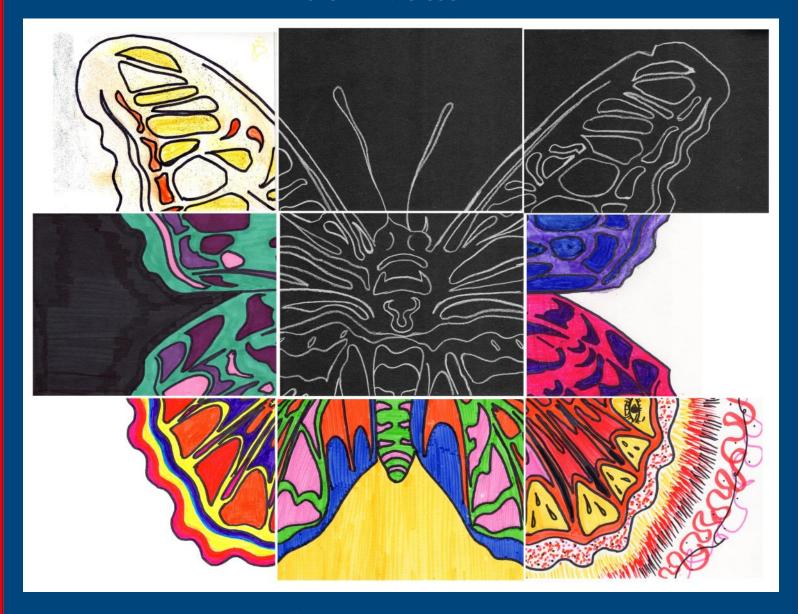


SACRAMENTO COUNTY



CASA Sacramento 2020/2021 Annual Report

### Dear CASA Sacramento Friends and Family,

After all of these years, we are still inspired.

Court Appointed Special Advocate Volunteers have duties to perform on their assigned case. They build many good relationships with teachers, social workers, families, doctors, therapists and people all around the community.

Sometimes those relationships are easy because everyone who works with children wants what is best for children.

Sometimes the relationships are hard because, as every family knows, we don't always agree on what is best for children.

But within the parameters of trying to give every child the childhood they deserve, extraordinary things happen.

A CASA Volunteer chose to spend a few hours on Christmas taking a kid to the movies, because the kid was without family on the holiday.

After many months of practical work on a case, a CASA Volunteer applied for Making Memories funds to get youth the video game he has had his heart set on.

A CASA Volunteer spent hours making life-saving phone calls to get a young woman out of danger and to a hospital.

We talk about Court Appointed Special Advocates speaking on behalf of our youth, but it never stops inspiring us to hear the big and small ways they are seeing the children who need to be seen.

CASA Volunteers do this service for the individual youth and for the Sacramento Community. It is our honor to do our part to make sure the program has the resources it needs to keep those Volunteers trained and equipped to do the work.

Our second pandemic year was not easy, but with our dedicated Volunteers, Board of Directors, Staff and Donors, we were able to protect the quality of the program that has touched so many lives over the last 30 years. As you look through the pages of this report, we hope you feel inspired by all those who have done their part to change a child's story.

With gratitude,

Alan Wolf Board President



Carol Noreen, JD Executive Director

About the cover image:

#### CASA Youth Art Piece, "Incomplete Butterfly"

The 9 pieces of this art project were given to CASA youth to complete. All of the youth wanted to participate, but 3 pieces did not return. Instability impacts a child's ability to perform in school, make meaningful friendships and ultimately to build an adult life.

Every tile that is complete exemplifies the ability of children in foster care when they have what they need. But this work of art is as much about the sections that are missing as it is the pieces that are complete. Court Appointed Special Advocates exist so that children in foster care are given the support, resources and stability to shine.

When you look at this piece, we ask you to imagine the world we would have if every child had what they needed to live up their potential.

