



**IMPACT REPORT FY2023-2024  
SAN DIEGO COUNTY SUPPLEMENT**

# A Guiding Light in a Child's Life

**"As we work to create light for others, we naturally light our own way."**

— MARY ANNE RADMACHER

For decades, we have been dedicated to championing the rights and well-being of children navigating the complexities of the foster care system. Through both challenging and transformative times, our unwavering mission remains clear: to ensure every child has access to a caring and committed Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) who needs one.

Our CASA program provides invaluable support to vulnerable youth, empowering them to find their voices. Each trained CASA volunteer serves as a beacon of hope, offering stability and consistency. They provide critical support through advocacy, meeting essential needs, and creating positive experiences. By ensuring that children in foster care are heard and fully represented, CASA volunteers illuminate a path toward brighter futures by being there every step of the way. Thanks to their efforts, Voices for Children (VFC) is honored to have advocated on behalf of 1,729 youth in San Diego County foster care this year.

As leaders within San Diego County's child welfare system, we continued amplifying our capacity to streamline access and resources for our CASA volunteers to improve how they can meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the children they advocate for. As the most extensive juvenile justice program in the nation, we are committed to serving at-risk and justice-involved youth and leading the way for other CASA programs that are expanding their reach to serve these youth as well. As a CASA program dedicated to advocating for children in foster care since 1980, we continue to be seen as experts who consistently share our support, advice, and technical assistance with local CASA programs statewide and meet with dozens of staff from other programs to contribute to their growth and success.

What sets us apart is our innovative model of child advocacy that integrates both CASA volunteers and case liaisons, a strategy rarely seen in CASA programs. This dynamic combination allows us to provide a consistent and informed presence in the courtroom, ensuring that every child's voice is heard. Our case liaisons offer invaluable insights, bridging the gap between legal proceedings and each child's unique needs. This holistic approach to our work, along with our comprehensive programmatic organizational structure, allows us to harness the power of teamwork, serve every child who needs us as soon as possible, and continue to make a meaningful impact.

The work of CASA volunteers is vital in creating a world where every child feels valued and supported. For many children, their CASA symbolizes hope — a light in the darkness. In this report, we recognize this special light and the motivation our dedicated CASAs have sparked in the lives of the most vulnerable children in San Diego County.

## THIS YEAR IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

- **1,226** children received a CASA volunteer
- **876** community members served as CASA volunteers
- **503** children in foster care received a VFC staff advocate
- **101** children received a CASA through Voices for Children's Juvenile Justice Program, one of the most established programs in the nation

# PROGRAM IMPACT: IGNITING POSITIVE CHANGE FOR BOYS IN FOSTER CARE

Seven-year-old Tai\* and his family sought asylum in the United States and immigrated in 2019. Due to a history of domestic violence, a family maintenance case was opened in 2020, which ultimately granted full custody to Tai's father in 2022. At that point, his mother was no longer involved in his life. Later that year, Tai was abandoned by his father and left alone in their apartment. Frightened and unsure of what to do, Tai reached out to a family friend, who arranged for him to stay with them while efforts were made to locate his father. The family friend cared for Tai for a little while. However, because of the emotional and physical abuse he had experienced for years, Tai had developed aggressive behavioral challenges that they felt unequipped to manage in the long term. With no known whereabouts of his parents, Tai entered foster care.

At just age 11, Tai had his whole life uprooted and turned upside down after being abandoned by both of his parents, and now adjusting to living in foster care. At first, Tai struggled to live with other youth in foster care, often having his things taken, getting involved in fights, and being bullied because of his race. Tai also experienced communication challenges due to his limited proficiency in the English language. Then Tai met his Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), Brian. When CASA Brian first met Tai, he did not want to talk and had little interest in going outside. Tai didn't have many hobbies at the time because, for so long, his main priority was simply to survive. CASA Brian slowly introduced the idea of different outings they could go on to try new foods. Tai was hesitant but slowly gained more confidence as he spent more time with CASA Brian. Tai and CASA Brian share the same cultural background, so he introduced him to traditional foods he had never tried. Tai enjoyed the new foods and now asks to return for one of his favorites, Pho.



