

# ANNUAL REPORT FY 2014-2015



## CREATING BRIGHTER LIVES...



**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.*

# ...FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE.

CASA reached many important milestones in helping children in foster care. You are one of the bright and beautiful parts of CASA and have created a mosaic of interconnections and support to brighten the lives of children and youth.

Because of you and your support, in 2014-2015 we served more children than ever before (226) and trained more volunteer Advocates than in any other year (85). That meant that we were able to serve 92% of the children in Santa Cruz County that needed a CASA, nearly eliminating our wait list of children.

Your support was instrumental in ensuring greater education success for children and youth through our education programs. You helped ensure that older youth (ages 18 – 21) develop skills, access resources, pursue employment and/or educational opportunities and make healthy connections in the community – all necessary for successful, independent living as adults. CASA also expanded our resources and broadened the scope of our program to provide volunteer Mentors for young adults beyond age 21.

We realized our vision of a “forever home” for the CASA organization. The final payment was made on the mortgage of the beautiful “CASA house” in Watsonville. Generous community support of our capital campaign has helped create a lasting legacy for children and youth in foster care in our community. It is a lively place, and it is much-used and appreciated. Children and their Advocates visited the house over 600 times throughout the year, more than ever before in our history.

We believe that every child in foster care has the right to a healthy, safe and happy life. We extend our profound gratitude to you for being a part of the “CASA mosaic” that is making this a reality.

Thank you.



Mary Dean  
Board President



Cynthia Druley  
Executive Director

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The CASA 2014-2015 Annual Report covers July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015.

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

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When Patrick was 12 years old, he was taken from his family and placed in the foster care system. “My first thought,” he said, “was ‘my life is over.’”

Throughout the next six years, Patrick was moved more than a dozen times, from group homes in Santa Cruz and Santa Clara Counties, to foster families, and with family members. However, none of these places offered the home and family that Patrick so desperately longed for and needed, and so he ran away, and was homeless and “AWOL” from the system for six months.

Patrick said that, in lieu of a “real” family, several of the boys in one of the group homes created their own version of a family. “We called each other brother, and protected each other. However, Patrick was desperate for a father figure in his life: “I never really had a father figure – they all left me.” When Patrick was 15 and first met his Advocate, Lynda, he thought, “Well, she has sons – maybe she’ll know what to do with me. Maybe this actually won’t be that bad.” After three years together, Patrick says, “Now whenever we hang out, it’s awesome. She really understands me – I can talk to her about anything.”

Patrick, now 18, is well aware of the dismal statistics for foster youth graduating from high school (only 50%), and graduating from college (only 2%). “I read those statistics – they’re not good,” Patrick said. “I made a promise to myself that I wasn’t going to be one of those statistics.” With Lynda’s consistent support – “She kept telling me, ‘You’re so close!’” – Patrick graduated from high school in June. In August, he moved to Sacramento, to attend Universal Technical Institute, and is training to become an International Diesel Mechanic. With his degree, he will be prepared for a good career.

Patrick’s goal after completing the program is to travel internationally and use his trade to support himself. He dreams about what his future family will look like. “When I have kids, I’m not going to let anything happen to them that happened to me. They’re going to have a regular life, without fear or violence or anger. Just a regular life.”



**I read the awful statistics about how many kids in foster care don’t graduate from high school, or go to college and graduate. I made a promise to myself that I wasn’t going to be one of those statistics.**

**This is a child who has never been able to trust his own home, so he is always looking for someone to trust. That is one of the things I can provide for Andy.**



Andy\* is John's second child with CASA. After his first young boy was reunited with his father, John was inspired to want to work with another child. For the past two years, John has been an Advocate for Andy, now 10 years old. Andy's case is in an extremely difficult and complex one, and Andy finds himself in what John understatedly described as "a very fluid family situation."

In order to best advocate for Andy, John has been in communication with two sets of foster parents, the birth mom, Andy's social worker, and his teachers. When Andy's math teacher told John that Andy was struggling with learning the multiplication tables, John called Andy every night to work with him. "And over the months, he learned them all," John said.

John spends time with Andy every week and describes him as a boy with "an infectious smile – he'll walk up and say hello to everyone." John is aware that this puts Andy in potentially dangerous situations, so he works with him on personal boundaries, and how to assess what is happening around him. "This is a child who has never been able to trust his own home," John explains, "so he is always looking outward for someone to trust. That is one of the things I can provide for Andy."