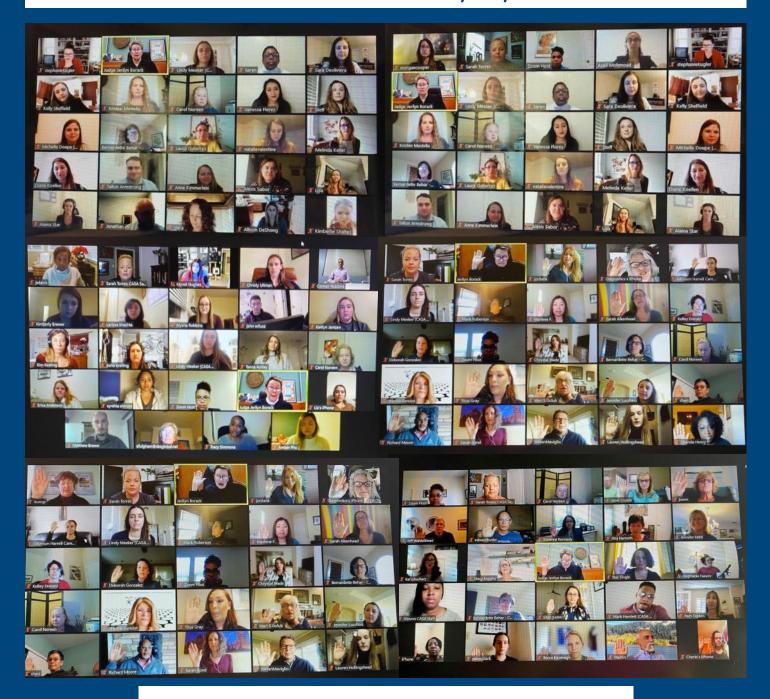
#### The CASA Mission

Ensuring consistency and support for children in the foster care system through the use of volunteer advocates advancing the best interests of each child.

#### The CASA Vision

Every child in need is appointed a CASA to champion them in Court, without compromise, on the path to a safe and permanent home.

# WELCOME TRAINING CLASSES 89, 90, 91 AND 92



### **CASA Volunteers:**

INVESTIGATE barriers to success in foster care

ADVOCATE to improve current services

MENTOR youth

**REPORT** progress to the dependency judge **MONITOR** the case

Youth referred to the CASA program spent an average of 122.8 days waiting to be matched with a CASA Volunteer.

# 2020/2021 PROGRAM IMPACT



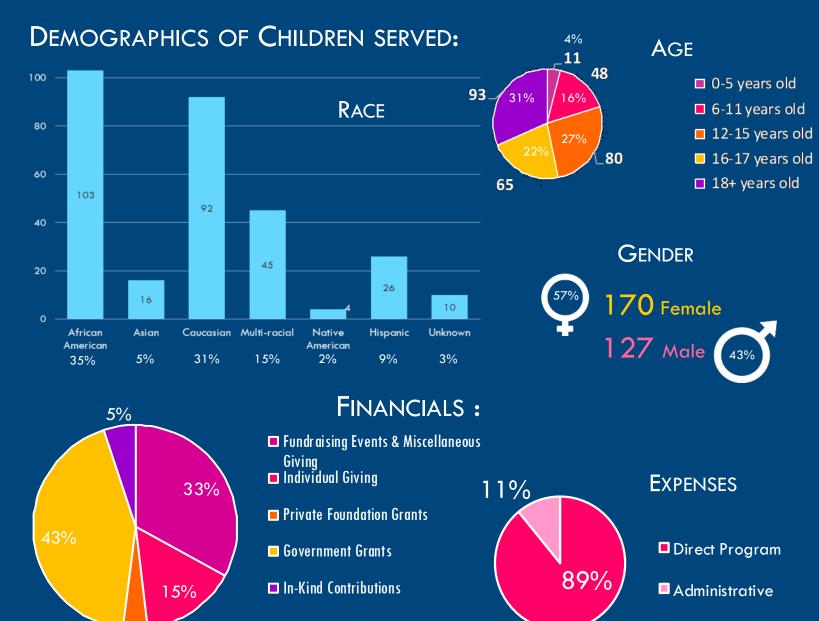
foster children served

11,804 volunteer hours contributed\*

78 new volunteers trained

**269** active volunteers

\* This is a value of \$395,552 in service at the current volunteer rate of \$33.51/hr



