

Child Advocates Quarterly

Current News for Friends of Child Advocates

SPRING 2004



At first, I found it odd that April, the first month of spring, was chosen to represent something as tragic as child abuse and neglect. But then it dawned on me why April was actually the perfect choice for National Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month: spring is a time of new beginnings, and a new beginning is exactly what every abused or neglected child needs.

Four-year old Casey* was abandoned by his mother. He has no home, no comfort, nothing to call his own. This little boy is then thrust into an overburdened court system, waiting for strangers to determine his fate. Fortunately, Casey had an Advocate who stuck with him throughout the court proceedings and helped him find a safe home with nurturing parents who will soon adopt him. Our 700+ Advocates are working to turn around the lives of 1,000 children just like Casey who live in worlds that are dark and lonely. Advocates often are the only consistent adult in the child's life, and spend on average three hours a week with the child getting to know him or her better than anyone else in the system. Advocates make sure these kids, who have already suffered too much, are not neglected in a system that oversees thousands of children. Our partnership with you—our donors, volunteers, and friends—is what makes these new beginnings possible for children like Casey, children who have had such a rough start. Thank you for your ongoing support. We are truly grateful!


—Gisela B. Bushey, Executive Director


April: National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month


Every day, three children die as a result of abuse or neglect. In the U.S., over half a million abused and neglected children are in foster care while waiting for a safe, permanent home. About 3,000 of these kids live in our own community.

Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month was established by presidential proclamation in 1983 to raise the public's awareness of such startling facts about child abuse and how we can work toward its prevention. We encourage you to join in the national effort.

How to help:

 **Join the blue ribbon campaign.** Wear a blue ribbon to symbolize the need to prevent child abuse and neglect.

 **Report suspected abuse or neglect.** Any concerned individual can and should report suspected child abuse. For more information, visit www.preventchildabuse.org.

 **Partner with Child Advocates** to ensure healthy childhoods and break the generational cycle of abuse. Work one-to-one with an abused child or make a donation.

Upcoming Events

SPEAK UP FOR A CHILD COURT TOURS

Tuesdays, May 11, June 8, July 6, 8 - 9 a.m.
Santa Clara County Dependency Court
Take a behind-the-scenes tour of juvenile dependency court and learn more about the work of Child Advocates. RSVP Susan@cadvocate.org or (408) 573-5674.



The Human Race

Saturday, May 8, 8:30 a.m.
Shoreline Park-Mtn. View

Child Advocates is a participating agency in The Volunteer Center of Silicon Valley's 11th Annual Human Race, a fun walk/run that gives local nonprofits an opportunity to raise funds. Register as an individual or team to participate on behalf of Child Advocates. Visit www.cadvocate.org/HumanRace2004.htm or call Susan at (408) 573-5674.



2nd Annual Birdhouse Bash

Sat., May 22, 2:30-5 p.m.
210 Alta Vista Ave., Los Altos

Celebrate spring with us! Bid on over 85 handcrafted birdhouses created by local artists, architects, children, and community members while enjoying spring in a beautiful garden setting. Hors d'oeuvres and drinks will be served.

(continued on page 2)

Our Mission

The mission of Child Advocates is to provide stability and hope to abused and neglected children by being a powerful voice in their lives.



Child Advocates
of Santa Clara & San Mateo Counties

 A Member of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association

Ways to Give

There are many ways to support the work of Child Advocates and our over 700 Advocate volunteers. Your tax-deductible contributions allow us to continue to recruit, train, and support Advocates to serve 1,000 abused and neglected children each year.

- ◆ Make a donation;
- ◆ Enroll in a payroll deduction program through your employer;
- ◆ Make a planned gift;
- ◆ Ask your company to partner with Child Advocates by sponsoring events or donating financially;
- ◆ Donate goods and services;
- ◆ Donate your car.

Donate Your Car



Vehicle Donation Program

Help support Child Advocates

Visit www.cadvocates.org/donate.htm or call (408) 416-0400

My Experience as a Child Advocate

Jeff Snyder, Advocate since July 2002

Boys and girls in the dependency system have tough lives. They are taken from their parents, they are assigned to social workers who also track several dozen other children, they frequently change homes and schools, and decisions are often made about them without their input or knowledge. As an Advocate, I get to provide a bit of stability and permanence in the life of a child, and because I'm a volunteer, there is frequently an extra degree of trust from the child. As a result, my advocate teen and I have built a great

relationship over the past year and a half, and we have tackled some pretty serious issues together as well.

