



# 2017 Annual Report



# Dear Friend,

What do children in foster care have in common? The critical need to have at least one consistent, caring adult in their life. Someone to listen to their concerns and fears, ask about their day at school, and nurture their hopes and dreams. Our Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers fulfill this need.

## The Power of a Caring Adult

Studies show that when children have at least one caring person in their life, they can overcome great odds. Every day, our CASAs help create positive outcomes for our foster children. Unlike foster care professionals—attorneys or social workers who must manage numerous cases at once—CASAs are matched with a single child or sibling group. These compassionate volunteers are able to focus and devote the time to get to know each child in depth, understand their life circumstances, and advocate for their best interests in court. Just as importantly, our CASAs are friends and mentors to their foster youth, awakening potential and resiliency in the children they serve.

## CASAs Help Children and Families

We are pleased to share with you our FY17 Annual Report, featuring the Fisher family. When Steven and Veronica Fisher lost custody of their daughters due to drug and alcohol abuse, they sought help. After completing a court mandated rehabilitation program, they regained custody of their girls and consider their CASA Susan, family. Theirs is a story of inspiration and hope.

## Positive Impact

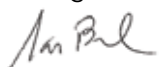
In FY17 we served 810 foster children with the support of 641 CASA volunteers. We recruited 232 new CASA volunteers, up from 201 last year. Furthermore, 95 percent of our teens completed their high school requirements—more than ever before. Our plan for FY18 is to grow to serve at least 900 foster children. We are making great progress towards our ultimate goal: to provide a CASA for every foster child in Santa Clara County.

One of our most significant accomplishments this past year has been around our move to a digital environment. We successfully transitioned all of our volunteer records to digital formats and are in the process of completing the same for all child and family records. Going digital not only saves paper and office space, but enables our staff and volunteers to exchange information and reports virtually. This enables us to assign CASAs much faster to children in need.

Additionally, we initiated distance learning technology to conduct orientation and training sessions remotely. This removes barriers for potential volunteers who are unable to travel to our Milpitas office and greatly increased our number of volunteers throughout Santa Clara County. Further deployment of this technology will facilitate our ability to provide training, coaching and support to volunteers regardless of where they reside in the County.

On behalf of our staff and Board of Directors, thank you for investing in our organization. Your ongoing support and commitment helps our CASAs provide stability and hope to each child they serve. Thank you for helping us transform lives.

With gratitude,



Cassio Conceição  
Chair, Board of Directors



Karen Scussel  
Executive Director

CHILD ADVOCATES OF  
SILICON VALLEY

## Mission

To provide stability and hope to children who have experienced abuse and neglect by being a powerful voice in their lives.

## Vision

Every child has a positive view of the future and the opportunity to become a productive, healthy adult.

## Purpose


To recruit, train and support Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) who are matched with foster children to provide critical emotional and educational support, ensuring that each child's needs are met and their voice is heard while navigating the court dependency system.





# Impact

## The Power of a Caring Adult

A photograph of a woman with reddish-brown hair, wearing a yellow button-down shirt, smiling broadly while holding a young girl. The girl is wearing a white dress with a pink and light blue ruffled skirt and has her arms raised in the air. They are standing in front of a yellow playground structure. The background shows a green field and trees under a bright sky.

*“Every child deserves a champion: a caring adult who provides stability and hope, who listens to that child’s fears and concerns, nurtures their dreams, and helps them become the best version of themselves that they can be.”*

— Susan Maciel-Finley,  
CASA volunteer



# Providing Hope, Promoting Stability

*“When parents are on drugs and alcohol the kids are left out. Kids need that caring adult in their life. Susan, their CASA, was that positive influence.”*

*— Steven Fisher, parent*

After Steven and his wife Veronica lost custody of their children because of their addictions, their three daughters Savannah, age 7, Isabella, age 10, and Yvette, age 12, were placed in foster care with their aunt and uncle. That’s when Susan Maciel-Finley became Yvette’s Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). A few months later, she stepped up to be a CASA for all three girls.

“My role was to listen to the girls, to be their friend and to be their voice in dependency hearings,” says Susan. “When they were with me, they got to be kids

again without the family drama. This was particularly important for Yvette, the oldest child who had taken on a parental role with her younger sisters. When she was with me, she got to be a young girl again.”

“Susan was someone I could open up to,” Yvette says. “She’s wonderful. She’s like my best friend.”

When I saw how Susan was helping my kids, that inspired me to continue on my path toward recovery,” says Veronica.







