



**Voices for Children**  
2012-2013 Annual Report





March 2014

**DEAR FRIENDS,**

Nelson Mandela's words resonate strongly for all of us associated with Voices for Children. We believe that it is our responsibility as a community to ensure that a caring Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer is assigned to every vulnerable foster child *early* in his or her journey through the system, thus mitigating the negative outcomes. Every child in San Diego County deserves a forever family and a promising, fulfilling future, and that is our ultimate goal.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff at Voices for Children, we thank you for speaking up for the most innocent in our community with your time, your money, and your commitment. Because of you, our ambitious goal to *Serve Every Child* has been propelled forward, and we now have a far greater ability to serve more children in crisis.

This report summarizes our achievements in FY2012-2013. We ended the year in the strongest financial position of our history. As a result of the generosity of over 3,000 donors to Voices for Children, we were able to recruit, train, and supervise more CASAs and, in turn, help many more foster children than ever before. During FY2012-2013, our 1,100 heroic CASAs—who are the heart and soul of this organization—advocated and spoke up for the rights and well-being of 1,605 children. We also reviewed and monitored the case files of each and every child in the foster care system.

We began the fiscal year with an ambitious income goal, but are proud to report that we ended up exceeding it, raising a record income of \$4,199,999. Part of this success was due to a visionary anonymous donor who presented a \$500,000 Challenge Gift in January 2013—giving Voices for Children six months to match it with at least an equal amount from new donors or increased gifts from existing donors. We are happy to report that we were able to meet this ambitious challenge by June 30, 2013.

Even with our recent success, we still have much work to do. We will not stop until we serve every foster child, every year. This ambitious goal is only possible because of your continued involvement and support. Thank you for supporting our mission, for believing in our work, and for your compassion for the children we serve.

With our gratitude,

Rochelle Bold, Esq.  
*Chair, Board of Directors*  
FY2012-2013, FY2013-2014

Sharon M. Lawrence, Esq.  
*President/CEO*  
Voices for Children

*“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”*

— Nelson Mandela (1918-2013)

## Olivia

**AGE:** 4 years

**HER STORY:** When the County removed Olivia from her home at two years of age, she displayed severe cognitive and physical delays typical of maltreated children. Fortunately for Olivia, CASA Ellen was assigned to her case. Ellen advocated for intensive speech therapy, as well as play therapy, to help the little girl work through her devastating past trauma. Developmentally, Olivia has started to catch up with her peers, and there is hope for a promising future.



## VOICES FOR CHILDREN

# *Speaking up for San Diego County's foster children*

Our CASAs give generously of their time, resources, and compassion. Every single case with a CASA represents many hours of advocacy on the part of the volunteers, many hours of support from the professional program staff, and, in so many cases, a transformative experience for the children. In all, Voices for Children volunteers reported 58,335 contributed hours of service in FY2012-2013—the equivalent of 7,294 eight-hour days and, valued in dollars, \$1,411,024.



## Jason

**AGE:** 15 years

**HIS STORY:** Growing up, Jason experienced extreme physical and emotional abuse. Removed from his drug-addicted parents at the age of seven, Jason has since changed foster homes and schools multiple times. Thankfully, CASA Steven was assigned to Jason's case. He has provided continuity in the boy's life and helped him get the academic resources he needs. His CASA is also helping Jason plan for his future, as he will likely spend the rest of his childhood in foster care. CASA Steven's goal is for Jason to graduate from high school, and the boy is well on his way to achieving this goal.

## MISSION

*Voices for Children transforms the lives of abused children in San Diego County by providing them with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs).*

## VISION

Voices for Children believes that every child deserves a safe and permanent home and, to that end, will provide a CASA to every child in foster care who needs one, monitor every court file in the system, and advocate to improve the lives of San Diego County's foster children.

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- We provide the highest level of training, supervision, and continuing education for volunteers who advocate for the best interests of foster children and provide vital information to judges.
- We annually review and monitor the case files of every child in foster care in San Diego County.
- We increase public awareness about the foster care system.
- We advocate for legal policies and practices that enhance the quality of life for foster children.

## CORE VALUES

- We cherish children and put them first, always.
- We are grateful for our selfless and dedicated volunteers.
- We work hard and stay humble.
- We believe in the difference we make by doing our jobs well.
- We set high standards for ourselves and constantly strive to improve.



## SHIFTING THE LENS

# *Volunteer turns focus to foster youth*

When his youngest child went off to college, **Clarence Flowers**, a supervisor at Genentech, decided it was time to volunteer. “After becoming an empty nester, I began looking for ways to give back to society. I’ve been very fortunate in my life. With my own children reaching adulthood, I wanted to be a part of helping other, more vulnerable children.”