John will stay with Andy for as long as he is in foster care and until he is placed in a loving, safe home. He said, "There is a long road ahead for Andy. He is just trying to deal with today." We know that John will be there to help Andy do that.

*\*To protect his confidentiality, Andy is not his real name.*



When Carol first met 10 year old Jordan\* in 2014, his first words to her were: "I thought you'd be a man – you're not a man." Carol smiled, "Well, I'm kind of a tomboy, so I think we'll be o.k." And for the past two years, spending time together every week, Carol and Jordan have been more than o.k.

Carol and Jordan spend many hours at the CASA house. Jordan likes to cook, so often the two of them can be found in the CASA kitchen, concocting some very complicated dishes. Carol noticed that Jordan would worry about having things done just right – his fear of making a mistake seemed to hold him back. Carol brought an old computer to the CASA house, and encouraged Jordan to take it apart. His initial response was, "But I won't be able to get it back together!" Carol encouraged him to be curious, and it wasn't long before the computer was completely dismantled and Jordan was intently examining the internal components.

Jordan has been fortunate to have several adults in his life who love and want him: his grandparents, his foster parents, and his birth mother. But the reality of where he will live permanently is complicated, and Jordan's future is still in limbo. Carol said she is "so conflicted" with feelings of empathy for many of the caregivers in Jordan's life, but needs to make recommendations to the court that are ultimately in Jordan's best interests. "He's such a great kid – so sweet and empathetic," Carol said. "I just want what's best for him."

*\*To protect his confidentiality, Jordan is not his real name.*



**He's such a great kid – so sweet and empathetic. I just want what's best for him.**

# CINDY MARGOLIN



Cindy has been a CASA Advocate since 2002; she is currently with her fifth CASA child.

When Cindy remarried in 2005, she and her new husband created a trust to safeguard their future. Cindy had a separate retirement account that was “just sitting there,” Cindy said. “I asked myself, ‘What is the best thing to do with this?’ My adult children from my previous marriage were the beneficiaries of the retirement account and other property, and they supported my desire to support local charities with a portion of the retirement account.”

Cindy had two guiding principles: the non-profit organizations had to be local, and “it had to be work I feel passionate about.” Cindy took a portion of her retirement account, and designated that money as a legacy gift for several nonprofit organizations, including CASA. “It was so easy – I didn’t have to go back to my attorney. I had my investment advisor set up a separate retirement account with the charities as joint beneficiaries. If I ever have a critical need for the money, I can always use it. And because I’m leaving it to a non-profit organization, the full amount designated will be transferred to CASA, with no deferred income tax due. Best of all, now I can continue to support the good work of CASA when I’m gone, without feeling like I’m taking from my children.”

Cindy said, “I’m not rich – I never thought I could do something like this. But I could – there’s plenty to go around! I’ve had so many gifts in my life, it’s time for me to give back.”

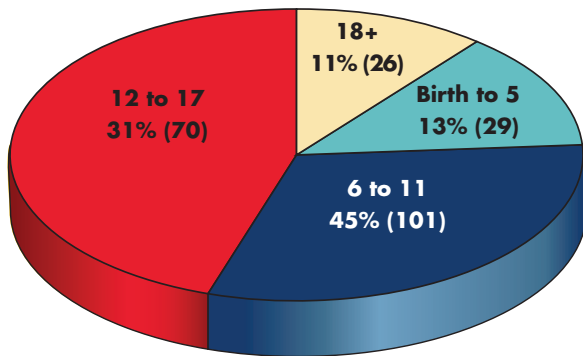
**I’m not rich – I never thought I could do something like this. But I could – there’s plenty to go around. Best of all, I can continue to support the good work of CASA when I’m gone.**



