## **2013 ANNUAL REPORT**



**JULY 1, 2012 TO JUNE 30, 2013** 

CASA OF LOS ANGELES



# Our Best Year

Was Just the Beginning



# Our Mission and Vision

CASA of Los Angeles' mission is to mobilize community volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children. It is driven by the belief that all children are entitled to stable, safe, permanent homes, with loving parents—biological or adoptive—or caring guardians.

CASA of Los Angeles recruits, trains, and coaches Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) to work with each child individually and make sure they get the support they need by:

- Investigating the circumstances of the child's life
- Advocating for the child's best interests in the court and in the community
- · Being a voice for the child

CASA of Los Angeles is the only local agency with volunteers appointed by the dependency court to advocate for children. Its vision is a Los Angeles in which every foster child has an advocate and the opportunity to thrive.

## **Dear Friends**

Every one of us has experienced one or more watersheds—turning points in life that distinguish everything that came before them from everything that came after them. Whether tragic or triumphant, these moments are so profound that we often mark the passage of time against them and tell our life stories through them.

For children in the dependency court system, losing a parent, suffering abuse, or being removed from their home easily becomes just such a moment. And for hundreds of these children each year, they also have a far more positive watershed.

It's the moment when they're paired with a champion of their own, a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA).

This, after all, is when they acquire a voice—one that speaks to their interests...and their interests alone. From that voice, the court and the community gain a fuller understanding of these young people, from their steepest challenges to their most cherished ambitions. And it sets in motion all sorts of life changes, from medical and mental health treatment to special education to the loving embrace of permanent homes.



Since 1978, CASA of Los Angeles has been the *only* local agency with volunteers appointed by the dependency court to do this. And in that time, it has enjoyed countless periods of growth and success. But this one—the twelve months from July 2012 to June 2013—was especially significant.

This was the year when the transformation of CASA of Los Angeles into a community-based organization became truly solid. Only a few years before, CASA was almost entirely dependent on the government, and when that funding came to an end in the recent recession, the very future of CASA of Los Angeles was in doubt.

In fact, it was clear that if CASA of Los Angeles were to not just survive but also further its mission, it would have to become rooted in, driven by, and, in no small way, owned by the community itself.

The community—from individuals to corporations to community partners—responded quickly and passionately to this call to action, and by fiscal year 2013, more volunteers and more donors than ever were involved and invested in the organization. Indeed, financial support from the community almost doubled in just this one year. And with that boost in commitment, CASA of Los Angeles—by then no less than an instrument of the community—provided intensive advocacy to over a hundred more children than just a year before.

But the greatest part of this story of evolution is that the best of CASA of Los Angeles is yet to come. Thanks to your support, the vision of one day providing a CASA to every child who needs one now seems within reach. Because besides being a microcosm of the community, CASA of Los Angeles is now an outright expression of the community's will to care for its children.

Only our collective commitment to that vision limits how far we can take it.

Let's take it further,

JAMES M. RISHWAIN, JR.

Chair, Board of Directors

**DILYS TOSTESON GARCIA** 

Executive Director

# What If There Hadn't Been a CASA to Speak for Them?



After a tragic start to their lives, Angel and Gene flourished in the care of foster parent Katherine Wheatfall (center right). Against a relentless stream of custody challenges, Court Appointed Special Advocate Danielle Hanne succeeded in keeping this exceptional family together.

By her own count, Katherine Wheatfall has provided a foster home for about 50 children since 1999. She's about as seasoned a foster parent as one can imagine. But when siblings Angel and Gene—8 and 6, respectively—went to live with her, in the fall of 2011, she encountered two children unlike any she had met before.

"When they first came here, we couldn't ride an elevator or escalator. I couldn't take them to church. I couldn't take them to the mall," Katherine explains. "They had just been kept in the house, not going anyplace, not doing the things normal children do."

Their mother had been incapacitated for years after the death of another of her children in a fiery car accident. Unable to care for herself, she struggled to meet her kids' most basic needs.