*"It's really nice how the CASA program works. Kids need support. The CASA program did a lot for my kids and inspired us to be better parents. The kids see there is a better life. They got so much love and encouragement from their CASA."*

*— Veronica Fisher, parent*

After completing a court mandated program to regain custody of their children, the Fishers were reunited with their girls in December 2016.

"The Fishers are a tremendous inspiration to those of us who work in this field, to those of us who dedicate our lives to working with families in the dependency system," says Santa Clara County Dependency Court Judge Shawna Schwarz.

"It feels really good to be a family again," says Isabella.

A year after the family was reunified, Susan continued and still continues to be a part of the girls' lives.

"Susan is so calm and has a lot of patience. She doesn't judge. As their CASA, she guided my daughters to make better choices and display better behaviors. When she stepped up to be a CASA for all three girls, I was like 'wow, this lady is something!' Now she's not just a part of the children's lives, she's part of our lives. She's family," says Veronica.

For Steven, being able to be a parent again means everything.

"I take them fishing, we go to the library and rent games. I help brush their hair for school. I get to be their dad again, says Steven, adding "We're ready to build new memories."

## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017

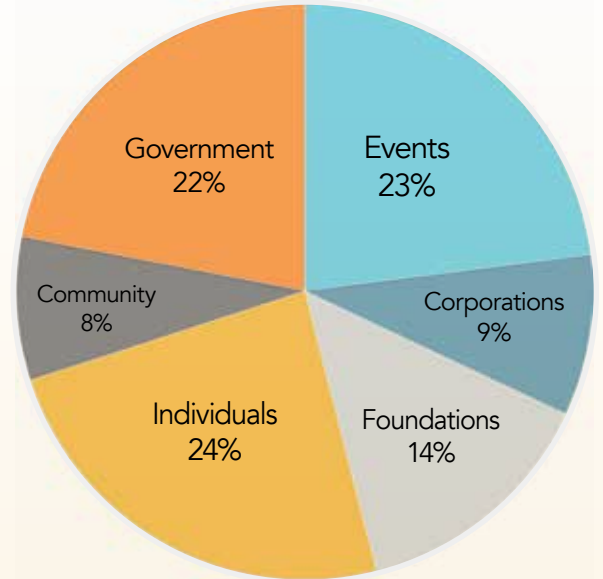
TOTAL REVENUE \$2,506,726

TOTAL EXPENSES \$2,297,246

NET INCREASE \$ 209,480

NET ASSETS FOR FY17: \$2,559,471

## Sources of Funds



## ACTIVE CASA VOLUNTEERS

# 641

## TOTAL CHILDREN SERVED

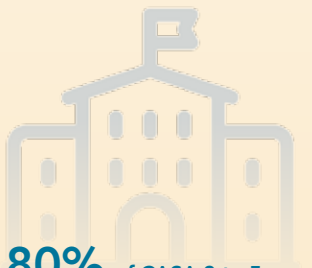
# 810



70,785 volunteer hours valued at \$2,014,555

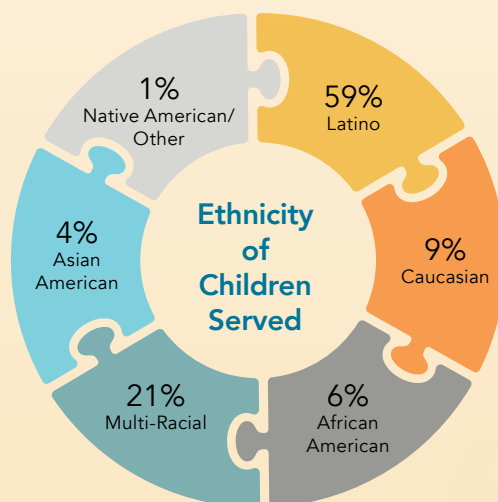
## FROM OUR CASAs:

- 91% felt they made a positive difference in their child's life
- 76% provided educational support to their child
- 66% saw an improvement in their child's success at school
- 81% engaged in healthy eating and physical activities with their child
- 86% felt their court recommendations were fully considered by the judge presiding over their child's case
- 98% recommend the volunteer experience to others



**80%** of CASA 3 to 5 year olds are enrolled in preschool compared to **23%** of all foster children ages 3-5 in Santa Clara County.

**95%** of our high school seniors completed their high school requirements compared to less than **50%** of foster youth nationwide.



## Ages of Children Served



18+ years	15%
15-17 years	20%
11-14 years	20%
6-10 years	27%
0-5 years	18%

# Thank you to our donors who make hope a reality for the children we serve.

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*"My ray of hope was my CASA. She listened to me without judgment and spoke up for me in court. As I was transferred from foster home to foster home, I knew she was always a phone call away if I needed her."*  
 – Aaron, foster youth



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