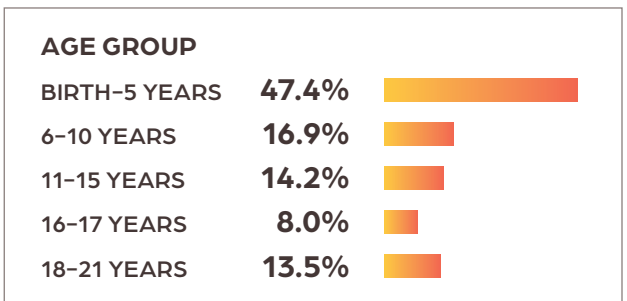
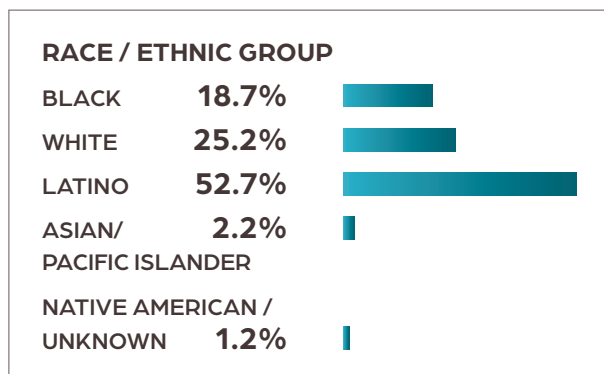
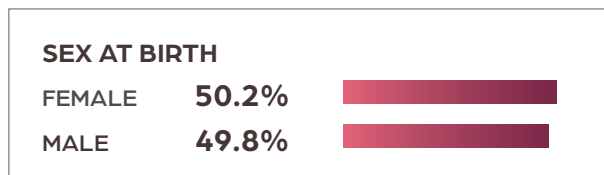
While Tai was more open to trying new foods, he still was hesitant to do any activities outside, as he had never really spent time outdoors and did not think he would like it. Nonetheless, CASA Brian continued to share different outing opportunities. Then, one day in the summer, Tai asked CASA Brian if they could go to the San Diego Zoo. CASA Brian worked with Voices for Children to obtain tickets, as this was the first time Tai had wanted to do an outdoor activity since he had met him. They had a great day together, and Tai showed fantastic growth, being open to such a new experience and showing curiosity and interest in new things. Since then, CASA Brian and Tai have attended other outdoor events and recently had a memorable experience riding multiple roller coasters at LEGOLAND.

Tai continues to blossom in his interactions with others. He shows genuine excitement about activities outside his comfort zone and keeps an open mind when forming friendships with his peers. Tai's significant school improvement, his confidence to ask more questions in class, and his academic excellence are all signs of his progress. His journey is a testament to the positive changes that can occur with the right support and guidance.

*\*Names and identifying details have been changed to protect confidentiality*

# OUR COMMUNITY'S CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

## CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY ON JULY 1, 2023



Source: Webster, D., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Wiegmann, W., Saika, G., Courtney, M., Eastman, A.L., Hammond, I., Gomez, A., Gomez Hernandez, F., Guo, S., Agarwal, A., Berwick, H., Lu, F., Hoerl, C., Yee, H., Gonzalez, A., Ensele, P., Nevin, J., & Michel, J. (2024)

CCWIP reports. Retrieved Aug 20, 2024, from University of California at Berkeley California Child Welfare Indicators Project website. URL: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu>



## *Inspirational Volunteerism*



- 0-4 YEARS: **73%**
- 5-9 YEARS: **20%**
- 10-19 YEARS: **7%**
- 20+ YEARS: **<1%**

### THE GIFT OF TIME

**82,000**

HOURS VOLUNTEERED

### STEPPING UP

**199**

Dedicated community members became CASAs this year, completing Advocate University, Voices for Children's comprehensive training program for new CASA volunteers.

# Our Volunteers

Our CASA volunteers are the heart and soul of our mission. Coming from all backgrounds and walks of life, they share a commitment to speaking up for our community's most vulnerable children. The following individuals served during FY23-24 and have been dedicated Voices for Children volunteers for five or more years.

## 40+ YEARS

Kathryn Ashworth, Esq.

## 20+ YEARS

Stacy Bond  
Kim Neilson  
Raquel Juarez  
Genevieve Knych-Rohan

## 15+ YEARS

Sara Holmes  
Jere McInerney  
Sonya McMahon  
Mary Reynolds  
Jenny Sharratt  
Barbara Winicki

## 10+ YEARS

Melanie Allen  
Paul Arenson  
CoraTena B. Ayala-Blackburn  
Aneesa Baker  
John Baker  
Patricia Billins  
Jessica Blankemeier  
Robert Borthwick  
Charity Bracy  
Bonnie Burke  
Sally Cohenour  
Sue Cox  
Lis Dukesherer  
Barbara Eikner  
Cindy Ellison  
Nynke Fortuin  
Philip Grondin  
Patsy Hartman

