



SAN DIEGO COUNTY
FY2021-2022
Impact Report
Supplement

Forming Connections, Fostering Hope

A 2019 study by the Hope Research Center found when a child in foster care has a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer who cares about them, listens to them, and understands them, they have more hope.

That hope, in turn, nurtures their overall well-being and allows them to picture a brighter future. That's why Voices for Children (VFC) is honored to have supported **1,421** youth in San Diego County foster care with a CASA this year.

Life in foster care can be a dark time in a child's life. Being removed from the only family they've ever known, many of the youth we serve feel sad, scared, angry, and hopeless. These feelings intensified when the COVID-19 pandemic took away some of their regular interactions, such as seeing a favorite teacher or friend every day at school. Fortunately, our **972** CASA volunteers found creative ways to stay connected with their case youth, providing a listening ear, being a consistent presence, and ensuring they knew that they matter.

This fiscal year, we celebrated the return to in-person connection. Once again, children in foster care and their CASA volunteers are bonding as they go on special outings and visit local attractions, like the San Diego Zoo, LEGOLAND, the New Children's Museum, the USS Midway Museum, and more. Sharing meals together provides an opportunity for youth to open up to their CASA about their worries and wishes for their lives. Important sibling and family visits also resumed, as did in-person court hearings. Appearing in person before

Juvenile Court judges and interacting face-to-face with other professionals on the case allows our CASAs to advocate more effectively in the courtroom.

In the following pages, you will see our impact in San Diego County and read inspiring stories of advocacy that show the power of one-on-one connection. We also recognize our dedicated community partners whose support enables us to do our best work for children in foster care.

THIS YEAR IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY JULY 1, 2021 – JUNE 30, 2022



- **1,421** children in foster care received a CASA
 - **972** community members served as CASA volunteers
- **483** children in foster care received a VFC staff advocate
- **983** children entered foster care this year and received a thorough needs assessment by VFC staff
- **123** children involved with the juvenile justice system received a CASA

*Just over **3,400** children spent time in foster care in San Diego County this past year.*



CASA INSPIRES HOPE WITH A NEW PATH

As a new CASA, Kim was assigned to 12-year-old "Jackson." Jackson's family came to the attention of Child Welfare Services (CWS) in the summer of 2021 after reports were received alleging ongoing and escalating domestic violence between the parents. Subsequently, Jackson and his three younger siblings were removed and put into foster care.

CASA Kim quickly dove in and built relationships with his CWS and tribal social workers. When CASA Kim was first introduced to Jackson, he frequently got into fights and even ran away several times. Jackson was very reluctant to bring down his walls. He was quiet, reserved, and convinced that CASA Kim would leave "just like all the others." CASA Kim was determined to see what was behind Jackson's hard exterior. Through CASA Kim's consistent visits, Jackson slowly began opening up and felt comfortable sharing more about his life.

Jackson always seemed much older than he was due to his stature. His presumed age is not just in the physical sense. He felt the weight of the tremendous responsibilities placed on him at such a young age to care for himself and his siblings. For example, he reported to CASA Kim it often fell to him to find money to pay for food for himself and his siblings. He often recalled many nights comforting his siblings for hours as they cried during his parents' fights and in their early days in foster care.

Jackson confessed to CASA Kim that he felt he needed to act street-tough so that people would not mess with him and his family. At the age of 12, he told CASA Kim he was sure he would end up in Juvenile Court and eventually in jail.

Jackson saw no other path for himself. Fortunately, CASA Kim did.

