

December 2023



Message from the CEO

To our CASAs,

The hustle and bustle of the holidays and end-of-year season has arrived. For some, the end of the year might be a time of reflection. Others may be looking ahead to all that 2024 will bring. I hope that as you think back on the last year you can take heart in all of the ways you have made a difference in your case child's life, and as you look ahead, you will be confident that our team at Voices for Children is here to support you in your advocacy no matter what you may navigate next.

With appreciation, always,

Jessica Muñoz, Esq., MFS
President & CEO

Reminders



November Volunteer Hours

Please use [this form](#) to submit your November volunteer hours. Remember to include time spent driving to and from visits, meetings, and other CASA-related destinations.

VFC Office Closures

VFC staff continue to primarily work remotely; however, access to the office is available to CASAs. Please reach out to your advocacy supervisor if you need to come into the office. Our office will be closed on the following days:

December 25, 2023–January 1, 2024 (Winter Break)
Monday, January 15 (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)
Monday, February 12 (Lincoln's Birthday)
Monday, February 19 (Presidents' Day)

Staff will be out of office this holiday season from Monday, December 25–Monday, January 1, and will return on Tuesday, January 2. If you have a case-related emergency during this time, please contact the [emergency cell phone](#) at 858-336-0609.

Chesapeake Office Drop-In Hours

Voices for Children's Chesapeake office has dedicated drop-in hours. If you need to access the office to pick up a gift card, a car seat, or any other prearranged item, please prepare to stop by Monday–Friday: 10 a.m.–noon or 1 p.m.–3 p.m.

Continuing Education

All scheduled Small Group and Continuing Education sessions will be conducted remotely unless noted otherwise. As a reminder, all active CASAs are required to complete at least 12 hours of continuing education each year in order to be in compliance with the National CASA Standards and California Rules of Court. Voices for Children tracks CASA completion of continuing education hours on a fiscal year basis. Please contact your Advocacy Supervisor if you have any questions or concerns.

Promoting Internet Safety

Wednesday, December 6
10:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m.

Join us for a presentation on promoting internet safety and preventing internet crimes against children. Participants will learn about the online threats, including enticement and sexual exploitation, faced by children of all ages. The presentation will cover available resources, such as NetSmartz, a free resource available to help parents, teachers, and service providers to have sensitive conversations about internet safety in an age-appropriate manner. To register, RSVP to Juvenile Justice Advocacy Supervisor Sabrina Gonzalez at SabrinaGo@speakupnow.org by Tuesday, December 5.

Open Topic Small Group

Wednesday, December 13
10:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m.

Please join us for a virtual Small Group meeting to discuss your case with peers and an advocacy supervisor. To participate, RSVP to Advocacy Supervisor Tanya Ehlert at TanyaE@speakupnow.org by Monday, December 11.

In-Home Activities for Children 0-5

Tuesday, January 23
10:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m.

Join us for this virtual training where Developmental Screening and Enhancement Program (DSEP) Developmental Specialist, Romina Cardenas from Rady Children's Hospital, will present on early childhood milestones and activities to support development. Please RSVP to Advocacy Supervisor Emma Bloom at EmmaB@speakupnow.org by January 22.

Open Topic Small Group

Wednesday, January 10
10:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m.

Please join us for a Small Group meeting to discuss your case with peers and an advocacy supervisor via Zoom. To participate, RSVP to Advocacy Supervisor Erin Estes at ErinE@speakupnow.org by Monday, January 8.

Working With Children Under 5

Wednesday, January 17
10:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m.

Please join us for a Small Group meeting to discuss how to best advocate for and develop relationships with children under the age of 5. RSVP to Advocacy Supervisor Autumn Webb at AutumnW@speakupnow.org by Tuesday, January 16.

Juvenile Justice Open Topic Small Group

Tuesday, January 23
10:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m.

Please join us for a virtual Juvenile Justice Small Group meeting to discuss your case with peers and an advocacy supervisor. To participate, RSVP to Senior Advocacy Supervisor Michelle Henry at MichelleA@speakupnow.org by Friday, January 19.

At-Home Continuing Education

This month's at-home Continuing Education suggestions come from our Juvenile Justice team. If you participate in these or any other form of independent study, please contact your advocacy supervisor to receive Continuing Education credit.

[What My Bones Know: A Memoir of Healing from Complex Trauma](#) by Stephanie Foo

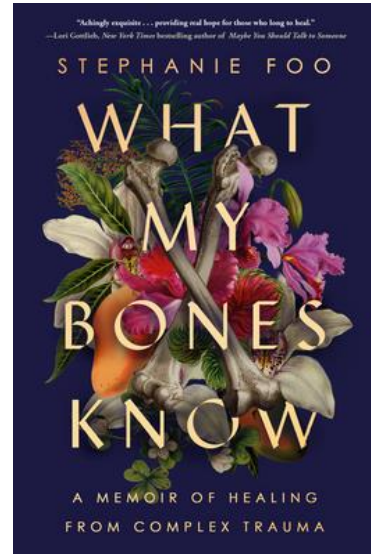
A searing memoir of reckoning and healing by acclaimed journalist Stephanie Foo, investigating the little-understood science behind complex PTSD and how it has shaped her life.