Valerie Herrera  
Jane Herrick  
Amy Hoffman  
Jenna Hough  
Hilary Isakow  
Kelley Jhung  
Mary Ann Jones  
Kathe Klare  
Eva Lagudi-Devereux  
Brandee Leath  
Debby Lyons  
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Phyllis Meredith  
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Leslie Molina  
Laura Muschamp  
Suzanne Norris  
Jeff Noyes  
Shannon O'Brien  
Sally Ogilvie  
Katherine Van Dusen Randazzo  
Brent Reyes  
Tara Richards  
Tim Riley  
Marcia Sachs  
Geri Sander  
Ilisha Sethi  
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Kim Stewart  
Kamla Topsey-Tilley  
Susan Ueland  
Michelle Vollrath  
Laura Weston  
Kathy Wiskur  
Don Wood  
Doug Woods

## 5+ YEARS

Cynthia Adams  
Kavita Agarwal  
Brenda Aguas  
Lois Andrews  
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Wendy Zwicker



“

Being a CASA is about forming real connections, being there in the messy moments and championing a child's right to a brighter future.”

– CASA MIKI, SAN DIEGO COUNTY



# Our Supporters

Our work is made possible thanks to the generosity and support of many individuals, companies, foundations, government agencies, and other community partners. We are grateful to the following donors who made financial gifts of \$1,000 or more between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024.

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## \$200,000+

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We are grateful to the following donors who made in-kind contributions between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024.

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 *San Diego Foundation*

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\* *Deceased*



## CASA ANDY | Became a CASA: 2022

CASA Andy has consistently advocated for 8-year-old Sean\* and built strong relationships with everyone involved in Sean's life, especially his mother. After two years in the child welfare system, Sean started a 60-day trial visit at his mother's home. During this time, CASA Andy has been by Sean's side, providing a sense of stability and security, ensuring Sean has what he needs to thrive.

# Our Supporters

## AMICUS CIRCLE

The Amicus Circle at Voices for Children is composed of law firms, law schools, legal associations, and other legal support service organizations that support our mission. We are grateful for our FY23–24 members.

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## MEMORIALS & TRIBUTES

The following were honored by their loved ones with gifts between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024.

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Paul Garrett

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William C. Hotard

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Joan Jacobs

Judith E. McDonald

# Our Community Partners

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Birch Aquarium  
Coronado Historical Association  
Japanese Friendship Garden Society of San Diego  
Museum of Photographic Arts  
Old Globe Theatre  
San Diego Automotive Museum  
San Diego Model Railroad Museum  
The Museum of Making Music  
The New Children's Museum  
The Water Conservation Garden  
USS Midway Museum

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS: CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

Balboa Park Community Access Program  
Birch Aquarium  
Church of Rancho Bernardo  
Children's Discovery Museum  
DJ Cutlos Supreme/Carlos Rico  
FOCUS Auxiliary  
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San Diego Padres  
San Diego Symphony  
San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance  
SeaWorld  
UltraStar Movie Theaters  
YMCA of San Diego County  
USS Midway Museum

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Assistance League of San Diego  
Aurora Behavioral Health Care San Diego  
California Youth Connection  
Child Abuse Prevention Coordinating Council  
Children's Initiative  
County of San Diego, Department of Child and Family Well-Being  
Children's Legal Services of San Diego  
Computers 2 San Diego Kids  
County of San Diego, Probation Department  
David's Harp Foundation  
Dependency Legal Services of San Diego  
Fred Finch Youth & Family Services  
Junior League of San Diego  
Just in Time for Foster Youth  
Lifeline Community Services  
National Conflict Resolution Center  
One Safe Place  
One Simple Wish  
Promises2Kids  
Public Defender, County of San Diego – Juvenile Office  
Rady Children's Hospital, San Diego – Chadwick Center for Children and Families  
Rady Children's Hospital, San Diego – Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Services Program  
Rady Children's Hospital, San Diego – Developmental Screening & Enhancement Program  
San Diego County District Attorney's Office  
San Diego County Office of Education  
San Diego County Sheriff's Department  
San Diego Regional Center (SDRC)  
San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program  
San Diego Women's Resource Center  
San Diego Youth Services  
South Bay Community Services  
Trans Family Support Services



## CASA ADRIANA | Became a CASA: 2023

While serving as a CASA for youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system presents unique challenges, it also underscores the transformative impact of a caring adult in a vulnerable youth's life. CASA Adriana embodies this role for Antonio\*, guiding him through rehabilitative services to complete his high school education, learn life skills, build healthy social behaviors, and prepare for successful reentry to the community.



[speakupnow.org](http://speakupnow.org)

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