



2021
ANNUAL
IMPACT REPORT

The
Future is
Bright.



**“Give me a firm
place to stand,
and I will move
the earth.”
– Archimedes**

OUR HISTORY

CASA of Kern County began operation in 1993-1994, funded by Junior League of Bakersfield. Our mission is to recruit, screen and train volunteers from communities throughout Kern County to serve as Advocates for children in foster care. We also support and closely supervise the advocacy work of our volunteers throughout the duration of their assignments.

OUR MISSION

The Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Kern County speaks for the best interest of abused and neglected children and youth in the juvenile court process by training volunteers to advocate for their safety and well-being in the courts, in schools, and in our community.

Dear Friends of CASA,



As we look back on 2021, we have been fortunate to witness the steadfast commitment of our organization to the children, youth, and families we serve. The continuation of a global pandemic kept a few hurdles in our path, but we were able to accomplish significant initiatives in 2021:

CASA opened our very own dedicated child and advocate visiting center due to the generosity of the Cynthia Lake Charitable Trust and partners. The CASA Clubhouse has proved to be a fantastic addition to our efforts in supporting children in foster care.

Our Legal Education and Leadership Training Program for CASA youth was launched and completed successfully. We collaborated with Amy Adams and Ted King in developing a program that emphasized nutrition and healthy habits, tenets of leadership, the impact of crime & violence, responsible citizenship, and the child welfare & juvenile justice system.



We attained financial stability through various grant opportunities and our two events: the CASA Derby Party and the CASA Superhero Run.

In 2021, we began advocating for children, in special cases, as Education Rights Holders. Education Rights Holders are the champions who step in when a parent is unable or unwilling to advocate for a child's education.

Last but certainly not least, we served 461 children during 2021! 80% of closed cases closed in reunification, adoption, or guardianship.

Thank you for your part in sustaining CASA in 2021! We are eternally grateful for each volunteer, donor, sponsor, and community member who has helped support our work with vulnerable children in Kern County. Thank you for working alongside us to accomplish these amazing outcomes and support the reason why we exist, the children.

Yours in Advocacy

Amy Travis
CASA of Kern County Executive Director

Mike Martinez
CASA Board President



Why CASA Matters

Building consistency and trust

Terry was the youngest of three and his mother had already lost custody of her oldest two sons. Terry and his mom were living in a motel and one day his mother fell asleep and was unaware that Terry had left the room. Terry was found running around on a busy street and nearly struck by several vehicles. The authorities were called and Child Protective Services were notified. When CPS entered the room, it was evident that Terry was being neglected. There was no food in the room, among other unlivable conditions, and his mother had failed to supervise him on multiple occasions. Because of general neglect and his mother's history of drug and alcohol abuse, Terry was placed into protective custody.

During the next few months, Terry's mother diligently worked hard on a plan, including submitting to random drug tests and completing parenting classes, to have her son returned to her care. After this time, the court ordered Family Maintenance Services and a CASA was requested.

The CASA began working with Terry in the summer of 2021. Terry was a talkative and imaginative 4-year-old that had attended preschool for a short while when he was in foster care, but now was back in the home with his mother. When the CASA first visited the home, a big concern was to have reliable door locks, to keep Terry safely inside. The CASA also spoke with his mother about possibly enrolling Terry into Head Start. His mother was interested but didn't have consistent transportation.

When the CASA would visit, they provided the family with age appropriate activities, such as Playdoh, number and alphabet flash cards, books, crayons and coloring books, and a list of fun activities that Terry and his mother could do together at home. On some occasions when the CASA was visiting, the CASA observed that Terry's mom made sure he had a nutritious lunch and Terry was even able to experiment with creating his own lunch creations. On occasion when the CASA called to talk to Terry, his mother would share about the lessons she worked on with him. She would work with him on learning his colors, personal space, and allowed him time to play outdoors when it was cool out.