So by the time Angel and Gene were taken out of her custody, they were unique even among kids in the dependency court system. Both had been diagnosed with autism and mental retardation. Neither could speak in any meaningful way, or use the bathroom, or leave the house on their own. They had never even been to school. They were among the hardest children to place in foster care.

In Los Angeles County, finding a foster home for even a

single child can be difficult. Finding one for siblings is even more remote. But finding a home for siblings with special needs is an Olympian task. Angel and Gene got very lucky.

"I feel like if you bring children into your home, there's been a problem in their past or they wouldn't have ended up with you," Katherine says. "They need you to accept them unconditionally, as your family member. And that's the way I accepted Angel and Gene."

And they soon flourished in her care. Over the next nine months, they began attending school, learned to use the bathroom, and became comfortable on car rides and walks around the mall. They even joined Katherine on cruises—one of her favorite pastimes since retiring from the postal service.

"It wasn't easy. I had to learn a lot," Katherine says. "But through trials and tribulations—and love—I believe I won them over. And I believe they got me, too."



When Angel was placed in Katherine's care, at the age of 8, she had never been to school and couldn't leave home without being terrified. She now attends school and accompanies her family everywhere they go, from church to the theatre to cruises on the Pacific.

So in July 2012, Angel and Gene's Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), Danielle Hanne, felt confident recommending Katherine's home as a permanent placement. The kids' mother wasn't visiting them and there were no other family members responding to the social worker's efforts to place them.

But when Danielle arrived for the court hearing, this happy and very unlikely ending suddenly seemed to have been scuttled.

The children's father—who had never lived with the family and hadn't seen them in around two years—heard the kids were in foster care and decided he wanted them to live with him and his girlfriend. He wasn't present when they were removed from their mother's custody, however, and, due to an administrative error, his legal custody had not been terminated.

Danielle could see that there was no legal reason to deny the father custody of Angel and Gene and that he could walk out with them that very day.

"It was one of those times," she remembers, "when you wondered what would have happened if there hadn't been a CASA there to speak for them."

Although this was her first case as a CASA, Danielle understood the stakes all too well. A former special education teacher, she had been handpicked for Angel and Gene by her Senior Program Coordinator at CASA of Los Angeles because of her expertise in working with children with special needs.

"If the kids had gone with the father, they would have lost their placement with Katherine," Danielle says frankly. "Foster homes like hers are in high demand, so if that placement doesn't work out and they get re-detained, where would they go? Where could they go?"

So she advocated for them to be transitioned into the father's care. It was a maneuver to keep the kids with Katherine for as long as possible while giving the father time to build a relationship with Angel and

Gene and demonstrate he was fit to be the custodial parent of two kids with very special needs.

Alas, he didn't. Over the next year, time and again the father failed to meet the requirements placed on him by the court. So in July 2013, the judge on the case decided

**CASA YOUTH** 

Age 0 to 5:

Age 6 to 11:

Age 12 to 15:

Age 16 to 17:

18 and above:

African American:

White/Non-Latino:

Unknown Ethnicity:

Asian/Pacific Islander: 1% Native American:

Hispanic/Latino:

Multi-racial:

24%

23%

28%

18%

7%

35%

13%

6%

1%

**DEMOGRAPHICS** 

neither biological parent was an option for placement. Family reunification would be terminated for both of them. It looked like Katherine would finally gain legal guardianship of Angel and Gene.

But like so many epic stories, this one had a false ending.

The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), which originally removed the children from their mother's care, refused to recommend the children remain with Katherine. She was pursuing guardianship and not adoption, and DCFS, to its credit, always seeks to have foster children adopted.

So again the court would look to Danielle to speak for the children when they couldn't speak for themselves.

"I wrote a six-page report making the case for placing the

kids with Katherine as their legal guardian," she says. "But the judge probably didn't need much more convincing. She had been reading my reports for almost two years."