Clarence was shocked to learn that, in any one year, there are more than 5,000 children in foster care in San Diego County, a figure known to few due to the fact that the identities of children in foster care are confidential. “Many foster children live in group homes that are set right in the midst of tremendous wealth. No matter where you live, there could be a group home on your street and you wouldn’t know foster teens were living there. It seems to me that these children are forgotten by the majority of society. Our attention to things that really matter—like children in need—should be our most important priority.

“I first knew that I could really make a difference when I attended a school conference for my case child, Marcus. The Court had granted me full educational rights for him and I was asked to attend a meeting at his school. At the meeting were Marcus, his teacher, the school principal, and his case workers. As we went around the room and each person spoke, Marcus raised his hand. The principal asked him what he wanted to say, and Marcus answered ‘I want to talk about Clarence.’ Marcus paused for a moment, took a deep breath, looked the principal straight in the eye and said ‘I just want to say that I’m happy to have Clarence as a CASA because he is always there for me.’”

Being a CASA has made Clarence realize how much he enjoys working with children, and the impact that caring advocacy can have on foster children’s lives. Though his own children have grown, Clarence has found that as a CASA, he can continue to give children the tools and support they need to succeed in life.

*“Our attention to things that really matter—like children in need—should be our most important priority.”* — Clarence Flowers

# *It began with just two voices...*

When **Kathryn Ashworth**, a USD law student, first embarked on her law school research project about San Diego's foster care system, she had no idea it would be the start of a revolutionary plan that would eventually transform the lives of thousands of children.

When her paper garnered the attention of social worker Elizabeth Brainerd Bacon, the two women met and decided to put their ideas into action. Their goal was to help judges make better-informed decisions when faced with a foster child's case. So, in 1980, the two women set up a few folding tables and chairs in the hallway of the San Diego County Juvenile Court. They recruited friends and Junior League members to volunteer to review files of children who had been placed under Court jurisdiction because of parental abuse or neglect.

The group agreed that the most effective volunteer model was the "Court Appointed Special Advocate," or CASA model, which had been created just a few years earlier in Seattle. They officially joined the National CASA Association and began formally training CASAs in 1983. From these humble beginnings as a grassroots organization, Voices for Children was born.

Bacon passed away in 2003, but contributed greatly to the organization and the foster children of San Diego County during her lifetime. Ashworth has volunteered for 34 years as a CASA and continues to do so. Her current case is a two-year-old little girl who is about to be adopted. Ashworth has been instrumental in making sure that the child was freed for adoption and that the adoptive mother has had access to adequate support and necessary services.

In 1997, attorney Sharon M. Lawrence joined Voices for Children as Executive Director and for 17 years has led the organization to new heights. Lawrence has utilized her legal expertise, leadership skills, and compassion for children to help Voices for Children grow and thrive. Under her leadership, Voices for Children has built a reputation as one of the largest and most well-run, innovative CASA organizations in the country. Most recently, VFC was recognized with a national "Angels in Adoption" award from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute in Washington, D.C.

In the past three years, Voices for Children has experienced dynamic growth. The staff and Board of Directors have actively pursued the *Serve Every Child* vision, with the goal of providing a specially trained CASA to each foster child who needs one. We anticipate continued and sustainable growth in the years ahead, allowing even more children to receive the caring advocacy of a CASA volunteer.



## **Mia**

**AGE:** 5 years

**HER STORY:** Mia was born with a birth defect that has caused her severe medical problems, which her parents chose to ignore. She was removed from her home, turned over to the custody of the Court, and separated from her siblings. CASA Jenny helped Mia get the medical attention she needs, and strongly advocated for her to be placed in the same foster home as her brothers and sisters. Thanks to Jenny, Mia and her siblings were reunited and are living together, their sibling bonds intact and giving them strength and comfort.



## *What CASA means*

For a San Diego County foster child, Court Appointed Special Advocates, or CASAs, are often the essential difference between a happy, peaceful childhood and one of fear, confusion, and sometimes even additional abuse and neglect while in foster care.

CASAs are highly trained volunteers who are empowered by the Juvenile Court to become experts about their case children. Every year, approximately 5,000 children will live in foster care in San Diego County. Through Voices for Children, CASAs are matched with one or more of these children who need their help. Much more than just a mentor, CASAs have broad access to legal, medical, educational, and other records and professionals. CASAs make detailed and informed recommendations to the Court to ensure that the judge knows everything about their case children's unique needs and desires.

But more importantly, CASAs are a source of caring focus and stability. By developing one-on-one relationships with their appointed children, they are able to understand each child's individual concerns and fears, and inform the Court. In many instances, they are the *only* stable and consistent adult in the lives of these vulnerable children.

