

# Meet Pauline Daerr:

## Court Appointed Special Advocate for Children

BY DENNIS SHEEHAN

PHOTOS BY DENNIS SHEEHAN UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

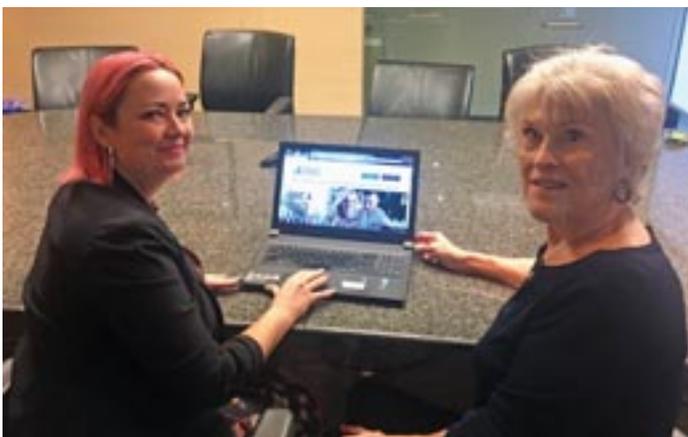
When any of us are face-to-face with someone who claims to be homeless, often we will give that person enough change for at least a cup of coffee. This seems to ease the person's obvious pain and minimize any possibility of a negative confrontation for most of us.

It's the right thing to do, most of us would agree.

However, if a child is abused or neglected, they have no real presence. We do not "see" them asking for change in a parking lot – they are largely faceless to us.

Right now, in Riverside County alone, an estimated more than 4,500 children are experiencing abuse or neglect. Authorities may have removed them from wherever they were living and placed them into foster care. Should their situation continue to spiral downward, this can almost surely translate to a life of severely limited opportunities – perhaps without any chance of succeeding whatsoever.

Pauline Daerr has owned a home in Sun City Shadow Hills for more than 10 years and has resided here nearly two years. Almost immediately since moving to SCSH, Pauline became involved with Voices for Children, a non-profit organization serving children across all of Riverside and San Diego Counties that prepares volunteers to become a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate).



*Brianna Miller and SCSH resident Pauline Daerr, working side by side. Photo courtesy of Voices for Children.*

Like Pauline, CASA volunteers generally have no legal background but provide vital services to foster children by gathering information from court documents, social workers' files, and educational, medical, and therapeutic records. They also speak with the professionals involved

in the child's life. CASAs use this information, as well as firsthand observations, to advocate for the child in court, in school, and in all aspects of the child's life. The CASA's role is to consider what is in the child's best interest and to make sure the child's needs are met.

When she lived in Ventura County, Pauline became familiar with the CASA program through her involvement with several child abuse awareness and neglect organizations. Pauline is one of the co-founders of the National Association Against Child Cruelty (NAACC) – also known as The Children's Wall of Tears, Ventura County – and has worked closely with several other children's organizations including The Salvation Army. During Pauline's term as president of the advisory board and executive board for The Salvation Army Oxnard/Camarillo/Port Hueneme, she implemented an after-school and camping program for underprivileged children in the community.

To provide the vital services a foster child needs, and to be able to report to a juvenile court both the current situation and ongoing needs of a foster child, Pauline relies upon the training she had with Voices for Children. That organization expects each volunteer to sign on for at least an 18-month period and have one visit per month with their assigned foster child or sibling group. A detailed, written court report on each foster child's progress and continuing needs is required twice a year. Nearly every resident of SCSH is "eligible" to serve as a CASA unless they are already working with foster children or their families in other capacities.



*Brianna Miller, Assistant Program Manager, Voices for Children*



OUR MISSION



BECOME A CASA



SUCCESS STORIES

*Voices for Children home page*

The “go-to” person at Voices for Children is Brianna Miller, Assistant Program Manager. Brianna provides some of the training and coordinates nearly all the interaction among volunteers and foster children. A graduate of Palm Desert High School and the University of San Diego, Brianna has served in the Peace Corps and worked in two positions with Volunteers for Children since joining the organization in January 2015. Giving back to the community in which she was raised was a major motivation for Brianna in choosing this career.

In her work as a CASA volunteer, Pauline feels a tremendous sense of accomplishment as she develops a level of acceptance plus comfort and trust between herself and a foster child. Whether the child is reunified with family, is adopted, or remains in foster care, Pauline feels fulfillment in advocating for a child knowing that she is making a difference in a young life, bringing hope where there is often little.

In retirement, many of us seek out volunteer opportunities of one sort or another. The simplest task may be giving a few coins during a chance encounter with someone in need. Of course, there are many worthwhile organizations

looking for volunteers in our greater community; and they are all doing positive work for the homeless and many other causes. But when you realize that you can positively change the life of a child for the better by volunteering your time and talent with Voices for Children, perhaps the cliché is true: nothing else comes anywhere close!

If you are able to follow through on projects, maintain objectivity and provide 10 – 15 volunteer hours per month, please consider contacting Voices for Children at [www.speakupnow.org](http://www.speakupnow.org) (or phone 951-472-9301). It’s easy to register for an information session to learn more about their needs and how to train to be a CASA. If volunteering your time is not an option, you can always make a donation through the Voices for Children website.

You CAN make a critical difference in a foster child’s life!



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