“Education is a key component to help foster children succeed in life. Neither one of my parents graduated from high school but they instilled in me the importance of obtaining a good education. I feel very blessed to support Child Advocates and know that my gifts help transform children’s lives.”

– Marjorie Mancuso, Donor since 1989

**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.
Dear Friend,

This year’s annual report celebrates our 30th anniversary of transforming foster children’s lives by providing a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). Since 1986, we have recruited, trained and supported more than 10,000 volunteers who have served more than 16,000 children in the Santa Clara County dependency system. During this time, Child Advocates of Silicon Valley has grown into one of the largest CASA organizations in the country.

Positive Results
2016 marked the third year of our five-year strategic plan to provide a CASA for approximately 1,000 foster children living in Santa Clara County. In fiscal year 2016, we served 783 children, a 6.5% increase over FY15. We reached our goal with the tremendous dedication of our 595 CASA volunteers.

Serving More Children
We are supporting our ever growing volunteer base by continuing to expand our CASA Mentor model where experienced CASA volunteers provide guidance and coaching to fellow CASAs. This model enables us to serve more children while managing our expenses. We’re also maximizing our use of office volunteers and interns from Palo Alto University who help us meet our case assessment needs while gaining valuable work experience.

Positive Impact
We know CASAs matter to foster children and provide valuable insight into dependency cases. Through diligent observation and engagement with the child, CASAs write thorough court reports and make critical recommendations that give Juvenile Court judges an inside, balanced look at their CASA child’s situation. Many of the decisions judges make concerning a child’s welfare, placement, therapies, and services are based on these CASA reports. Just as importantly, our CASAs are friends and mentors to their foster youth, awakening potential in the children they serve.

You Make a Difference
Everyone needs someone on their side, a guiding hand to help them navigate life’s ups and downs. Your ongoing support and commitment to our agency helps make this happen. Your donations help us continue to recruit, train and support volunteers who are consistent, caring adults for our community’s most vulnerable children. Thank you for helping us make a lasting difference in these children’s lives.

With gratitude,

Mala Jairam
Chair, Board of Directors

Karen Scussel
Executive Director
I first met Karen when she was a high school senior living in a foster home with three other teenage girls. Within a short time, I became aware of Karen’s uniqueness. She is ambitious, intelligent, hardworking, fun loving and, given her situation, well adjusted. She is the type of person who leaves a lasting first impression, and her eager receptiveness has made for a delightful rewarding relationship.

All children need support systems. Even though children in foster care have attorneys, foster parents, social workers and therapists, a CASA brings real heart into a child’s life by focusing on that child individually. We are with that child by choice because we really care and want to make a difference as they navigate through a difficult time in their life.

Karen is a very accomplished young woman. She won a scholarship through her high school and earned an award for being proficient in Spanish. She served as class secretary and captain of the tennis team, and, she did all of this while taking IB level classes.

While Karen is a high achiever, the stresses of adult life can be overwhelming. It is my goal to support Karen emotionally. She sometimes likes to talk through things, so I listen and encourage her when she faces challenges. It has been a pleasure to watch her confidence grow in preparation for her sophomore year at UC Santa Cruz.

On Being Karen’s CASA

“Karen is such a sweet, genuine person. She’s a joy to be around and I love being with her. She’s the real deal.”

“I volunteer and support Child Advocates because I want to make a difference in a child’s life. As a CASA, I’ve seen for myself the incredible impact the organization has on foster children’s lives.”

– Gaylene Austin
The CASA program has been the most beneficial service I’ve had since I entered the foster care system at age 15.

For me, it’s not that I needed a CASA to guide me and teach me what’s right and what’s wrong. I always had a set mentality to keep on the right track. My goal was to attend a university, but when you strive for big goals, it can be a bumpy and emotional road because it takes a lot of hard work.

It was very, very difficult my senior year in high school. I was dealing with a different foster home setting, managing all the paperwork to apply to universities and get scholarships, while juggling school work. It was very stressful – like I said, it’s a bumpy road. But the person who was always there for me no matter what was Gaylene, my CASA.

I also believe that it’s the little things that people do that help you grow. Gaylene helped me learn how to drive, open a checking account, make a budget and shop for food – and trust her when she says there’s a right way to shop for food. Gaylene also exposed me to various ethnic foods when we would go out.

Most importantly, I know I can call Gaylene when I need someone to talk to and sort out my feelings. Gaylene always has an open door for me. It’s very comforting. Everybody should have their go-to person. Gaylene is that person for me.

Scholarship Winner
Last spring, Karen received a $10,000 scholarship from Child Advocates to help her pursue her dream to study Critical Ethnic Studies and Psychology at UC Santa Cruz.

“Winning the scholarship money from Child Advocates makes me feel really happy and grateful. It’s nice to have that big financial burden off my shoulders.”
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016

REVENUE $1,689,713
EXPENSES $1,674,276
OPERATING INCOME $ 15,436

NET ASSETS FOR FY16: $2,315,368

More than **81 cents** out of every dollar donated goes to services that directly support the advocacy of foster children in Santa Clara County.

64,800 hours valued at $1,816,305

Volunteer Hours

FROM OUR CASAs:
- 95% felt they made a positive difference in their child’s life
- 66% saw an improvement in their child’s success at school
- 90% felt their court recommendations were fully considered by the judge presiding over their child’s case
- 99% recommend the volunteer experience to others

Ages of Children Served

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14 years</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-17 years</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18+ years</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Ethnicity of Children Served

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>62%</td>
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<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indian/Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi-Racial</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL CHILDREN SERVED 783
ACTIVE CASA VOLUNTEERS 595

65% of CASA 3 to 5 year olds are enrolled in preschool compared to 35% of all foster children in Santa Clara County.

79% of our high school seniors completed their high school requirements compared to less than 50% of foster children nationwide.
Thank you to our donors who make hope a reality for the children we serve.

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www.BelMyAdvocate.com • info@caladvocates.org • Tax ID No. 77-025773

This list reflects donors who generously gave during FY 2016 (July 1, 2015 — June 30, 2016). If you find an error please accept our apologies and contact the Development Office so we can correct our records.
Executive Director
Karen Scussel

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Lisa Clark
Laura Duganne
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Becky Manchester Aidlberg
Jane Oglesby
Michael O’Leary
Moe Rubenzahl
Herta Schreiner
Greg Warder
Dan Winter

"My CASA, Lisa, is one of the most important people in my life. She is there for me when I need help with school or just have questions about life. Lisa makes sure I am comfortable with my surroundings, my foster placements and school. I appreciate all the wonderful things she has done for me - it is because of her I am in a good place in life"
— Dan, age 17

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