At last, at a hearing last September, the judge agreed with Danielle and overrode DCFS's recommendation. This

> family would stay together, and Katherine would become Angel and Gene's legal guardian.

As the kids, now 11 and 9 respectively, arrive home from school one afternoon in December, they're greeted with kisses from Katherine on the front porch. Angel eagerly asks for something to eat, while Gene remains in the front yard, waving to the school bus until it's out of sight.

"These kids can go anywhere now," Katherine says. "They're not the same kids."

Gene also had never been to school but now he can't get enough of it. Nothing makes him happier than being asked to write on the board.



# From First-Evers to Best-Evers, 2013 Was Unique in CASA of Los Angeles' 35-Year History

Thanks to historic levels of support from the community, CASA of Los Angeles did much more than post impressive numbers in fiscal year 2013\*; it developed the know-how to expand its operations to help hundreds more foster children each year. In addition, with this robust infrastructure in place, CASA of Los Angeles is now poised to tackle new frontiers in its quest to improve the lives of kids in the child welfare system—from advancing research into effective outcomes to collaborating on a systemic level to improve public policy, programs, and awareness.

\* July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013









Bottom: The inaugural Evening to Foster Dreams gala, in May, raised more than \$950,000 for CASA of Los Angeles.



Top: Tiana, with her CASA, Jan Miller, is one of nearly 750 foster children who benefited from intensive advocacy provided by CASA of Los Angeles volunteers in 2013.

Bottom: More than 300 teenage girls in foster care were treated to the Glamour Gowns event, in March—a "shopping day" at the LA Convention Center, featuring new formal dresses, shoes, accessories, and everything else they needed to attend their high school proms, all free of charge.

#### **Provided Intensive Advocacy** for 748 Foster Children—an 18% Increase over 2012

Lots of numbers illustrate what an exceptional year 2013 was for CASA of Los Angeles, but none more than the 748 foster children who benefited from the intensive advocacy of a Court Appointed Special Advocate. This was 18% more than in 2012 and equal to the most in the history of the organization. In addition, with the help of a devoted corps of Shelter Care volunteers, CASA of Los Angeles provided comfort and encouragement to 5,653 additional children on the days of their court appearances. And under the direction of the ever-industrious volunteer Glamour Gowns Committee, it treated more than 300 teenage girls in foster care to a free shopping day in March for everything they needed to attend their high school proms.

#### **Recruited and Trained 100 New Volunteers and Increased** the Total Number of Active Volunteers to More than 400the Most Ever

Volunteerism is more than a theme in CASA of Los Angeles' work; it's the heart and soul. Thanks in part to new training techniques and toolsincluding a new pre-service training course, specialized early childhood training, ongoing in-services, online training modules, and evening and weekend classes—as well as expanded outreach activities, CASA of Los Angeles trained 100 new volunteers and increased its total number of active volunteers by 13% over 2012. By the end of the year, there were more CASAs in L.A. County than ever—429, to be exact—to support vulnerable children in the dependency court system.



#### **Expanded Technology and** Infrastructure in Strategic Areas

In order to serve hundreds more children and to serve them well, CASA has needed to take its technology systems to new levels and to develop new ways in which a limited number of staff members can each facilitate service to more children. In 2013, it made further progress in implementing data systems for program evaluation and donor relationship management, which will improve quality of service and administrative efficiency and help attract new funders and community partners in years to come. It also reconceived and relaunched its Peer Coordinator model, where select, experienced volunteers coach new volunteers.

#### **Raised \$3.2 Million in Private** Funding—the Most Ever

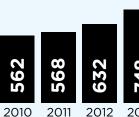
For the first time in almost a decade, CASA of Los Angeles received no significant federal funding in 2013, but it more than offset this loss by raising an additional \$1.6 million in private funding. Led by the Evening to Foster Dreams gala, which contributed over \$950,000 in its very first year, and thanks largely to first-time donors, CASA of Los Angeles raised \$3.2 million—very nearly double the total in 2012.