CASAs are ordinary citizens who do extraordinary things. They *listen* closely and intently to their case children and then *speak up* when it matters most—in the courtroom, in the classroom, and community. And in the process, a child's life is changed forever.

*Henry: "Jody, I think of you as my sidekick—is that okay?"*

*CASA Jody: "Well Henry, I'm not sure what a sidekick is ..."*

*Henry: "All superheroes have sidekicks. They are the people who take care of the superhero when his superpowers are about to fail. They make sure he is okay when he can't take care of himself. That's what you do, isn't it? You take care of me when my superpowers are low. So that makes you my sidekick!"*

## SERVE EVERY CHILD INITIATIVE

# *Every child needs a voice*

Abuse, neglect, and abandonment are tragic enough, but no child should have to experience additional hardship. The sad reality is that many children, after being removed from unsafe homes, face the added uncertainty of shifting foster care placements, unstable living conditions, and insufficient support systems. The repercussions of spending years in foster care can further damage a vulnerable child physically, psychologically, and emotionally.

Voices for Children knows that a CASA volunteer can help ease these hardships for a suffering foster child. CASAs provide the stability, caring, and advocacy needed for these children to thrive. They often help their case children do better in school, live healthier lives, and learn to trust adults again, and they ultimately help place them in stable, loving homes.

This is why Voices for Children is committed to achieving our ambitious *Serve Every Child* vision—to provide every San Diego County foster child in crisis with a compassionate CASA who will advocate on their behalf. Our Board of Directors has dedicated its energy and resources to promoting this initiative, which began in 2006. We are determined to provide a CASA to every child in San Diego County who needs one. All of these children desperately need an influential voice to speak up for them, and Voices for Children's Board, staff, and volunteers will not rest until that goal is achieved.

### **Katrina**

**AGE:** 8 years

**HER STORY:** Katrina came into foster care after her father beat her on multiple occasions. After a string of foster placements that left Katrina confused and upset, CASA Bonnie came onto the case. She recommended to the Court a stable foster home for Katrina and worked with the grandparents to adopt the little girl. Katrina now lives with them and is finally beginning to thrive.







# Speaking up for those who can't—our children

Life can be scary when it feels like nobody cares, when all you have ever known is the vicious pattern of abuse, neglect, or abandonment, and when you have internalized the false perception that you are worthless and that no adult can be trusted.

These are the feelings that many of the 5,000 children in San Diego's foster care system live with every day. Most of these children have suffered terribly, to the point that they had to be removed from their own homes for their safety. After being placed under the jurisdiction of the Court, these children have had to navigate the confusing foster care system, and often switch living arrangements and schools many, many times. Thankfully, over the years VFC has served thousands of these children by providing them with CASA volunteers. But there are thousands still waiting.

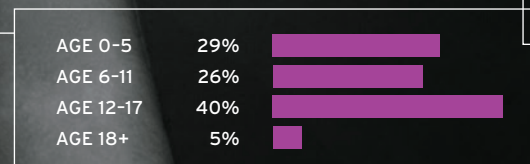
In our most recently concluded fiscal year (ending June 30, 2013), Voices for Children provided 1,605 of San Diego's foster children with the advocacy and support of a CASA volunteer (20% more children than the year before). The charts below show the gender, age, and ethnicity of the children served last year.