REVENUE: \$1,409,574

4%

EXPENSES: \$1,061,094

# **COVID-19 Response**

The CASA Sacramento program has been fully operational during COVID-19. CASA Volunteers have written court reports throughout shelter in place orders. They have been asked to make phone or video contact at least weekly to ensure that children were safe, cared for, receiving educational resources and emotional support. Newer volunteers were challenged with trying to establish a relationship at a distance, and experienced CASAs were challenged with needing to adapt their routines for distance mentoring and advocacy.

CASA Sacramento local foster youth cases were deeply impacted by COVID-19 school closures. Special education/emotional disturbance testing was interrupted, lack of technology to access remote learning continues to be a problem and less remote learning is being offered to special classes. Older youth (18-20 year olds) lost job opportunities and income. Because of COVID-19, service providers moved online, resulting in halted healing and escalated behaviors. The stress of distance learning on foster parents caused placement changes.

It will take years of concentrated, individualized CASA attention to help our most vulnerable foster youth recover from the obstacles they are facing today, so we need to match the youth on our waitlist with a CASA as soon as possible. CASA Sacramento is attempting to overcome all of these barriers with one-on-one advocacy and increase opportunities for youth in foster care.





# Recruiting Volunteers & Education of Public

CASA Sacramento actively recruits volunteers from all backgrounds in an effort to adequately represent the demographics of the youth population that we serve. This past year, our recruiting efforts have been hampered due to COVID-19, but we continued to look for resourceful ways to remain present in the community, such as local television advertising, a K-Love radio conversation, and increasing our social media footprint. All volunteer orientations were moved online, resulting in an increased attendance capacity.

367 people attended a volunteer orientation





CASA Sacramento's Diversity and Inclusion Committee, for med in June of 2020, aims to create stronger and more collaborative ways to address the systemic oppression of others based on their ethnicity, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, country of origin, age, or disability.

#### 2020 Highlights

**August – Staff Trainings.** Series focused on race, gender identity and expression, xenophobia, and socio-economic inequality, with a goal of self-awareness and reflection leading to personal growth and action.

**September – CASA Volunteers**. In-service training focused on race: A Conversation with Dr. Michael Eric Dyson and Dr. Robin DiAngelo.

October – Youth Forum. Youth-led discussions focusing on law enforcement, distance learning, COVID-19, changes they'd like to see in society, changes they'd like to see in the foster care system, how to implement those changes, and what the CASA program can do.

November – Staff, CASAs, Youth, and Board of Directors. Community Forum addressing the intersectionality of race, sexual orientation, education, and health care. Panel included Darryl White, Chair of the Black Parallel School Board; Koby Rodriguez, Chief Program Officer of the Sacramento LGBT Community Center; and Sade Daniels, Curriculum and Training Director of the California Youth Connection.

#### **2021 Trainings**

February – Recognizing Black History Month. Staff and Volunteer training on "The History of Policing"

April – A deeper dive into policing youth of color. Staff and Volunteer training on "The School to Prison Pipeline"

June – Recognizing Pride Month. Staff and Volunteer training on "Transgender Awareness"



Danielle Keys, Training & Recruitment Manager, has joined with National CASA as a facilitator in their Book Club series which provided opportunities for professional development for staff and CASAs and a safe space for reflection, learning, and authentic dialogue as we explored race and racist ideas in America through the following books: Stamped From the Beginning by Ibram X. Kendi, The Color of Law by Richard Rothstein, Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates, and So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo.

