

Dear CASA Supporter,

As a member of the CASA family, I want to thank you for your generous support of the organization. Because of your investment, individuals like me have the opportunity to impact some of Sacramento's most vulnerable kids. I want to share my story so that you can truly understand how this happens.

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**“My heart wanted so badly for him to be with family, but my head soon began to think otherwise about the situation.”**

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I was matched with Javier, a 10-year-old boy in August 2016. Javier is smart, thoughtful, and unbelievably polite for a pre-teen boy. The first time I met him I was incredibly nervous. After reading a brief summary of his case, I imagined a regular 10-year-old boy, put on my running shoes and drove to the group home. He was out front playing basketball, and taking a deep breath, I stepped out of my car and spent my first hour with Javier playing hoops. In our subsequent visits, we played some basketball or watched videos of his favorite basketball player.



As the months passed, I discovered that, when I was told in training that foster children get moved a lot, they aren't kidding. During our first year, I saw him live in three different foster homes, two group homes, and one relative home. The placement with his relatives actually happened two months after I met him. I was elated knowing that he was going to be with family. I knew it was important to him to be surrounded by his culture, especially by other Spanish-speakers. I was hopeful.

My heart wanted so badly for him to be with family, but my head soon began to think otherwise about the situation. It was clear that the relatives had never received training to support a child who has experienced trauma. The home was missing structure and discipline, and I watched my kid revert to behaviors I had only read about in his case file. The relatives knew there was a problem too. They approached me to share their concern that they were doing more harm than good to Javier. He was transferred to a foster family soon after.

As the most stable adult in his life, I became his Education Rights Holder, which meant I made all decisions related to his schooling. Javier is a smart kid and loves to read. I knew that finding ways to support his education was important too. We found a place where used books are sold for \$1, and I was more than happy to spend our weekly time together looking through the shelves for something he wanted to add to his little library.

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**“While it's a CASA's job to help in a crisis, it's also my job to make room for the good in a child's life and, for Javier, that's still basketball.”**

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Unfortunately, he was being regularly suspended and literally not in the classroom for enough hours to learn. Thank goodness for the principal and vice principal who did all that they could to keep him from being expelled. Ultimately, I decided it was best to move Javier to a non-public school where the primary focus is around behavior with academics secondary. In his six months there, his behavior has improved tremendously, and because I do not want him to fall behind in his academics, I am recommending that he transfer back to a regular public school for his next school year.

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**“He was being regularly suspended and literally not in the classroom for enough hours to learn.”**

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While it’s a CASA’s job to help in a crisis, it’s also my job to make room for the good in a child’s life, and, for Javier, that’s basketball. Soon after meeting him, I went to see his team play a game, and I realized how good he was. Really good.

I got on an email list for the youth academies operated by the local basketball team, and soon received notice about a week-long camp that was being offered. I knew I had to sign Javier up, and as his birthday present, I handed him an envelope with a ticket to the camp. Watching him open the envelope and realize what he was looking at was one of the most priceless moments I’ve experienced.



Javier thoroughly enjoyed the camp, and on the last day, one of the coaches invited him to practice with the youth academy for his age. I connected with the right person who confirmed that Javier could attend a practice so that they could vet him. The next thing I know, I am

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on the phone with the coach who tells me that Javier was accepted to the advanced team and that the coach believes that my kid is one of the top ten players on that team. When I hung up the phone, I burst into tears. Javier’s life was about to take an entirely different trajectory.

So, I share my story to say that you should believe it when you hear it: a CASA makes an enormous impact on a kid’s life. Despite the many challenges I have faced and will face in supporting Javier, I will never give up because I can only imagine how it feels to him to live those challenges every day.

Sincerely,

Claudia  
CASA Since 2016

*\*All names and identifying information have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the child*