



Challenge for the Children Matching Campaign
In Support of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
Final Donor Report

I. CAMPAIGN BACKGROUND

From September 1, 2014 – May 1, 2015 Focusing Philanthropy and National CASA launched and ran a joint campaign to raise \$160,000 towards the recruitment of new CASA volunteers nationally. In support of this goal, Focusing Philanthropy’s network of donors pledged \$80,000 to match, dollar - for - dollar, all gifts made towards this effort. Of the campaign total, \$50,000 was designated to support CASA of Los Angeles, recognizing that Los Angeles County has the most children under the jurisdiction of dependency courts in the country. All other funds would support volunteer recruitment and training across other CASA programs with a particular focus on high need urban areas.



Once the campaign launched, it became clear that in addition to CASA of Los Angeles, two CASA regional programs, Voices For Children in San Diego County and San Francisco CASA, were particularly well positioned to take advantage of the matching challenge opportunity. In light of this, Focusing Philanthropy augmented the campaign so that funds would be deployed in support of existing CASA volunteers in addition to the recruitment of new CASAs. The campaign timeline was also modified to allow interested donors who wished to process their gift in spring 2015 to be able to do so.



All four CASA programs involved in this campaign had demonstrated several years of impressive, sustained growth that positioned each of them to serve a record number of foster youth and CASA volunteers in 2015 and beyond. The organizations used the matching challenge to reach out to their core group of supporters with an exciting opportunity to have their dollars leveraged. The appeal was even more effective in raising new donations than expected. **In total the “Challenge for the Children” matching campaign generated \$293,350 in gifts for these four CASA programs, far exceeding the initial goal of \$160,000! The campaign formally ended May 1, 2015.**

This one-year final report (from campaign conclusion) follows and builds on the interim donor report and progress reported April 2015 prior to campaign conclusion. A summary of the total dollars raised, and what funds were deployed for, follows for each of the 4 participating CASA programs in this campaign.

II. THE NEED

Nationwide, 400,000 children experience the foster care system in any given year, and the state of California is home to the largest foster care population of any state, with an estimated 60,000 youth in the system in any given year. In 2014, over 238,000 abused and neglected children nationwide had a CASA volunteer speaking up for their best interests, but countless more could stand to benefit from the intensive, life-changing advocacy of a specially trained and dedicated CASA volunteer. Intensive CASA advocacy costs substantially less than the cost society incurs each time a child’s lifetime of potential is lost, through no fault of its own.

Tragically, a child who doesn’t find a safe, loving home faces bleak outcomes. They are 10 times more likely to

be arrested. Young women who have been foster children are six times more likely to have a child before turning 21 years old. When former or current foster youth become parents, their own children are at higher risk of being placed in the foster care system. Prospects are particularly dire for foster children who remain in ‘the system’ until they age-out when they turn 18, of these: only 1% will graduate from college, 40% will be homeless within the following 18 months; and 25% will be incarcerated by age 20.

III. THE CASA MODEL

Nationwide, nearly 1,000 community-based CASA programs recruit, train, and deploy citizen volunteers to become court appointed advocates for what can be the most challenging subset of foster care youth. All CASA volunteers assigned to a foster youth undergo at least, and in many cases more than, 30 hours of “pre-service” training and 12 hours of continuing education annually. Once trained, these volunteers are responsible for only one or two cases at a time and frequently until the case is closed and the child is placed in a permanent home.



CASA volunteers are the sole, consistent adult advocates ensuring that a child’s needs are being met while in the system, and simultaneously working towards helping them achieve permanency in a loving home. They develop a deep understanding of the child’s circumstances and needs; making recommendations to the family court judge; visiting with the foster child frequently; reviewing his/her case to determine service needs; verifying that those services are being provided; meeting with his/her social worker, teacher, foster care provider and parents (when a reunification is in process).

The CASA intervention model has been the subject of an impressive array of studies of varying methodological rigor that have found many lasting impacts, including:

- CASA volunteers are highly effective in getting their recommendations accepted in court. In 80% of cases, all or almost all CASA volunteer recommendations are accepted.
- Foster children with a CASA volunteer were adopted 22% of the time versus 14% for children not assigned a CASA volunteer.

IV. CAMPAIGN UPDATES



CASA of Los Angeles

CASA of Los Angeles was founded in 1978 as one of the first CASA programs in the country. Los Angeles County has the largest number of foster care youth of any county in the country with an estimated 28,000 foster children under the jurisdiction of dependency courts in any given year. CASA of Los Angeles is the only local agency with volunteers directly appointed by the Dependency Court to serve as advocates for foster youth in

LA County and the Antelope Valley. One-third of these children are age 0-5 and infants and toddlers are the fastest growing group of abused children.

Campaign Impact on CASA of Los Angeles:

CASA of Los Angeles leveraged their portion of Focusing Philanthropy’s matching funds to secure a large donation from a new CASA supporter. **Through this campaign CASA of Los Angeles raised \$125,000 – far substantially exceeding the initial goal of \$50,000!** CASA LA was able to report significant progress towards their goals of supporting safety, permanence, and wellbeing for children and youth in protective care. All grant funds (\$125,000) were expended to cover the salary and benefits of staff providing outreach, training, and support of CASA volunteers serving abused and neglected children and youth in the foster care system.