*Children served with CASAs*

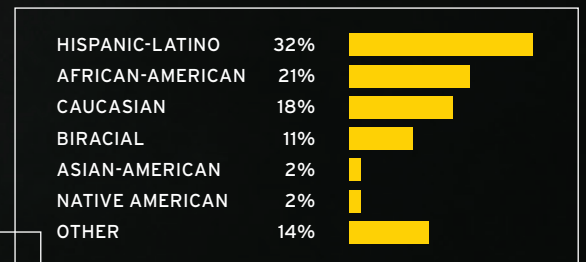
## Gender



## Ages



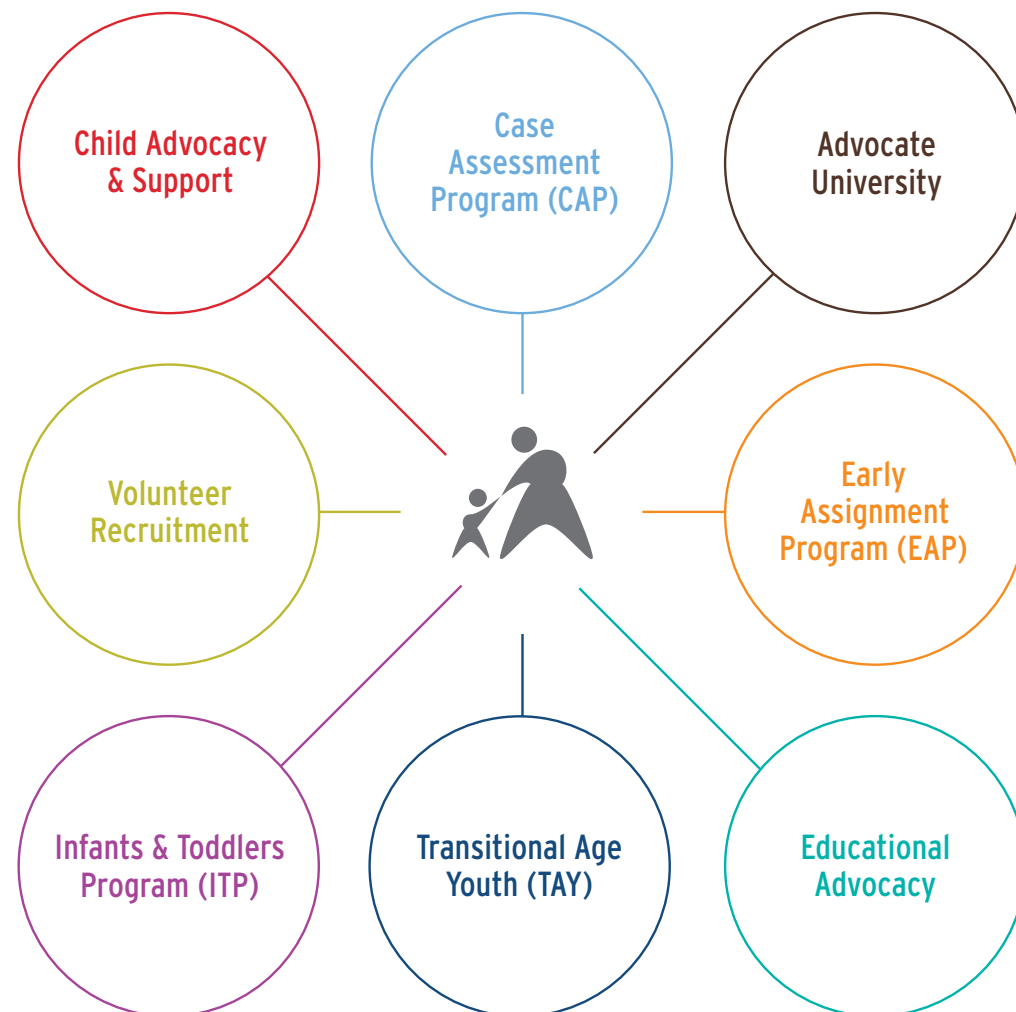
## Race/Ethnicity



## A RESOUNDING IMPACT

# The CASA Program

Through our CASA model, Voices for Children is working to create an entirely new paradigm—one in which children do not suffer unnecessarily from abuse or neglect, unstable living situations, and an overwhelmed, broken, and dysfunctional foster care system; one in which they do not spend long lengths of time living in foster care. These are the elements of our CASA program:



### Child Advocacy & Support

With the counsel and support of their VFC Advocacy Supervisors, CASAs identify and advocate for support services for their case child(ren) to ensure the child's safety, provide stability, and enhance well-being. CASA volunteers advocate for services through written court reports and appearances at the children's court hearings to help judges understand and implement resources that address each child's unique needs.

### Case Assessment Program (CAP)

CAP staff and volunteers review and triage the case files of every child in foster care in San Diego County, maintaining the CASA waiting list and identifying the most urgent cases in need of an advocate. There is a constant influx of new children into the foster care system, and our CAP staff and volunteers work to match these children with CASA volunteers as quickly as possible.

### Advocate University

CASAs complete 35+ hours of training through VFC's Advocate University, offered to trainees in a combination of online and classroom presentations (evening, daytime, and Saturday class options). Completion of training is celebrated by a VFC graduation ceremony and by CASAs being sworn in as a court officer by a Juvenile Court judge.

### Early Assignment Program (EAP)

Through EAP, VFC assigns CASAs to foster children as soon as possible after entering dependency (often within two weeks), in order to offset some of the trauma and to help ensure that fewer children will spend their entire childhoods in foster care.

### Educational Advocacy

The trauma of abuse and the chaos of frequent moves in foster care often wreak havoc on a child's education; each change of school can set back a child's educational progress by four to six months. CASAs help ensure that students receive

needed educational services. They meet with their case children's teachers and counselors to help reduce skill gaps, lost credits, and school failure. Education and its path to employment are crucial to building a positive future for our foster children.

### Transitional Age Youth (TAY)

This new program focuses on the needs of older youth, ages 16 to 21, to help prepare them for adulthood outside of the foster care system. CASAs help these youth with graduation requirements, college and job applications, budgeting, and other independent-living skills needed for young people to avoid homelessness, unemployment, or worse.

