I have had the pleasure of working at Casa de los Niños for 20 years now. But my association with this great organization goes back even further than that. In the late 1980s, I was a volunteer for the Pima County Attorney Victim Witness Program (now known as the Victim Services Division). As a volunteer, a partner and I drove a crisis unit each Friday night, from 5:30pm to 2:30am. We would respond with law enforcement to help crime victims as crisis counselors.

One of the tasks we had was to help transport children that Child Protective Services (now Department of Child Safety) had removed from their homes in the middle of the night. More often than not we would transport these children to Casa de los Niños. This is what I found myself doing on Christmas Eve in 1987. Do you remember that Christmas? It was the last time I remember having a white Christmas in Tucson.

My partner and I were called by Pima County Sheriff’s Department to respond to a trailer way out on west Valencia on the reservation, at about 2:00 in the morning.

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Message From Susie Huhn

Home for the Holidays… a phrase we hear over and again in songs and cards. I love the holidays… my sons gather at my home and we enjoy being together as a family. But, facing the holidays without a family or a home is tragic for anyone, let alone a child. Unfortunately, we see this all too often at Casa de los Niños. But we also see joy and hope in the faces of the children. And there are some faces that just stay with us. I remember a very special Christmas several years ago for a little boy named Jake. He was 7 years old and his mother struggled with drug addiction. They lived, for the most part, on the streets. On the day she left Jake in the custody of Child Protective Services, she had hit rock bottom and acknowledged she could no longer care for him. His next stop was Casa de los Niños. The weeks leading up to Christmas we heard that Jake’s case manager had done some remarkable work on his behalf and had located his father. It turned out that the man had lost contact with the mother before he even knew she was pregnant—he did not know he had a son. The father had married, had a son of his own, and lived in Ohio. On Christmas Eve, he and his family came to Tucson to take Jake home—to a true home where he would have family! I often think how different this boy’s story might have been if this caseworker did not make the extra effort for this child. In the end, the most important thing for a child is to have the consistency and warmth of a home, and to be part of a family.

I hope that we can all take some time over the holidays to stop a minute and thank the people around us that are helping families who are struggling, or to extend some help to a child in need. We all have a role to play! And, if you are reading this, I know that you are part of the solution to keep families healthy and together. Warmest wishes to you and your family.

Sincerely,

Susie Huhn, MA
Chief Executive Officer
Focus on Families:  
A Community Conversation

Casa de los Niños is proud to present

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND CREATING SOLUTIONS IN THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

Wednesday, February 24th, 2016 | 11:30am to 1:30pm
DoubleTree Reid Park | $25 per person for lunch

Join us as we once again bring together the Tucson community around children and families. Our speakers will include:

Rev. Dr. Darrell Armstrong, focusing on the latest research on evidence-based, child-abuse programs that prevent child maltreatment and promote family strengths and child and family well-being. A dynamic and animated speaker, Rev. Armstrong inspires his audiences with his experiences, passion, and stories on how to strengthen families so that all children can grow up happy, safe and healthy.

Debbie Moak, Director of the Governor’s Office of Youth, Faith and Families will speak about the ways her office is refocusing Arizona’s efforts to engage faith-based communities and create more foster families for the thousands of children who are in state care. Ms. Moak will also discuss the work of the Governor’s Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment, which connects with community and faith-based organizations to offer support for foster families.

Susie Huhn, CEO of Casa de los Niños, who has dedicated more than 30 years of her career to child & family welfare in Arizona, will moderate a discussion following the speakers about the current challenges children, families, and organizations face working within the Arizona foster care system.

For more information, or to register contact Wendy Smith at 520.624.5600 x507, or via e-mail at wsmith@casadelosninos.org.

Holiday Reflections

Rosie Dyer, RN

During the holidays in the Shelter, there is a flurry of activities marking the celebration; the staff and children join together to decorate their rooms and play areas, the child-care workers select several special gifts for each child from generous donations given by the Tucson community, and the food service staff prepare a special Christmas Holiday dinner for the children that are going to remain in the shelter for Christmas Day.

If you walk through the Shelter during the month of December, you feel the air of excitement and see different volunteer groups assisting the children making gingerbread houses, Christmas cookies, and other holiday decorations. Other traditional activities are, of course, a visit with Santa and a trip to Winterhaven to see the award winning houses all decked out for holidays. Including parents in the Holiday festivities is a significant and favorite tradition. It is an emotional moment when parents, many who are wondering how they are going to be able to get their child a present, have the opportunity to choose and wrap a special gift that they will give to their child.

I will never forget the year we had immigrant children from Russia staying in the Shelter due to homelessness. While the children were clearly excited and looked forward to daily visits from their mom, they were completely captivated by the Christmas at Casa experience. When the Casa social worker was able to help find housing for the mother and her children, the kids asked if they could stay at Casa for Christmas!

The opportunity to help parents and children create positive memories around, what is often a sad time, is clearly rewarding. And, the experience is not saved just for the children in the shelter - the community-based prevention programs also participate in the wonderful tradition. The celebration starts at Thanksgiving with the incredible Ritz-Carlton making a complete and beautiful holiday meal for the entire staff and all of the children in the shelter. The kids are enthralled with the delicious food, the wonderful staff, and the festivities!