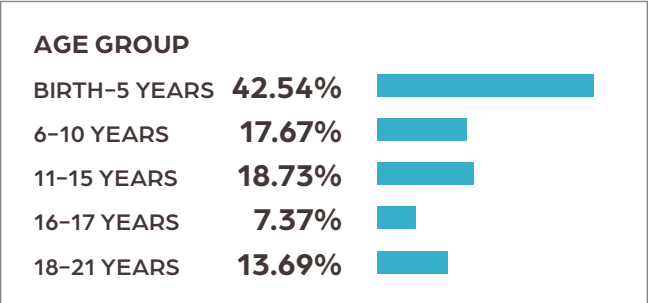
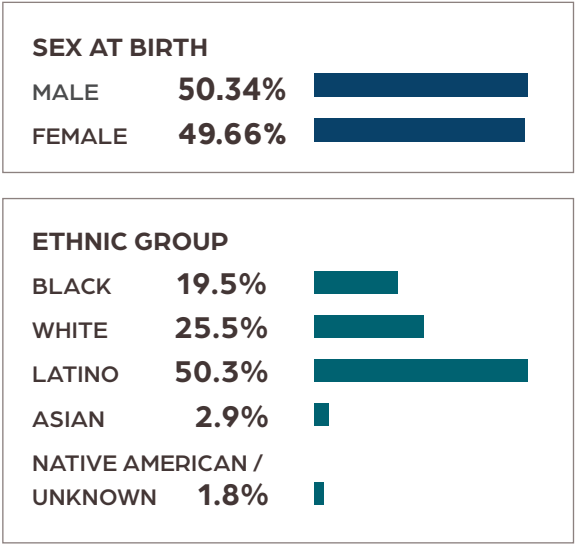
CASA Kim's incredible advocacy and partnership with the minor's attorney allowed them to advocate for special education resources through the Tutoring, Reading, & Empowering Children (TREC) Program.

The TREC Program is designed to meet the unique needs of students between the ages of 5 and 22 who exhibit emotional and behavioral challenges. The program is dedicated to helping these students manage significant emotional reactions, learn to behave responsibly, increase positive social interactions, increase resilience, and improve academic progress. CASA Kim reports it has been game-changing for Jackson's confidence. She also helped Jackson get involved at a local gym. He says he feels less displaced and overwhelmed with the support he is receiving now. CASA Kim has also forged a connection with Jackson's parents, who continue to make progress in their respective recovery programs.

CASA Kim's involvement and advocacy on this case have undoubtedly been impactful and changed Jackson's life path in many positive ways, giving him hope for a brighter future.

OUR COMMUNITY'S CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY
July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022*



*Source: Webster, D., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Wiegmann, W., Saika, G., Chambers, J., Hammond, I., Ayat, N., Gomez, A., Misirli, E., Hoerl, C., Yee, H., Flamson, T., Gonzalez, A., & Ensele, P. (2021). CCWIP reports. Retrieved Oct 19, 2021, from University of California at Berkeley California Child Welfare Indicators Project website. URL: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu>

Inspirational Volunteerism



- 0-4 YEARS: 685 CASAS (70.5%)
- 5-9 YEARS: 238 CASAS (24.5%)
- 10-19 YEARS: 43 CASAS (4.4%)
- 20+ YEARS: 6 CASAS (.6%)

THE GIFT OF TIME

96,000 HOURS VOLUNTEERED

STEPPING UP

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

EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY: GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND



Unfortunately, there was no easy solution. Undeterred, CASA John immediately went into problem-solving mode. CASA John researched and contacted a different school that was just four blocks from his home so Matthew could easily walk there.

CASA John collaborated with Matthew’s mother and social worker to make sure he got the support he needed as he transferred into the new school. The CASA compiled all the necessary information and documents for Matthew to be enrolled and even helped his mom fill out the paperwork.

Matthew began the school year at his new school with a fresh start without being held back.

CASA John continues to communicate with the new school about Matthew needing to be assessed for an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). According to CASA John, Matthew enjoys his new school and has been attending more consistently than last year. CASA John’s ongoing support helps ensure that Matthew has the academic resources he needs to succeed.

CASA John was assigned to siblings 9-year-old “Matthew” and 15-year-old “Joseph” in May 2022. Since his appointment, CASA John has built a strong and trusting relationship with the boys and advocates to ensure their needs are met. Matthew and Joseph’s case is currently in family maintenance, and the children live with their mother.

Matthew was in danger of being held back in school due to numerous absences and poor grades. His mother could not take him to school because she did not have a car. CASA John stepped up and contacted the social worker and school to find a way to get Matthew there.

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 Fiscal Year 2021–2022 and have been dedicated Voices for Children volunteers for five or more years.

