

June 20, 2008

Maria Long  
Executive Director  
Court Appointed Special Advocates  
402 East Gutierrez St.  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Ms. Long:

The following constitutes an Activity Report, prepared in accordance with the California Penal Code, sections §925 and §928, regarding Santa Barbara Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA).

The 2007-2008 Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury inquired into the well-being of children who find themselves in foster care in Santa Barbara County. As a part of that inquiry, we became aware of the work done by CASA volunteers on the children's behalf. While other aspects of the foster care system will be covered in a formal report, the Grand Jury wanted to take the opportunity to credit CASA and inform the public about the exemplary services provided to the children who are forced by circumstances to be wards of the Court. Locally, CASA volunteers work closely with Santa Barbara County Child Welfare Services in determining what is best for each child in the foster care system.

CASA is a non-profit, volunteer organization which is dedicated to providing judges with information regarding court-dependent children for use in determining what is appropriate for each child. CASA volunteers are appointed by a judge, making them Officers of the Court. There are over 900 CASA organizations in the United States. Santa Barbara County has two CASA offices, one in Santa Barbara and one in Santa Maria. Each CASA office has a group of volunteers who advocate for court-dependent children. CASA volunteers receive 40 hours of training and make a one-year commitment, although most volunteers stay with the program much longer.

The Grand Jury had the opportunity to visit one of the CASA offices and interview staff as well as individual volunteers. Their dedication to the needs of these children of Santa Barbara County is to be commended. The Department of Child Welfare Services was also highly complimentary of the services provided by the CASA staff and volunteers.

Last year in Santa Barbara County, CASA served 210 children. Unfortunately, there are not enough volunteers to go around and 120 children remained on the waiting list. CASA volunteers become de-facto mentors for many of the children and are one of the stable points in the child's life. CASA volunteers see their assigned children at least once a week and help them with schooling, foster placement, and for the older children, preparation for emancipation.

As CASA is a non-profit organization, it depends on the financial generosity of the community. In addition to fundraising events, it holds award and recognition dinners for its volunteers.

The 2007-2008 Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury commends the CASA staff and volunteers for the work they do for the betterment of court-dependent children in Santa Barbara County.

This report does not require a response.

Sincerely,

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Ted Sten, Foreman

For more information on CASA, go to [www.sbcasa.org](http://www.sbcasa.org)