



IMPACT REPORT FY2023-2024
RIVERSIDE COUNTY SUPPLEMENT

illuminating a Path to Stability

**“There is always light. If only we’re brave enough to see it.
If only we’re brave enough to be it.”**

– AMANDA GORMAN

During FY23–24, Voices for Children CASA volunteers and staff advocated on behalf of 586 children in Riverside County through our CASA program. The Riverside County CASA program continues to grow as it approaches its ten-year anniversary of serving children in foster care in Riverside County. When VFC was asked to recruit and train volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) in Riverside County in 2015, we not only rebuilt a CASA program but enlightened the community one conversation at a time to establish trust, and developed the program’s public image from the ground up. Now, we are a trusted organization that transforms the lives of children in foster care by providing them with trained, volunteer CASAs.

Our relationships within the community, along with our outreach team’s tremendous efforts at every booth, public event, and meeting, have helped spotlight the critical need for CASA volunteers throughout our geographically large county. As we continue to expand awareness, we have deliberately brought together a group of versatile CASAs who now serve as ambassadors of our mission, speaking directly to their communities about local youth in need of support. The Riverside County program also welcomed a new Community Outreach Coordinator to strengthen our long-term strategies, guiding more community members to support our work and continuing to build a CASA volunteer program that is demographically representative of the children we serve.

CASA volunteers work with children in foster care to form trusting relationships, demonstrate stability, and, most importantly, advocate for their best interests. In the following pages, you will read about these compassionate individuals who step up in the most remarkable way by choosing to dedicate their time to children in foster care, and becoming guiding lights during their most challenging moments. We hope you see the joy that comes from building lasting connections, creating cherished memories, and witnessing the resilience and strength of the children we serve.

THIS YEAR IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY **July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024**

- **586** children served with advocacy
- **346** community members served as CASA volunteers
- CASAs conducted **1,808** visits to their case youth

PROGRAM IMPACT: A BEACON OF HOPE



A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a truly unique and impactful figure in the life of a child in foster care. Caseworkers, attorneys, teachers, and even foster families might change, but a CASA remains a constant presence, providing a much-needed anchor of stability. This enduring relationship can last a lifetime, as demonstrated by CASA Lynn, a true champion for her youth, Claudia*.

In 2016, CASA Lynn met 13-year-old Claudia, a sweet, soft-spoken young girl. At the time, Claudia struggled in school, missed her siblings, and was adapting to a new placement. CASA Lynn quickly formed a close bond with Claudia, sharing their love for going out to eat chicken wings. Understanding Claudia's needs, CASA Lynn stepped in to ensure Claudia had everything she needed to thrive. For instance, when Claudia was having difficulty with math, CASA Lynn advocated for her to receive a math tutor. She also worked to increase Claudia's visits with her siblings, which helped alleviate her feelings of loneliness. As Claudia formed family connections while in foster care, CASA Lynn also supported her in contacting her mother and grandmother and helped her create healthy relationships with them as she continued to grow.

Having been in each other's lives for over a few years, Claudia and CASA Lynn spent time together every other weekend, enjoying going to the arcade, seeing movies, and eating wings. As Claudia started her senior year of high school, she was on track to graduate, striving to pursue a career in criminal justice. CASA Lynn was there by her side for all of it, including when the city recognized Claudia for her service in the community as a mentor and tutor for middle school students through a school club she was active in. CASA Lynn also celebrated Claudia's college acceptance letters to multiple universities by doing their favorite thing: eating wings!

