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Child Advocates Honors CASA Mentors During National Volunteer Week *CASA Volunteer Mentors Help Scale Program to Serve More Foster Youth*

Milpitas, CA – April 17, 2017 –Volunteer Mentors who dedicate their time, talents and energy to improving the lives of foster children in Santa Clara County will be honored at a special luncheon by Child Advocates of Silicon Valley during National Volunteer Week (April 23-29, 2017). The weeklong celebration pays special tribute to volunteers across the country that give of themselves to better their communities and the lives of others.

“It’s fitting that National Volunteer Week is celebrated during the same month as Child Abuse Prevention Month because all of the children we serve in foster care have experienced some form of abused and or neglect,” says Karen Scussel, executive director of Child Advocates of Silicon Valley.

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 2016, approximately 600 CASA volunteers donated 64,800 hours of time to serve 783 foster children.

Celebrating CASA Mentors

“This year, we want to shine the spotlight on our volunteer CASA Mentors who play a crucial role in our efforts to serve every child in the Santa Clara County dependency system with a CASA by 2021,” Scussel says. That’s about 1,200 foster children.

CASA Mentors are experienced CASAs who guide other CASA volunteers with their cases. Mentors help provide guidance, answer questions and connect the CASA volunteer with resources and services in the community.

Child Advocates began the Mentor program in 2015 and now has 35 active Mentors who oversee 433 CASAs. “With a program staff of just 13 people, the Mentor program has enabled us to scale our CASA program and serve more foster children while keeping costs down,” Scussel explains.



"I enjoy being a Mentor and working with other volunteers," says Bob Feldman, a Mentor to four CASA volunteers, and a CASA to a 19 year old college student. "Child Advocates does amazing work. I'm just glad to be involved and know that what I do has a positive impact on a foster child's life." [Read his blog story here.](#)

Susan Maciel-Finley became a CASA volunteer after she retired as a Business Operations Manager from a UK-based Telecommunications company. "I couldn't see myself being idle. I knew I wanted to give back," Susan explains.

After being a CASA to seven children, she accepted the challenge to become a Mentor and now oversees eight CASA volunteers in addition to being a CASA to a teen mother. "It's been great. I really enjoy it," Susan says. "I tell anyone thinking about volunteering that being a CASA is a great way to utilize your nurturing skills outside of your immediate family. I am so fulfilled by doing this work."

Child Advocates is actively recruiting volunteers for its July training class. Individuals interested in becoming a CASA volunteer can learn more at www.BeMyAdvocate.org/Volunteer.

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.