



SACRAMENTO CHILD ADVOCATES, INC.

Sacramento Child Advocates, Inc.

Protecting the rights of abused and neglected children in Sacramento County, California

Community Connection

www.SacChildAdv.org

Summer 2008

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Sacred Work: Protecting Children

The smile on a child's face, a successful adoption, reunification of a child with a parent who is now healthy and functioning, to protect children; these are only some of the many reasons why the dedicated staff of Sacramento Child Advocates works tirelessly for our child clients.

When we first meet our clients they are children who are often hurt, scared, and emotionally damaged. Our role is to advocate for their protection and safety, and for the services they need to become whole again. We achieve this goal by approaching the child with empathy, knowledge, and experience so that we can become aware of their needs and seek services and court orders to meet those needs.

Most of us can remember when we were children and the relationships that were most important to us then. The things that spring to mind may be our parents, brothers and sisters, friends, and our school; along with countless other things that made up our life as a child. When a child comes to SCA each of these relationships for that child has been damaged and is in danger of being lost forever. We strive to strengthen these relationships when possible, and to nurture new relationships to replace the ones that can't be repaired.

Why do we do it? We do it because we recognize the needs these children have and know that we can bring true caring to this sacred work. We do it because we know that these children and families are a part of the community we live in and building a healthy community where all of us can thrive takes hard work. Thank you for joining with us in our work to build our community.

-Mike Hansell, Managing Attorney

"SCA is the only court-appointed legal agency for every child who enters the dependency system in Sacramento county."

"There are approximately 4,600 Sacramento children that have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect."



Message from the Executive Director

Having one's own attorney is something no child should have to have. Historically, children had been excluded from the judicial processes that affect them. Sadly, each month in Sacramento, approximately 160 children are removed from their home because of an allegation of abuse or neglect. Today there are approximately 4600 children still in out-of-home care that SCA represents. SCA was established in Sacramento to be their "voice", their personal advocate. SCA does this through a unique model of using both attorneys and social workers. Foster youth who are represented in this manner truly have a partner in designing their future, someone they can trust, someone that is always looking out for their best interests. We are proud of the work we do here at SCA and we thank you for taking the time to learn more about our role in the Sacramento community. As a non-profit, community support is necessary for us to continue to be the "voice" for those who did nothing wrong, may have been emotionally and physically traumatized, may now find themselves without a "home", removed from their family - separated from their brothers and sisters, separated from their friends and their school. They need someone to be their voice and look out for their best interest. SCA strives to do that - but *we need your help* so we can grow and be a stronger and better voice.

-Robert Wilson, Executive Director

Outstanding SCA Staffers Receive Judge Roger Warren Awards

At SCA's May benefit, the agency presented attorney Christie Giusti and staff member Annette Herr with the annual Judge Roger Warren Award. This award is given to an attorney or staff member who has evidenced deep dedication to the children served at SCA and who continues to exemplify the mission of the agency. To help friends of SCA learn a little more about one of our honorees, we asked Annette Herr to share a bit about herself: "My mother was a teacher for mentally and physically challenged children and, as a teenager, I would assist her with the children on field trips and entertain them with puppet shows. As a young adult I worked in a preschool. After marriage, we started a family of four and regularly participated in all the activities children love. My house was always full of my children and their friends and I loved it!

Shortly after moving to Sacramento in 1995, I began working in after-school programs at a variety of schools in the San Juan School District where I brought my passion for and experience in arts and crafts to the children every day. In 1999 when after-school programs were being cut, I decided to make a career change. I didn't know exactly which direction to go in but I did know that whatever I did, it had to be with or for children. I soon found my home at Sacramento Child Advocates, Inc. (SCA) and have loved every minute of the nine years I have been here.

My philosophy is, "there by the grace of God go I". I was fortunate to be born into a happy, stable home with nurturing parents and friends. Children have no choice as to what type of family they are born into and those who are in dysfunctional homes need all our help more than ever.

To me, every person on staff at SCA has a special job that connected together is what makes this agency work as a powerful whole: clerical, social workers, attorneys, management and fund-raising. While working with Native Americans, Benjamin Franklin took a valuable lesson from them in how one person alone is not as strong or as powerful as many working together. The Indian tribes taught him that though one arrow can break, many arrows bound together are strong and cannot be broken. I guess I never forgot that example and it is how I view my role and that of everyone else here at SCA. We are a team and I am proud to be a part of it."



Sac "Child Advocacy" Celebrates 17 Years of Service

Prior to 1992, children who were taken from their homes because of allegations of child abuse, neglect and abandonment had no platform for direct legal representation, and there was no one to make recommendations to the court on the child's behalf. Before the vision and implementation of the concept "child advocacy," Sacramento's county counsel and social workers made recommendations to the court based on home evaluations and parent interviews.

In August of 1991, Judge Roger Warren, a trial court judge with over twenty years on the bench, developed a non-profit organization for child advocacy. This organization was founded to address the

"160 abused and/or neglected children enter the Sacramento court system each month."

long-standing concern that children who have been removed from their homes need direct legal representation. SCA acts as the advocate, *the voice*, for abused and neglected children who have been placed in the foster care system. Affirming the need for direct legal representation, the Superior Court of Sacramento established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SCA in 1992 to be

the designated court-appointed legal agency for every child who enters the dependency system in our county.

Child Welfare Fund: Helping children in extraordinary situations live ordinary lives

The Child Welfare Fund provides the "little extras" that foster families are not afforded through the stipend received from the County.

The purpose of the Child Welfare Fund is to provide dependent youth with the same luxuries and amenities of non-dependent youth. There is often a lack of funds that keeps foster youth from experiencing life's pleasures such as participating in after school sports, art, and summer camp programs.



