

Community Comment – Humboldt CASA

Hello, this is Chelsea Barto from Humboldt CASA Court Appointed Special Advocates on Community Comment. Imagine you are a child and you find yourself in court; you have been abused or neglected and taken away from your family for your own safety...now you're in the company of a judge, attorneys, social workers... all of them are strangers. You're scared; your world has been turned upside down. You are alone. This is the reality children in the foster care system are facing right here in our community.

Most of us know what it is like to worry about the future from time to time. **But the children CASA serves worry about their future every single day** - where are they going to live? Where will they go to school? When, if ever, will they see their parents again? Far too many of these children have never slept in a warm bed, had clean clothes to wear, nutritious food to eat, or someone to love them. That's where CASA comes in. We provide one-to-one advocacy to help prevent children like this from "falling through the cracks."

At CASA we train volunteers to advocate for these children in court, assuring that they are placed in safe, nurturing homes where they will flourish. Unlike overloaded professionals, a **CASA has time to become a consistent presence in the child's life**. They speak for children who would otherwise have no voice, giving unconditional love and ensuring that each child receives the services they need to heal.

And the children appreciate it. One of our teenage ^{foster} CASA kids recently showed up at the workplace of her CASA with a bouquet of flowers and announced to the whole medical office how much she appreciated all that her CASA had done for her over the years. Another CASA child who is on the road to become adopted drew her CASA a beautiful picture and told her CASA that she hopes they can still remain friends after her adoption. One woman who had a CASA when she was child, told us that when she got her CASA at six years old, that was the first time in her life that she had experienced unconditional love. These kinds of stories are how we know this work is important.

Last year, Humboldt CASA served 150 children, with 116 volunteer advocates, but there were over 300 children who could have benefited from having a CASA. Our goal is to have an Advocate for every child who needs one because we believe that every child deserves to live in a safe and loving home. If you have a few hours a week to make a HUGE difference in the life of a child in need, consider becoming a CASA. We have a training coming up Monday, January 6th through Friday the 10th from 9-4:30 pm. If that training doesn't work for your schedule, we do 4 trainings per year at different times. For more information visit humboldtcasa.org or call us at 443-3197. On behalf of the children, thank you for joining me today on Community Comment, I'm Chelsea Barto from Humboldt CASA.