#### Leveraged Each Dollar Raised into an Additional Dollar in **Donated Goods and Services**

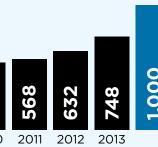
CASA of Los Angeles' 400+ volunteers donated more than 125,000 hours, valued at more than \$3 million, in 2013. Along with other goods and services—including every prom dress, undergarment, and pair of shoes selected by girls at the Glamour Gowns event—CASA of Los Angeles procured \$3.2 million in in-kind donations, matching its fundraising total dollar for dollar.

#### WHAT'S NEXT? ONE THOUSAND

Children served with intensive advocacy



2011 2012



With the knowledge and systems in place to scale up its operations to unprecedented levels, CASA of Los Angeles will soon provide intensive advocacy to 1,000 abused and neglected children annually. Doing so will require recruiting at least 200 new volunteers and raising more than \$4 million per year.

#### STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2013

		Temporarily	
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
REVENUE			
Contributions	\$1,000,294	\$ 1,179,027	\$ 2,179,321
Government grants	129,357	-	129,357
Donated volunteer services*	3,044,697	-	3,044,697
Donated rent and goods	150,663		150,663
Gala event	956,159		956,159
Special events	21,527	9,000	30,527
Other revenue	55,478	-	55,478
Total Support	5,358,175	1,188,027	6,546,202
Net assets released from restrictions:			
Satisfaction of program restrictions	458,523	(458,523)	-
Total revenue	5,816,698	729,504	6,546,202
EXPENSES			
Program services	4,696,724	-	4,696,724
Management and general	361,864	-	361,864
Fundraising	684,220	-	684,220
Total expenses	5,742,808	-	5,742,808
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	73,890	729,504	803,394
NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR	457,184	417,590	874,774
NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR	\$ 531,074	\$ 1,147,094	\$ 1,678,168

A full copy of the Fiscal Year 2013 audit is available at www.casala.org.

<sup>\*</sup>This value is being included in CASA of Los Angeles' financial statements for the first time. It has been calculated using the Independent Sector Volunteer Rate of \$24.18 per hour for the year ended June 30, 2013.

## **STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION**

FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2013

#### **ASSETS**

ASSETS	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 609,280
Restricted cash	474,594
Accounts and pledges receivables	293,118
Prepaid expenses and other current assets	15,248
Total current assets	1,392,240
Accounts and pledges receivable, net of current portion	385,000
Property and equipment, net	87,738
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,864,978
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	
LIABILITIES	
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	186,810
Total current liabilities	186,810
COMMITMENTS AND CONTINGENCIES	
NET ASSETS	
Unrestricted	531,074
Temporarily restricted	1,147,094
Total net assets	1,678,168
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$1,864,978

#### **OUR COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES**

Betsy Burch

Jane Abrams Rosa Acuña Allison Purtell Addante Arcola Aikens Teo Alexander Berenice Alfaro Carol S. Allen Kimberlyn L. Allen Scott Allen Natalie Allen-Wriggle Michael Almazar Dee Ann Alongi Judith Alves Brandee Anderson Jim Anderson Minor Anderson Tina Marie Angulo Marjorie Annapav Mindy Applebaum May Masako Arakaki Anita Aratow Manuel Arciniega Armando Arenas Rosa Arevalo Robert Argo Barbara Arlow Trudy Armer Andrea Arnold Heidi Ashcraft Mark Ashley Elena Avila Mary Elizabeth Bail Franziska Balcaen Barrie Lynn Barash Emma Barrientos Tracy Baum Veronica Bayer Michelle Becker Judith Beckmen Christine Beilinson Mary Ann Bell Thomas Bell Rosalie Benitez Corinne Bennett Clarence Eugene Berroud Kathy Berry Aishwarya Bhave Denise Bieker Louise W. Bieschke Renne Bilson Pamela Bingham Pamela Bjorklund Janet Blair Stacee Blom Roberta S. Bloom Steve Bloom Maruzella Bognoli Lesley Bois Sarah Bojorquez Neda Bolourchi Douglas Borsom Catherine Collins Bott Karen Bowles Leah Bowman Lauraine Braithwaite Susan Brandler Nancy Brashears Irma Breslauer Sandy Breuer Janette R. Brice Jayelin Broussard Rhonda Lee Brown Susan Lynn Brown