### Infants & Toddlers Program (ITP)

Infants and toddlers, ages newborn to five years, are the most vulnerable children in the system. Through ITP, VFC assigns CASAs to these youngest foster children (the fastest-growing segment in San Diego County's foster care population), in order to help identify and expedite needed services and, in some cases, find the children "forever families" where they can heal and flourish.

### Volunteer Recruitment

VFC reaches out to the community to recruit CASA candidates using various marketing vehicles—from broadcast media to billboards, print collateral to social networks. We conduct in-person outreach at volunteer fairs and events, and make presentations to corporate, religious, and other community groups. Through our volunteer recruitment efforts, VFC informs the community of the plight of abused and neglected children in San Diego County.



## TWO SISTERS, ONE SHARED PASSION

# *Helping San Diego's foster children*

Sisters **Jen Negre** and **Pat Burrascano** have different occupations, Pat is a lawyer dealing with family law, and Jen is a former preschool teacher and business owner, but there is something they have in common besides their family ties: a passion for helping children and nine years as CASA volunteers with Voices for Children.

Both sisters became CASAs in 2005 after Pat encouraged Jen to join her at a volunteer information session. They've been actively involved ever since. Pat explains: "When I heard there was an organization that not only allows volunteers to interact with foster children but actually lets them advocate in the Court to have those children's needs and desires met, I felt it was a very good match with my interests."

Jen had a very similar reason for becoming a CASA: "The fact that so many foster children have no one to be there as support or to provide stability in their lives was the greatest draw for me."

Since starting with Voices for Children, Pat has worked with five children and specializes in working with teenagers. She likes helping these teens develop productive coping mechanisms, and enjoys taking her case children on outings, such as classical music performances. She and one of the children she represents recently learned that the young girl has been accepted to CSU San Marcos.

Jen has had a total of seven cases over the years, often several at one time. She knows that she is making a positive difference in their lives—so much so that, next to raising her own children, being a CASA is the most fulfilling experience she's ever had.

As two of six brothers and sisters, Pat and Jen know the importance of sibling bonds and having the support of one's family. And, as CASAs, these sisters have been able to demonstrate to their case children what it means to feel supported and have someone in your life who truly cares.

*"The fact that so many foster children have no one to be there as support or to provide stability in their lives was the greatest draw for me."*

— Jen Negre

# Speak up for success

## FINANCIAL RESULTS FY2012-2013

As Voices for Children steadily moves toward the successful achievement of its goal to *Serve Every Child*, the corresponding financial goals take on a steeper trajectory and become substantially more ambitious. To serve more foster children in crisis requires even greater amounts of volunteer recruitment, intensive training, and supervision and, in turn, monumental amounts of fundraising. Nevertheless, we know that behind these goals and numbers are the precious and fragile lives of abused children—innocent victims who should not have to wait for a safe and happy childhood. Every child saved is an immeasurable triumph.

And this is why we are extremely pleased to report significant growth in our donor support in FY2012-2013. We concluded the fiscal year in the strongest position ever. Because of the generosity of more than 3,000 donors, Voices for Children completed the fiscal year with revenues of \$4.2 million. Given that Voices for Children is 97 percent privately funded, with only 3 percent coming from government sources, this accomplishment is even more profound. But the best news of all is that this increase in revenues allowed our organization to serve 20 percent more San Diego County foster children in FY2012-2013 than in the previous year.

## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

REVENUES	FY2011-2012	FY2012-2013
Gifts and Contributions	1,542,149	2,518,298
Special Events (net of expenses)	1,231,030	1,455,379
Government Funding	450,600	143,173
Contributed Goods, Services, and Facilities	63,620	58,276
Other Income	(3,146)	24,873
<b>Total Revenue:</b>	<b>\$3,284,253</b>	<b>\$4,199,999</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Program	2,595,256	2,976,098
Management and General	134,584	162,366
Fundraising	584,101	665,174
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$3,313,941</b>	<b>\$3,803,638</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets:</b>	<b>(\$29,688)</b>	<b>\$396,361</b>
Net Assets at Beginning of Year:	1,412,224	1,382,536
<b>Net Assets at Year End:</b>	<b>\$1,382,536</b>	<b>\$1,778,897</b>

**AUDIT AND IRS FORM 990** – Independent auditors review our financial statements each year, preparing our audited financials and our tax returns. Access to our audit and tax filings can be found online at [www.speakupnow.org](http://www.speakupnow.org).

