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## CASA of Arizona Celebrates 40 Years of Statewide Advocacy

**PHOENIX** – CASA of Arizona is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> year of pairing volunteer advocates with children in foster care.

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a volunteer who advocates for the best interests of children and youth in Arizona’s foster care system. These volunteers give a child a voice in court.

The role of a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) was first conceived in 1977 by Judge David Soukup in Seattle, Washington, who wanted to find a way for the court to obtain better information about the needs of children in foster care. He believed dedicated and well-trained volunteers could accomplish that task, and the idea quickly spread across the nation and reached the Superior Court in Pima County in 1982.

It was in 1985 that the Arizona Supreme Court formally established the program under its jurisdiction and recruitment of volunteers began throughout the state.

CASA volunteers go through 30 hours of training. The in-depth training, referred as the CASA Academy covers all aspects of child dependency cases, child advocacy, reunifications, expectations and court reports. After training is completed, volunteers will have local CASA coordinators available in their county to support and guide them.

A CASA volunteer will get to know the child and every aspect involved in the dependency case and then advocate for the best interest of the child to the judge. That information aids the judge in determining the best course of action for the child. Studies have shown children with a CASA volunteer are more likely to receive services, more likely to find a safe, permanent home, and half as likely to re-enter the foster care system.

The state CASA program continues to thrive with each new advocate who is trained. Currently the program has over 900 active volunteers advocating for 1200 children throughout the 15 Arizona counties. More volunteers are needed.

“CASA volunteers are not just a cornerstone of our program; they are the solid backstop for the children whom they are paired. Supporting, mentoring, spending time with, and advocating for a child helps relieve a sense of uncertainty,” says Charlie Gray, CASA of Arizona Program Manager.

Original volunteers were recruited from the Foster Care Review Board (FCRB). The FCRB was established in 1978 and is another volunteer program with the Arizona Supreme Court where volunteers serve on a 5-member panel that meets online once a month to review the cases of children in foster care.

No prior experience is necessary to volunteer with the CASA or FCRB programs. Anyone aged 21 or older who can pass a thorough background check and complete the required training is encouraged to apply or reach out to their local county programs for more information.

A different way to help a child in foster care is to open your home and become a foster parent. It is a remarkable opportunity to provide care and support to a child in need of a stable home environment.

To learn more about these opportunities click on the links below:

- To learn more about becoming a CASA or FCRB volunteer visit, [azcourts.gov/volunteer](http://azcourts.gov/volunteer)
- To learn more about becoming a foster parent visit, [dcs.az.gov/foster/learnmore](http://dcs.az.gov/foster/learnmore)

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*CASA of Arizona and the Foster Care Review Board operate in all 15 counties in Arizona and are open year-round to recruit and train volunteers to help the children in Arizona’s foster care system. The programs are administered by the Arizona Supreme Court. Follow CASA of Arizona on Facebook [@CASAofArizona](https://www.facebook.com/CASAofArizona), Instagram [@CASA\\_of\\_Arizona](https://www.instagram.com/CASA_of_Arizona), and [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/casa-of-arizona).*