



Contact:
Debbie Crouse
Board Member and Flower Run Co-Chair
Child Advocates of Silicon Valley
debbie@cdcrouse.com
650-504-7785
Website: www.run4fosterkids.com

Los Altos Hills Annual Flower Run 5k to Benefit Foster Youth
*2nd Annual Flower Run Presented by El Camino Hospital Celebrates
Foster Care Awareness Month in Los Altos Hills*



Los Altos, CA – April 5, 2018 – A group of philanthropically minded Los Altos and Cupertino residents are hosting the 2nd Annual 5k Flower Run on Saturday, May 12th to raise money for foster children during Foster Care Awareness Month.

The 2nd Annual 5k Flower Run/Walk presented by El Camino Hospital, starts at 9:00 a.m. at Los Altos Hills Town Hall, 26379 Fremont Road in Los Altos Hills, and loops through the lovely streets and paths of Los Altos Hills and Palo Alto. Participants can register online at www.run4fosterkids.com. Snacks, a raffle and fun prizes will be given out after the fun run. All proceeds from the event benefit foster children in Santa Clara County.

The team is led by Debbie Crouse, Joy Erf and Grace Zakaria. Crouse, who has served on Child Advocates' board for 2 years, is passionate about finding ways to help the 1500 foster youth in Santa Clara County. She initiated the Inaugural Flower Run last year with Erf and Zakaria, both experienced distance runners who enjoy pairing their passion for running and with their skills in fundraising to help foster children in Silicon Valley.

The Inaugural 5k Flower Run/Walk attracted 120 participants and raised nearly \$5000 to benefit Child Advocates of Silicon Valley last May. This year the event has moved from downtown Los Altos to Los Altos Hills and Palo Alto. Their goal is to reach at least 200 registrations.

"We are excited to build on our momentum from last year's race," says Crouse. "We had excellent support from local businesses last year. Donations and sponsorships from Los Altos businesses were key to our success. This year, we are expanding our partnerships to include A Runner's Mind, Sports Basement and other larger businesses to help us raise more money and promote the event to reach more Santa Clara County residents."



Crouse added: "The 5k Flower Run/Walk is a healthy, fun activity for friends and families to do together while raising funds to support foster youth in our

community. It's the day before Mother's Day so we hope the whole family will come out."

"Running is a passion for me," explains Joy Erf. "Giving back to the community while doing something I love brings that much more meaning to the sport."

"We're thrilled to see our community of supporters continue to grow the 5k Flower Run/Walk during Foster Care Awareness Month," says Karen Scussel, executive director of [Child Advocates of Silicon Valley](#). "With the continued climate of uncertainty surrounding programs that help underserved children, it is vitally important that foster children – our community's most vulnerable population – have a caring, stable adult in their lives. Our program provides that caring, stable adult presence for a foster child." Scussel, a Los Altos resident, is also a running enthusiast.

According to the American Medical Association, a more vulnerable group does not exist than children removed from the custody of their parents and placed in foster care. Child Advocates provides that one person, that caring adult who will remain their friend, advocate and mentor throughout their time in the dependency system: a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). CASAs are a powerful voice for children in foster care, ensuring that a child's emotional and educational needs are met and their voice is heard in dependency court hearings.

In fiscal year 2017, Child Advocates supported approximately 640 CASA volunteers who donated 70,800 hours of time to serve 810 foster children. As a member of the Board of Directors, Debbie Crouse is not only managing this run; she's also an active volunteer leader in fundraising for the organization.

"We're among only 4% of charities that Charity Navigator rates 4-star," says Crouse, noting that it requires about \$2000 to recruit, train and support each CASA volunteer. "We have a strategic plan to serve 1200 foster children by 2021. That obviously requires us to increase our operating budget and bring on more CASA volunteers. We depend on the community - both financially and with their volunteer time to reach these goals. The Flower Run is a fun and healthy way to engage the community."

Debbie Crouse is a long-time resident of Los Altos and brings a wealth of business experience to Child Advocates. She has been driving change within technology, service and manufacturing businesses for over 20 years. In more recent years, she has spent her time raising her children, leading fundraising projects for non-profits and working with technology startups to improve execution as they grow. She



formerly served on the Board of Directors for Family & Children Services of Silicon Valley and Montclair Educational Foundation.

Joy Erf, a resident of Cupertino and technical recruiter, found her passion for distance running 10 years ago when she began training for her first half marathon. Since then, she has completed six marathons and over 50 half marathons. Joy has provided leadership to other local 5ks including the Montclair 5k, CEEF Run For Great Schools, and Kennedy Color Run.

Grace Zakaria, a resident of Los Altos and a data scientist, brings her analytical skills, systems savviness and race experience to the team. She began running in earnest 4 years ago with a group of friends. Since then she has run in over 30 races that range from simple 5ks to full marathons. Grace, Debbie and Joy started organizing 5ks together as parent volunteers for the Montclair Elementary School 5k.

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 explore 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.