40+ YEARS

Kathryn Ashworth

20+ YEARS

Mary Ann Beattie
Stacy Bond
Elizabeth Leonard
Christie Ranney
Cissy Wolfe

15+ YEARS

Holly Elwell
Raquel Juarez
Genevieve Knych–Rohan
Carole Martin
Jere McInerney
Kathy Myers
Kimberly Neilson
Joanna Netzke
Jenny Sharratt
Kate So
Amanda Stroud

10+ YEARS

Cindy Aaronson–Davis
Paul Arenson
Robert Borthwick
Rebecca Bowman

Charity H. Bracy
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Sally Cohenour
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Clarence Flowers
Philip Grondin
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Tara Richards
Tim Riley
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5+ YEARS

Kelly Ackerson
Susan Acquista
Cynthia Adams
Kavita Agarwal
Brenda Aguas
Melanie Allen
Ted Anderson
Kimberly Arnett
Kimberly Ashford
Jennifer Avina
CoraTena B. Ayala–Blackburn
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Aneesa Baker
Dewain Baker
John Baker
Monica Balch
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Mark Brody
Zoe Browne
Bonnie Burke



CASA SAM

Became a CASA in 2019

“Never underestimate the impact that you will have on your case child as a CASA...but they will definitely have an unbelievable impact on you, too.”

Our Volunteers

Rita Burke
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Kelly Cantine
Ginger Chasteene
Yi-Liang Chen
Grace Cho
David Cieslak
Carmen Cimino
Arielle Clagett
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When CASA Sam first met “Ben,” the teen was failing most of his classes and struggling in life. CASA Sam was determined to do whatever he could to help. After a year of weekly visits and consistent support, not only has Ben’s mood lifted, but his academic performance has also improved. He boasted four As and three Bs on his last report card!

Our Volunteers

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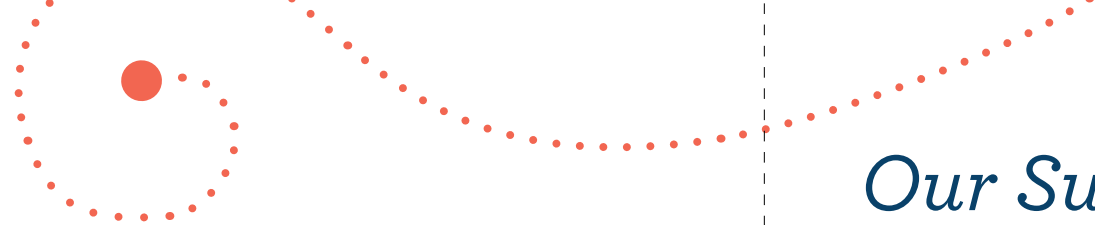
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CASA AMBER | Became a CASA in 2021

“Being a CASA has been such a rewarding experience. Do not underestimate the different ways that you will be able to make an impact on the lives of youth in foster care.”

At 21, Amber is one of our youngest CASAs. She advocates for a medically fragile 1-year-old boy. As soon as she was assigned to the case, Amber started researching activities, books, and toys to enhance his development and started forming a strong relationship with his caregiver. Once a month, Amber drives an hour each way to spend time with him.

Our Supporters

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The Amicus Circle at Voices for Children is comprised of law firms, law schools, legal associations, and other legal support service organizations that support our mission. We are grateful for our Fiscal Year 2021–2022 members.

