

**ALAMEDA COUNTY  
COURT APPOINTED  
SPECIAL  
ADVOCATES  
PROGRAM**

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501 (c)(3) Nonprofit  
Organization

We are on the Web:  
[www.casaofalamedacounty.org](http://www.casaofalamedacounty.org)

**Foundation Support**

- Children's Support League of the Bay Area
- Five Bridges
- Foss Foundation
- Hilton Hotels
- Honeywell
- In-N-Out Burger
- John Burton Foundation
- Kaiser Permanente
- Kappa Alpha Theta, UC Berkeley
- The Morris Stulsaft Foundation
- Pottruck Family Foundation
- The San Francisco Foundation
- State Street
- van Löben Se Is/RembeRock

**Special Thanks**

- Washington Mutual



**Alameda County Court Appointed Special Advocates Program**

**Mission Statement:** Alameda County CASA promotes and supports quality volunteer advocates to speak for the best interests of abused and neglected children in the dependency court system.

**Volunteer Meetings and Continuing Education**

CASA volunteers have the opportunity to attend monthly support groups and are required to complete 12 hours of continuing education each year. CASA volunteers can access our continuing education calendar at our web site: [www.casaofalamedacounty.org](http://www.casaofalamedacounty.org). Click on "Online Resource Center" and then "Calendar."

**Volunteer Support Groups**

Support Groups count as two hours of CE. Please RSVP to your case supervisor at least two business days prior to the meeting.

**CASA Staff**  
Regena Jones, *Executive Director*  
Tara Beckman, *Deputy Director*  
Di Roberts, *Program Assistant*  
Maria Mann-Gagné, *Pre-Adolescent Case Supervisor*  
Jaime Dadej, *Adolescent Case Supervisor*

**Maria Mann-Gagné's Meetings**  
**Mon., Jan. 26, 6-8 pm:** Volunteer Support Group  
**Tues., Feb. 24, 6-8 pm:** Volunteer Support Group  
**Jaime Dadej's Meetings**  
**Mon., Jan. 26, 6-8 pm:** Volunteer Support Group  
**Tues., Feb. 24, 6-8 pm:** Volunteer Support Group  
**Tara Beckman's Meetings**  
**Mon., Jan. 26, 6-8 pm:** Volunteer Support Group  
**Tues., Feb. 24, 6-8 pm:** Volunteer Support Group  
**Upcoming Continuing Education Trainings**  
**Location: Seneca Center (Registration required: To**

**Advisory Board Members**  
Gary Thompson, *Chair*  
Chet Hewitt, *Chair of FOACASA*  
Ann Garnier, *CASA Volunteer*  
Nancy Vachani, *CASA Volunteer*  
Alex Briscoe, *Alameda County Health Care Services*  
Calvin James, *Assistant County Counsel*  
Michelle Love, *Alameda County Social Services*  
Kathy Siegel, *Public Defender's Office*  
Tony Crear, *Probation*  
Paul Seeman, *Alameda County Commissioner*  
Sylvia Soublet, *FOACASA Member*  
Geoff Douvel, *Clear Channel*  
Regena Jones, *CASA Executive Director*

**sign up, please register on Seneca's web site, www.senecacenter.org)**  
**December Trainings**  
**Tues., Dec. 9, 9:30 am-5:30 pm:** Introduction to: Behavior Basics and Child Development  
**Fri., Dec. 12, 9:30 am-12:30 pm:** Understanding Child Abuse and Caregiver Reporting Requirements  
**Mon., Dec. 15, 9:30 am-5:30 pm:** Introduction to: Safety & Communication  
**Tues., Dec. 16, 9:30 am-5:30 pm:** Introduction to: Life Space Interviews & Multiculturalism  
**Fri., Dec. 19, 9:30 am-12:30 pm:** Introduction to: Suicide Prevention with Youth & Self-Care

**Friends of CASA Members**  
Chet Hewitt, *Chair*  
Donna Robinson, *Social Worker, Sojourner Truth Senior Housing*  
Yvette Leung, *Alameda County Health Care Services Agency*  
Kendra Roberts, *Delta Sigma Theta, Inc.*  
Cindy Burnett, *California Consulting Assn.*  
Sylvia Soublet, *Alameda County Social Services*  
Kamal Nair, *JJDPC Commissioner*

**Ex-Officio Members**  
Regena Jones, *CASA Executive Director*  
Vana Chavez, *HCSA Finance Manager*

**ALAMEDA COUNTY COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES PROGRAM**

**Special points of interest:**

- CASA Web site
- Digital Stories
- CASA Holiday Party

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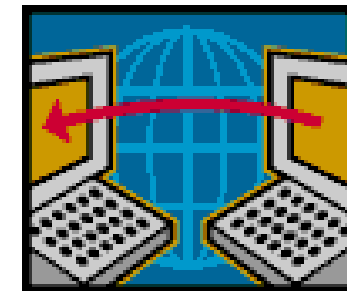
**Voices for Children**

