

Child Advocates offers foster children stability, attention

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Written by Los Altos Town Crier Staff



Photo courtesy of Child Advocates
Through Child Advocates of Silicon Valley, Court Appointed Special Advocate Denise enjoys time with Mayra. Child Advocates aims to provide stability in the turbulent lives of foster children.

- **Mission:** Through Child Advocates of Silicon Valley, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) serve Santa Clara County foster children who have experienced physical, emotional or sexual abuse at the hands of the adults in their lives. CASAs are volunteers who focus on individual children and provide them with much-needed stability and attention.

- **2015 update:** In fiscal year 2015, Child Advocates managed to recruit 198 new volunteers while continuing to maintain and support at least 575 existing volunteers.

In addition, the organization benefited from several major funders to raise \$1.9 million, money that helped staff and volunteers exceed their goal of serving 720 children and reach 735.

- **Why the Holiday Fund is needed:** Government subsidies provide only 18 percent of Child Advocates' funding. The organization seeks additional support to recruit new volunteers. In 2013, Child Advocates set a goal of recruiting at least 200 new volunteers a year to expand as an agency and eventually serve 1,000 children by the end of 2018.

"Last year, we recruited 198 – two shy but still good – and we continue to recruit," said Karen Scussel, the organization's executive director.

The organization is particularly interested in Latino advocates, as many of the children in the county foster system are Latino, and male advocates who can serve as positive role models for troubled boys. Currently, only 20 percent of CASAs are male, despite a 50-50 split in the number of boys and girls who need representation.

Child Advocates of Silicon Valley

Location: Sobrato Center for Nonprofits, Child Advocates of Silicon Valley, 509 Valley Way, Building 2, Milpitas

Founded: 1986

Annual budget: \$1.8 million

Staff: 18 employees; approximately 775 volunteers

Information: bemyadvocate.org