The main goal of SCA's supplementary program is to provide foster youth with the financial support that will allow them to have the ordinary experiences of a child for knowledge and growth.

Spirit of Youth Award Created

The Spirit of Youth Award will be given annually by SCA to recognize and celebrate a young adult, under the age of 19, who has become a positive role model for others and has succeeded in spite of difficult odds. This youth has performed outstanding and/or extraordinary service for their community, family and/or SCA.

Two \$500.00 cash awards will be presented at an awards ceremony at a student's school at the end of the school year.

These annual awards represent SCA reaching into our community to recognize deserving youth. Thank you for your support which allows SCA to offer these awards.

Red Baron Ball is Expected to be the “Ace” Event in Our Community

An airport hangar at a museum sets the stage for a back-drop of exotic cars, airplanes, ladies in gowns and men in formal dress, music, a live band, a D.J., a delicious signature dinner prepared by top local restaurants, a martini bar, a cigar bar, a flight simulator ... you name it and you might find it at the first ever “Red Baron Ball” to be held September 27 at the Aerospace Museum of California at McClellan Park. This benefit, organized by EuroSunday (www.EuroSunday.net), precedes the following day’s Rally 4 Kids (www.EuroSunday.net/rally4kids/) and will kick off the annual Niello Concours week-long event. More at (www.NielloConcoursAtSerrano.com).

Tickets for the benefit and sponsorship opportunities (\$500 to \$25,000) are found now on the SCA website www.SacChildAdv.org. Tickets are limited to 300 so we invite you to secure your reservations now!

For further information regarding our sponsorship levels and opportunities, please phone Advancement Director, Katie Walker, at (916) 364-2365.

SCA is a non-profit agency with Tax ID# 68-0249756.



Wine & Dine Benefit Rewrites History

The agency’s fourth annual Wine & Dine Benefit for Children, held May 17, is now part of our history but, boy, did it rewrite SCA history! This one event brought in more needed funds for the agency than the three previous events combined!

The Wine & Dine brought in just over \$67,000 thanks to the generosity of many.

Between sponsors who helped underwrite the benefit, volunteers who gave of their time and talents, restaurants and vintners who donated their food, wine and serving staff, donors who donated items for auction, local media who gave our benefit free publicity, and the over 300 supporters who attended the benefit, it was a community effort that resulted in unprecedented rewards. Thank you on behalf of the children our agency represents!



Will Amy Be Able to Call Her Brother Today?

Most children spend their time deciding what cartoons to watch or who to call on their personal cell phone. Not so for Amy! Amy only wants to know whether or not she will be allowed to talk to her twin, Brandon, this month. Brandon is in a separate group foster home. Amy and Brandon are 14 years old and have been in foster care for 9 years. In the last year, Amy and Brandon have not seen each other and have spoken by phone only twice.

Is it a fundamental right for Amy and Brandon to be able to at least speak to each other? If so, who represents them? Who will be their voice? Maybe it does not matter? Well, to me, it clearly matters. Someone out there has to advance the basic rights of the most vulnerable population in this country, especially children in foster care. SCA provides a voice for these children.

Sacramento Child Advocates has been protecting children in foster care for 15 years. One of the attorneys at Sacramento Child Advocates will ask the right questions for Amy and Brandon and will enforce their most basic and obvious human rights. But, SCA only has 18 attorneys, 7 social workers, and 24 hours in a day.

I made the decision several years ago to support this non-profit agency financially because of the endless stories like Amy’s and Brandon’s. I have also joined the Board of Directors, as a way of further supporting SCA. I simply was not aware of what happens to kids after they are removed from families due to abuse and neglect and placed in foster care. What happens to them? Who speaks for them? Is life good for them? Are they happy? Will they be reunited with their parents and siblings?

Your generosity will enable SCA to continue to be the voice for these most vulnerable members of our community. Your gift to Sacramento Child Advocates will help the nearly 5,000 abused and neglected children who SCA will represent in 2008. They need an advocate who will create a place for them that is safe from violence, safe from fear, and safe from brutality. Someone who will help them to believe that they indeed have a promising future, that life can be good and kind. And that yes, Amy can call her brother Brandon today!



-Robert Buccola, Esq.
Member, Board of Directors

Sacramento Child Advocates, Inc.

8745 Folsom Boulevard, Suite 150
Sacramento, CA 95826

Phone: 916-364-2365

Fax: 916-364-5687

E-mail: KWalker@SacChildAdv.org

Four Ways You Can Help SCA:

- Make a donation
- Attend benefit events
- Become a volunteer
- Tell a friend about the cause

For more information, go to

www.SacChildAdv.org

Did you know...?

- There are more than 500,000 children in foster care in the U.S. Approximately 20%, or 100,000, live in California.
- 3.6 million children were investigated as potential victims of abuse or neglect as reported September 2005. 25% of those cases were confirmed.
- 69% of children in foster care are of minority backgrounds.
- Almost half of the children in foster care have siblings who are also in foster care.
- Based on high birth trauma and many life challenges, 50% of foster youth experience developmental delays, which is 4-5 times more than the rate found among children in the general population.
- Former foster youth are found to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder at 2 times the level of U.S. war veterans.
- 1/3 of former foster youth have incomes substantially below the federal poverty level.
- 25% of former foster youth will be incarcerated within the first two years of emancipation.
- Within 18 months of emancipation 40-50% of foster youth become homeless.



- 75% of children in foster care are behind grade level.
- SCA provides legal representation, advocacy, support, children's services (health, mental health, education and social) and assistance to the Family Services division of the Sacramento Superior Court.