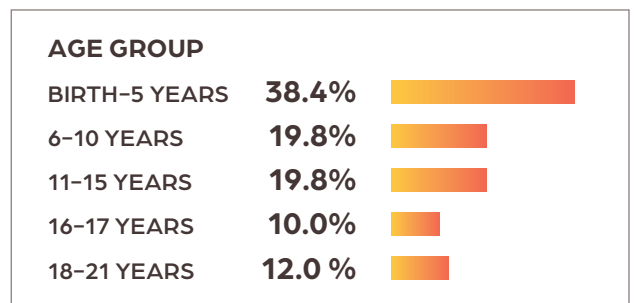
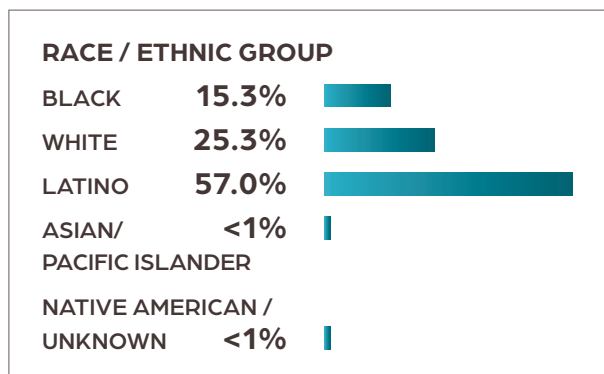
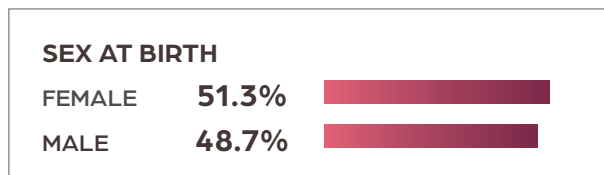
Together, they worked on her plans to attend college, obtain a part-time job, and participate in extended foster care. Claudia then faced new and adverse challenges with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. She had to adapt to an abrupt change in placement, transition to online learning, and cope with limited contact with her family. CASA Lynn remained steadfast throughout it all, supporting Claudia in every way possible. She was there to see Claudia virtually graduate from high school in the spring of 2020 and complete her first year in college. Despite the restrictions, they maintained a close connection, and when it was safe to resume outings, they continued their cherished tradition of going out to eat wings.

Today, Claudia stands as a shining example of resilience and personal growth. She demonstrates financial responsibility, advocates for herself with confidence, and cultivates strong connections with her family and community. Claudia's journey toward independent living and achieving self-sufficiency is a testament to the transformative power of CASA Lynn's unwavering support, a bond that has endured for eight years.

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

OUR COMMUNITY'S CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY ON JULY 1, 2023



Inspirational Volunteerism



- <18 MONTHS: **56%**
- 18 MONTHS-2 YEARS: **6.6%**
- 2-3 YEARS: **13.4%**
- 3 YEARS-8 YEARS: **24%**

THE GIFT OF TIME

17,000

HOURS VOLUNTEERED

STEPPING UP

105

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

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>

Our Volunteers

Our CASA volunteers are the heart and soul of our mission. Coming from many 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 CASA volunteers for three or more years.

7+ YEARS

Pushpa Ananthanarayan
Patricia Bell
Andrew Boucher
Theresa Brennan
Julie Dawson
Melanie Fitzgerald
Robert Geibert
Frances Harris
Gina Newton
Cathy Perring
Catherine Peterson
Barbara Ragsdale
Crystal Swain
Samantha Tajalli Tehrani

5+ YEARS

Loretta Altamirano
Melissa Caton
Pamela Comings
Clarissa De Jesus
Susan Goodsell
Nancy Green
Robyn Harmon
Shelly Henderson-Cuthbertson*
Peggy Huetten
Chary Jackson
Barbara Leadholm
Karen Lovett
Karen Macias

Julie Martel
Shelley Mitchell
Alberto Monge
Susan Nelson
Alexandra Orozco
Marianne Pekala
Ryan Poley
Gloria Simpson
David Smith
Dana Torrey
Armando Valles
Robin Wesley

3+ YEARS

Jacky Aldana
AnnaMaria Boullion
Cassie Bruccheri
Lachelle Buford
Ellie Carrillo
Melissa Chesney
Alanda Cormier
CeCe Darakjian
Lisa Delgado
Kevin Dell
Tiffany Dorin
Vanessa Douty
Anna Frost
Olivia Garcia
Terry Gavitt
Vincent Gollogly
Darcy Hernandez
Jacob Hernandez