#### 2021 Diversity & Inclusion Committee Members

Michael Butler - CASA Volunteer
Xuan Chung - CASA Volunteer
Kelley Donato - CASA Staff, Senior Case Supervisor
Danielle Keys - CASA Staff, Training & Recruitment Manager
Dani Wogulis - CASA Staff, Development Coordinator



The CASA Beehive is a peer-led community group of CASA Volunteers, here to support each other in the important work of youth advocacy. The Beehive coordinates Caring for CASAs, a monthly gathering for CASAs to share their stories, seek advice, and share wisdom with the group.

> This year, the CASA Beehive hosted 10 virtual Caring for CASAs gatherings attended by 93 volunteers.

## **Peer Coordinator Program**

The 2020-2021 Peer Coordinators have been a tremendous support to the CASA program. During the year, four Coordinators have served six youth and four advocates. They provided their new advocates with individual instructions on preparing Court Reports, planning for Child Family Team meetings, and tips on how to navigate their cases. In addition, the Peer Coordinators were vital sources of strength and a calming presence for advocates attending Court for the first time.

Our Peer Coordinators also attended Staff meetings with CASA supervisors. Their ideas and contributions have been invaluable, and they have been recognized as part of the CASA team.

The Sacramento CASA Peer Coordinator Program goals for 2021-2022 include adding one to three more advocates to the existing Peer Coordinators' case load. We also hope to train a new set of Peer Coordinators so that they can begin their service.

All of us at Sacramento CASA heartily commend our Peer Coordinators. After all, "For every ten that watch, only one comes forward to help. Today, as on many occasions before, they were that unique and selfless individual." We thank them for being tireless volunteers and for setting an excellent example of service.



LGBTQ youth are over-represented in the child welfare system, and disproportionately likely to leave foster care without a permanent family. Many of these youth experience neglect, abuse, and/or abandonment specifically because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

All Children – All Families (ACAF), a project of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, promotes LGBTQ inclusive policies and affirming practices among child welfare agencies, and formally recognizes those agencies that are leading the field with innovative approaches to inclusion. This August 2021, CASA Sacramento will be recognized in the All Children-All Families "Change-Makers in Child Welfare" report for achieving the Solid Foundation for Inclusion Tier of Recognition.



# **IMPACT SINCE 1991:**

3,664 foster children served by 1,751 volunteers

Richard. Gucciardo Shannan Field Deborah.Gonzalez Doris.Fulgham Rebecca. Kavanagh Allyssa.Grierson
Denise.Field
Mei.Lin.Jackson
Michelle Irvi Elizabeth Knopf Jessic ole Hurley James Field Jessica.Gordon Nicole.Hurley James.Field Sarah.Bond Stacy.Kopshy Sharae.Green Valeri.Gonzales

Danielle.Keaton

Stacy.Anderson Wendy Gonzales
Mari Golub
Rebecca Hofman Jeaneen Cruz Tanna. Ashley Rhonda. Hankey Vanessa. Flores Mari, Golub
Laura, Gutierrez Melinda, Keller
Spenser, Goodwin Allynson, Harrell-Camarillo
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Elizabeth, Franklin
Steffanie, Bledsoe
Samantha, Gray Noor, ul. aane, Khan
Patty, Estopinal Sharon, Holgerson Joann, Driggs
Karen, Kontz
Marlene, Ferrell Aulaina, Hansen
Marlene, Ferrell, Ferrell, Gerca, Ge arlene.Ferrell Aulaina.Hansen Ashley.De.Alba Chau.Wilson Morgan.Montoya Scott.Williams Rafen.Dace Lauren.Holli Ellen.Kaster Sheri.House Christine.Ullman Morgan.Montoya Aart.van.Beek Xuan.Chung Rose.Bledsoe Lynn.Garcia Augusta.Brothers Jackie.Simon Emilee.Walters Nicole.Pedersen Genevieve.Vivaldi Stella.Bridges Emily, Kinkead Janina, Boel Lydia, Suprun Alysha, Robbins Lila, Ramirez, Hanson Joanne, Wenzel Nina, Stevens Kaitlyn.Jantzen

