



MEDIA RELEASE

Volunteer Advocacy for Abused, Neglected Children in Monterey County

Salinas, CA
January 17, 2018

Court Appointed Special Advocates of Monterey County (CASA) serves as a voice for some of our most vulnerable children in Monterey County. All too often, CASA assists with cases of unspeakable child abuse and neglect, right here in our own community. Most recently, CASA learned of a family in Perris, California, where the parents allegedly held captive and abused their 13 children, ages 2 to 29. According to law enforcement, the starving victims were kept shackled to their beds by their parents, amidst foul surroundings in their Perris home. On January 14th, one of the children, a 17-year-old girl, escaped and called 911.

While stories like the Perris tragedy grab headlines for a day or two, we must ask the bigger question: What happens to the Perris children now and to children like them in other cases?

Vicki Myers, Executive Director of CASA of Monterey County explains that once suspected abuse is established, the Monterey County Department of Social Services removes the children and assesses immediate needs such as medical attention and psychological counseling. Initially, the children are taken to interim emergency group housing or foster care housing until a Superior Court Dependency Judge can decide on the most appropriate placement for the child/children.

“This is an extremely traumatic time for these children.” Vicki Myers added. “They need special care and services.” Vicki explained that judges often assign a CASA volunteer to help these children on a one-on-one basis. CASA volunteers are specially trained by CASA of Monterey County to help children who have suffered abuse or neglect, and have been removed from their families or caregivers.

The CASA volunteer immediately establishes a caring relationship with the child, researches and meets with all the stakeholders, and then actively pursues getting needed services for the child. As an “officer of the court,” CASA volunteers write reports and advise the judge on the child’s status, and make recommendations for the most appropriate placement. CASA volunteers are often the only consistent, dependable adult in a foster child’s life, and their sole focus is on the child’s well-being and best interests. CASA volunteers can make transformative differences for children, and are very helpful to judges and the child welfare and court systems.

Our Mission: To train and support community volunteers who advocate for abused or neglected children placed in foster care, upholding the children’s rights while pursuing a safe and permanent home.

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Child abuse and neglect is a profound problem in the state of California. Currently, there are 60,550 children in foster care statewide, with more than 400 in Monterey County. “These deserving children really need our help,” Vicki said. "Our goal is to find permanent placements as soon as possible, where the children can feel safe and thrive. But the sad reality is that many children, especially the older ones, must live in foster care for their entire childhoods. These kids need an adult by their side, someone who cares about them, and will be there through thick and thin. That’s what our CASA volunteers do, every single day."

To learn about how to become a CASA, or to find out more about the work of CASA of Monterey County, go to: <https://casaofmonterey.org> or call: **831.455.6800**

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For Immediate Release