



Contact: Lesli Smith, Community Marketing Manager  
Child Advocates of Silicon Valley  
[lesli@advocates.org](mailto:lesli@advocates.org)  
408-573-5615

## **CHILD ADVOCATES TO LAUNCH “YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE” CAMPAIGN TO RECRUIT MORE LATINO AND MALE VOLUNTEERS**

**Milpitas, CA – July 14, 2015** – Child Advocates of Silicon Valley will launch its “You Can Make A Difference” campaign July 20th to recruit more Latino and male volunteers to work one-on-one with children in the foster care system. Child Advocates recruits, trains and supports Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) to provide critical emotional and educational support to children in the court dependency system.

[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.

In fiscal year 2015, Child Advocates provided 735 children with a CASA and hopes to serve 780 children in FY 2016. More than sixty percent of the children Child Advocates serves are Latino and half of them are males. Child Advocates’ goal is to recruit 200 new CASA volunteers this year and have at least 20% of those volunteers be Latino, 15% bi-lingual Spanish speaking and 25% male.

“Every foster youth deserves to have an adult who cares about them and gives them unwavering support throughout their years in the system,” says Karen Scussel, Child Advocates’ executive director. “In order to scale our program and better reflect the cultural backgrounds and gender of the children we serve, Child Advocates will broaden our efforts to recruit more Latinos and men to serve as role models and mentors.”

Lorena Torres, a Child Advocates’ board member and member of the organization’s Latino Outreach Committee, says the committee has held focus groups with Latino CASA volunteers to better understand how they came to volunteer as CASAs. The group is also reaching out to various Latino community organizations to see if Child Advocates can come speak about its organization and need for more Latino volunteers.

“We need to establish a stronger presence and build trust within the Latino Community as the foundation for all future interaction,” Torres explains. Torres says this means holding meetings in locations where the people already gather and are comfortable.



Child Advocates also hopes to increase general public awareness about its need for volunteers through a media outreach and advertising campaign. The recruitment advertisement campaign will show how an individual can make a difference in a foster child's life by simply doing ordinary things with the child like reading a story or visiting a park.

George Ochoa, a Child Advocates employee who has been a CASA volunteer to several young boys agrees. "We're looking for everyday people who want to make a difference in a foster child's life. Teenage boys, in particular, need a successful male role model they can interact with."

Griselda Ramos who has been a CASA volunteer to two children says, "Being a CASA is so rewarding. I really feel like I'm making a difference in the child's life and the Child Advocates' staff is always there to answer my questions and help guide me when I represent my child's best interests in court. I highly recommend people consider becoming a CASA."

Currently Child Advocates has more than 200 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 12-15 hours per month, and volunteers must be 21 years or older to become a Court Appointed Special Advocate.

Individuals interested in becoming a CASA volunteer can contact Amalia Renteria at 408.573.5611 or visit Child Advocates' website ([www.bemyadvocate.org](http://www.bemyadvocate.org)) to sign up to attend an orientation session or Volunteer Open House to learn more about the role and requirements of becoming a CASA in Santa Clara County.

Child Advocates will hold three Open Houses over the next few weeks – Thursday, July 23 at 12:30 pm at the Social Service Building, 90 Highland Avenue, San Martin, and Saturday, July 25 at 12:00 pm at the Child Advocates' Training Room, 529 Valley Way, Building 2, Milpitas, and Wednesday, August 5 at 6:15 pm at the Sobrato Center, 1400 Parkmoor Avenue, San Jose.

### *About Child Advocates of Silicon Valley*

Child Advocates of Silicon Valley recruits, trains and supports Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) who serve the needs of children in the foster care system by providing a powerful, independent voice for the child. These dedicated community volunteers spend time with a child and become a trusted friend, mentor, and consistent adult presence. They work with foster parents, teachers, social workers, counselors, and others to build a complete picture of the child's life and needs. CASAs attend hearings in dependency court to advise the judge on the child's best interests when key decisions are being made. The 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).