Erica.Anderson
Danielle.Brown

Melynda.Hughes Michael.Butler
Paul.Donahue Kymla.Birchette Lisa.Chavez Charles.McComish

Kymla.Birchette Lisa.Chavez Charles.McComish

Alysha.Robbins
Alysha.Robbins
Alysha.Robbins
Alis.Hugher Aseil.Mohmoud Merrill.Roseberry Laurie.Eschrich Shira.Gilbert
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# **Making Memories**

Making Memories is a program of CASA Sacramento which provides special experiences to children in foster care who otherwise would not have the resources to pay for them. For children who have moved many times through many homes, basketball or theater camp has typically never been an option. Making Memories funds extracurricular activities to help children and young adults learn social skills, build confidence and provide the relief of getting to be a young person among peers.

During COVID-19, Making Memories has shifted to accommodate requests for equipment that youth can use to stay active in isolation. We provided 8 youth with bicycles in 2020/2021. Other requests included skateboards, gymnastics lessons, and art supplies.

A CASA youth attended a one-week camp at the Aerospace Museum of California, and wrote a thank-you card to CASA staff that read:
"Thank you Ms. Danielle and Ms. Carol for sending me to summer camp. And I had a great time.
Sincerely, [youth name omitted for privacy]"

### **Transition Age Youth Program**



The Transition Age Youth Coordinator at CASA Sacramento provides comprehensive support services to youth ages 16-20 who are in the foster care system. These are youth unlikely to find a permanent placement and forced to face adulthood on their own. Aging out of foster care without a permanent home is the highest-risk outcome for foster youth. One of our key strategies for expanding and improving services to transition age foster youth and young adults is to build upon our experience using the National CASA Association's Fostering Futures Curriculum. The curriculum provides 12 hours of additional training to CASA Volunteers to

assist teens and young adults with transitional skills and planning. This program provides training for advocates on relationship building with older youth, the "possible selves" concept and working with youth as partners in transition and independent living planning.

This year, the CASA TAY Program shifted to virtual workshops and trainings and were able to continue engaging with youth and CASAs, cover a wide range of life skills topics, and enhance the relationships between CASAs and their transition age youth.

46 youth over the age of 16 attended workshops.

36 CASA Volunteers of teens have completed the 12 hour Fostering Futures training.

39 CASA Volunteers were matched with Transition Age Youth.



On February 6, 2021, CASA Sacramento's New Orleans Jazz Crab Dinner grossed over \$200,000 for Sacramento's youth in foster care. We shifted to a virtual event format that allowed guests to pick up their dinners and join our live broadcast and auction from the comfort and safety of their homes. Thank you to everyone who made this night possible as we (in the spirit of jazz) improvised!

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On May 6, 2021, over 320 donors came together to raise a recordbreaking \$83,000 for CASA Sacramento. Our volunteers led the charge to create individual fundraising pages and encourage other CASA Volunteers, board members, and staff to do so as well. Thank you for contributing to a spring full of hope and possibility for CASA youth.



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By joining one of CASA Sacramento's recurring donor circles, you become a partner in a child's success. As a volunteer-driven organization, supporting CASA is one of the most effective ways to invest in the lives of local foster children, and ultimately improve the communities in which we live and work. Your commitment will ensure the good work of CASA Sacramento will continue in our community long into the future.

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\$210 per month – train a new CASA Volunteer and match them with a youth for a year \$125 per month – support an existing CASA

Volunteer and their youth for a year

\$50 per month - give a youth an advocate for 5 months

\$25 per month - give a youth an advocate for 10 weeks

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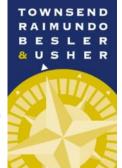




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