



FY2021-2022 Impact Report

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

CASA of Santa Cruz County



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

OUR VALUES

ADVOCACY

COLLABORATION

EQUITY

INTEGRITY

OUR VISION

Our vision is 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.

*“For me,
CASA is the
voice I lost”*

-Ana, page 9

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Dear Friends,

All children should be nurtured in the hearts and homes of safe and loving families. For 30 years, together with you, CASA of Santa Cruz has successfully advocated for children, providing court appointed volunteers so each child in the dependency court system is cared for. It's our honor to invest in and nurture our youth in foster care while supporting the work their families are undertaking. Together, with you, we will eagerly continue to do so.

We know that the future of our youth is bright. They are so resilient and each one has a wonderful constellation of strengths. But we also know that they have many obstacles to overcome. Research shows they are twice as likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress and that trauma can affect their lives in numerous ways. California Surgeon General Dr. Nadine Burke, who is an expert in early childhood trauma, said, "It takes just one stable relationship with a caring adult to help reverse the negative impacts on a child who has experienced abuse or neglect."

And that is why we are committed, with your support, to continue the essential and so important work of offering every child in the foster care system in Santa Cruz County a volunteer Advocate to be there for them, to speak up for them, advocate for their unique individual needs, and when appropriate, support their families.

This past year, for the first time in a very long time, we spent more than we earned. This was due to a large grant being awarded in the 22-23 FY rather than in FY 21-22 as expected. And to the fact that we sadly and suddenly lost a smaller grant. We are happy to let you know that with your continued support, we are on track to increase our revenue this FY so that we earn as much as we spend. Your support is, and always has been, the cornerstone of ensuring that our youth continue to receive the same excellent support they always have.

During the FY 21-22, together we moved through the pandemic, adjusting, growing, changing and joyfully re-connecting. We at CASA have been thrilled to reconnect with so many in our community in person, some at a deeper level and some in a different manner but always in celebration of our youth.

We are so grateful to be working in community with you,



Sesario Escoto
Board President

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Sesario R. Escoto".



Lynne Petrovic, MSW
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in cursive that appears to read "Lynne Petrovic".

Why CASA Matters

by Honorable Timothy Schmal,
Santa Cruz County Superior Court Judge



In my nearly three years of serving as our county's Juvenile Dependency Judge, I almost daily marvel at the significant positive impact made by Court Appointed Special Advocates in the lives of the various parties engaged in juvenile dependency.

The most obvious illustration is, of course, the important roles fulfilled by CASAs in the lives of juvenile dependents. The CASAs demonstrate an unwavering desire to advance the best interests of these children, and in our county, they do that faithfully. CASAs are often identified by juveniles as their one positive adult role model.

CASAs often also play a significant role in the lives of our transition-age 18 to 21-year-old non-minor dependents, helping them to forge adult independence as they move out of foster care.

A less obvious role often fulfilled by our county's CASAs is assisting parents in successfully reunifying with their children. Parents are often distrustful of everyone involved in the court process, but parents can often see that the CASAs are committed to the well-being of their children.

Santa Cruz County CASAs play an invaluable role in educating and informing the court. CASA's written court reports often provide insights and introspective lacking from the social workers' formal reports. I love telling the story of reviewing a lengthy written appellate decision on one of the first trials that I had conducted independently. In validating the decision that I had reached, the appellate court quoted just a smattering of my statements. In contrast, their opinion contained a detailed recapitulation of the Advocate's written reports that they had provided over a couple of years, as the most reliable recap of the underlying facts of the case. CASAs really do matter in the lives of our community's foster youth.

5 Key Actions of a CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates help children navigate the foster care system:



Speak up

for the best interest of a child



Build Resiliency

and reduce the impact of ACEs, or Adverse Childhood Experiences, by providing support and stability



Listen

to what a child says about their education, mental and physical health, and home environment



Share

the needs of the child with other caregivers and the court



Take Action

to ensure the safety and well-being of the child, now and in the future



THREE KEY OUTCOMES

Safety
A Forever Home
Well-Being

A photograph of two women smiling and talking in an office. The woman on the right is wearing a green button-down shirt and has her hair pulled back. The woman on the left is wearing a floral patterned top. The background shows office desks, a laptop, and a blurred American flag.

Spotlight on Juvenile Justice

The need for Advocates for every youth in Santa Cruz County Juvenile Probation has become clear. Offering an Advocate to every youth and their family to help navigate the complexity of the Juvenile Court system is our ultimate goal.

