



FOSTERING GROWTH CAMPAIGN 2022 REPORT

THE PROJECT:

Focusing Philanthropy and Voices for Children launched the 2022 Fostering Growth Campaign to provide individualized advocacy services for 123 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. The CASA volunteer is often the only consistent, caring adult in the 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 2022 CAMPAIGN IMPACT:

Voices for Children and Focusing Philanthropy set a goal to raise \$225,000 through the Fostering Growth Campaign, of which \$150,000 of donations secured by Voices for Children would be matched with a \$75,000 grant from Focusing Philanthropy. The campaign ran from May 1, 2022, until December 31, 2022. During that time, Voices for Children exceeded its goal of \$150,000, raising \$164,874. Focusing Philanthropy generously agreed to match the full amount, resulting in a total amount raised of \$247,311.

The total number of donors who contributed to the campaign was 24. Of those, four donors were new to our organization and made their first gift to Voices for Children through Focusing Philanthropy. Also, nine of the 24 donors are current or former CASA volunteers who truly understand the impact that a CASA can make. As a direct result of the \$247,311 we raised during this campaign, 123 children benefited 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 2022–23. Voices for Children is deeply grateful for the support of Focusing Philanthropy as we aim to serve even more children in the coming fiscal year.

Your support has not only helped us to serve more children, but also to improve our program. In the past year, some of our most relevant programmatic changes are directly related to our efforts to resume in-person activities. Over the past year, VFC returned to hosting the initial interview for potential CASA volunteers in person. This critical meeting helps us to not only share the program with a potential volunteer, but also to meet them and learn more about their interest in becoming a CASA volunteer. We began conducting in-person continuing education sessions for CASA volunteers so that they could connect with and learn from one another. Finally, VFC moved in to a new office space in Riverside that better meets our needs. There, we can meet with CASA volunteers and have a greater presence in the community.

IMPORTANCE OF THE CASA PROGRAM:

CASAs have a tremendously beneficial impact on the lives of the children they serve. The following stories illustrate just how important CASAs can be. The names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Sally

Brenda was assigned to then 6-year-old, "Sally," in December 2020. Sally lives with her grandmother, who is currently in the adoption process. CASA Brenda and Sally have developed a very special relationship over the years. Sally even told her grandmother that her CASA is her best friend. Without fail, Brenda visits Sally on a monthly basis and takes pride in taking Sally to new places. She takes Sally on educational outings, including museums, libraries, science centers, and tours of historical monuments. During one of their visits, Sally made each of them friendship bracelets, which Sally refuses to take off. At Sally's last hearing in December 2022, Sally's grandmother wanted the court to know that Sally loves spending time with Brenda and that she is extremely grateful to have CASA Brenda in Sally's life.

Janie and Jacob

CASA Christina has been assigned to siblings "Janie" (16) and "Jacob" (15) for a little over a year. During this time, Christina has been the only consistent adult in the children's lives. She is also someone that their professional team turns to for advice, insight, and collaboration. Recently, the children had a status review hearing at the Riverside Juvenile Court. When the Advocacy Supervisor sent the CASA report to the attorneys, the children's attorney replied to her, "Oh my gosh, so much information and [I had not been] advised ... of any of it!! ... This is why our CASAs are so valuable! Thank you so much!" After the hearing, CASA Christina told her Advocacy Supervisor that she felt very appreciated by the attorneys and the judge. The Court granted every single request that she made for the children, including one for an important medical evaluation for Jacob. Jacob was relieved to be getting the care he needed that he gave CASA Christina a huge hug as they walked out of court.

Cara

CASA Nancy began advocating for "Cara" a year and a half ago. Cara, now 14-years old, was removed from her father due to sexual abuse and is preparing to testify in his criminal court case. Cara is simultaneously navigating the transition to high school as well as eagerly waiting for her adoption to be finalized. Despite all of the chaos in her life, Cara told CASA Nancy that she just wants to have a "normal" high school experience. CASA Nancy took this to heart and has been working hard to ensure that Cara has the best possible start in high school. Before the semester even began, Nancy helped Cara sign up for ASB and tryout for volleyball. Cara was so excited to invite Nancy to watch her play a home game! CASA Nancy is incredibly proud of how far Cara has come and tells her Advocacy Supervisor that they have created a strong and reliable bond together.

Voices for Children truly appreciates the incredible support of Focusing Philanthropy and your investment in our Riverside County CASA program. Together, we have improved the lives of 123 children like Cara, Janie, Jacob and Sally. Thank you for your sustaining partnership.