



National Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Association and Focusing Philanthropy Partner to Kick Off the Challenge for the Children Campaign *Organizations also announce nonprofit partnership*

Los Angeles, Calif., September 15, 2014 –Focusing Philanthropy and the National Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Association announced today the launch of a ‘Challenge for the Children Campaign’ to raise funds to train 150 new CASA volunteers. National CASA, through its network of 951 programs, provides training for volunteers who provide one-on-one advocacy for abused and neglected children.

The inaugural 2014 Challenge for the Children Campaign will raise funds to recruit, train and supervise 150 additional CASA program volunteers that will provide sustained advocacy for abused and neglected youth during their time in foster care. Through November 15, National CASA will seek donations of \$80,000 that will be matched dollar for dollar by Focusing Philanthropy for a total of \$160,000. To qualify, all donations must be made through Focusing Philanthropy. Consistent with its uniform practice, 100 percent of all donations made through Focusing Philanthropy are forwarded to recipient organizations.

“The Challenge for the Children Campaign is an exceptional opportunity to provide powerful CASA advocacy for abused and neglected children in need of a voice in the courtroom and in the community,” said National CASA Association CEO Michael Piraino. “We are proud to join with Focusing Philanthropy in this generous campaign and are deeply honored by the organization’s recognition of our highly effective model for serving children in foster care. Together, we will be game-changers for children who need and deserve safe, promising and fulfilling futures.”

CASA volunteers usually work on one to two cases at a time and receive at least 30 hours of required “pre-service” training and 12 hours of continuing education annually. During their service, volunteers advocate for the best interests of the child and develop a deep understanding of the child’s circumstances and needs. CASA advocates spend time with the foster child, ensure that he/she has the services needed to thrive, and work to move the child into a safe, permanent home.

The two organizations also announced that National CASA was selected as the 15th nonprofit partner for Focusing Philanthropy. L.A.-based Focusing Philanthropy identifies, evaluates, and promotes compelling opportunities for personal and corporate giving. National CASA was selected following months of intensive diligence and multiple program site visits. Focusing Philanthropy selects five percent of the nonprofits it evaluates.

“We spent much of the past year looking for a way in which we and our donors could have the most powerful impact in addressing the national dysfunction that is the foster care system,” says Elliott Gilson, President of Focusing Philanthropy. “CASA programs address many of the system’s worst problems, with impressive, life-changing results.”

More than 600,000 children are in the foster care system across the country annually. Of those who remain in the “system” until they age-out when they turn 18, only one percent will graduate from college and 40 percent will be homeless within the following 18 months. Twenty-five percent will be incarcerated by age 20. It is further estimated that 27 percent of the nation’s entire homeless population have spent some time in the foster care system.

“National CASA fits the rigorous Focusing Philanthropy screens: it is a very well run, lean organization both nationally and at the local level; it uses a proven, successful model which is constantly being refined following regular assessments; it has demonstrated the capacity to scale its operations as incremental support becomes available; and, most importantly, funds donated have a profound impact in improving the life trajectory of individuals who face extraordinary challenges through no fault of their own,” said Gilson. “We are proud to support National CASA’s admirable work.”

All gifts during the Challenge for the Children Campaign are 100 percent tax-deductible, will be acknowledged by Focusing Philanthropy and there is no administrative fee.

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About CASA for Children

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children is a network of 951 community-based programs that recruit, train and support citizen-volunteers to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in courtrooms and communities. The only program of its kind, CASA volunteers are empowered by the courts to provide children with one-on-one advocacy.

CASA volunteers see their assigned children regularly and interview all the adults who impact their lives. Volunteer advocates offer judges the critical information they need to ensure each child’s rights and needs are being attended to while in foster care, staying with the child until he or she is placed in a loving permanent home. For many abused children, their CASA volunteer is the only constant adult presence in their lives.

Learn more: [National CASA](#)

About Focusing Philanthropy

Focusing Philanthropy identifies, evaluates, and promotes compelling opportunities for personal and corporate giving. Supported nonprofits help to achieve sustainable improvements in the quality of life for individuals and develop vital resources for communities. Areas of focus include increasing access to medical care, education and job training, clean water, agricultural productivity, mental health services, and other core needs.

Intensive diligence and ongoing monitoring of all showcased nonprofits provides donors with the confidence that their contributions are achieving the greatest possible impact in addressing identified problems. Focusing Philanthropy is itself a nonprofit and 100% of all funds donated through Focusing Philanthropy go to the showcased organizations.

For more information, please visit [Focusing Philanthropy](#)