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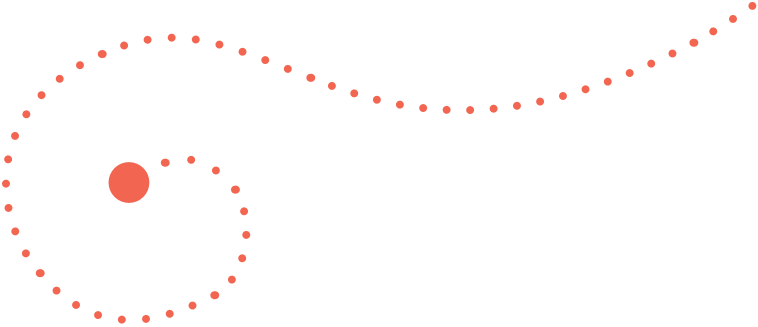
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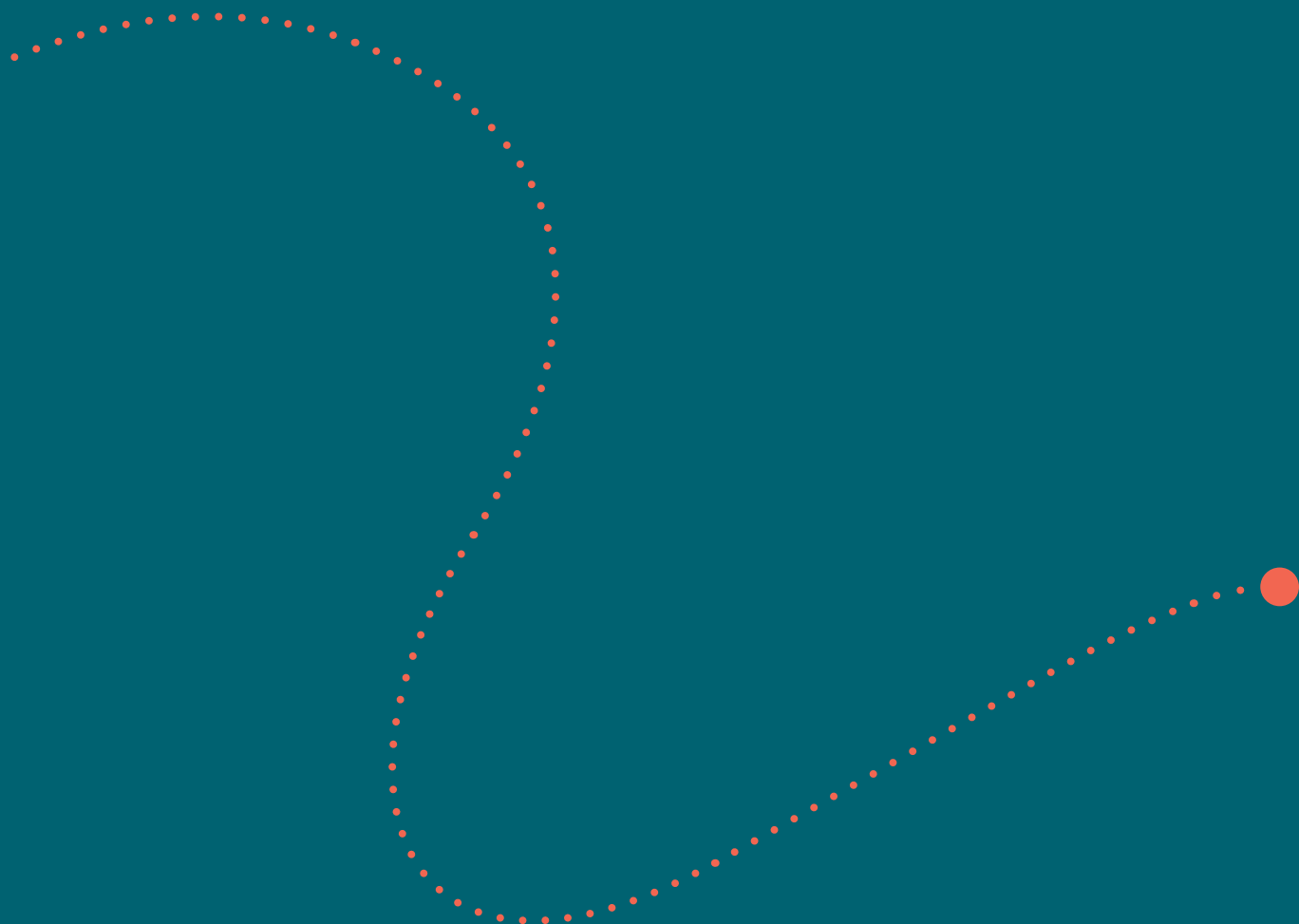
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