

# Group that helps kids navigate justice system has birthday

By KELLY NIX

**AN ORGANIZATION** that advocates for children is celebrating three decades of serving Monterey County.

In 2025, CASA, or Court Appointed Special Advocates, of Monterey County will mark its 30th year of “improving the lives of children and youth in foster care throughout the county.” The nonprofit trains residents to serve as advocates for children who have been neglected and abused.

## Multiple services

Since 1995, the volunteers for CASA work one-on-one with children and young people in foster care, providing them with a “consistent and caring adult presence, navigating complex legal systems, ensuring that educational, medical, and therapeutic services are provided,” the group said.

CASA of Monterey County executive director Beth Wilbur said the anniversary marks a “critical milestone

in our mission as we continue to expand our services and now also support youth in juvenile justice and truancy.”

“As we look back on our journey, we celebrate the thousands of children and youth we’ve served and the countless volunteers who have given their time, energy and compassion to ensure that these children and youth have a brighter future,” Wilbur went on to say.

To address the increasing need for volunteers, she said CASA is launching a campaign on Jan. 1, 2025, dubbed “30 in 30 for 30” with the goal of recruiting 30 volunteers in 30 days for each training cohort.

The initiative aims at trimming the waiting list and ensuring that children in foster care get the advocacy they need.

“While we have accomplished so much in 30 years, there is still much work to be done,” said Danny Little, chair of the CASA of Monterey County’s board of directors.

Being a member of CASA will not only help a child or young person who needs help, but will also make a

“lasting difference in their life,” Little added.

CASA has trained more than 1,300 volunteers and “helped thousands of children and youth in foster care navigate their path to safety and stability,” the group says.

## Volunteers and supporters

CASA will host events this year to recognize its anniversary and highlight its impact on the community and raise awareness about the needs of foster children.

The kickoff event is Jan. 23, and is in coordination with Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, with a community celebration set for April 30, when the nonprofit said it will bring “together volunteers, supporters, and local leaders to reflect on CASA’s achievements and look ahead to the future.”

Last year, CASA helped 148 young people, the majority of whom are Hispanic and live in Salinas and South Monterey County, the group said.

To volunteer, or for more information about CASA’s anniversary events, visit [casaofterey.org](http://casaofterey.org).