



IMPACT REPORT FY2024-2025
SAN DIEGO COUNTY SUPPLEMENT



Voices for
Children

45 Years of Speaking Up for San Diego's Children

For 45 years, Voices for Children (VFC) has been a powerful advocate for children in San Diego County's child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Through its Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program, VFC ensures children in foster care have a consistent, caring adult by their side — someone who listens, speaks up, and stands up for their needs.

What began in 1980 by law student Kathryn Ashworth and social worker Elizabeth Bacon has grown into one of the nation's most comprehensive CASA programs. Initially focused on providing judges with vital case information, VFC expanded rapidly in response to surging numbers of children entering foster care. The organization introduced innovative approaches: regional case management, flexible volunteer training, and data-driven practices, all aimed at reaching more children with greater efficiency and focus.

VFC now serves children from birth through age 21, thanks to public and private support. Specialized services include advocacy for infants and toddlers, early assignment of CASAs to new cases, and support for young adults in extended foster care. In recent years, the CASA model expanded into the juvenile justice system, providing consistent, compassionate advocacy for youth navigating complex challenges.

Last year alone, over 1,206 children received personalized support from more than 800 trained CASA volunteers. These dedicated advocates participated in court hearings and Child and Family Team meetings, collaborating with professionals to ensure each child's voice was heard. CASA volunteers are equipped to address issues like trauma, behavioral health, disrupted education, and family instability, always with the goal of safe, permanent, and loving homes.

VFC's work aligns with kin-first culture, reflecting a modern, child-centered approach

that prioritizes family preservation and timely reunification. CASA volunteers are recognized as essential partners in the child welfare system, earning the trust and praise of numerous community partners. To deepen our local impact, VFC has staff support in every juvenile court and provides region-specific support for CASA volunteers, ensuring children receive effective, culturally competent advocacy across all communities, including rural and border regions of San Diego County.

Collaboration is at the heart of VFC's success. The organization plays a key role in more than a dozen committees and task forces, informing policies and practices that shape the future of child welfare. None of this would be possible without the tireless commitment of volunteers, staff, partners, donors, and community leaders working together to protect and uplift our most vulnerable children.

As we look to the future, VFC remains committed to expanding access to high-quality advocacy. Every child deserves a trusted adult by their side, and with your support, we can ensure no child in San Diego County faces the child welfare or juvenile justice systems alone.

THIS YEAR IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

- **1,206** children received a CASA volunteer
- **880** community members served as CASA volunteers
- **426** children in foster care received a VFC staff advocate
- **61** children received a CASA through Voices for Children's Juvenile Justice Program, one of the most established programs in the nation

PROGRAM IMPACT: FROM ADVERSITY TO ACHIEVEMENT

When a child enters foster care, their world can feel uncertain and out of their control. But when a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) steps in, new possibilities take shape. CASA Will became that advocate for “Jack”, and together, they turned a vision for the future into a life-changing reality.

Jack was placed in foster care as a teenager, carrying with him not just the weight of past trauma, but also an extraordinary drive to succeed. From their first meeting in early 2022, CASA Will connected with Jack over art, Boba tea, and a shared love of movies. CASA Will quickly became a trusted adult in Jack’s life and an essential source of educational support and stability. After Jack moved to a residential and educational campus for youth in foster care, he began to thrive socially and academically. By the end of the year, CASA Will was appointed as Jack’s co-educational rights holder, allowing him to play an even more active role in supporting Jack’s learning goals and academic progress.

In the spring of 2023, Jack shared his desire to transfer to a more rigorous academic environment. He expressed that he was not feeling challenged in his current coursework and dreamed of attending a school that offered advanced learning opportunities, ideally with a performing arts program. Jack had big aspirations, including graduating from high school, attending college, continuing his education abroad, and one day moving to South Korea. CASA Will took his aspirations seriously. He researched alternative high schools, asked questions, attended meetings, and explored every option to support Jack’s vision. Together, they identified a local arts and sciences high school with a rigorous academic program focused on college readiness and creative expression.