I have met his teachers, his housemates, and his county social workers. I visited him in the hospital when he had appendicitis, and met him at the train station after he visited his relatives for the holidays. But being an Advocate is much more than just meeting people and running errands; it's about helping a child become a strong, healthy adult.

"I immediately helped move him to a new home where he could thrive..."

When I first met him, my advocate teen lived in a group home that left him feeling disrespected and very unhappy; I immediately helped move him to a new home where he could thrive. More recently, when his group home's pet was hit by a car, I brought the injured cat — and several very worried boys — to a vet hospital where together we decided how best to treat the animal.

Anyone who spends time with teens must have ongoing conversations about the constant

pressure from cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs. I can't protect him from these things, but I can help him learn how to make the right decisions, how to not just survive in the system but succeed in it, and over time, how to take responsibility for his own life.

Of course, we also have fun: we bowl (him well, me not so well); we ice skate (him well, me very poorly); and we love to eat Johnny Rockets hamburgers.

An especially touching moment for me was at his eighth grade graduation ceremony, when he saved a seat for me by his side. Ordinarily, these roles should all be filled by his parents, but for thousands of children in the Bay Area, parents just aren't there.

I know that I'm unlikely to change the world through my actions. However, as a Child Advocate, I can help change the world of one child. And I'm okay with that.

— Jeff Snyder

Board of Directors 2003-2004

Kevin Gardner, President
Toni Cupal, Vice-President
Bill Hannemann, Treasurer
Mary Dean, Secretary

Margaret "Margie" Becker
Shelley Brown
Gisela B. Bushey
Mike Byrd
Loren Cheng
Frank Clohan
Laura Elmore
Joseph Giansante
Kevin Hatch
Barbara Insel
Tim Jenks
Randy Schwemmin
Skip Shaw
Robert Smith
Julie Stermer
Kathryn Williams

2nd Annual Birdhouse Bash

continued from page 1

Prizes:

Prizes will be awarded in several categories: Best of Show, Most Artistic, Best Architecture, Most Functional, Best Children's Entry, and Wackiest.



Tickets:

\$60 per adult
\$20 for children ages 3 - 14
Free for children under age 3

To make a reservation: Please call Susan at (408) 573-5674 or mail your check along with your name, the names of your guests, address and phone number to:

2nd Annual Birdhouse Bash
Child Advocates
509 Valley Way, Milpitas, CA 95035

Tickets will be held at the door. Pre-registration is required.



Call for Entries! Interested in building a birdhouse for the auction or know someone who might be? Please contact Debbie at debbie@casasiegel.com or (650) 533-7713

Legislative News

California Foster Care Legislation

Significant strides have been made to improve the lives of California's foster children. State bills AB490 and AB408 took effect the beginning of this year and will promote educational stability as well as overall stability and permanency for the children we serve.

AB 490: Education of Foster Youth

AB 490 is a comprehensive foster youth education reform bill. It addresses the obstacles foster youth face in successfully completing their education as a result of frequent moves, school transfers and absences due to court appearances.

Highlights: The law requires the coordination of efforts by social service agencies and school districts to promote the educational stability of foster youth. Social workers must consider a child's educational stability when

determining a placement. If a child transfers between schools, it must take place within two business days, and school districts are required to award credit for full or partial completion of coursework.

The law also requires that each student is to be placed in the least restrictive educational program and has access to the academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all students.

AB 408: Promoting Stability & Permanency for Foster Youth

The overall intent of AB 408 is to address the issue that foster children do not typically receive familial support or establish relationships with adults to help them with their transition into adulthood upon exiting the dependency system. The goal of AB 408 is to "ensure that no child leaves foster care without a lifelong connection to a committed adult."

Highlights: Under AB 408, social workers are required to help foster youth identify and establish relationships with important individuals. They must also help the child maintain these relationships and report their efforts to the court.

To view the full text of these bills, visit www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html

Donor Spotlight



Child Advocates thanks **Walters and Wolf Companies** (www.waltersandwolf.com) for its incredible generosity.

