



## **CASA Announces New Leadership To Serve Increasing Numbers of Abused and Neglected Children**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Los Angeles, CA** – The Board of Directors of CASA of Los Angeles has announced that it has hired David Melendez, a highly experienced nonprofit executive and fundraiser with long ties to Los Angeles County, as its new Executive Director.

The announcement was made by Mr. John Sabourin, CASA Board President. President Sabourin commented, “we are extremely pleased to have a professional of David’s caliber to lead the organization in this time of transition and growth, in order to expand and solidify this wonderful organization and enable it to serve the neglected and abused children throughout the County. This is an essential community resource, and I call upon all sectors of the community to assist us to serve the interests of children who are wards of the courts.”

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Los Angeles is a tax-exempt nonprofit that recruits, screens, trains and supports community volunteers who are sworn by the court as advocates for abused, neglected and abandoned children in juvenile judicial proceedings. It is part of a national organization with more than 900 chapters. The Los Angeles program works in active partnership with employees of the Court and the nonprofit to further the organization’s mission.

Melendez commented, “I am honored and humbled to have the opportunity to work with the dedicated board, exceptional volunteers and talented staff of CASA in the interest of the most vulnerable children in our county. I pledge to deploy every talent I’ve developed in over 20 years of leading nonprofit organizations large and small, in order to ensure that CASA remains a core community asset.” He continued, “I am looking forward to meeting our community, social service and court partners, as well as our supporters, volunteers and collaborators.”

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With over 27,000 children in the dependency court system in Los Angeles County, CASA is in constant need of volunteers willing to undergo the rigorous training in preparation for assignment to a child's case. The experience is described by many as a "life-changing experience." Prospective volunteers are urged to call the agency's office at (323) 526-6329 or (323) 526-6666, or visit the website at [www.casala.org](http://www.casala.org). CASA operated out of offices located in the Edelman Children's Court Center in Monterey Park, and in the McCourtney Juvenile Justice Center in Lancaster.

Melendez has begun his duties as of May 1, 2008. He can be reached at the Edelman Court Building CASA office at (323) 526-6329 or by email at [executive@casala.org](mailto:executive@casala.org).

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***See attached for Background information on CASA and Melendez***

For more information on CASA OF LOS ANGELES, please visit [www.casala.org](http://www.casala.org)

**CASA OF LOS ANGELES  
201 Centre Plaza Drive, Suite 3 - Monterey Park, CA 91754**

## **Background information on CASA of Los Angeles and David Melendez**

### **CASA**

CASA volunteers are sworn by the court to represent the interests of abused and neglected children in juvenile court, to secure a safe, nurturing, permanent home. CASA volunteers are diligent advocates for the services needed to help each child become a healthy, productive adult. More than 27,000 children in Los Angeles County are under the supervision of the Court because of abuse, neglect or abandonment TODAY. They are living in foster or group home care. Most will not return to their birth families, and they are more likely than other children to face unemployment, homelessness, incarceration and suicide as young adults.

CASA volunteers come from all walks of life. They are all ages and ethnicities. They are nurses, clerks, stay-at-home moms or dads, attorneys, students, plumbers and more. They may be working fulltime or part-time, or they may be retired. What links them all is an intense desire to help break the chains of abuse, neglect and abandonment that victimize thousands of children throughout Los Angeles County's communities.

### **David Melendez**

David began his career at Apodoca and Company, a consulting firm specializing in evaluations of major government funding initiatives. He then served as a Program Associate with the Sprague Foundation where he worked with trustees and program officers in awarding grants to community institutions supporting education, youth development, and healthcare before joining Plaza de la Raza as its General Manager. While at Plaza, he completed a capital campaign focusing on further developing Plaza's infrastructure and physical plant as well as establishing a group of endowed funds supporting its operations. He developed Plaza's operating budgets and program offerings that supported the talents of more than 900 promising children and young people per year.

He has also worked at Pepperdine, UCLA and CSUN in fund development. Among his professional endeavors was public television station KCET, where he worked as Executive Director of Advancement and also worked to establish "KCEd," a program initiative seeking to build the teaching skills of caregivers and educators working with children under the age of five.

David comes to CASA from College Summit, where he was Executive Director for National Initiatives. He was responsible for the operation of an innovative college access program working to significantly increase the college enrollment rate of low-income students throughout the state.

Among his awards and recognition are: Capital One Community Management Fellowship Award (2007) and the Washington Mutual Executive Director Fellow (2006).

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