and reassured a worried father. Stacey was able to build a relationship of trust with Matt and support him and the toddler through this time of transition. And, remarkably, was able to accomplish all this a virtually over phone and Zoom.

*Fictitious name

Due to the dual stresses of poverty and the pandemic, the number of babies and toddlers entering dependency court has increased. Therefore, the need for CASAs who can step in to support such a young child has never been greater.

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
### Financial Summary

#### Statement of Financials
**FY 2020-2021 & FY 2019-2020**

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<th>REVENUES</th>
<th>FY 2020–2021</th>
<th>FY 2019–2020</th>
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<td>Administrative</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses:</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,539,221.05</strong></td>
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**With Thanks,**
CASA of Santa Cruz County is grateful to the following individuals, businesses, foundations, and government agencies whose contributions of $100 or more during the 2020-2021 Financial Year made our work possible.

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<tr>
<td>Sessario Escoto, Vice President</td>
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<td>Phuong Mayer, Treasurer</td>
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<td>Matt Gianelli</td>
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<td>Esther Sylvan</td>
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<td>Jenn Volch-Olsen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linda Bixby, End of Term March 2, 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nancy Gordon, April 12, 2021</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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- Alexis Eproson
- Kelley Hopkins
- Gabrielle Foresma
- Jackelin Rodriguez
- Raquel Magadan-Sanchez

**Staff**

- Lynne Petrovic, Executive Director
- Elin Bonds, Communications & Grant Coordinator
- Jessica Chu, Advocate Supervisor & Advocate Workst Manager
- Jimmy Cooke, Program Director
- Clarita Cortes, Outreach & Recruitment Manager
- Mopi Diego, Development & Communications Director
- Yosie Gonzalez, Advocate Supervisor & Court Liaison
-任务： cascade, Advocate Supervisor & Early Childhood Specialist
- Megan Greyoh, Advocate Supervisor & Transition Age Youth Specialist
- Ana Guzman, Program Coordinator
- Victoria Hecksom, Advocate Supervisor & Project Lead
- James Holman, Administrative Assistant
- Jenny Hundemer, Trainer
- Michelle Keenan, Events Coordinator
- Aline Rocha, Advocate Supervisor & Education Liaison
- Puiyee Tse, Finance Manager

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- Raquel Magadan-Sanchez

CASA OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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

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CASA OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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Patsy and George Marinelli
Lisa Marinovich
David Martin

CASA OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

FY 2020/2021 IMPACT REPORT
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.

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Sarah Amador
Monica Ambriz
Tanya Arnold
Prateek Arora
Guinevere Ashley
 Roxanne Aspesi Areias
Daniel Atlet
Maria Bahena
Tracy Baker
Susan Barisone
Mitchell Barlas
Dulce Barrera
Rachael Beauregard
Jean Beeth
Amanda Blakeman
Stacey Blanding
Gary Bloom
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CASA OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

FY2020/2021 IMPACT REPORT
COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The California Giant Foundation

The California Giant Foundation, established by the founders of California Giant Berry Farms, is a wonderful community partner, sponsoring our events and donating to and providing awareness of our programs. Run by a volunteer committee made up of employees, events take place at California Giant headquarters. The annual Skirt Steak BBQ has become a community-wide tradition and one of the largest fundraising events put on by the Foundation. The pandemic did not stop their community fundraising efforts. They created an online Spreading Smiles fundraising campaign and hosted COVID safe drive-thru hotdog BBQ. We are so grateful for the volunteers and all they do for our community. And those berries sure are delicious!

EVENTS

Imagine! 2020

Imagine! was held for the first and hopefully last time 100% virtually in September of 2020. We had a wine social hour via breakout rooms, heard from Lynne, and then had Rod join us for the live auction. All the silent and live auction bidding was held online and thanks to our community, we raised more than we had expected, with little overhead.

For the Love of Children Luncheon

For the Love of Children is an annual event hosted by the Friends of CASA. This event is normally a luncheon, where the community can come together to learn more about CASA and raise money for the CASA Children’s Fund. In 2021, we held the event virtually for the first time on February 10, 2021. We had a virtual house tour by Lynne, had an update from Judge Timothy Schmal, heard from Advocates, youth, and a family that we serve.
Walk for CASA

On May 15, 2020, CASA came together for our first in-person hybrid event, our first annual Walk for CASA. We had dozens of participants fundraising and walking in four groups walking in different parts of the county. Team Friends of CASA, Team CASA Board and Staff, and Team CASA Advocates met at Elkhorn Slough. The Girlz Squad Team met at the Sealcliff stairs. The Team UCSC Kappa Alpha Thetas met up near UCSC and Team The Mamas met at Wilder Ranch! So grateful for all the community support of our youth and showing up and representing CASA. We raised almost $38,000 and got to spend time together as a community once again.

EVENTS, CONTINUED

Training

This fiscal year was unusual in that for the first time all of our trainings were held online. We were so impressed by the community of volunteers who stepped forward during the pandemic to help support our foster youth and their families. Our trainer, Jenny Hundemer, has become a virtual instructor extraordinaire, creating an interactive and informative environment for our volunteers to learn and form bond.

Volunteer Appreciation Picnic

CASA celebrated our volunteer Advocates, Board Members, and Friends of CASA at a picnic June 12 at Harvey West Park. Many of us met face to face for the first time in months or ever! It was great to celebrate our volunteers, make new connections and enjoy tacos together!
CASA of Santa Cruz is a member of the National CASA/GAL Association and the California CASA Association.

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Phone Number: (831) 761-2956

www.CASAofsantacruz.org  @CASAScruz  CASAofsantacruz  CASAofsantacruz

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