In the short amount of time, between Terry's mother and the CASA working with him, Terry was naming more colors, numbers, and letters. The CASA, with the assistance of Terry's mother, completed an Ages & Stages Questionnaire assessment on Terry and his scores were well above average for a child his age (the ASQ scores communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal-social skills for young children), and within range for social-emotion development. By the Fall of 2021, the CASA felt confident that Terry's mother was very able to care for her young son. The CASA could see that Terry had a good relationship with his mother, was doing well, and was in a loving and caring environment.

*Names changed due to strict confidentiality

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

Volunteers Who Served a Child in 2021

Mike Abbas	Sue Daniels	Micky Heppe	Alexandra Martinez	Paulina Ruiz
Russell Abercrombie	Emma Dashtipour	Elieser Hernandez	Jessica Mase	Joe Salinas
Sandra Acosta	Alie Davenport	Toni Hernandez	Domingo Mata	Michelle Salinas
Nayan Alcala Suarez	Keith Davenport	Jo Ann Herrera	Tiffani McCullough	Noah Salinas
Brigetta Alexander	Melanie Dawn	Kristina Herrera	Carolyn McIntyre	Silvana Sanchez Parra
Angelica Allen	Amanda DeLeon	Rebecca Hertan	Heather McMahan	John Sanders
Elizabeth Altmiller	Ricardo DeLeon	Tracye Hicks	Lori McWilliams	Tyler Saso
Ann Ardell	MaryAnn Dunham	Brian Holt	Gaylene Merz	Anne Schlesinger
Charlina Arroyo	Natalie Dutcher	Tina Hopper	Terry Meyer	Alys Scoggins
Paris Baca	Katharine Edmonson	Deanna Marie Hostetter	Esmeralda Morales	Diana Shaw
Dana Baugh	Bill Elrich	Alicia Huerta	Donald Moss	Vijay Siddiah
Diane Baumruk	Laura Elrod	Adriana Humphrey	Greg Muir	Renee Socia
Lizette Bazan	Carol English	William Humphrey	Kassie Mullican-Martin	Lucia Sosa
Breann Belcher	Jeannie Enriquez	Susanne Icardo	Everlie Murillo	Deborah Soto
Stafford Betty	Charity Espinoza	Michelle Jackson	Nagi Nammour	Ashley Southworth
Catherine Blanton	Alexis Etcheverry	Justin Janssen	Kelli Neuman	Pamela Spitzer
Deric Blanton	Linda Eviston	Madelyn Janssen	Miriam Nevarez	Chris Stahnke
Robert Boyce	Sherry Fanell	Maria Jaquez	Karen Nizar	Jamie Swan
Chris Boyd	Tammie Fanning	Margaret Jephson	Ty Ohanneson	Sally Tanus
Traci Boylan	Amanda Flores	Laurie Johnson	Lilia Orozco	Corinne Thompson
Angie Boyler	Erika Flores	Paul Johnson	Sarah Owens	Theresa Thompson
Glenda Braun	Rebecka Foote	Ian Journey	Michael Pangborn	Dwight Todd
Tammy Brown	Christine Francis	Rachel Jung	Jane Parsons	Judith Todd
Lauren Bryant	Charis Franz	Jeff Kasinger	Sonia Patino	Ignacio Torres Jr.
Rebecca Bullard	Leann Furgerson	Brenda Keele	Dorothy Patterson	Laura Torres-Curtis
Amanda Callahan	Yahaira Gallegos	Cheryl Ketchum	Noemi Perez	Karen Townsend
Sabrina Campbell	Stephanie Galvan Diaz	Angeline Key	Douglas Peters	Amy Travis
Kylee Carranza	Sharon Gamboa	Leslie Kimble	Deborah Petrini	Susan Trihey
TinaMarie Chaney	Timothy Garcia	Karen Kinijara Murillo	Robert Puente	Teresa Valdez
Mary Coleman	Jim George	Bobbi Kirkegaard-Jensen	Martin Pulido	Mary VanderWerff
Cheryl Collins	Jeanine Griggs	Debra Krohn	Diana Ramirez	Heaven Vasquez
Rebecca Collins	Gordy Guillen	Maritza Lara-Martinez	Petra Ramirez	Selena Vega
Kristin Condie	Katrina Guzman	Kevin Leahy	Serennah Ramos	Iris Virgen Gonzalez
Mer Conner	Sandra Guzman	Michelle Leigh	Kristy Rapley	Rhonda Voda
Phoebe Contreras-Jones	Craig Haley	Mitzi LePere	Kylie Redwine	Jennifer Waguespack
Sarah Cooper	Debbe Haley	April Lewis-Williams	Kevin Reilly	Beatriz Waldrop
Sherry Core	Elizabeth Haley	Rhonda Litt	Kassandra Robles	Susan Walker
Randy Coulter	Arlene Hamilton	Andrea Lopez	Alan Rodriguez Juarez	Stacey Wheeler
Karen Covington	Susan Hamilton	Araceli Lopez	Fanny Rodriguez-Melnikovskiy	Laurel White
Janie Cross	Johnathan Hart	Aurelia Lopez	Melissa Row	McKenzie White
Yadira Cruz Rivera	Veronica Hart	Maribel Mancilla	Richard Row	Rachel White
Yesenia Cuellar	Bob Hawkes	Scott Manzer	Gwendolyn Rudolph	Kathy Williams
Stephen Cutty	Beth Heisey	Gary Martin	Martha Ruiz	Donna Woodall
				Sylvia Ziehler
				Patricia Zloczewski