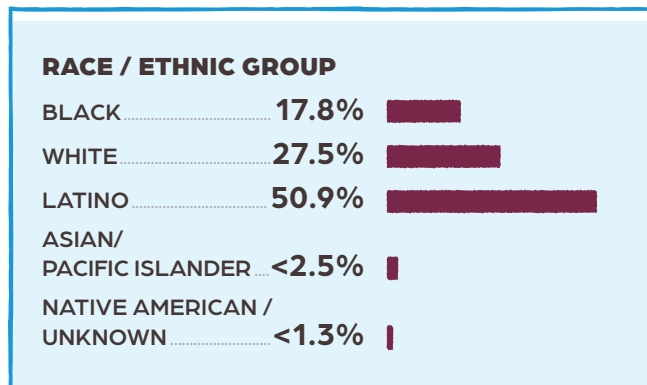
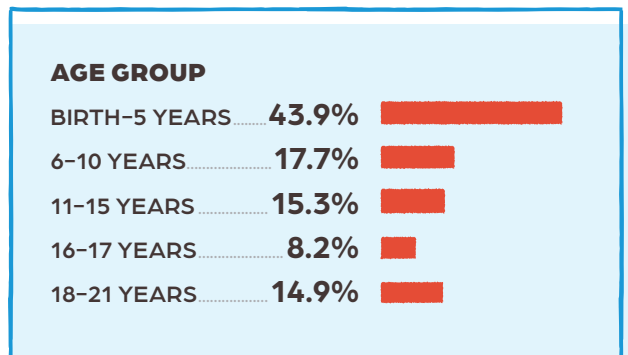
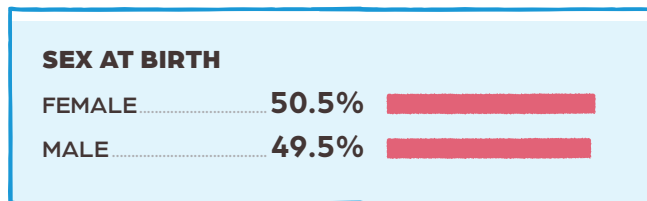
Jack was accepted, but they faced a new obstacle: getting permission to attend an off-site school and coordinating daily transportation. When the request for transportation was denied less than two weeks before the start of the new school year, Jack was crushed but not defeated. CASA Will immediately took action, informing Jack’s attorney, and with the support of the San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program (SDVLP), a special court hearing was held. The Court ruled in Jack’s favor, recognizing that this educational path was in his best interest.

Since that pivotal moment, Jack’s achievements have been remarkable. He graduated in June 2025 with a 4.06 GPA and was accepted to several universities, including his top choice, the University of Southern California. He enrolled in the fall and is currently participating in extended foster care as he transitions to college life with the continued support of his CASA, Will.

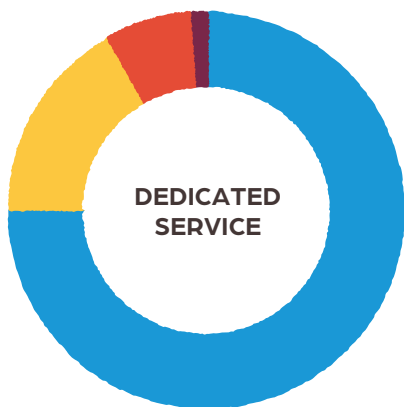
Jack’s journey demonstrates the powerful impact a CASA can have, not just as a supportive adult but as a relentless advocate for a young person’s voice, goals, and future. When a CASA listens, believes, and does everything in their power to help a child reach their potential, dreams once thought impossible can become true.

OUR COMMUNITY'S CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY ON JULY 1, 2025



Inspirational Volunteerism



- 0-4 YEARS: 76%
- 5-9 YEARS: 17%
- 10-19 YEARS: 7%
- 20+ YEARS: <1%

THE GIFT OF TIME

87,000
HOURS VOLUNTEERED

STEPPING UP

224
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, 2025, 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 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 FY24–25 and have been dedicated Voices for Children volunteers for five or more years.

45+ YEARS

Kathryn Ashworth

20+ YEARS

Stacy Bond
Genevieve Knych–Rohan
Kim Neilson

10+ YEARS

Kavita Agarwal
Brenda Aguas
Melanie Allen
Paul Arenson
Aneesa Baker
Patricia Billins
Jessica Blankemeier
Robert Borthwick
Bonnie Burke
Karen Bush
Ginger Chasteene
Sally Cohenour
Sue Cox
Lis Dukesherer
Heather Duncan
Barbara Eikner
Cecilia Fernandez
Nynke Fortuin
Joe Gieda
Mariana Giraldez
Valerie Herrera
Jane Herrick
Amy Hoffman
Jenna Hough
Sharon Humphreys
Hilary Isakow
Kelley Jhung
Mary Ann Jones
Janet Katz
Kathe Klare
Joseph Knece
Eva Lagudi–Devereux