A specialty building contractor providing glass, stone, aluminum panels, and other products for commercial construction, the company has donated more than \$80,000 to Child Advocates over the past several years. These contributions have enabled us to serve over 50 of our community's neediest children!

An Evening of Stars

On Saturday, February 28, about 500 of our guests enjoyed *An Evening of Stars* at The Fairmont San Jose.



Lisa Sobrato Sonsini and Judge Richard Livermore

Thanks to our many sponsors, guests, table hosts, and volunteers who made this year's Come Play for a Child gala a smashing success! We far exceeded our \$270,000 goal and raised over \$330,000 on behalf of abused and neglected children in our community.



Former Foster Youth Speak Out

In-Depth Interviews with 94 Former Foster Care Alumni

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation recently commissioned a study involving in-depth interviews with 94 foster care alumni. Participants were asked about their experiences in the system as well as their opinions about what improvements in the system were the most critical. The great majority agreed on the importance of the following changes:

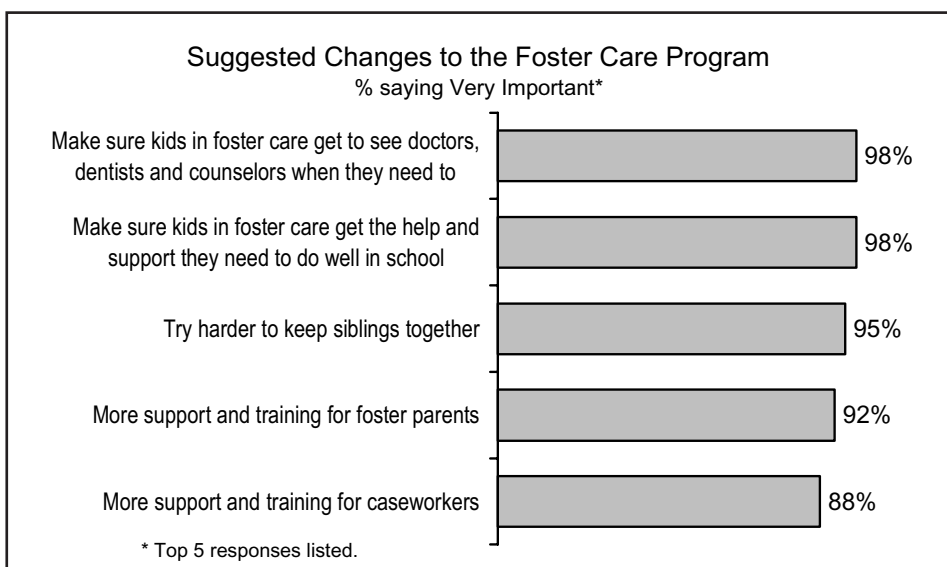


Figure reprinted from *The Future of Children Journal*, 2004

To view the full report, visit www.futureofchildren.org

Children Waiting, Hoping for an Advocate

Gina*, age 13

Gina is living in a San Jose foster home. She was sent to the U.S. from Mexico after both of her parents passed away and has been bounced back and forth among relatives ever since. Gina loves to dance and is very talkative. She is primarily Spanish speaking, but her English is improving every day.

Rosa*, age 4

Rosa is in the system because of drugs and domestic violence. Rosa is the 2004 version of Shirley Temple, with curly blonde hair and a love of singing. She needs a consistent adult in her life.

Simon*, age 13

Simon was removed from his home over three years ago because of neglect by his mother, who was under the influence of methamphetamines while caring for her children. Simon has been having problems in school and needs a special person to guide him down the right path. He has been on the waitlist for almost three years.

*Name changed to protect the identity of the minor.



Curtis*, age 1

Curtis was born premature and tested positive for cocaine. Despite his hardships, Curtis is a smiley baby. He is currently residing at a foster home and needs an Advocate to be a powerful voice for his best interests.

David*, age 17

David is currently living in a group home and needs an Advocate to help him with his impending emancipation. He is flunking out of school and desperately needs a positive role model. David is a kind-hearted teen who has been in the system for seven years and on the waitlist for two.

**Make a lifelong
difference for a child.**

(408) 416-0400

info@cadvocates.org



Speak up for a child...

Non Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 1064
San Jose, CA

Child Advocates
509 Valley Way
Milpitas, California 95035
Phone (408) 416-0400
Fax (408) 416-0406