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

CASA's support children and families involved in the child welfare system and increase the well-being of these children. **CASA VOLUNTEERS ARE EVERYDAY PEOPLE WHO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN CRISIS.**

NUMBER OF ACTIVE CASA VOLUNTEERS

246

NEWLY TRAINED VOLUNTEERS

68

HOURS GIVEN TO ADVOCACY

9,230

MILES DRIVEN BY CASA VOLUNTEERS

75,097



2021 Economic Impact

This impact report addresses the cases CASA was assigned by the juvenile court in which the CASA made the significant difference in the child achieving a PERMANENT outcome. The majority of these children were in Long Term Foster Care. When a child or youth finds a family, and leaves this system, there is a huge benefit to the community. Minimally, the community is saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in housing costs.

CASA can demonstrate that we saved taxpayers over \$292,152 in housing costs in this year alone. This is accomplished through the work of an assigned CASA volunteer assisting in the child leaving the system earlier than the court plan.

Twenty-eight more children* were able to leave foster care and gained their families through our intervention. These children would have cost over \$7.7 million to house them during their 246 additional years of foster care. The twenty-eight children that qualify for this report are identified as children in which the CASA intervention made a unique and vital intervention into the child gaining their permanent success in a family.



CASA of Kern County is committed to finding a permanent, “forever” family for each child we reach. CASA cannot do this work alone, and we rely on our collaborative work with the Department of Human Services.

“It shouldn’t hurt to be a kid. We must listen to children, protect them, and nurture them. I sometimes wonder how different my life would have been if there had been someone in my childhood who was able to hear me, be with me, protect me.” – A victim of child abuse

461 children served

17% 0-5 years
29% 6-11 years
44% 12-17 years
7% 18-21 years

36% Caucasian
37% Hispanic/Latino
12% African-American
13% Multi-Racial
1% Asian
1% American Indian

Children we helped came to us as a result of

Neglect 60%
Physical Abuse 25%
Domestic Violence 13%
Sexual Abuse 2%

Financial Summary

FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021

Statement of Audited Financials

FY2019-2020 & FY2020-2021

REVENUES	2021	2020
Individuals	\$308,562	\$319,899
Foundations and Groups	\$82,125	\$86,935
In Kind Contributions	\$303,823	\$280,911
Special Events	\$131,198	\$142,666
Released from Restrictions	\$725,224	\$314,080
PPP	\$100,000	\$0
Interest/Other Revenue	\$27,537	\$8,700
Total Revenue:	\$1,681,469	\$1,153,191
EXPENSES		
Advocate	\$888,635	\$863,737
Management & General	\$235,600	\$229,903
Fundraising	\$145,277	\$173,820
Total Expenses:	\$1,269,512	\$1,267,460
Change in Net Assets:	\$309,792	\$343,740
Net Assets at Beginning of Year:	\$1,025,336	\$681,596
Net Assets at Year End:	\$1,335,128	\$1,025,336

Statement of Financial Position

FY2019-2020 & FY2020-2021

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Current Liabilities	\$55,970	\$39,688
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$806,928	\$394,971
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$1,491,098	\$1,165,024

CASA of Kern County states that an indemnification under section 9.02 did not take place during the 2019-20 fiscal year.