Marc Lawrence
Brandee Leath
Mark Lewis
Jere McInerney
Sonya McMahon
Phyllis Meredith
Bruce Meyer
Bob Morris
Suzanne Norris
Jeff Noyes
Sally Ogilvie
Katherine Randazzo
Tim Riley
Marcia Sachs
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Jenny Sharratt
Elizabeth Spillane
Ellen Springall
Kamla Topsey–Tilley
Michelle Vollrath
Laura Weston
Jennifer Wilbur
Barbara Winicki
Don Wood
Doug Woods

5+ YEARS

Cynthia Adams
Carina Affinito
Lois Andrews
Annie Atencio
Margaret Banez
Nigel Barker
Christy Bartlett
Wendy Bassett
Janet Bergland
Jim Beverett
Pam Beverett
Rachel Bilodeau
Dave Braggs
Reginold Branch
Dave Broad
Rita Burke

Margret Burroughs
Yi–Liang Chen
Jose Contreras
Veronica Cox
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Amelia Grattan
Karen Gross
Bonnie Grossman
Dinora Guadarrama
Sue Gwizdak
Virginia Hancock
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Barry Hill
Petrea Hodge
Sara Holmes
Alyssa Hom
Juli Horka–Ruiz
Sylvia Hostetler
Stephanie Jimenez
Chalsie Keller
Laura King
Heather Kostyzak
Sherri Kredich
Sagary Krulce

Our Volunteers

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Leah Semann
Erin Sensibaugh
Iisha Sethi
Janet Shanberge
Teri Sharp
Sarah Shekhter
Kim Shores
Bill Shovers
Joe Shultz
Jean Skobljar
Patricia Smith
Michael Snare
Beth Sneyd

Charlene Stanley
Cary Stillwater
Diane Stockton
Cathy Suhovecky
Leslie Swerbilow
Lina Thomas
Jen Tipton
Jaleesa Torres
Evan Tucker
Carl Tulberg
Kathy Urbanic
Kelly Valencia
Jeanell VanDusen
Joyce Waller
Brendan Walsh
Rebecca Warbrick
Jennifer Watkinson
Chris Watson
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Lexi Wiggins
Kelly Wilkinson
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Katrina Young
Wendy Zwicker



CASA VICTORIA A. | Became a CASA: 2024

When 15-year-old "Rosalia" entered foster care in 2024, she was facing upheaval—placement changes, loss of family connection, and the everyday struggles of being a teen. CASA Victoria stepped in with a steady presence and empathy. From driving Rosalia to appointments to listening through tears, Victoria built trust and showed what true advocacy looks like. Through conflicts, honest conversations, and joyful outings, Rosalia knew she wasn't alone. At a recent meeting, Rosalia shared: "CASA Victoria is the one person I can call... she makes me feel safe and okay again."



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, 2024, and June 30, 2025.

\$400,000+

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\$200,000+

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Focusing Philanthropy

\$100,000+

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\$10,000+

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\$5,000+

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🌱 *San Diego Foundation*

✨ *The Jewish Community Foundation*

* *Deceased*

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



CASA BART M. | Became a CASA: 2024

Assigned to "Derrick" in 2024, CASA Bart quickly realized that true advocacy meant supporting not only Derrick, who is neurodivergent and mostly non-verbal, but also his hardworking mother. He secured in-home care that eased her burden and strengthened family stability. CASA Bart also built a meaningful bond with Derrick through consistent visits, including his favorite activity—riding the trolley and enjoying chicken nuggets from McDonald's. CASA Bart's advocacy is grounded in the belief that recognizing and valuing everyone involved in a child's life is essential, as their efforts multiply when they feel appreciated.

Our Supporters

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We are grateful to the following donors who made in-kind contributions between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025.

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Jamie and Justin Gover	Paradeigm Films	Vin De Syrah
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Jennifer Li-Hochberg and Jason Hochberg	North Shores Printery	Yoga Barre Del Mar
	Push Play	

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Birch Aquarium
Coronado Historical Association
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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

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Birch Aquarium
Church of Rancho Bernardo
Children's Discovery Museum
Comfort Cub
FOCUS Auxiliary
Forever Foster Homes
Hilda Ochoa-Parra & Family
HM Electronics, Inc. (HME)
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One Simple Wish
ProKids Golf
San Diego County Credit Union
San Diego Padres
San Diego Symphony
San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance
SeaWorld
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UltraStar Movie Theaters
YMCA of San Diego County
USS Midway Museum
Warby Parker
Xtreme Youth

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Aurora Behavioral Health Care San Diego
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California Youth Connection
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Children's Initiative
County of San Diego, Department of Child and Family Well-Being
Children's Legal Services of San Diego
Computers 2 Kids San Diego
County of San Diego, Probation Department
David's Harp Foundation
Dependency Legal Services of San Diego
Foster the Earth
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
Outside the Lens
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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
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