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Bay Area CASA Organizations Launch Campaign To Recruit Volunteers *Men, in Particular, Needed to Serve as Advocates and Role Models for Foster Youth*

Oakland, CA – May 17, 2016 – Ten Bay Area nonprofit organizations that recruit, train and support Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) have launched a widespread awareness campaign aimed at recruiting more men and women throughout the greater San Francisco Bay Area to serve as volunteer advocates, mentors and role models for children in foster care.

“We’re looking for a few good men and women to volunteer as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs),” says Mim Carlson, interim executive director for California CASA Association. “Nearly half the children in foster care are male but only 5% of volunteer CASAs are men. We want to change that.” Carlson says young boys, in particular, need male role models. Additionally, Carlson says all members of the collaborative have demonstrated a commitment to recruiting more people of color to better reflect the ethnic make-up of children in the foster care system.

Ten nonprofit agencies in the greater San Francisco Bay Area have formed a [collaborative](#) to recruit more male volunteers. The collaborative is comprised of CASA agencies from Napa County to Monterey County and includes: [Napa CASA, A Voice for Children](#), [CASA of Solano County](#), [CASA of Sonoma County](#), [Marin CASA Program](#), [CASA of San Mateo County](#), [San Francisco CASA Program](#), [Alameda County CASA](#), [CASA of Contra Costa](#), [Child Advocates of Silicon Valley](#), and [CASA of Santa Cruz County](#).

While there are many different mentoring programs available to volunteers, the CASA program is unique. Because Advocates 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. In a life full of uncertainty and endless change, CASAs are consistent and caring adults who 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.

There are 7,190 foster children in Bay Area communities, removed from their homes through no fault of their own. Together, the collaborative served a network of more than 1,902 volunteers who advocated for approximately 2,431 foster children in 2015. The collaborative's goal is to increase the number of children served by 180 in 2016 and grow another 8% to serve 2,800 children by 2017.

The campaign is partially funded through a grant from the National CASA Association and money from individual CASA organizations. Marketing firm [Mogo Interactive](#) is overseeing the \$50,000 six-month-long campaign, which aims to spread the word about CASA volunteer opportunities for men and women in the above mentioned counties. The campaign's slogan, 'Be the Change in a Foster Child's World,' involves geo-targeted online display and search ads.

"We thought it was fitting to announce the campaign during Foster Care Awareness Month," explains Carlson. "Our goal is to increase public awareness for the CASA program and inspire more men and women to click on our ads to learn more about our volunteer programs," Carlson adds.

Individuals interested in becoming a CASA volunteer can visit the [collaborative's page](#) on the California CASA website to find a CASA organization in their area. Prospective volunteers are encouraged to register online to attend a Volunteer Orientation session in their county to learn more about the [role and requirements](#) of becoming a CASA volunteer.

About California CASA Association

California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association ensures children in the foster care system have both a voice and the services they need for a stable future. We achieve this goal by strengthening California's network of local CASA programs and advocating for progressive child welfare policy and practice. For more information, please visit our website at www.californiacasa.org.

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