Children's SPOTLIGHT

Due to confidentiality, the identity of our children is protected. Consequently, we were eager to find a unique way to share photos that show our children connecting with their CASA Volunteers and our community connecting with the children and youth we serve. In the last year, the CASA Clubhouse has been the cozy and fun spot where CASA youth come to hang out and bond with their CASA volunteers. Additionally, we have successfully completed our very first Legal Education and Leadership Academy! Below you will see photos of youth enjoying special moments at the CASA Clubhouse.



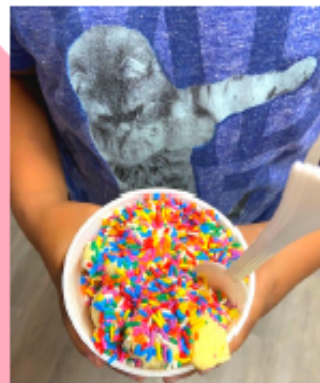
During the Christmas holiday, we held a cookie making gathering where children enjoyed creating their very own tasty cookies. Smiles and cheer all around!



Our first Legal Education and Leadership Academy helped inspire goals and aspirations in the lives of CASA youth who have faced significant adversity.



We hosted our very own art workshop series at the Clubhouse with our CASA teens. Creativity was overflowing!



Last Summer we hosted an ice cream and backpack social before the school year kicked off. It is evident from this photo that sprinkles are a go-to topping!

CASA Clubhouse

Est. 2021

The CASA Clubhouse is designed to support the lifelines of our organization, our Advocates, and the reason why we exist, the children. The Clubhouse will be a tribute to the thousands of children who have had a CASA Volunteer walk by their side, and the thousands more that will see a community-wide effort to assist in their darkest of times.

Lee and Krystyna Jamieson
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION



Robert Grimm Family
FOUNDATION



Why CASA Matters

We held our inaugural Judge's Luncheon where we had the exclusive opportunity to hear from three Juvenile Court judges and their encounters in the court room. Their insight into their decision making and the depth of their experiences was illuminating. With approximately 1,900 children in the Kern County foster care system, the much anticipated question was, how is it determined that a CASA be appointed to a child? The judges on our panel shed some light on this critical decision.

CASA's involvement with the child welfare system is truly unique. For the courts to allow CASA to work alongside attorneys and social workers is immensely significant. Judge Susan M. Gill emphasized that she would like for every child in care to have a CASA, but the reality is there is a shortage of CASA volunteers and a waitlist much too long. Judge Gill went on to share that the "cases that are the scariest to return the children home to" are the ones that she is compelled to assign a CASA to. Even when parents have completed their case plans and there's a diligent social worker assigned, there's still an innate urge to act on the well-being of children by providing them a stable and compassionate adult. In other instances, a CASA could be assigned because there is a need for a nurturing environment with a constant adult figure and also because there is a need for impactful family connections. Retired Judge Louie L. Vega recalls CASAs providing invaluable reports and seeing the rapport built between a CASA and the child. The level of commitment and objectivity by a CASA volunteer is what holds value in a courtroom and also in the relationship with the child.

Judge Therese M. Foley pointed out that she looks for the siblings. In some cases, siblings are separated due to behavioral issues and if a CASA can be assigned, there is reassurance in there being a consistent connector between the siblings. Moreover, she found reassurance in assigning older youth a CASA because of the risk of becoming runaways and entering the unspeakable world of human trafficking. A CASA has a way of establishing confidence and trust with their CASA child, which encourages a strong line of communication that endures even if a youth decides to runaway.

Overall, the judges agreed that a CASA is a crucial part of a child's life. A child in foster care is one who lives with horrific trauma, who has been failed by countless adults, whose voice is a whisper but with a CASA by their side, their voice becomes a ROAR!



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