
ADVOCATE ALLEY

Volume 3, Issue 12

December 2009

The manner of giving is worth more than the gift. -Pierre Corneille, *Le Menteur*

Dear Advocates,

We're planning to begin our Gift of Giving event next week. This is a special opportunity for you to bring your CASA children to the office and "shop" for gifts for the special people in their lives. One of our interns, Andrea Taylor, has spearheaded the project, making calls to community members to procure donations, however, we are still looking for help with donations. Below are suggestions in case you would like to help out:

- **NEW SMALL GIFTS ITEMS SUCH AS TOYS, GAMES, PHOTO FRAMES**
- **MEN AND WOMEN'S CLOTHING ACCESSORIES, SUCH AS HATS, SCARVES, GLOVES, SOCKS**
- **STATIONERY GIFTS SUCH AS PEN SETS OR NOTE CARDS**
- **TOILETRY ITEMS SUCH AS COLOGNE, NAIL POLISH, LOTION, BATH PRODUCTS**
- **GIFT CARDS FOR GROCERY STORES (SAFEWAY, MOB XILL, SaveMart), TARGET, BORDERS BOOKS, OR SIMILAR MULTI-PURPOSE STORES SUCH AS WALGREENS, CYS, OR RITEAID - SUGGESTED MINIMUM GIFT CARD AMOUNT IS \$25**
- Gift bags, ribbon, bows, tissue paper, and gift tags.

The Gift of Giving event is an incredibly special one to us, as it reminds all of us of the beauty and joy found in giving instead of receiving. We hope you and your CASA child(ren) will be able to participate. More information will be headed your way about the Gift of Giving event and our special holiday hours to accommodate the event. If you have any questions, comments, ideas, etc, please do hesitate to let us know!

With gratitude and happy holidays,

Michelle Arnold
Program Manager

The gift giving season is starting with a fabulous event at
Lussori, fine jewelers on Ocean Avenue in Carmel!

Please join CASA at Lussori's this Thursday evening from 4 - 8pm.
Let the shopping begin!!

*CASA & LUSSORI invite you to
an Evening of Holiday Shopping
Dec 3rd 4-8pm • Lussori on Ocean Ave, Carmel
10% of every retail sale will go to
CASA of Monterey County*

Become a group home liaison!

How many of us have been confused by the structure of a group home where our CASA child has been placed? Could communication have been better between you and the staff? Did you feel that the youth lacked a clear understanding of house expectations? Our pilot program is off the ground, and we're looking for a few fabulous advocates who are up to the challenge of this exciting new role. Contact Michelle to learn more!

CASA Movie Corner

By Jackie Steakley

"Blind Side" is the factual story of a young, homeless man, Michael Oher, who was raised in the projects and was illiterate at the age of 16 due to lack of schooling and his mother's drug addiction. A schoolmate's family took him into their home and eventually adopted him. Because this family cared about what happened to him he had another chance at a fulfilling, healthy life. Today this young man has finished high school and college. Michael went to "Old Miss" and currently has been nominated as "Rookie of the Year".

As an advocate I would highly recommend seeing "Blind Side" alone or with your CASA child, I took my child and she related to many of the scenes in the movie even though this is a movie about a male teen raised in the projects. The scenes portraying this young, homeless man's life at home and in school brought back many tears and memories for her that we had not been able to talk about in the three years that I have known her. The movie ends on a hopeful, uplifting note.

It is a fascinating story that shows what resilience and involvement can do in a child's life. Michelle also has stated that this movie as well as "Precious" can count for continuing education hours...yahoo!!

Advocate Avenue



We would like to wish the following advocates a very happy birthday during the month of December...

Miriam Gonzalez	12/2
Juliet Gonzalez	12/7
Mel Spehn	12/13
Yadira Sandoval	12/16
Rene Jackson	12/20
Barry Elkins	12/28
Lloyd Schwimmer	12/28
Sandy Mraule	12/30

Follow the link below to watch a video of Michelle Sales and Stanislaus CASA as they make us all remember why we do this work! This piece was produced for our Court News Network.

View the video here: http://easylink.playstream.com/aocstream/ccn/ccn102709_story2.wvx or you may access the CCN library page: <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/videos.htm>.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium's week-long, summer day-camp is designed to get young women excited about and involved in science, the ocean and conservation. Through a variety of hands-on field activities, they strive to increase their knowledge and to spark a personal connection with the natural world that will lead them to become future stewards of the ocean. Kids get the opportunity to explore ocean habitats by joining in activities such as surface scuba diving, boogie boarding and kayaking. We aim to serve young women regardless of primary language or economic background. Three camps are conducted in both English and Spanish. Young women entering grades 6, 7 or 8, who reside in Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito counties, are eligible to apply. As a recruiter, you would identify girls who would benefit from this type of experience and serve as a liaison between the YWS staff and the families. During the summer of 2008, recruiters from Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito County helped in overcoming barriers associated with applying for this type of program for over 140 girls! As a result, 103 girls were served during three camps that summer. As a recruiter, you will be invited to attend an Aquarium event as well as introductions to staff and resources to promote the Young Women in Science program. If you are interested in becoming a recruiter or know a young girl who would be a good match for this program, please contact Claudia Pineda at cpineda@mbayaq.org or call 644.7596.

Judge blocks cuts to foster care group homes

Bob Egelko, Chronicle Staff Writer
Saturday, November 14, 2009

A federal judge prohibited the state Friday from reducing payments by 10 percent to foster care group homes for thousands of neglected and mistreated children, and questioned the wisdom of cutting services that might keep troubled youngsters out of jail.

"We're talking about children one step away from the criminal justice system," U.S. District Judge Marilyn Hall Patel said during a hearing in San Francisco. "Is this kind of cost-cutting really smart?"

State lawyers replied that the youths have access to publicly funded services at schools and mental health clinics, and that California is mired in a budget crisis.

"The state is doing the best it can to share the pain across the board," said Deputy Attorney General Susan Carson.

But Patel said the cuts lowered state payments to 70 percent or less of the costs of providing food, clothing and other necessities that federal law requires states to cover. She issued a temporary restraining order Nov. 4 blocking the reductions, and said Friday she was converting it into a preliminary injunction that would last until a lawsuit over the cuts went to trial.

She rejected the state's request to suspend the injunction while it appealed to a higher court. Patel said she would rule at a later date on whether the state must reimburse group homes for rate reductions that prevailed from Oct. 1, their effective date, to Nov. 4.

About 70,000 youths up to age 18 are in foster homes in California, and 7,400 of them are in group homes. Counties place children in foster care when their parents abuse or neglect them or are unable to care for them.

The cuts, among the budget-balancing measures that the Legislature approved in July, would save the state about \$19 million, said the plaintiff in the suit, the California Alliance of Child and Family Services, whose nonprofit agencies operate 87 group homes with 3,700 beds.

Because of corresponding cuts in federal and county payments, which contribute 80 percent of the funding, the alliance said, many homes would have to reduce staff, therapy and other services or shut their doors.

"We're warehousing kids at this point," William Abrams, a lawyer for the organization, told Patel. "The law requires more."

The state Department of Social Services, which administers the program, has argued that the 10 percent cuts wouldn't seriously harm group homes or their residents. It noted that the state raised the homes' rates by 5 percent in January 2008.

But Patel said the reduced rates are probably below the minimums required by federal law and would hurt vulnerable youngsters.

In social service programs, and in their daily lives, she said, "children have to know what to expect."

E-mail Bob Egelko at beigelko@sfchronicle.com.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/11/14/BADH1AK3J9.DTL>