For many years, CASA LA served 500 – 600 children annually, but with the support of their generous philanthropic partners, the success of campaigns like this one, and dedicated cadre of CASAs, they were able to serve 876 foster youth with intensive 1:1 advocacy in fiscal year 2015. CASA LA was able to reach these many children/youth with a cadre of 490 dedicated CASA volunteers. Through this work, they are providing better services every year and recruiting more adult volunteers in order to support the physical, psychological and educational well being of LA’s most vulnerable children. In addition to the intensive 1:1 advocacy that CASA is known for, another type of volunteer service is “day of court” assistance, where trained volunteers orient children to court procedures and accompany children to their court appearances and hearings; this program is called “shelter care” and impacted the lives of 5,495 children this year exceeding the goal of 5,000 children served. Of the children served during the grant period the age ranges were as follows:

- 0-5 years old: (21%)
- 6-11 years old: (25%)
- 12-17 years old:(42%)
- 18+ years old: (12%)

Funds from this campaign made it possible for CASA LA to exceed their goals and position them to serve over 1,000 foster youth in the coming 2016 fiscal year.



San Francisco CASA

The San Francisco CASA program is the only program that provides one-on-one advocacy and mentoring for a fraction of the approximately 1,000 abused and neglected children who are under the jurisdiction of San Francisco’s juvenile dependency court. Annually, SFCASA has an average of 200 dedicated community members serving as personal advocates for 320 foster children. SFCASA has an in-house waitlist with an additional 90-100 of the most urgent cases waiting to be assigned to an SFCASA volunteer. There remain over 750 foster children and youth in San Francisco who could potentially benefit from a comprehensive evaluation of their case and the sustained advocacy. The organization also employs specialized training programs that complement their

core-training curriculum for CASA volunteers, and equip volunteers to better serve the special needs of specific groups of their children. Currently these programs include: educational advocacy, and a transition-age youth program.

Campaign Impact on SFCASA:

SF CASA was able to raise \$112,000 through this campaign! With an annual operating budget of \$1.2 million, funds raised were instrumental and material in helping SFCASA reach their goals for fiscal year 2015. Funds were deployed in support of their 2015-2016 *Core Advocacy Program*, which provides case supervision and advocacy for foster children and youth. In the 2015 fiscal year, 210 CASA volunteers served a total of 217 foster youth through their Core Advocacy Program. All of the foster youth served by SFCASA are from low-income households and approximately 50% need special education services.

The overall goal of the *Core Advocacy Program* is to ensure that foster children and youth have safe, stable housing and access to vital health, education and permanency planning services that will improve their quality of life. SFCASA volunteers must complete 40-hours of comprehensive training before being assigned to a case. Through a collaborative effort with professionals and relatives involved in the child’s life, CASAs support the foster youth in developing an SFCASA Case Plan which details timely objectives that move the foster youth towards high school graduation, postsecondary education, career and independence.

One development in San Francisco is causing great disruption in the lives of the youth served by SFCASA – over 60% of San Francisco’s foster youth are now placed outside the county, often 100 miles away, as the tight housing market has again reached beyond Alameda County to the borders of Contra Costa County. San Francisco

County service providers are not able to see these youth as frequently or monitor their services as closely, *making the support of a CASA even more important.*

In addition to preparing volunteers to work with youth placed in distant counties, SFCASA is actively working with attorneys and county social workers to refer foster youth earlier, as they enter the system. By having the opportunity to serve youth earlier, SFCASA hopes to have more impact and to prevent many of the acute issues that can occur after years of compounded trauma in foster care. With this in mind, the organization has set a goal of serving approximately 400 youth annually by 2020. At the same time, they have also committed to working with the Human Services Agency to address the shortage of foster homes in San Francisco.

A CHILD HEARD.



Voices For Children (San Diego County)

In any given year there are approximately 5,100 children in San Diego County's foster care system. Of these thousands of children, it is estimated that about half of these children have *no one*—no parent, no relatives, no family friends—to look out for the child's best interests. Since 1980 Voices For Children, the CASA program of San Diego County, has worked to ensure that each child's best interests are represented in court.

In 2015 Voices For Children will serve 2,400 youth through intensive advocacy and review the case files of all foster youth in San Diego County. This is made possible by the specially trained local CASA volunteer force of 1,400 – the most of any CASA program in the state of California.

A LIFE CHANGED.

Campaign Impact on Voices For Children:

Voices For Children leveraged a \$10,000 challenge grant from Focusing Philanthropy to secure an additional \$25,000 in contributions, for a combined \$35,500! Funds raised through this matching campaign enabled the organization to serve an additional 14 foster youth with intensive one-on-one advocacy for an entire year, and review the case files of an additional 56 foster youth to ensure all needs are being met, collectively impacting 70 youth.



Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA For Children (National CASA Association)

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) For Children is the national association for the nearly 1,000 county-based CASA programs throughout the country. Through this campaign, the National CASA Association was able to raise ***\$20,300 in general support*** for their crucial services to the CASA network. Some of their specific activities include:

- **Training & Curriculum:** The National CASA Association creates new, research-based training opportunities, such as their new e-learning series on educational advocacy, and continuously improves the core volunteer training curriculum. [Learn more about the curriculum goals and download an excerpt.](#)
- **Technical Assistance and Quality Assurance:** Offer extensive technical assistance to help programs serve more children more effectively, and a set of standards that provide a framework for quality program management. Each state organization and local program participates in a self-assessment process, which measures their compliance with [National CASA Association standards](#), once every four years.
- **Volunteer Recruitment and Public Awareness:** Coordinate national campaigns to help recruit CASA volunteers and raise awareness about child abuse.
- **Resource Development and Grants:** The National CASA Association provides pass-through funding to local and state CASA/GAL programs. Grant funding comes primarily from the Department of Justice but also from private corporations and foundations.