

Voices for Children's Starry Starry Night gala returns

Del Mar residents Nancy and David Doyle to chair the event

BY KRISTINA HOUCK

Voices for Children's "Starry Starry Night" gala returns Sept. 24 to the San Diego Polo Club in Rancho Santa Fe, and this year's event co-chairs have a particularly close connection to the cause.

Del Mar residents Nancy and David Doyle have been longtime supporters of Voices for Children, a San Diego-based nonprofit organization that recruits, trains and supervises volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs). CASAs advocate for the rights and well-being of children living in San Diego County's foster care system.

"It gives us a chance to say how much Voices for Children means to us," Nancy Doyle said about co-chairing the event. Nancy can speak about the important role of CASAs firsthand because she once served as a CASA volunteer.

Nancy learned about the foster care system in San Diego and Los Angeles counties through her career, and later through her work with Voices for Children. She is a former teacher who served at the San Diego Juvenile Court



David and Nancy Doyle

COURTESY

member of the San Diego County Grand Jury.

Beginning in 2005, Nancy became a CASA, working with an 18-month-old boy in Los Angeles.

"It really was because of your insight and advocacy that he was adopted," David said.

"Any CASA would have done what I did," Nancy insisted.

In just 18 months, Tommy had been in five foster homes and had six social workers. Nancy recalled visiting him in the mornings.

"He had no interest in me whatsoever,"



A past Starry Starry Night gala benefiting Voices for Children

TIM HARDY

longtime friend Anne Farrell, chief philanthropy officer of Voices for Children.

Nancy later discovered that Tommy had no interest in anybody in the morning. And, unfortunately, that's when potential foster and adoptive parents visited him.

After making a new rule that Tommy would only see visitors after noon, the little boy showed interest in the very first person who stopped by for a visit. And during a second visit with the same man, Tommy started talking.

"I get goosebumps just thinking about

That man officially became Tommy's father about two years later. Nancy attended the adoption ceremony.

Today, Tommy is a happy and healthy 12-year-old boy.

"Any CASA would see that. It was so obvious," Nancy said about Tommy being particularly fussy in the morning. "But a social worker wouldn't see it because there had been so many."

There are 960 CASA programs nationwide. Founded in 1980, Voices for Children is the third largest CASA program in the country.

Voices for Children has 1,500 CASAs.