



Contact: Laura Fulda  
Director of Community Development  
Child Advocates of Silicon Valley  
[Laura@cadvocates.org](mailto:Laura@cadvocates.org)  
408.573.5615

## **Yale Club of Silicon Valley to Help Child Advocates Raise Awareness and Empathy for Foster Children During National Foster Care Month**

Milpitas, CA – May 8, 2018 – May is National Foster Care Awareness Month and members of the [Yale Club of Silicon Valley](#) (YCSV) have chosen to spend their 10<sup>th</sup> annual Day of Service on May 12<sup>th</sup> working with [Child Advocates of Silicon Valley](#). YCSV will meet with Child Advocates at the Sunnyvale Community Center from 1:00 – 4:00 pm for a three-hour workshop to better understand the issues facing foster youth in our community and help Child Advocates develop a plan to raise awareness and empathy to improve the lives of foster children in Santa Clara County.

Child Advocates recruits, trains and supports volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) to serve as friends, mentors and advocates to children in the Santa Clara County foster care system. Last year, 95% of CASA teens completed their high school requirements compared to just (fewer than) 50% of all foster teen nationwide.

While Child Advocates has had great success with its CASA program, the agency, like many smaller nonprofits in the valley, often struggles to gain visibility and maintain financial viability despite great wealth in the Silicon Valley region.

This challenge was emphasized by the [Giving Code Report](#) sponsored by the [David and Lucile Packard Foundation](#) in March 2017. Child Advocates is one of 20 local non-profits selected for a Learning and Experimentation grant sponsored by the Packard and [Heising-Simons foundations](#) to identify ways of better connecting the tremendous wealth and talent in Silicon Valley with the needs of the local community.

Child Advocates' project is to create a Walk in My Shoes (that is the actual title of the project) multi-media/virtual reality experience. "Our intent is to provide greater appreciation for the challenges our children overcome by being removed from their parent's care," says Karen Scussel, executive director of Child Advocates of Silicon Valley.

YCSV members will essentially function as a focus group for Child Advocates, learning about the plight of foster children, reviewing materials, participating in discussions and giving feedback.

"Our club members are very excited to participate in this important project to help Child Advocates increase awareness in their CASA program and achieve sustainability on behalf of foster children in Silicon Valley," says Dr. Elizabeth Leary, a Yale Alum who is an ambulatory and community health executive lead nurse coordinator at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center.



“We’re very excited to work with the Yale Club Silicon Valley,” says Scussel. “I have no doubt that their participation will help us build a dynamic foster child multi-media/virtual reality experience that we can ultimately share with other CASA organizations across the country.”

Other speakers at the Yale Day of Service include Andrea Herz, president of the Yale Club of Silicon Valley, Karen Kudelko, communications officer from the Packard Foundation who will speak about the Giving Code Report, and Debbie Chin, a senior consultant at Kaiser Permanente who will talk about Design Thinking.

### **About Child Advocates of Silicon Valley**

Child Advocates serves abused and neglected children in the foster care system by providing a trained, dedicated volunteer to mentor and advocate for the child’s best interests. 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](http://www.BeMyAdvocate.org)