[Invisible Child: Poverty, Survival & Hope in an American City](#) by Andrea Elliott

The riveting, unforgettable story of a girl whose indomitable spirit is tested by homelessness, poverty, and racism in an unequal America—from Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Andrea Elliott of *The New York Times*.

[Solito](#) by Javier Zamora

In this memoir, a young poet tells the story of his harrowing migration from El Salvador to the United States at the age of nine.



Join Us

VFC Children's Holiday Party & Gift Cards

Saturday, December 9

Noon–3:00 p.m.

VFC Chesapeake Office

Voices for Children's Annual Holiday Party for CASAs and case children is coming soon! Please complete this [RSVP form](#) by **Monday, December 4**, whether or not you plan to attend. If you are unable to attend, your case child is entitled to a holiday gift card, so we ask that all CASAs complete the RSVP form. Reserved gift cards not picked up during the holiday party will be available for pickup from the VFC office December 11–22 during our drop-in hours: Monday–Friday: 10 a.m.–noon and 1 p.m.–3 p.m. If you have questions regarding this event, please email HolidayParty@speakupnow.org.



Note: This event is private and caregivers and biological family members are strictly prohibited from dropping children off at the event and/or attending the event. Please talk to your Advocacy Supervisor if you have case-specific questions.

Voices for Children Book Club

Tuesday, January 16

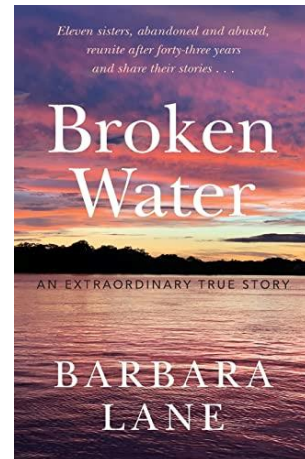
6:00 p.m.–7:30 p.m.

VFC Chesapeake Office

9370 Chesapeake Drive, San Diego

Our next selection is *Broken Water* by Barbara Lane. In this true story of resilience in the face of hardship, Barbara Lane and her sister Kay survive abandonment by their mother only to face severe abuse while living in foster care: the home of a Mafia grunt. However, for Barbara, missing her nine other sisters was more than she could bear. This powerful memoir reveals Barbara's hidden abuse and invites the reader to journey with her through the many years she spent trying to find her sisters and solve the mystery of her family of origin.

You will receive a small group credit for attending the book club meeting and four independent study hours for reading the book. Please RSVP for the book club meeting to Program Manager Nora Siklosi-Szabo at NoraS@speakupnow.org by Tuesday, January 9. If you read the selection but cannot attend the meeting, please email Nora to receive four independent study hours.



Out & About

Culture in Our Community

VFC's "Culture in Our Community" is an online guide for CASAs to find places to visit, upcoming events, local restaurants, and other resources to help connect youth in foster care with their culture or background. We encourage you to explore this resource and use it for upcoming outings. To access the online guide, [click here](#).



Children's Activities

Many local events, activities, and attractions are available to Voices for Children youth for discounted or waived admission. Learn about what activities you and your case youth may enjoy together by visiting our [Children's Activities](#) page.

Kudos

CASA of the Month

Congratulations to our CASA of the Month, Marie G., who has been a CASA since 2022! CASA Marie's tactfulness and advocacy have changed the direction of the life of her 2-year-old case child, Amelia. [Click here](#) to read about how CASA Marie brought together all parties involved in Amelia's case by building trust and empathy to ensure everyone felt heard.



CASA Marie G.

On-Time Court Reports

Congratulations to CASA Courtney Flanagan, our on-time court report winner for hearings scheduled in November! Courtney has advocated for five children since becoming a CASA in 2018.

VFC received 40 on-time court reports for hearings scheduled in November. Court reports are due 15 business days prior to the scheduled hearing. Submit your reports on time for a chance to win a Starbucks gift card.

Ways to Give

Year-End Tax Planning and IRAs

Taxpayers who itemize deductions have until December 31, 2023, to make charitable contributions for their 2023 tax years. Moreover, those 70½ and older can use their individual retirement accounts (IRAs) to support Voices for Children. An IRA charitable rollover gift to Voices for Children may lower income taxes, satisfy the minimum distribution for the year, reduce taxable income even for those who do not itemize deductions, and more. For more information, [click here](#).

Spreading the Word

Fun Without Faces Photos

Our marketing team would love to share your youth's activities on our social media platforms. To submit your stories, please email photos with a description to your advocacy supervisor using the subject "Fun Without Faces." Possible images include visits, celebrations, artwork they made, or photos taken by their caregiver.



Tracking Outreach Efforts

In an effort to better track all of the outreach efforts on behalf of VFC, our recruitment team asks that you complete this [brief form](#) if you gave a presentation about VFC in November. This information will help us improve our recruitment efforts throughout the year.

Second Saturday

Every second Saturday of the month, we encourage our volunteers, staff, board members, and other supporters to showcase their [VFC apparel](#). Join us by wearing yours on Saturday, December 9, to help spread awareness about Voices for Children.

Voices for Children | 858-569-2019 | www.speakupnow.org

STAY CONNECTED