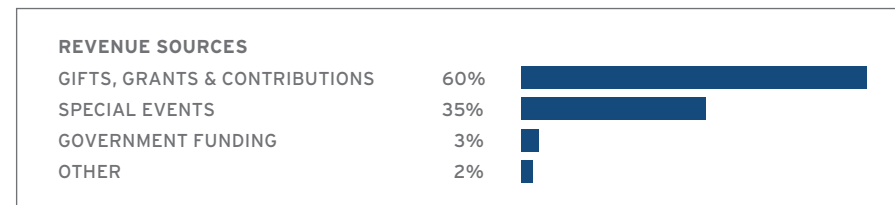
### Andrea

**AGE:** 18 years

**HER STORY:** Andrea has lived in “the system” for many years. She suffers from low self-esteem, and lacks certain basic life skills. Her CASA, Debbie, specially trained through VFC’s Transitional Age Youth Program, has helped Andrea develop independent living skills such as budgeting and how to apply for a job. Debbie also introduced Andrea to the resources available through the state’s Extended Foster Care program. With Debbie’s help, Andrea is getting ready to rent her first apartment and will begin classes at a community college in the fall.

## FY2012-2013 REVENUES

Voices for Children's revenues grew by almost 28 percent compared to the previous fiscal year. This enabled VFC to serve more San Diego County foster children than ever before and remain on track with our *Serve Every Child* expansion plan. We are so grateful to our generous donors for their extraordinary financial support.



### GIFTS, GRANTS & CONTRIBUTIONS

In FY2012-2013, donations from individuals, corporations, foundations, and service organizations, comprised the largest category, accounting for 60 percent of Voice for Children's total annual revenues. Grants from loyal foundations such as the Leichtag Foundation, Price Family Charitable Fund, Qualcomm Foundation, the Rose Foundation, and the Galinson Family Foundation propelled VFC forward. We unexpectedly received our largest single gift to date when an anonymous donor contributed \$350,000 in July 2012 after learning of a devastating State of California budget cut. Another more recent high point was a \$500,000 Challenge Gift presented in January 2013, also from an anonymous donor who gave Voices for Children six months to match it with at least an equal amount from new donors or increased gifts from existing donors. We are delighted to report that by June 30, 2013, we met the challenge.

### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

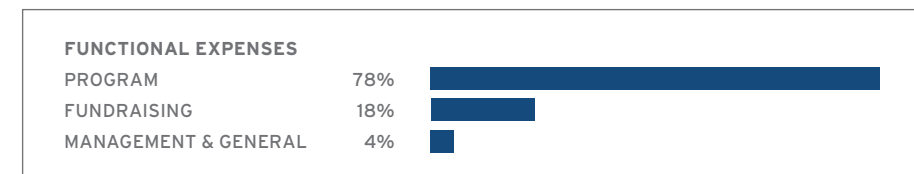
Government funding fell dramatically to three percent in FY2012-2013 due to the loss of an annual \$350,000 grant from the State of California. However, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors approved Community Enhancement and Neighborhood Reinvestment grants, and Voices for Children received a federal grant in collaboration with Foster Youth Services with the San Diego County Office of Education.

### SPECIAL EVENTS

Net of expenses, Voices for Children's combined special events income increased by 18 percent over the previous year and contributed 35 percent of revenues for FY2012-2013. It was a record year for Voices for Children's signature event, *Starry Starry Night*, which grossed more than \$1.1 million in September 2012, with a net of \$973,000. Our 21st Annual Golf Tournament at the Del Mar Country Club in April 2013 netted \$123,000. Makua, Friends of Voices for Children, netted \$119,000 with its *60th Anniversary Back to the Beach* themed party held in June 2013. The 2nd annual *Wine, Women & Shoes*, held in May 2013 at an equestrian facility in Rancho Santa Fe, once again proved popular and netted \$137,000. *The Ultimate Man Cave* in June 2013, capped the year, netting \$60,000 from a group of "guys who give."

## FY2012-2013 EXPENSES

Because our staff must recruit, train, and closely supervise more than 1,000 CASA volunteers each year, the work at Voices for Children is extremely labor-intensive. In order to reach the ambitious goals of our *Serve Every Child* strategic plan, we must increase expenses to increase the number of foster children served. In FY2012-2013, services increased by 20 percent, while organizational expenses increased by 15 percent. Serving more foster children requires the addition of more highly-trained staff. Voices for Children had 46 employees as of June 30, 2012, expanding to 57 employees as of June 30, 2013.



## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS	FY2011-2012	FY2012-2013
Current Assets	1,710,623	2,090,903
Property and Equipment	141,860	148,605
Other Assets	29,025	29,025
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$1,881,508</b>	<b>\$2,268,533</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
Current Liabilities	498,972	489,636
Unrestricted Net Assets	1,266,317	1,760,591
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	116,219	18,306
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$1,881,508</b>	<b>\$2,268,533</b>

# LEADERSHIP

Voices for Children is grateful for the dedicated leadership of our Board of Directors, recently recognized with a Kaleidoscope Award for Exceptional Governance by the University of San Diego, which celebrates, promotes, and inspires excellence in nonprofit governance. We are fortunate to have a diverse, dedicated, and compassionate Board of Directors, 100 percent of whom support VFC with generous contributions.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS FY2012-2013

### Rochelle Bold, Esq. *Chair*

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Gina Ellis  
Lisette Farrell  
Anthony Farwell  
Cynthia Purcell Garrett, Esq.  
Kevin Harris  
Maria Herman  
Marina Marrelli  
Hon. Scott Peters (through December 2012)  
Dick Pfister  
Jori Potiker  
Lauree Sahba, *Past Chair*  
Jill Skrezyna  
Robin Stark (through December 2012)  
Alan Talbott, Esq. (through September 2012)  
Haeyoung Kong Tang, Ph.D., *Vice Chair*  
Michelle Weinger (through February 2013)  
Lise N. Wilson, Esq.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS FY2013-2014

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David Bialis, *Vice Chair*  
Jonni Bailey  
Stephanie Bergsma  
Mark Cafferty  
Ann Parode Dynes, Esq. *Treasurer*  
Gina Ellis  
Holly Ellison  
Roi Ewell  
Lisette Farrell  
Anthony Farwell  
P. Randolph Finch Jr., Esq.  
Jennifer Greenfield  
Kevin Harris  
Maria Herman  
Richard Kintz, Esq.  
Marina Marrelli  
Julian Parra  
Dick Pfister  
Jori Potiker  
Jill Skrezyna  
Katie Sullivan  
Haeyoung Kong Tang, Ph.D., *Vice Chair*  
Lise N. Wilson, Esq., *Secretary*  
Lany Zikakis

# COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS COUNCIL

Voices for Children's CAC includes former Board members as well as supporters and community leaders. These individuals serve as community liaisons and are committed to the mission of Voices for Children and to improving foster children's lives in San Diego County.

## COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS COUNCIL FY2012-2013

### David Archambault, *Chair*

Doug Arthur  
Kathryn F. Ashworth, Esq.  
Joye D. Blount  
Janice P. Brown, Esq.  
Ilia Terrazas-Dickey  
Mindy Fletcher  
Nathan Fletcher  
Dick Freeman  
Craig A. Irving  
Richard Kelley  
David Marino  
Patsy Marino  
Susan McClellan  
Dr. John Mendlein  
Hon. James Milliken  
Tom Murphy  
Eleanor Navarra  
Sheryl Scarano  
Cecil H. Steppe  
Katie Sullivan  
Joan Waitt  
Pamela S. Wygod  
Dale E. Yahnke, CFA, CFP®

## COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS COUNCIL FY2013-2014

### David Archambault, *Chair*

Doug Arthur  
Kathryn F. Ashworth, Esq.  
Joye D. Blount  
Annette Bradbury  
Janice P. Brown, Esq.  
Vicky Carlson  
Ilia Terrazas-Dickey  
Mindy Fletcher  
Nathan Fletcher  
Dick Freeman (through January 2014)  
Craig A. Irving  
Richard Kelley  
David Marino  
Patsy Marino  
Susan McClellan  
Dr. John Mendlein  
Hon. James Milliken  
Tom Murphy  
Eleanor Navarra  
Lauree Sahba  
Sheryl Scarano  
Cecil H. Steppe  
Joan Waitt (through November 2013)  
Pamela S. Wygod  
Dale E. Yahnke, CFA, CFP®

The **YOUNG PROFESSIONALS GROUP**, or YPG, was formed in 2010 to involve San Diego's under-40 community in our work with abused and neglected children. The group raises funds and awareness of Voices for Children. [www.VoicesYPG.org](http://www.VoicesYPG.org)

**MAKUA, FRIENDS OF VOICES FOR CHILDREN**, is an auxiliary that has supported Voices for Children's mission with more than \$1 million in gross income raised since 2004. These dedicated women work on behalf of San Diego County's foster children. [www.makua.org](http://www.makua.org)



## YPG Officers FY2012-13

**Chair** Sean Giffin  
**Vice Chair** Alex Scoma  
**Treasurer** Katherine Johnston  
**Secretary** Emily D'Amico  
**Past Chair** Scott Yates

## YPG Officers FY2013-14

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## Emily

**AGE:** 4 years

**HER STORY:** Hungry and scared, Emily was found wandering in a neighborhood park after being abandoned by her alcoholic mother. Emily was placed in foster care and her mother's parental rights were eventually terminated. As part of VFC's Early Assignment Program, the Judge ordered that Emily be matched with a CASA right away. CASA Linda immediately requested that Emily receive intensive therapy. Because of Linda's determination and consistent advocacy, Emily is now safe and secure—a happier child on the road to being adopted by her "forever family."

