



Child Advocates
of Santa Clara & San Mateo Counties



In court waiting for an Advocate...

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December 1, 2003

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"As I sat alone in a small room, I stared at the pile of folders in front of me. As each folder revealed a story of a child, I thought I was reading fiction. How could this happen to some small and innocent child? I became particularly interested in two children, a brother and a sister, who had been removed from their home on Christmas night. A night when most children, after a day of family, toys, and a turkey dinner, are tucked into warm beds with smiles on their faces. For these children, Christmas memories included a homeless shelter and tears of fear.

As I closed the file, I decided I would do whatever I could to change their lives for the better. I realized that making a difference could happen in small ways. Each little step helped put two children on the road of life where they had been left by the wayside. Being a Child Advocate means reaching out to a small hand that needs holding. It means giving hope. It means working toward the future of a child who has no future unless someone says, "I will make a difference." —Linda Warfield, Child Advocate

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Every year thousands of Bay Area children are abused and neglected by their families. Sometimes, for their own protection, they are removed from their homes and placed in foster homes, group homes, or shelters. Over 4,000 children and youth in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties are dependents of the court, an overwhelming number for both the court system and child welfare professionals. Without a caring adult to befriend these children and look out for their needs, they easily fall through the cracks of the system, forever denied the permanent, loving homes they deserve.

And that is where Child Advocates changes the story's ending. A Child Advocate makes a profound difference in the life of an abused child.

"I see kids who are hurting badly, kids everyone has given up on. They're society's throwaways. A Child Advocate really gets to know the child, humanizes the child. When I read an Advocate's report, for the first time I am able to get a full picture of this kid."
—Judge Leonard Edwards, Santa Clara (Please turn over)

Interim Executive

Director

Barbara F. Zahner



A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE ASSOCIATION

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You probably read about the tragic stories of two San Mateo County toddlers who were murdered in their homes during the past year—both children were dependents of the court at the times of their deaths. Neither of these children had an Advocate. To ensure these tragedies are not repeated, Dependency Court Judge Marta Diaz now refers many more children to Child Advocates.

There are currently over 400 kids on our waiting list.

With our current resources, we are unable to assign a volunteer Advocate to every child who needs our help. Abused children who do not have a committed, caring adult in their lives often try to recreate their lost families—some by having babies of their own, and others, by seeking family-like relationships through gang affiliation. These children are at high risk of becoming abusers of their own children, joining the ranks of the homeless, or becoming involved in criminal activities.

It takes \$1,500 per year to support one child in our program. Your generous support will allow us to recruit and train additional Advocates, and so many children will no longer have to wait. Your gift will allow us to reach out to more abused children who have been forgotten and abandoned by their very own families.

This past year, your financial contribution made it possible for us to match 774 Advocates with 997 abused and neglected children. On behalf of the children, we extend our deep appreciation to you for making 997 children's wishes come true!

During this holiday season, your gift comes at a critical time for those 400 children on our waiting list. An Advocate can very well mean the difference between life and death, between hopelessness and a future bright with hope, between a productive life and one full of despair.

Won't you please help us reach out to these children?

By working together, we can provide stability and hope for individual children and take an important step toward building a better community for future generations.

*Mart thanks
for your few-
month
help & love!*

Gratefully,



Barbara F. Zahner
Interim Executive Director