Barbara A. Bruner

Pamela Bumgardner

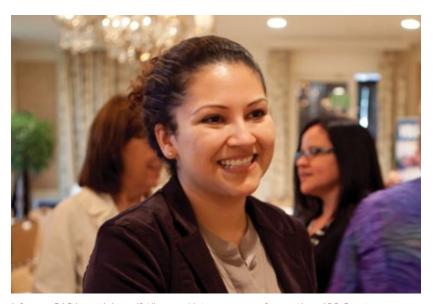
Marilyn Burke Carolyn Burtch Colleen Butcher Karen Olson Butler Heather Ann Mack Butterfield Gayle Byrne Margaret (Peggy) Byrnes Martha Byrnes Monica R. Byrnes Betty Cady Lennora "Lynn" Calica Cari Campbell Joyce Campbell Marisela Carmona Gail Carp Rosa Carreon Valerie Carrigan Roseanne Carson Sandra Carter Virginia Casimiro Rosalie Cauley Rita Cazares Isabel Cazarez Janet Charlin Winnie Ching Joan Chlebowski Pek Ean Chong Alfred "Chris" Christophersen Mary E. Christophersen Paulette Chulack Charity Clutter Cathleen M. Cobb Virginia Coffin Mary Anne Cogbill Edward Cohan Claire Coleman Yesenia Collier Kristen Collins Stephen Collins Kim Cooper Stephen Cooper Denise Cortes Jennifer Salas Coscarart Lauren Costa Syndi Croad Joe Cruz Alan Cunningham Patricia Cuocco Shirley Cutler Karen Darling Meghan Daum Sonia De Leon Miranda de Pencier Shannon Del Rio Blanca Flor Delao Maria Teresa Delgado Marie-Helene Demers Arlene Dickey Barbara Dixon **Emily Dixon** Charles Dizenzo Charles Dodson Jacquie Dolan Chelsey Doust Laurie Dressler Gary Duboff Daniel Duncan Lesley Dunlap

Carissa Dunn

Randall Duran

Katharine Durham

Tashea Dunn-Stevenson



A former CASA youth herself, Xiomara Matus was one of more than 400 Court Appointed Special Advocates who together donated 126,000 hours—valued at more than \$3 million—in 2013.

Julie Dwyer Sharon R. Ellingsen Theresa Emerick Beatrice Dale (Bebe) Emerman Tonsonia Emerson-Brooks Rosemary Enzer Arnold Mike Epstein Laura Evans Tate Fairchild Beverley-Jo Farzin-Nia Samantha Feld Karin Barter Fielding Carolyn Finkenbeiner Shannon Fisher Francine Fitzgerald Aurora Flores Svlvia Foos Shirley Ford Stephen Forstadt Susan Forstadt Arlene Forster Michele Foster Mariann Fragner Patricia Franklin Betty Freitag Simone Friedman Kimberly Ann Fry Lynne Gabriel Brian Gadinsky Linda Galati Dana Galen Ian Garber Susan Garcia Karen Garipay Marc Garlett Catherine Garraway Pauline A. Garstka Eileen Gates Pauline Gaughan Suzanne Geary Jennifer Anne Gerich Rita Ann Giamaniaro Andreia Gibbs Carole Gibson

