



# Strong Families, Thriving Communities

Photo: San Diego Foundation

## SUMMARY REPORT | Live Well Advance November 8, 2017 – Town & Country Resort and Convention Center

The 2017 Live Well Advance featured two separate panel discussions hosted by Strong Families, Thriving Communities. The interactive sessions were meant to educate attendees on how they and/or their agencies can support children and families involved with the County's child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Audience members heard compelling first-hand stories from panel members, and at the end of each session, many were inspired to fill-out cards committing to contribute their time or other resources for the good of San Diego children.

The first panel focused on the role and importance of Resource Families. Attendees learned the process for becoming a Resource Parent from County staff, and then heard from San Diegans with lived experiences in the child welfare system. A former foster youth-turned relative caregiver spoke about her journey through foster care as a child, reaching adulthood, and taking custody of her two biological sisters. A veteran Resource Parent who has welcomed more than a dozen children talked about her own experiences, in particular those raising children with special needs. Audience members listened to the panel talk frankly about the realities of being a Resource Parent, including the challenges and joys that it brought into their lives. They asked questions of the panel members and were also informed with facts about the state child welfare in San Diego via an interactive poll, which was intended to raise

awareness of issues needing attention and dispel common misconceptions. The session concluded with a call to action for attendees to use their organizational capacity, networks, and/or personal commitment to support the needs of Resource Families in San Diego County.

The second panel was devoted to CASAs and mentors. Representatives from local nonprofit and County programs educated the audience about opportunities to volunteer with foster children and help build successful adults. They informed attendees about the respective roles of a CASA and mentor, and spoke about the impact that such a commitment often has on a child's life. Former foster youth who have benefited from having volunteers in their lives talked about how important these individuals were to them, both in terms of providing emotional and material support. Also, the critical difference that CASAs can make in a child's judicial outcomes was highlighted by a San Diego Dependency and Delinquency Court judge. As with the first panel, attendees asked questions of the speakers and participated in a poll to test their knowledge of child welfare and juvenile justice in San Diego, including important issues and common misconceptions. The session concluded with a call to action for audience members to use their organizational capacity, networks, and/or personal commitment support the needs of volunteers for foster youth in San Diego County.

To learn more about Strong Families, Thriving Communities, please contact Sara Couppas at [scouppas@clintonfoundation.org](mailto:scouppas@clintonfoundation.org)

If you or your agency are interested in learning more about mentoring, CASAs or Resource Families, please contact Kimberly Giardina at [kimberly.giardina@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:kimberly.giardina@sdcounty.ca.gov)

# Panelists

## PANEL 1: Developing and Supporting Resource Families

PANELIST	ROLE OR OCCUPATION	ORGANIZATION
Patty Boles	Resource Parent	—
Vanessa Davis	Youth Services Director, Former Relative Caregiver & Foster Youth	Just in Time for Foster Youth
Wendy Curiel	Protective Services Program Manager	SD County Child Welfare Services

## PANEL 2: Supporting Foster Youth Through Mentorship

PANELIST	ROLE OR OCCUPATION	ORGANIZATION
Don Wells	Executive Director	Just in Time for Foster Youth
Belen Gomez	Former Foster Youth	—
Hon. Carolyn Caietti	Presiding Judge	Juvenile Court of San Diego
Jennifer Burleigh	Advocacy Supervisor	Voices for Children
Rosalina Burton	Mental Health Worker, Former Foster Youth	San Pasqual Academy
Elizabeth Rosas	Protective Services Supervisor	SD County Child Welfare Services