



Contact: Laura Fulda, Director, Community Development
Child Advocates of Silicon Valley
laura@cadvocates.org
408-573-5615

CHILD ADVOCATES OF SILICON VALLEY SEEKS VOLUNTEERS TO SERVE AS MENTORS, FRIENDS AND ADVOCATES TO FOSTER CHILDREN

Milpitas, CA – January 23, 2017 – [Child Advocates of Silicon Valley](http://ChildAdvocatesofSiliconValley.org) is looking for people to volunteer and serve as friends, mentors and advocates to children in foster care. The non-profit organization is holding monthly Volunteer Informational sessions in February and March to recruit volunteers for its April training class.

Child Advocates recruits, trains and supports Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) to work one-on-one with children in the Santa Clara County foster care system. CASAs provide critical emotional and educational support, ensuring that each child's needs are met and their voice is heard while they navigate the dependency system.

"We know CASAs make a tremendous difference in a foster child's life," says Karen Scussel, executive director of Child Advocates. Scussel notes that nationally only 50% of all foster youth complete high school, but with the support of a CASA, foster teens fare much better. Last year, 79% of Child Advocates' teens completed their high school requirements and planned to continue their education at a community college or vocational program.

Child Advocates has an ambitious five-year strategic plan to provide a CASA for every child in the Santa Clara County foster care system by year-end 2018. Currently, there are more than 1,600 children in the Santa Clara County dependency system, 1,000 of which could benefit from a CASA. By July of this year, Child Advocates hopes to serve 840 children with a CASA volunteer.

More Men and Latinos Needed to Advocate for Foster Youth

Sixty-two percent of the children in foster care are Latino and nearly half the children are boys but only about 20% of Child Advocates' CASA volunteers are men and 13% are Latino. Adam Escoto, a former foster youth who advocates for three teenage boys, says it is important that children have role models and mentors that reflect their gender and cultural background.

"It's so essential for teenage boys to have a stable adult male presence in their lives," Escoto explains. "As a CASA, I can help provide that stability and give these boys the support to create a better future for themselves. The child Advocates' staff is always



there to answer my questions and help guide me when I represent my child's best interests in dependency court hearings. I highly recommend people consider becoming a CASA."

Currently Child Advocates has more than 150 foster children waiting to be matched with a CASA. No legal experience is necessary — just a willingness to reach out to a child when he/she is feeling most vulnerable. The time commitment is 10-12 hours per month. Volunteers must pass a background check and be 21 years or older to become a Court Appointed Special Advocate.

Individuals interested in becoming a CASA volunteer can visit Child Advocates' website (www.bemyadvocate.org) to sign up to attend a [Volunteer Info session](#) to learn more about the role and requirements of becoming a CASA volunteer in Santa Clara County.

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 research 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.

###