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### **First-Ever Los Altos Flower Run to Benefit Foster Youth**

*Los Altos Volunteers Kick-Off Inaugural Benefit Run During Foster Care Awareness Month*

Milpitas, CA – April 24, 2017 – Los Altos resident and Child Advocates of Silicon Valley Board Member Debbie Crouse is passionate about finding ways to help the 1600 foster youth in Santa Clara County. But she wanted to do more than fundraise, she wanted to make it fun for the community while building awareness for her cause. She recruited her friend, Joy Erf, an experienced distance runner and six other philanthropically minded Los Altos residents to organize a 5k fun run/walk to raise money for foster kids.

The 5k Inaugural Flower Run/Walk starts at 9am on Sunday, May 21 in front of On Your Mark in downtown Los Altos, 378 Main Street and loops through the lovely Los Altos Hills and back. Participants can sign up online at: <http://tinyurl.com/flowerrun4kids>. All proceeds from the event benefit foster children in Santa Clara County. Participants are encouraged to add a flower flourish to their running/walking gear and will receive a commemorative bracelet for participating in the event.

"The Flower Run/Walk is a healthy, fun activity for friends and families to do together while supporting foster youth," says Debbie Crouse. "We hope this event is the first of many runs to benefit foster children in our community."

Joy Erf is excited to be pairing her passion for running and skills in fundraising to help foster children in Silicon Valley. "Running is a passion for me," explains Joy Erf. "Giving back to the community while doing something I love brings that much more meaning to the sport."

"We're thrilled to see our community of supporters kicking-off the inaugural Flower Run/Walk during Foster Care Awareness Month in Los Altos," says Karen Scussel, executive director of [Child Advocates of Silicon Valley](#). "With the climate of uncertainty surrounding programs that help underserved children, it is vitally important that foster children – our community's most vulnerable population – have a caring, stable adult in their lives in the form of a Child Advocate." Scussel, a Los Altos resident, is also running enthusiast.

According to the American Medical Association, a more vulnerable group does not exist than children removed from the custody of their parents and placed in foster care. Child Advocates provides that one person, that caring adult who will remain their friend, advocate and mentor throughout their time in the dependency system: a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). CASAs are a powerful voice for children in foster care, ensuring that a child's emotional and educational needs are met.



In fiscal year 2016, Child Advocates supported approximately 600 CASA volunteers who donated 64,800 hours of time to serve 783 foster children. As a member of the Board of Directors, Debbie Crouse is not only managing this run; she's also an active volunteer leader in fundraising for the organization.

"We're among only 4% of charities that Charity Navigator rates 4-star," says Crouse, noting that more than 81 cents of every dollar donated to Child Advocates last fiscal year directly benefited foster children in Santa Clara County.

Debbie Crouse is a long-time resident of Los Altos and brings a wealth of business experience to Child Advocates. She has been driving change within technology, service and manufacturing businesses for over 20 years. Debbie has provided facilitation, training and hands on delivery of projects for clients and former employers. In more recent years, she has spent her time raising her children, leading fundraising projects for non-profits and working with technology startups to improve execution as they grow. She formerly served on the Board of Directors for Family & Children Services of Silicon Valley and Montclair Educational Foundation.'

Joy Erf, a resident of Cupertino and technical recruiter, found her passion for distance running 10 years ago when she began training for her first half marathon. Since then, she has completed six marathons and over 50 half marathons. Joy has provided leadership to other local 5ks including the Montclair 5k, CEEF Run For Great Schools, and Kennedy Color Run.

Joy and Debbie met at Montclair Elementary School of Los Altos where they lead various fundraising efforts for the educational foundation including the annual walk-a-thon, Silent Auction and 5k Run. They are joined by a highly enthusiastic group of six women who met at Montclair Elementary School who share a passion for running and giving back to the community.

### **About Child Advocates of Silicon Valley**

Child Advocates is the only agency in Santa Clara County that provides Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) to foster youth. Because our volunteers are court-appointed, they can thoroughly explore every aspect of a child's case, including meeting teachers, doctors, social workers, counselors, biological family members and foster parents, thereby gaining a comprehensive perspective on what the child needs in order to thrive. CASAs assist their child in accessing needed resources, follow their school progress, and speak up for their child's best interests in court. They maintain complete records about the case, submit reports and attend court hearings. CASA volunteers stay with their case until their child has a safe, loving home. Find out more about our CASA program at [www.BeMyAdvocate.org](http://www.BeMyAdvocate.org).