The outcomes were so positive from the Juvenile Justice Pilot we ran for the past few years that the Juvenile Court Judge is eager to ensure every justice-involved youth is offered an Advocate. Having a mentor for justice-involved youth has shown to contribute towards reductions in recidivism, positive social-emotional development, and success in schools. CASA Advocates attend court and probationary proceedings and provide invaluable insight to the Court. They also assist their youth in their schooling, aiding in homework, and encouraging involvement with extracurricular activities. If applicable, Advocates help their youth understand, find, and qualify for subsidized housing. In addition, they also assist with developing independent living skills and building economic security, such as finding employment, obtaining driver licenses, and opening bank accounts. CASAs work seamlessly with the Probation Department as the youths work to complete their terms of probation.

Latino children and youth are massively overrepresented in the Juvenile Court system. Despite Latinos only comprising 41% of the county's population, Latino children and youth comprise 63% of all Juvenile Court cases and 77% of all children held in Juvenile Detention are Latino. For monolingual Spanish-speaking families, navigating the Juvenile Court system is especially daunting. CASA is committed to recruiting and training bi-lingually trained Advocates to provide culturally relevant mentoring and assist the youth and their families navigate and successfully transition out of the court system.

Highlighting Dual-Status Youth

Every year, CASA of Santa Cruz County serves about a dozen dual-status youth, meaning youth who are in both Dependency and Juvenile Justice Courts. Advocates are often matched with youth in one court and then enter into another to become dual-status. The caring relationship between Advocate and youth doesn't change, but the required court reports, visitation, support services, and systems navigation does.

Advocate Sarah was matched with 11-year-old Hope* in 2017 while in Dependency Court. When Hope was 13, she was arrested for the first time and became a dual-status youth. Unfortunately, Hope has been in foster care since the age of 6, has had 16 placements, and has lived in several group homes. Her life has been full of trauma and hurt, and the pain can manifest itself with her behavior. When she would act out at a group home, breaking their rules, she would be sent back to juvenile hall. For Sarah, learning the complexities of the Juvenile Court System and the Probation Department was a challenge after serving in Dependency Court for years. However, Sarah has the full support and respect of both Judges who read her court reports and ask her opinion at every one of Hope's hearings. For the past five and half years, Sarah has continuously advocated for Hope's needs. Sarah has been a consistent adult in Hope's life, showing up time and time again, even in the most difficult times. And, Sarah continues to support her, no matter what happens next, believing in Hope and her dreams for the future.

*fictitious name



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



Building a Brighter Future

Sue and Susan were matched with a pair of very young siblings, two-year-old Sarah* and four-year-old Bobby*, in December of 2020. Unfortunately, when the children were removed from their parent's care, they were placed in separate safe and loving foster homes and the parents entered separate drug rehabilitation programs. The family was completely separated from one another.

Due to the separation, there were logistical struggles to ensure the family could spend time together as they healed. Sue and Susan advocated that parent visits were easy to get to so the family could spend time together. And, once unsupervised visits were allowed, the Advocates signed the kids up for a weekly gymnastic class that the parents could also attend. This became a family bonding time where the parents proudly watched their young children develop with the skills they acquired week after week.

Although it was a difficult struggle for the parents, with the challenging logistics and limited time, Mom and Dad did the work. They successfully completed drug rehabilitation, attended all mandatory meetings, and completed all the paperwork, fulfilling all the court's requirements. Sue and Susan would offer help where they could, supporting this family reunification, visiting with them weekly after COVID protocols allowed.

Once reunited and living under the same roof, the co-CASAs would spend time with the kids, sometimes separately or sometimes together, often inviting the parents along to the park or the beach or train ride. The parents were incredibly involved in their kids' lives and showed so much love and care. Their dedication to their kids and recovery was so strong, that their case was dismissed in June 2022. Sue and Susan couldn't be happier for the family reunification and are honored to have supported this family through such a difficult time. They plan on being part of the kids' lives for the foreseeable future.

*fictitious names

CASA by the Numbers

TOTAL CHILDREN SERVED

210

IN DEPENDENCY COURT

190

IN JUVENILE COURT

10

DUAL STATUS (IN BOTH COURT SYSTEMS)