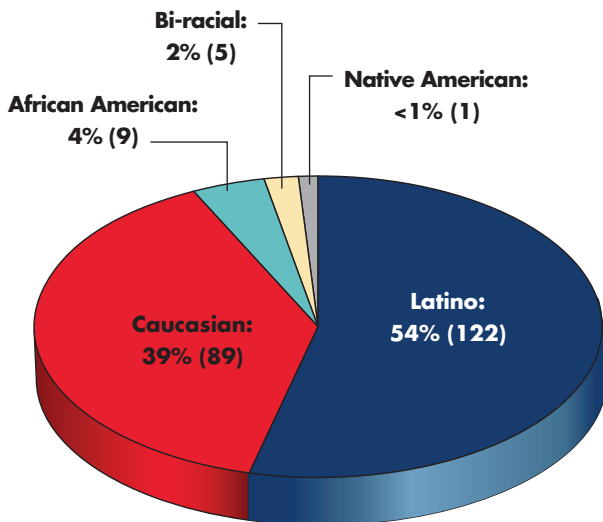
### CHILDREN SERVED

CASA served 226 children

#### Ages of Children Served



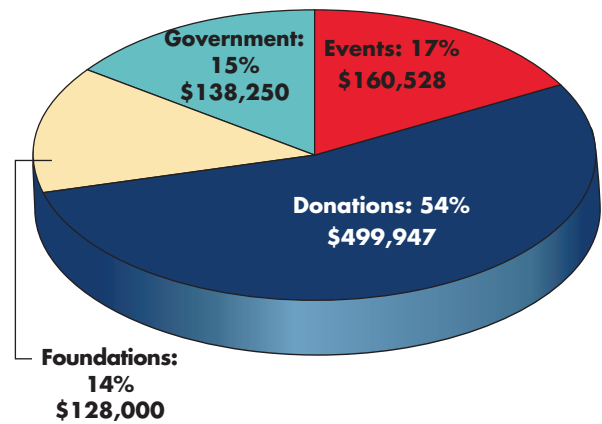
#### Ethnicity of Children Served



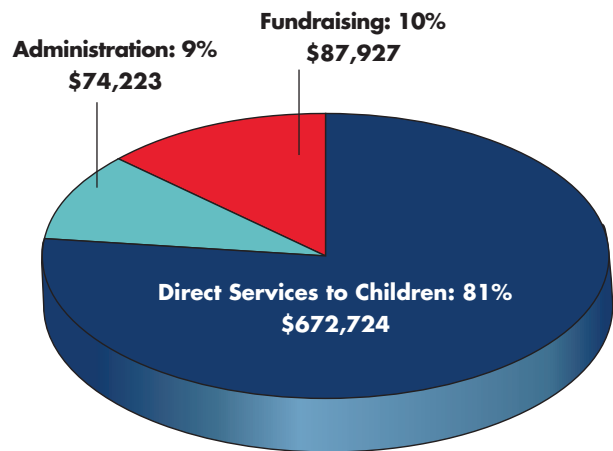
### FINANCIALS

July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015

#### Income: \$926,725



#### Expenditures: \$834,874



# GIFTS TO CASA

**CASA of Santa Cruz County is grateful to the following individuals, businesses, foundations and jurisdictions whose contributions from July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015 made our work possible.**

## \$50,000 - \$100,000

County of Santa Cruz  
Donor Advised Fund of the Jewish  
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\*A Donor Advised Fund at the Community Foundation Santa Cruz County



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# YOUR LEGACY AND THE FUTURE OF CASA

## You support our Mission

CASA provides advocacy, stability and hope to children in the foster care system who have been removed from their homes because of abuse or neglect. With your help, we can continue to improve the lives of children and youth in foster care through legacy gifts of any size to CASA. No gift is too large or small.

## Create your own CASA Legacy

A gift in your will, or another type of legacy gift, will help future generations of children and youth in foster care receive the advocacy and support they desperately need. Some legacy gifts even provide you with income for life.

Please join the list of individuals below with your own legacy gift. We honor members in our annual report, unless you prefer anonymity.

We would like to extend a special thank you to these generous individuals who have helped ensure our children's future by including CASA in their estate plans:

Dave & Kay Bartlett  
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Have you already included CASA in your will or through 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.



# A FEW HOURS A WEEK



## A lifetime of impact

With just a few hours a week, you can make a difference for a child in foster care right here in your community.

CASA volunteer Advocates are everyday people, trained by CASA and then appointed by the dependency court judge to advocate for the safety of children who have been removed from their homes because they have been abused or neglected.

Advocates develop a one-on-one relationship with their child, building a bond of trust. The Advocates also get to know other people in

the child's life: parents and relatives, foster parents, teachers, medical professionals, attorneys and social workers. Advocates then use the information they gather to inform the court and others on what is in the child's best interest.

Nobody longs for a safe and loving family more than a child in foster care. As a CASA volunteer Advocate, you are empowered by the court to help make this dream a reality. You will not only bring positive change to the lives of these vulnerable children, but also their children and generations to come.

**For more information on how you can help change the life of a child in foster care, please contact CASA's Outreach Coordinator at (831) 761-2956, ext. 102. To sign up for an information session, please visit [www.tinyurl.com/CASAorientation](http://www.tinyurl.com/CASAorientation)**





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