



# CASA

## Informed

### Change a Child's Story™

TULARE COUNTY

CASA of Tulare County Newsletter Fall 2021

## Meet our new executive director

He's a familiar face and now he's leading our team! The Board of Directors of CASA of Tulare County has named Alberto Ramos the new executive director. Alberto had been serving as the interim director since February and the board made the decision in July to keep him in the permanent role.



Alberto has been with CASA of Tulare County for 10 years, beginning as a volunteer just like most of the staff. He moved into program management and associate director and became one of those team members who can always be relied upon to move things along and keep the ship upright.

Alberto is not only a dedicated CASA team leader, he's a dedicated family man. He is married to Jennifer and has three sons, Alberto, Xavier and Noah, all of whom are familiar faces to the team.

Please join us in congratulating Alberto on this new chapter in his life and for his steadfast devotion to the mission of CASA.



## Tickets still available for annual gala

There's still time to get tickets for our Once Upon A Dream fundraiser with dinner by the Vintage Press and silent and live auctions which will give you a chance to help CASA make up for lost fundraisers.

Register here and enjoy a night out with CASA: <https://one.bidpal.net/casa2021/welcome>

## CASA OF TULARE COUNTY PRESENTS SUPERHERO RUN!

<https://runsignup.com/casarun2021>



5K & 1K ROUTES

**OCTOBER 30TH, 2021**  
**7:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

## Superhero Run offers plenty for kids & adults

CASA's 4th Annual SuperHero Run is for everyone, all ages, serious runners who want to tune up for major races, and those just out for a fun outing.

Besides the 1K and 5K walk/run, there will be carnival games, food, prizes and medals. The sheriff's new youth services RV with lots of activities will be there along with Rosa Brothers ice cream.

Register by Oct. 15 to receive a T-shirt, but you can register even on the day of the event. Everyone is invited to wear their favorite Superhero costume.

Sponsors are still needed. Registration and information at [runsignup.com/casarun2021](https://runsignup.com/casarun2021)

## Story from an advocate

### CASA case outcome brings tears to eyes in the courtroom

CASA advocates are always happy when their case ends well, but this one was extra special. There were a lot of misty eyes and tears in the courtroom that day.

Advocate Jim Fixel had been visiting with 10-year-old Andrew (not his real name), who had lived with his aunt and uncle out of state before his father asked for him to be returned to him. Andrew was soon removed from the father's home and had been living in several different foster homes.

Jim had many phone conversations with the aunt and uncle, who really wanted Andrew to return to them. The couple had an amazing story themselves.

The uncle had been in prison but had totally turned his life around and gotten a good job. He had even been given custody of a child he had learned about while he was in jail and had been granted guardianship of his younger brother.

"The aunt and uncle are pretty special. The uncle's heart was changed by his experience," said Jim.

Andrew wanted to return to his aunt and uncle, but the law said they could not get custody because of the uncle's jail record.

Flash forward to the court hearing. The aunt and uncle had flown out to testify.

"It didn't look very good when we recessed for lunch," said Jim. "There was a report and some people had not seen it. The judge told us to read it over the break."

Several things happened to change the judge's mind. Both the prosecuting attorney and judge of the uncle's case wrote very positive letters in favor of the uncle, something they had never done before.

The resource (foster) parent said she could no longer keep Andrew because of his behavior.

In the end, Andrew's judge said he had to do what was best for the child, which was for Andrew to go back to his aunt



**Andrew's uncle and aunt, Andrew, his resource mom and CASA advocate Jim Fix**

and uncle.

The judge said it was because of Jim's testimony that he judged the way he did.

"There were a lot of players involved," said Jim, who thought that the resource parent saying she was not able to keep Andrew was also a big factor.

"The aunt and uncle were very involved in Andrew's life. I told the judge that the main thing was that if Andrew didn't go to his aunt and uncle, he would end up in a group home and no stable environment."

The judge also told Jim that he was very appreciative of Jim's involvement and said he couldn't make decisions without input from CASAs.

Many cases aren't so positive for the child, but in this case, Andrew has a real chance to have a loving upbringing.

### Arts Consortium begins monthly art classes for CASA kids & their advocates



Seven CASA kids and their advocates created their own acrylic art on July 28 thanks to a new collaboration with the Arts Consortium, Tulare County's arts council.

Two teachers from the Arts Consortium brought paper and supplies and taught the participants about creating layers and experimenting with tape painting.

The creative process can be healing because it relieves stress, encourages creative thinking, boosts self-esteem and provides a sense of accomplishment, a great benefit to traumatized children.

The Arts Consortium will do a different class on the last Wednesday of each month. Advocates can sign up themselves and their CASA kids by contacting their coordinator. First come, first served.

## Attendees will hear how a CASA changed a life during 'Dream' gala

A former foster child will tell how his CASA advocate changed his life when he speaks at the "Once Upon A Dream" auction on Sept. 10.

Anthony O'Leary was taken from his abusive parents as an infant and lived in various foster and friend's homes. When he was in 7th grade, he was assigned a CASA advocate.

"That was a great relationship," said Anthony. "He didn't play sides. He spoke to my social worker. He built up my confidence and played a big brother/father role. We ate together; we talked."

Anthony had been told that his great aunt and great grandmother didn't want to take him. The aunt had been told Anthony didn't want to live with them.