10

ACTIVE CASA VOLUNTEERS

165

OTHER VOLUNTEERS

50

TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS

8060

IN-KIND VALUE

\$270,896.60

Ethnic/Racial Breakdown

of Santa Cruz County is Hispanic/Latino

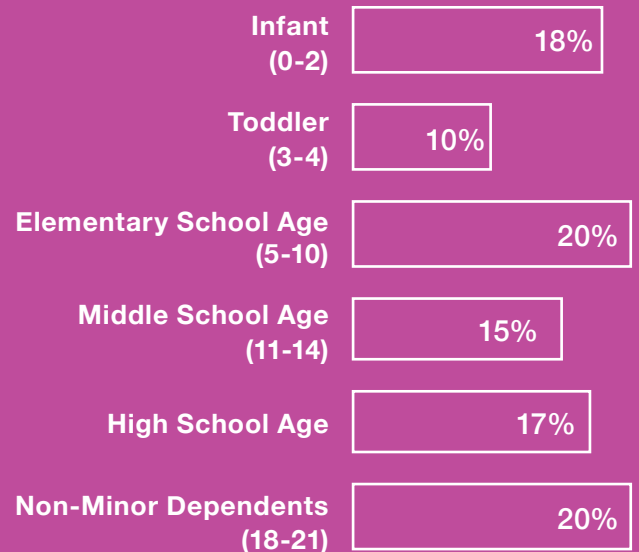
52%

of CASA of Santa Cruz Children Served were Hispanic/Latino

18%

of CASA Advocates were Hispanic/Latino

Ages of Children Served





Shining a Light on Inclusion

CASA of Santa Cruz County continues our commitment to address the disproportionate representation of Hispanic/Latino children and youth in the Juvenile Court system through the extensive use of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principals.

We strive to incorporate these principles into every layer of our organization, and great progress has been made to adopt more inclusive practices. Research has shown that a Hispanic/Latino adolescent with Hispanic/Latino mentors provides significant benefits to their wellbeing and sense of self. And so, we have placed a greater emphasis on recruiting not only bi-lingual Advocates but Advocates from the communities we serve.

Moreover, we believe to most effectively serve Santa Cruz's most vulnerable populations, our organization must hear and be steered by members of those populations, including those that are bilingual and bicultural and those with lived experience in the Juvenile Court Systems. By welcoming more perspectives into CASA's processes, such inclusive practices ward against the implicit biases that inadvertently harm these communities. Most of the staff we have hired in the past year have been bilingual and we are benefiting from having those with lived experience be a part of our team. Every day, Advocates and staff listen to the youth and families we serve and include their voices in our work, amplifying them as a core part of our mission.

Including Youth Voices



A Voice of My Own by Ana Menera

As a former foster child, I was a difficult person to deal with; I was scared of being hurt. I was tired of the expectations put on me. I was terrified of what my future may hold and how many times I was supposed to repeat my story till someone understood me and my bag of traumas. I'm a girl with baggage and because of that, I'm thankful for all the people who helped me be where I am now. I'm grateful they didn't give up on me. While in the foster system, I had people who I held close let me down, making me have a negative view on the system. It brought new traumas and hatred towards those people which might not be the case anymore. But my feelings are a complicated matter to understand, so forgiveness is not something I can think right now. Of all the services I received as a foster youth, CASA is the only one who I don't have a negative view on. For me, CASA is the voice I lost, and even if it doesn't sound the same, it conveys my words, making it a voice of my own. And for that, I will always be grateful to you guys.

Staff Spotlight

One area where inclusive practices have had a significant impact on our youth is with the CASA staff Court Liaison. This position attends Juvenile Court proceedings to gather case information to better understand the needs of the children and their families. The assigned staff member's first-hand knowledge of the Juvenile Court system provides culturally relevant, genuine, and caring support to youth and families during court proceedings.

Recently, the Court Liaison advocated for a family in dependency court. The Court Liaison helped inform the court of the multitude of challenges and court requirements a parent faces to be reunified with their child while desperately trying to maintain sobriety. Through lived experience, the Court Liaison helped convey that what may seem inconsequential are truly enormous accomplishments on the road to recovery. When the case was eventually dismissed, it was a joyous experience for the family.

Financial Summary

Statement of Financials

REVENUES	FY 2021-2022	FY 2020-2021
Individual Donations	463,151	641,018
Private Grants	153,077	42,500
Government Grants	362,724	606,266
Fundraising Events	236,682	231,003
Miscellaneous Income	0	2,450
Total Revenue	\$1,215,634	\$1,523,237
EXPENSES		
Program Services	1,325,306	1,285,339
General & Administrative	142,228	130,891
Fundraising	126,250	118,434
Total Expenses	1,593,784	1,534,664

83¢

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



With Thanks,

CASA of Santa Cruz County volunteers must be over 21 years of age and come from all over the county. They represent a wide range of backgrounds, ethnicities, and experiences, but all have an amazing capacity to care. They are truly community heroes, consistently showing up and being committed to the best outcome for a child's future.

