



FOSTERING GROWTH CAMPAIGN

THE PROJECT:

Focusing Philanthropy and Voices for Children launched the Fostering Growth Campaign to provide individualized advocacy services for 75 youth in foster care in Riverside County. Voices for Children is one of nearly 1,000 county-based Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs throughout the country serving youth in foster care. CASA programs recruit, train, support, and supervise community volunteers to serve as individual advocates for children until permanency is achieved, or the case has been closed. They are often the only consistent, caring adult in a foster child's life. CASAs are assigned to a single child or sibling group, providing a level of individual attention and support that is unparalleled elsewhere in the foster care system.

FOCUSING PHILANTHROPY 2020 CAMPAIGN IMPACT:

Voices for Children and Focusing Philanthropy set a goal to raise \$150,000 through the Fostering Growth Campaign, of which \$100,000 of donations secured by Voices for Children would be matched with a \$50,000 grant from Focusing Philanthropy. The campaign ran from May 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020 and during that time, Voices for Children exceeded its goal of \$100,000, raising \$128,739.84. Focusing Philanthropy has graciously agreed to match the full amount resulting in a total amount raised of \$194,609.76.

The total number of donors who contributed to the campaign was 20. Of those, six donors were new to our organization and made their first gift to Voices for Children through Focusing Philanthropy. Also, four donors increased their gift to Voices for Children from the year prior. Finally, one donor made a significant increase in her gift from \$250 to \$19,261. This transformational gift will have a tremendous impact on the children that we serve.

As a direct result of the \$194,609.76 we raised during this campaign, 97 children benefitted from the life changing advocacy of a CASA volunteer. Focusing Philanthropy played an instrumental role in our ability to assign CASAs to abused and neglected youth during Voices for Children's fiscal year 2020-21. Voices for Children is incredibly grateful for the support of Focusing Philanthropy as we aim to serve more children in the fiscal year ahead. Your steadfast support makes this possible. Thank you.

IMPORTANCE OF THE CASA PROGRAM:

The impact CASAs have on the lives of the foster youth they serve is immeasurable. Below, we include the stories of two youth and the impact that their CASA has made on their lives.

Clara

Kristin, has been Clara's (name changed to protect confidentiality) CASA for five years. Over the years, Clara has relied on Kristin to advocate on her behalf for housing, education, enrichment, and extra-curricular activities. Clara will tell you that Kristin has been the only person who has been there for Clara whenever she needed an ear to listen, advice, a friendly voice, or someone to whom she could vent.

With the new 2020-2021 school year beginning in an entirely new format, many families and children struggled to learn the new requirements. Clara and her caretaker did not receive consistent information from her school and found distance learning to be incredibly challenging for a middle school student. Kristin was able to research the school and its distance learning program. She discovered an orientation Clara could attend, as well as a bell schedule for distance learning and a handbook, which she printed and brought to Clara. With the CASA's help they are now able to navigate this new environment. Kristin will likely continue to be the one person who knows the most about Clara's school and what she will need to be successful.

Cody

CASA Tuan was matched with 16-year-old Cody (name changed to protect confidentiality) shortly after he entered the foster care system in early 2020. Cody came to the attention of the Riverside County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) after his teachers learned that he was being physically harmed by his abusive step-father. Cody was diabetic, but his family had not provided him with the medical care and education he needed to safely monitor and treat his insulin levels. When Tuan met Cody, he had been placed in a foster home that was miles from the community where he grew up. He was no longer in physical danger, but the effects of the trauma he had suffered in the past were still impacting him. Cody had transferred schools, and was just getting used to his new teachers and peers when the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded.

The transition to distance learning was difficult for Cody. It was hard for him to stay connected with his new teachers and peers through the virtual classroom environment. He began to struggle with depression and lost his motivation to complete his schoolwork. When Tuan was assigned to Cody's case, he scheduled a meeting with Cody's school counselor to learn about the challenges Cody was experiencing. The counselor shared that Cody was behind in his extracurricular credits and had poor grades in his core classes. She was eager to find a way to help Cody stay engaged and on track as he worked toward meeting graduation requirements. Tuan and the counselor brainstormed some alternate ways for Cody to earn course credit. Together, they came up with the idea of enrolling Cody in a music class where he could incorporate his love for playing the guitar. They also arranged to have Cody meet with the school nurse to learn more about his diabetes and his insulin levels. When Tuan told Cody about the music class, he expressed enthusiasm about school for the first time. Tuan and Cody's counselor believe that getting Cody excited about school again will be key in motivating him to become a regular participant in his distance learning classroom. Tuan and the school counselor continue to meet periodically to discuss Cody's progress so they can ensure that he has the support he needs to thrive.

Voices for Children is grateful for the support of Focusing Philanthropy and your investment in our CASA program. Together, we have changed the lives of 75 of the most vulnerable youth in Riverside County. Thank you.