His CASA cleared up the misunderstanding, and Anthony went to live with his aunt. Case closed.

That was when Anthony wrote a letter to the CASA office in San Diego that had helped him, thanking them for the CASA who "changed my life for the better."

CASA had never gotten a thank you letter like this, and from a 14-year-old boy.

"I wanted to give back and tell my story," Andrew said.

The San Diego CASA has a speaker's panel of former foster children who go out and explain how a CASA can be so important to a child who feels unwanted.

Although the panel had never included a youth that young, Anthony was so passionate about helping, he was included.

"Miss Sabrina at CASA got me involved and trained me how to tell my story. Before that, I hadn't spoken publicly.



Anthony O'Leary was awarded the prestigious Horatio Alger Scholarship during a ceremony in Washington D.C.

Because of that, I felt confident in speaking at school and with my teachers too. I felt like I could voice my feelings."

This training and his advocate also encouraged him to apply for scholarships and apply to college. He has earned enough in scholarships to pay for his entire undergraduate education at UCLA, where he is now a junior.

Anthony has done amazingly well. Those who attend the gala will learn about the great internship he has gotten.

## If you can't attend the gala in person, you can bid from home!

The live auction at the Once Upon A Dream gala is the highlight of the evening, with bidders competing to see who can raise the most money for CASA of Tulare County and sweeping the crowd along in the excitement.

If you can't be there, however, the silent auction may be just the thing for you because online bidding can place you in the middle of the fun. We'll have dozens of beautiful items ranging from jewelry to home décor and you can browse the selection and place your bids, all from the comfort of your home.



Set up your bidder profile now so that you are ready to go on the night of the auction. If you need help at the event, CASA will provide assistance.

Bidding on silent auction items at the Once Upon A Dream gala is as simple as making a few clicks on your smart phone. Here's how to register as a bidder:

**Step 1:** Go to [one.bidpal.net/casa2021](https://one.bidpal.net/casa2021)

**Step 2:** Sign in, or create an account, using your email, Facebook or Google.

**Step 3:** Complete your profile and add a credit card by following the prompts.

**Step 4:** Enter your mobile number and you'll get a text message with a link to sign in when the auction goes live. That's it!

Please register early and then get ready to enjoy the fun of an online auction while helping CASA meet its mission of helping the abused and neglected children of Tulare County.

# CASA kids have fun, build self-esteem with horses at Mending Fences

Some CASA kids are having a ball grooming and riding horses at Mending Fences, an equine-assisted learning program in Visalia. The riding facility helps children develop self-esteem, communication and team-building skills.

Advocate Linda Fox went above and beyond to advocate for her CASA kiddos because she knew they would really enjoy this experience. Linda did a great job of ensuring the kids made it to the program weekly and supported them and their resource family throughout the whole experience.

Previously, CASA had to seek funding through grants and donations to send children to Mending Fences, but now Mending Fences is contracted with Tulare County so CASA children can attend the program for free!

There are also other wonderful changes at the ranch. It will now serve veterans and be a place for families to work on reunification services and provide substance abuse and child abuse prevention services for families and youth.

“This was the second time that the kids have been on horses but the first that they have learned how to take care of them,” said Linda. “It was the greatest thing to watch and be a part of. The kids learned how to get them out of their pens, saddle and bridle, brush and feed them.”

CASA looks forward to sending as many CASA kiddos as we can, giving foster youth a unique, fun and enriched experience.



## What's new at CASA

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### Next Advocate training

The next training session for new volunteer advocates is scheduled to begin Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021. The course runs for five weeks and sessions are held twice weekly. Because of the volatility that COVID has created, it has not yet been determined if the classes will be held in person or virtually. Stay tuned.

### Visits to Kaweah Oaks Preserve

CASA is excited to announce upcoming field trips to the Kaweah Oaks Preserve east of Visalia in partnership with the Sequoia Riverlands Trust. The outings are designed for kids in 6th-8th grades and provide a science- and social-emotional-based focus on land preservation.

Dates are on two Saturdays, Oct. 23 and Dec. 11 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Groups can be no larger than 50 people, including the advocate or child's care provider if the advocate is unavailable. Only one adult per child, please.

It's first come, first served, so contact your coordinator quickly to reserve your spot.

The goal of the Sequoia Riverlands Trust is to make nature accessible to everyone. Information: <https://sequoiariverlands.org>.

### College scholarship

CASA was pleased to award a \$2,000 scholarship to a 2021 graduate of Dinuba High School courtesy of the Ann B. Reimers Charitable Educational Foundation. This student finished high school with a 3.8 GPA and, after completing general education requirements locally, will enroll at UC Berkeley.

She was on CASA's waiting list so never got the help of a CASA, but she was nurtured by Virginia Rodriguez, a dedicated resource parent of 30 years. A special thank you to the Ann B. Reimers foundation for making this possible.

### Back-to-school supplies

Many thanks to our hard-working advocates for helping us send our kiddos back to school with new backpacks filled with school supplies.

Advocates stopped by the CASA office the first week of August to collect backpacks with notebooks and lined paper, pens and pencils, markers and rulers, crayons and scissors to start their kids off for the school year.

Sincere thanks to our always-generous donor, Ruiz Foods through its foundation Ruiz 4 Kids, for providing the funding for this important project.

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