Volunteer Advocates

Susan Adelman	Teresa Delfino
Sarah Amador	Jennifer Deming
Prateek Arora	Crystal Diaz
Guinevere Ashley	Joel Dodge
Carolyn Bailey	Mark Donpineo
Nicole Baldocchi	Lauri Duncan
Susan Barisone	Mark Ebaugh
Dulce Barrera	Torrey Ebaugh
Rachel Beauregard	Patricia Emmons
Jeana Beech	James Engelman
Alexandra Beltran	Gabriele Estill
Nicole Benjamin	Kathryn Fahl
Chamene Blanco	Ellen Ferguson
Stacey Blasing	Suzanne Feutz
Jill Borba	Doug Fischer
Peter Brown	Marisa Fischer
Amber Burke	Megan Fox
Mona Butler	Bonnie Friedenbach
Kayla Cabral	Liliana Galvan
Emily Chambers	Mary Gaukel Forster
Laura Chiavola-Larson	Alicia Gaytan
Nancy Claspill-Navarro	Karen Gill
Amy Connolly	Lani Giovanetti
Stacey Cooper	Denise Gomez
Shawnte Corona	Heidi Gomez
Amelia Cutten	Amy Gonzalez
Suzie Dailey	Peter Goodman
Valeria Daki	Paula Grainger
John David	Victoria Granger-Jones
Arwen DeLaine	Maryke Grobler

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James Holman, Grants and Communications Coordinator

Conny Ramirez, Administrative Intern

Alma Rocha, Advocate Supervisor and Education Liaison

Judy Russell, Events Coordinator

Karen Silva, Program Assistant

Puiyee Tse, Finance Manager

*As of 6/30/2022

Amanda Cruz

Becky Diaz-Perez

Alexis Eproson

Gabi Poremba

Maria Ramirez

Vanessa Salas

CASA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (# 77-0305354) and all donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

With Thanks, Continued

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Todd Hager
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Brenda Hanning
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Teri Hessel
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Lauren Holtsclaw-Johnson
Kathy Hundemer
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With Thanks,

CASA of Santa Cruz County values all donors and appreciates every one of them for giving what they can to our organization. These individuals, businesses, foundations, and government agencies make our work possible and enable us to expand to serve more youth in the community. The following donors provided a monetary or in-kind gift of \$100 or more in our 2021-2022 Financial Year. We are full of gratitude.

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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Friends of CASA

We are so grateful for the Friends of CASA, a dedicated group of volunteers, integral to the success of CASA’s mission. The Friends help organize, promote, and run the annual For the Love of Children luncheon, supporting the CASA Children’s Fund, which purchases special items and awards academic scholarships for our community’s foster youth. The Friends are also crucial to the success of the Move for CASA, mailings, children’s parties, and Imagine! Thank you Friends!

- | | | | | |
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* Executive Committee as of February 2022



COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Caroline's

NON PROFIT THRIFT SHOP

We are so grateful to Christy Licker, owner of Caroline's Non-Profit Thrift Shop, and her dedication to improving the lives of the most vulnerable youth in the community. Christy opened Caroline's in June 2010, just three years after the death of her daughter, Caroline. Her hope was to honor the life of Caroline by donating money to local nonprofits with programs/services for children and their families. For 10 years, Caroline's has supported CASA of Santa Cruz County, with annual donations totaling \$234,500. Our community is a better place with Caroline's in it. Shop at Carolines Caroline's where 100% of items sold fund nonprofit organizations. - 8047 Soquel Drive, Aptos, CA.

<https://carolinesnonprofit.org/>



EVENTS

Imagine! 2021

We were so happy to gather in person once again at Imagine! held on Sept 11, 2021. In the spirit of inclusion and to reduce costs, we moved the event to Sesnon House, Cabrillo College where many of our youth attend college. Our celebration of the resilience of our community's foster youth during such trying times was blessed with beautiful weather. We also offered a drive-thru option, for those unable to attend our full-course dinner and live auction.



EVENTS

Move for CASA 2022

On May 14, 2022, we held our second annual Move for CASA. Once again, we had several groups meeting up and walking/ moving at different locations across the county. CASA Staff, Board, Friends of CASA, and Advocates met at Elkhorn Slough, North County Advocates and Supporters hiked at Glenwood Preserve, while the UCSC Kappa Alpha Thetas met at Westlake Park for a walk and yoga. Grateful for all the enthusiastic support to raise awareness about CASA and almost \$19,000!



CASA's 30th Anniversary

In 2022, CASA of Santa Cruz County turned 30 years old! We celebrated our anniversary on June 20, 2022 at Aptos Village Park with a fun-filled picnic to honor our caring volunteers who have been an intricate part in building CASA of Santa Cruz into the wonderful program it is today. Over 130 people came out to celebrate, including former board members, staff, Friends of CASA, and even a few Advocates from the very first graduating class of volunteers! Fun was had by all including folklórico dancing, great food, face painting, shaved ice, and bubbles!



EVENTS





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