Phyllis Elaine Glock Sherry Goddard Joyce Goldstein Celina Goodman Janice Ruth Goodman Gale Lvnn Gordon Melinda Grace Judith Graham-Johnson Ariel Greenspun-Gale Stephanie Greer Sharon Griffing Diane Grooms Sandra H. Guerrero Dahlia Gutierrez Lori Haas Lynda Hadjian Lauri Halderman Danielle Hanne Pamela Haring Maithe Harispe Susan "Blair" Harless Alvin Jay Harman Ravna Harman Elton Harps Kathleen Harter Kav Harter Danica Hartshorn Fiona Harwich Ina Haugen Arthur Head Andrea Hein Ashley Heldman Marsha Heller Sarah Henderson Karen Henry Emma Luz Hernandez Samuel Kevin Herod Michael Bruce Herron Laura Hertz Sheila Hightower Katherine Hill Barbara Jean Hodges Abbe Hofstein Paula Rene Hollins Christine Hood Elizabeth Hook Alice Horevitz

Margaret Katherine (Peggy) Huber Ella Marie Hudson Rosemary Hutton Karen Ilich April Jacobs Lynn James Sandra Jefferson Linda Jenson Darlane Jespersen Dana Johnson Kathy Barrett Johnson Shannon Johnson Delphia Jones Linda Jones Sallie Jones Sheryl Jones Terry Judge Patricia Kaplan Nirja Kapoor Maureen Kedes Deborah Wick Keen Julie Kelleher Jacqueline Keller Seema Khan Angie Kim Faith (Young) Kim Nahae Kayden Kim Llonald King Nancy King Inta Ástrida Kipper Richard Norman Kipper Linda Klein Jeffrey Russell Knight Courtney Koester Rhonda Kohn Linda Konner Wendy Koro Susan A. Kowalski Gail Krieger Sharon Krischer Frances Kristof Maria Alejandrina Ku Joseph Kuban Daniel Kubrin Lori Kupfer

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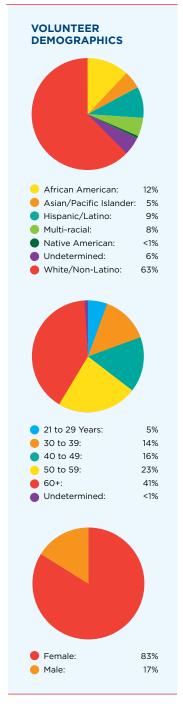
Kimberly Landis Elizabeth Lane Audrey Davidow Lapidus Monica Larson Susan Lau Jennifer Laughlin Sherry Lawrence Joan Lee . Carol Legge Linda Levine Michael Levine Ruby Lewey Janet Licht Raymond Lilly Penny Liu Adriana Lopez Susan Lord Lise Lovato Diana P. Love Maureen Lucas Charlotte Luey Nancy Ann Lyon **Dolores Lyons** Rebecca Lyons Cruz Macias Adrienne Mack Lara Mackey Joan Elizabéth MacLaughlin Marge Colyear MacLaughlin Joanna MacQueen Kathleen Malone-Biener Michele Marchand Julie Marcus Sandra Mardesich Teri Marias Carol L. Marlowe Cryssol Marquez Susan Marshall Stacy Marteeny-Haus Birdie Martin Amanda Martindale Anna Mathews-Keeling Xiomara Matus Michael Maxwell Carolyn Mazza Jasmine McClendon Nina Stern McCullaugh Carolyn McGee Elois McGehee Claudette McGhee Catherine McMahon Anissa McNeil **Emily Meehan** Marcus Mendez Stacy Mengel Georgia Mercer Kristin Meredith Jose Maria Mesa Monica Ariel Mihell Janice McCoy Miller Anne Mirisch Venezia Mojarro Linda Mokler Brooke Ann Montgomery Dianne Moonves Elizabeth Rizzo Moore Hitochi Morimoto Mayumi Susan Morishita Abby Myerson Judy Nagy Eunice Elizabeth Nash Kathy Nauman Martha Needelman Maria Nelson Nancy Anne Nelson

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JULY 1, 2012 TO JUNE 30, 2013

#### \$100,000+

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