Michelle Hetzel
Sarah Hunt
DeeDee Jackson
Sharon Karpin
Christina Karrer
Julie Knighton
Amy Lanhardt
Ariella Lewis
Rhiana Little
Elizabeth Maurer
Jaime McDermott
Brenda Monzon
Kayla Muir
Kymberli Murray
Danielle Nicholson
Keri Ohlrich
Nancy Olsen
Debra Ringo
Mariana Robles
Ana Rocha
Diana Rodriguez
Denise Salazar
Lorena Sanchez
Tricia Schoenfeld
Joshua Schutte
Holly Simmons
Tami Smason
Carmen Stewart
Megan Taylor
Zayna Thorpe
Winfield Tuttle
Nicole Vinci
Tessa Voss

*Deceased



“

Becoming a CASA has changed my lens on the world. As a result, I am a better person, infinitely more empathetic and less judgmental of others, more patient, persevering, and above all, more grateful for the blessings I have in my life. It is an honor to serve as a CASA in the community.” - CASA PEGGY, RIVERSIDE COUNTY



Our Community Partners

COLLABORATING AGENCIES

Assistance League of Temecula Valley
Association of Fundraising Professionals,
Desert Communities Chapter
Association of Fundraising Professionals,
Inland Empire Chapter
Banning Chamber of Commerce
BNI Success Professionals
County of Riverside, Department of Public
Social Services
County of Riverside, Probation Department
Greater Riverside Chamber of Commerce
Murrieta/Wildomar Chamber of Commerce
Palm Desert Area Chamber of Commerce
Pechanga Band of Indians Tribal Court
One Simple Wish
Rancho Mirage Chamber of Commerce
Regional Access Project Foundation
Riverside County Office of Education
Riverside Elks Lodge #643
Superior Court of California, Riverside County –
Juvenile Division
Temecula Valley Chamber of Commerce
TribalSTAR

'FOSTERING CULTURE' PARTNERS

Boomers! at Palm Springs
Canyon Lanes at Morongo
Children's Discovery Museum of the Desert
Coachella Valley History Museum
Color Me Mine – Riverside
Famous PUDN
Glo Mini Golf
March Field Air Museum
Palm Springs Air Museum
Performance Riverside
Riverside Art Museum
The Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture
The Wheelhouse Skating Rink



CASA FRANK | Became a CASA: 2023

CASA Frank was assigned to two brothers living in separate homes across different counties. Upon meeting them for the first time, he could see that it was vital that they stay connected. Ever since, he goes out of his way to meet and pick up 15-year-old Paul* and then drives across the county to visit and pick up 12-year-old Blake* and makes sure they get to spend time together. They always do their favorite things like getting frappuccinos, eating burgers, and simply hanging out, talking about school, video games, and the Netflix series they're into at the time. With CASA Frank consistently bringing them together, the brother's relationship remains close, highlighting the crucial role of CASA volunteers in maintaining family connections while in foster care.

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 \$100 or more between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024.

\$100,000+

California CASA Association
California Governor's Office of
Emergency Services
Focusing Philanthropy
Hsueh et al v Bankers Life and
Casualty et al Settlement
Riverside County Transportation
Commission

\$50,000+

Jocelyn Bauer/The Bauer Family
Foundation
County of Riverside EDA CDBG
Program (HUD)
CPT Group, Inc.
Desert Healthcare District
Judicial Council of California
San Manuel Band of Mission Indians

\$25,000+

BetterWorld Trust
Bluebird Legacy, Inc.
City of Corona CDBG (HUD)
City of Moreno Valley CDBG (HUD)
Desert Community Foundation
In-N-Out Burger Foundation
Lily Lai Foundation
PositiviTee Inc.
The Roost Foundation
U.S. Bank Foundation

\$15,000+

Amazon.com Sevices LLC
City of Perris CDBG (HUD)
County of Riverside District 4,
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez

\$10,000+

Irene W. and Guy L. Anderson
Children's Foundation
City of Riverside CDBG (HUD)
County of Riverside District 1,
Supervisor Kevin Jeffries
County of Riverside District 2,
Supervisor Karen Spiegel
County of Riverside District 3,
Supervisor Chuck Washington
Devto Support Foundation
Kaiser Permanente (Riverside)
E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter
Foundation
Riverside County District Attorney's
Office
Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians

\$5,000+

Anonymous
The Champions Volunteer
Foundation
City of Hemet CDBG (HUD)
City of Temecula CDBG (HUD)
Donor Anonymous
The Dragon Tree
Dutch Bros Foundation
Pacific Premier Bank
PRS Holdings Foundation
Rite Aid Foundation KidCents
Katie and Dan Sullivan/
The Kathryn & Daniel Sullivan
Foundation

\$2,000+

BigHorn Golf Charities
Citlalli Rojas
City of Indio

City of Palm Springs
City of Temecula, Office of the Mayor
Adrienne Lane
Mechanics Bank
Pechanga Resort and Casino
Provident Savings Bank Charitable
Foundation
Shelly Cobb
Stater Bros. Charities
The Gardens on El Paseo
Kathy and Chuck Washington
Hector Zatarain

\$1,000+

Jeffrey R. Beaulieu
Bent Share Entertainment LLC
Clarissa and Frederick L. De Jesus
Amy Eybsen
First Service Residential
GFWC Woman's Club of Indio
Goodwin Family Memorial Trust
Tracey and David Kloehn
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Stettenheim Foundation, Inc.
Michelle P. and Gregory R. Swartz

If you have any questions or corrections to your listing, please contact us at giving@speakupnow.org

Our Supporters

\$500+

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Dana Torrey and Manny Siordia
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Region
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\$250+

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BNI Riverside
Erin Boyd
Mary H. Bradbury

Inland Southern California
United Way
Traci Kaas
Kappa Alpha Theta-Inland
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Barbara Lefler

Thrivent Financial
Dana Torrey and Manny Siordia
Evan Trubee
Evan D. Tucker
United Way California Capital
Region
Regina C. Velasco
Anthony J. Vitulli
Pam Weekley

IN-KIND SUPPORT

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

Air 1 / K-Love
Big Wheel Tours
Body Deli
Boomers! Palm Springs
Brandini Toffee
Brunch 101
Camden Cellars
Coachella Valley Coffee
Company
Desert Dust
Desert Luxury Pools
Merav Eshkol

First Service Residential
Robert Ford
Fresh Eddie Productions
LLC
Frisky Business Cat Cafe
Heartfelt Crafted Notes
Kappa Alpha Theta-Inland
Southern California
Alumnae Chapter
Jenika Kurtz
KVCR
La Fe Wine Bar

La Quinta Brewing Co.
Las Casuelas Nuevas
Life Coaching for Dogs
(and Their Humans)
Luchador Brewing Co.
Melita Martin Radtke
Keri Ohlrich
Omni Rancho Las Palmas
Country Club
One Eleven Bar
Palm Desert Chiropractic

Palm Springs Animal
Shelter
Elizabeth Partain
Red Jeep Tours
The Best Bookstore in
Palm Springs
The Dragon Tree
The Living Desert
The Renaissance
Esmeralda

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 Fiscal Year 2023–2024 members.

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Walter Clark Legal Group

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Roberta “Sue” Nitti



CASA JODI | Became a CASA: 2022

When CASA Jodi first met her case youth, Emily*, she had already experienced more than 18 foster homes and, at times, had run away. Within five months, the two formed a trusting relationship. CASA Jodi has been instrumental in supporting Emily academically and helping her acquire the skills to transition into adulthood as she approaches her 18th birthday. With CASA Jodi by her side, Emily was admitted into 11 universities, including her top choice. Emily has enthusiastically expressed that she wants CASA Jodi to remain her CASA as she participates in extended foster care. Now, CASA Jodi continues to be Emily’s biggest cheerleader and is doing everything she can to support her as she begins college.



speakupnow.org

951-472-9301 | Riverside County

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