Volume 2, Issue 4

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**CASA Launches New Web Site**

Alameda County CASA launched our newly redesigned web site on November 24th, 2008. Y Art Works, based in Seattle, WA, worked with CASA for three months to create a new navigation system, a more user-friendly web site and add new features that will help the community understand the impact that CASA volunteers have in the lives of foster children. The new web site includes added features, such as:



- Digital stories of Alameda County CASA youth and volunteers.
- Internship opportunities will be posted for both undergrad and graduate students.
- Volunteer/Youth Speakers Bureau information: Requests for a volunteer and/or youth speaker can be made online by organizations, churches, sororities, fraternities, corporations, etc.
- Juvenile Justice/Delinquency Prevention Commission (JJDPC) Complaint Form: The objective of the JJDPC is to provide a confidential venue where youth voices are heard without fear of retaliation, to maintain

- confidentiality at all times and to hold all entities responsible for their actions. Youth will be able to access and submit the complaint form directly to CASA online.
- Potential CASA volunteers will have the capability to complete our application online and electronically submit it to CASA. Once we have received the application, the potential volunteer will receive an automated response thanking them for their interest in the CASA program.
- News/Special Events regarding the Alameda County CASA program.
- Stories/Quotes from volunteers and foster youth.
- Download the CASA Group Homes Report.
- Download CASA Referral form for judges/commissioners, attorneys/public defenders and child welfare workers.

- Make a Donation (PayPal).
- Newsletters (PDF versions of the CASA Newsletter).
- Staff bios and pictures.
- Contact Form fields to submit questions and contact information. .

CASA volunteers will be able to continue to use our online resource center; however, they will no longer be redirected to a new browser. Both sites have been integrated so volunteers have one less step to complete. The online resource center is a database that centralizes community resources, downloadable forms, templates and our continuing education calendar. Using a Web-accessible volunteer tool kit as a repository has been an effective way to manage and share information. Our online resource center allows us to maintain current, easily accessible information for volunteers at a low cost.

Alameda CASA would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the John Burton Foundation and van Löben Sels/RembeRock Foundation for their generous support to make this project possible. Please visit our web site at: [www.casaofalamedacounty.org](http://www.casaofalamedacounty.org).

## Volunteer Recognition

### Maria Mann-Gagné, Pre-Adolescent Case Supervisor

I was recently speaking with newly-appointed volunteer, Susan Terry when I received an email from the social worker informing me that Susan's CASA child had been placed in Antioch. My heart sank as I considered dismissal and reassignment. I was astonished when Susan informed me that she will not give up on this little girl, though they hadn't yet met. Thank you, Susan for your great determination and commitment to our mission.

### Jaime Dadej, Adolescent Case Supervisor

Maeve Granzin has served as a CASA to a youth for 18 months. Like many CASAs, she's had her ups and downs with her youth. She's had challenges in getting her youth to keep in contact or follow through with appointments scheduled. Maeve quickly learned how to communicate with her youth in her youth's preferred method, text messaging. Recently the youth took her SAT. Prior to the exam, Maeve made her an SAT goodie basket, with snacks and such to help her through the exam. Maeve is currently helping her youth apply to different colleges and sorting through the financial aid process. Great work!

### Tara Beckman, Deputy Director

Richard Carter has been a CASA volunteer for 1.5 years. He has been a dedicated volunteer and very engaged in his CASA youth's life. Richard has worked closely with the team to ensure that his youth's needs are met and is committed to supporting his youth through emancipation. Richard recently became an advocate for a second youth and is currently in the process of supporting him as he transitions into adulthood. Keep up the great work!

## Digital Stories Created for CASA Web site

Alameda County CASA recently completed eight digital stories through the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) in Berkeley, CA. The Center for Digital Storytelling brings groups of 8-10 people together to share their stories with one another, write and record first-person scripts, choose images and video clips and learn to edit these materials into completed stories. Skilled facilitators guide participants through the steps necessary to complete their project.

Stories created in workshops are used to shed light on a host of critical social and political issues. Stories are used for educational purposes, to highlight services provided by community-based agencies and to provide information for individuals seeking services.

During the workshop, advocates had the opportunity to create a short video based on a meaningful personal story from their experiences as a volunteer. They were invited to tell a story about how their CASA experience was personally transforming - how it opened their eyes, how it expanded their life, and how it impacted them and their relationships.

Former CASA youth had an opportunity to write a meaningful personal story about their experience in foster care. Youth shared stories about their CASA volunteer and told touching stories about the impact that their volunteers have had in their lives.

CASA decided to create these digital stories because we hope



ject, and I thought it would be fun to do something different with him.