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## BRIDGING THE GAPS

# Ten years of life-changing advocacy

**Kimberly Neilson** first learned about the CASA model during college, when her Kappa Alpha Theta sorority helped raise funds for the National CASA Association, of which Voices for Children is a member. Even as a college student, Kimberly knew she wanted to be a CASA, but decided to hold off on volunteering until she had completed her schooling. Now an attorney at a firm specializing in complex litigation, Kimberly has volunteered with Voices for Children for more than a decade and has, to date, advocated for nine children.

"I like the idea of advocating for children who can't do it for themselves. I can be hands-on and get to know the children and all those involved in their lives," Kimberly explained. "It makes me feel good knowing that I am a consistent person in the child's life and will be there for them for the duration of their time in foster care."

Kimberly has seen how crucial it is for foster children to have a CASA, a dependable adult presence in a foster child's life. "I have seen children emotionally traumatized, unnecessarily, by decisions made during the course of their cases. It is usually due to lack of consistency and a failure to communicate information in a timely and appropriate manner. I find it frustrating that things slip through the cracks due to the sheer number of children in the system. To see the emotional toll it takes on the children is heart-wrenching."

Kimberly enjoys taking her case children on outings to local museums, parks, and the beach. She took one of her case teens out to eat at different ethnic restaurants because she knew how much the boy loved sampling different cuisines. The teen later went on to attend a culinary institute.

Knowing how daunting the process can be, Kimberly helped two of her case teens, Jeannie and Sam, with their college admissions and scholarship applications. The most rewarding part? "Waiting anxiously with them to hear the results, and then learning that they were admitted and received scholarships!"

*"I like the idea of advocating  
for children who can't do it  
for themselves."*

— Kimberly Neilson



# Our volunteers

Voices for Children's advocates are passionate, determined individuals. Unwavering in their dedication to our mission, many CASAs continue their service far beyond the minimum 18-month commitment. The list below recognizes volunteers who have generously served for five years or more. We are deeply appreciative of their commitment to our community's children.

## 30+ years

Kathryn Ashworth, Esq.

## 25+ years

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Cheryl Greaves

## 20+ years

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Irene Wells

## 15+ years

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Mary Limoges  
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Marta McCarty  
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## Joseph

AGE: 9 years

**HIS STORY:** Maria knew her life had to change when she woke up on a park bench with no idea how she got there. One thing was certain: she had to do better by her son, Joseph. The Court brought Joseph's needs to the attention of Voices for Children and he was assigned a CASA volunteer. CASA Mark spent time playing with Joseph and listening to his dreams and needs. Mark believed that Maria could turn her life around and advocated for her to reunify with her son. After intensive rehab and months of therapy, Maria is back on track. Sober and employed, she has a new outlook on life. Best of all, thanks to CASA Mark, Maria and Joseph have reunited.

# Stellar supporters

Our work with San Diego County's foster children would not be possible without the generosity and support of many individuals, companies, and foundations. We are grateful to these donors who had cumulative contributions of \$25,000 or more through December 31, 2013.

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**Greg Byrum**  
**Voices for Children Supporter**


For six years, Greg Byrum, a supply chain manager at United Technologies Corporation, volunteered as a Case Assessor for Voices for Children. In the role, he reviewed the files of children in foster care, and brought to the attention of VFC the cases of foster children urgently needing a CASA. When Greg's travel for work necessitated he resign from his volunteer service, he continued to support VFC in another way: as a regular donor. Knowing from his volunteer service the abuse foster children have endured and the challenges they face, Greg's gifts to VFC are a testament to the value of the CASA Program. Every year, he has faithfully made contributions which are then matched by his employer; and he recently included Voices for Children in his estate plans, joining the new Advocates Circle that honors legacy donors like Greg. We thank Greg and the thousands of other VFC supporters, whose generosity makes possible such life-changing advocacy for San Diego's foster children.

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*“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”*

– Sir Winston Churchill



Voices for Children deeply appreciates each donor's compassion for the foster children of our community. Every contribution makes a difference, and we wish we had room to list the many other individuals and organizations that made donations up to \$1,000 as well as in-kind gifts.

We have made every effort to ensure this list (which covers a period ending 12/31/2013) is complete and accurate. If you have found an error or omission, please contact Eric Pitarresi, Stewardship Coordinator, at (858) 598-2243 or EricP@speakupnow.org.

To protect the identities of the children, some details of their stories have been altered, the names have been changed, and the images used are not the actual children.

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