I learned a lot about myself, my youth and the other participants. I listened to the stories of the other seven participants, all of which were interesting, touching and a testament to human resiliency. I learned to tackle a computer program that initially was very intimidating to me. I marveled at how quickly the three CASA youth adapted to the computer work. And, as the Center for Digital Storytelling says, I was reminded to "Listen deeply. Tell stories."

It was a wonderful experience; and I thank CASA for providing me this unique opportunity.

~ Lisa Bereny, CASA

Lights, camera, action, GO! Recently, I was one of a group of CASA volunteers asked to create a digital story describing how serving as a CASA volunteer was personally transforming. Creating my digital story showed me how becoming a CASA volunteer strengthened a personal transformation that was in progress, but not complete. A positive change in attitude as a result of learning hard lessons is all well and good, but personal transformation means little without inspiring action to aid and uplift others. Yes, I learned to dream in color. More importantly, I learned that helping others do the same can help change the world. It is a pleasure and an honor to serve as a CASA and be a part of my youth's life; truly, serving as a CASA volunteer gives back far more than it takes.

~ Patricia Parker, CASA

that they will inspire others to become volunteers as well as create awareness about foster care. In addition, a program goal is to launch a media campaign to create awareness about the CASA program. We hope to begin to give more presentations to corporations, churches, organizations, schools, etc. and share these digital stories with others.

To view these digital stories, please visit our web site at: [www.casaofalamedacounty.org](http://www.casaofalamedacounty.org)

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to Pottruck Family Foundation and The Morris Stulsaft Foundation for making this project possible. We are truly grateful for your support and for helping us to create awareness about the need for CASA volunteers.

Below, you will find a couple statements from two volunteers who completed digital stories.

When I was first approached to participate in the Digital Storytelling project, I hadn't the faintest idea what digital storytelling was. I thought maybe I would tell some "professionals" the story about my experiences as a CASA and about my CASA youth and they would turn it into a slick presentation for the CASA web site. My youth was also participating in this pro-

## Resources for Foster Youth

The Fall 2008 issue of FOCUS, Newsletter of the Foster Family-based Treatment Association, includes many articles relevant to issues common to our foster youth. Family therapy/visitation, connecting with birth family post-emancipation and the possible effects foster parenting may have on biological children are all discussed. The newsletter may be viewed at: [http://www.ffa.org/publications/focus\\_archives/2008\\_fall.pdf](http://www.ffa.org/publications/focus_archives/2008_fall.pdf).

Higher education often seems out of reach for foster youth; only around



2% receive bachelor's degrees, as compared with around 26% of those in the general population. CASAs can be instrumental in helping to improve these statistics. Casey Family Programs has developed a publication called "Supporting Suc-

cess: Improving Higher Education Outcomes for Students from Foster Care". This and other relevant publications may be ordered for free or viewed online in a PDF format at: <http://webfulfillment.com/kp/storefront/>.

Many, if not most of the children we serve have been separated from at least one sibling while in care. Issues with visitation are incredibly common and cause frustration for the children as well as our volunteers. Child Welfare Gateway created a bulletin for professionals regarding Sibling Issues in Foster Care and Adoption. While difficulties are discussed, there are also many tips that CASAs may utilize when working on visitation issues with their child's team. The bulletin is located at:

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/siblingissues/>.

## Holiday Party for CASA Volunteers and Children



Alameda County CASA cordially invites you and your CASA child(ren) to the Annual CASA Holiday Party. The party will take place on Tues., Dec. 16th from 6-8 pm at the San Leandro Marina Community Center, located at 15301 Wicks Blvd., San Leandro, 94579.

The festivities will begin promptly at 6 pm and Santa will be arriving at 6:30 pm.

As with years past, the Pleasanton Washington Mutual Card Services Department has adopted our CASA children and plans to purchase gifts for each child.

CASAs was asked to submit a wish list on behalf of their child(ren). We are so thankful that our friends at WaMu are still trying to provide gifts for our children, despite a tumultuous time in their company with recent layoffs.

Santa Claus will be making an appearance to help distribute the gifts to the kids. We're asking that CASAs bring a dish to share. For more information, please see the Evite, which was emailed to all volunteers on 11/25/08. **Please RSVP no later than Fri., Dec. 12.**

For more information about the holiday party, please contact your case supervisor. We look forward to seeing you all very soon. Wishing you and your family a safe and happy holiday season.

## Welcome Interns

CASA is pleased to welcome three first-year MSW interns from UC Berkeley's School of Social Welfare. Each student brings with them a wealth of information and past experiences to share with the CASA team. The interns will each be carrying a caseload focused on serving transition-age youth, helping to prepare them for their emancipation. Two of the three students plan to pursue careers as child welfare workers and the third hopes to become an adoptions social worker. All three interns will be with us until May 2009. We enjoy having them work with us; their youthfulness has brightened our offices.