In reflection, the consistent theme of Holidays at Casa de los Niños is a wonderful mixture of community generosity and many healing encounters of warmth, love and joy for children and families.

While writing this article, I again realize the amazing gifts I received personally during my twenty-seven years at Casa de los Niños. Thank you.
...Cover Story Continued
‘Twas the Night

We would be transporting a 10 year-old girl and her 3 year-old younger brother to Casa de los Niños. Their mother had decided to go out on Christmas Eve and leave the children at home alone. Mom drank too much, caused a big car accident and was in the hospital. When she mentioned to the nurses that she had kids at home, they called the sheriff’s department.

When we arrived, the house was cold and dark, so we quickly got the kids loaded into our warm car and headed back to town. We arrived at Casa de los Niños at about 3am. The snow was coming down pretty hard. In those days, Casa de los Niños was still using the little house on the corner of Speedway and 4th Avenue as a shelter for the younger children. Older school-aged children lived in Casa B (now called the O’Rielly Building). We unloaded the children and went to the little house first to do intake with the young boy. The friendly staff met us at the door and got all the information they needed. It was pretty clear that the older sister was very much the caretaker for her younger brother, and she was a little uneasy about leaving him. The great staff assured her she would see her brother in the morning and that she would be staying right next door to him.

We left the little house to start our short walk up 4th Avenue to Casa B. The front yard of the little house was a blanket of soft, white snow. I remember it looked like mid-day from the glow of the street lights on the corner. I asked her if she had ever seen snow like this, and she said she had never seen any snow! To ease the tension a bit, I spent the next few minutes showing her how to make a snow angel. She thought that was fun and actually smiled. Of course, this then led to a little snowball fight in the front yard. After a few minutes she let out a big sigh…and she said she was ready to get some rest.

We walked over to Casa B and got her all checked in. The staff said they needed to get her into her bed soon because Santa would be on his way. She gave my partner and me a big hug and went on her way.

Every year at this time, I find myself wondering what happened to those two children. I hope the years ahead were happy ones.

A Christmas tree is up in our shelter, and on Christmas morning the children will find it filled with presents. THANK YOU so much to all who support Casa de los Niños over the holidays and all year long! Please know that you are making a big difference in the lives of children.

Community Education & Outreach Program
Under New Leadership

Parent Education has been a cornerstone of the work of Casa de los Niños for decades. And over the years, the education piece has extended beyond parents to provide a resource for whole families, parent educators, health and human service workers, and the entire Tucson community.

Our Community Education and Outreach Program not only offers families the tools to be great parents but also offer trainings for groups to discuss parenting challenges and issues that families face. This program provides a network for collaboration with child and family welfare organizations so that families can easily access multiple services. And, we are always doing outreach work, to connect with families that might not have access to these free resources.

Watch our website for new offerings coming soon.

We welcome Stephanie, who holds a BA in Elementary Education and has an extensive background in training.
Volunteer Profile

Volunteering at Casa de los Niños can be a family affair! Our Volunteer Program recently welcomed the McDaniels family; yes, nearly the entire family—Nick, Paul, Amanda, JoAnne and Christopher—came to Casa de los Niños seeking an opportunity to impact the lives of children who have been removed from their homes; an opportunity to share their time and love with the children in our shelter. The family discovered Casa de los Niños when Christopher was 14 and wrote a paper for school about the organization. He knew then that he wanted to volunteer when he turned 16, and when he was old enough, almost the entire family decided to join in!

Volunteering with our infants, each one dedicates their Friday afternoon to making a difference in the lives of the children they work with. That may include a compassionate shoulder to lay a tired little head on, or someone to roll around on the floor with during tummy time, or reading a special story book.

Each shift they volunteer presents them with an opportunity to make a child feel special, loved, and safe. Collectively, they will tell you that being a volunteer at Casa de los Niños is very rewarding but at times can also present some challenges. The rewards come from “feeling really good inside knowing I played a part, even a small part, in making the day better for a child” says mom JoAnne, and the challenges can be “trying to find a way to comfort a new child who is feeling vulnerable and misses their family”, says Amanda.

Many times on their way home from volunteering they reflect on their time here and share their experiences. They feel volunteering has brought them closer and helped them realize the power of giving. Volunteering has been a long-standing tradition in the McDaniels family and we are very fortunate and grateful they have chosen to include volunteering at Casa de los Niños as one of their new traditions.

For more information about becoming a volunteer contact Maricela Fair, Volunteer Resources Manager at 520.624.5600 x501 or mfair@casadelosniños.org.

Make a Monthly Commitment to Support our Kids

When children are brought into our crisis shelter, many times it happens in the middle of the night, and these children come to us with only the clothes they are wearing…and sometimes that is just a diaper.

Personal hygiene items and larger sized diapers seem to be the items we never have enough of, especially for the children who are with us for several months. We end up having to purchase these items several times each month.

We would like to find clubs, civic groups, schools, and/or faith-based organizations, for example, who might consider focusing on collecting one of the items below, each month, at a time when the group usually meets. For example, a church may focus on baby wipes, and designate the 3rd Sunday of each month as Baby Wipes Sunday, and encourage members to bring a container or 2 of baby wipes for the children at Casa de los Niños.

- A & D Ointment/Desitin – we use 45 4oz.-tubes per month
- Baby Wipes – we use 20 to 30 containers per month
- Baby soap/lotion – we use 20 bottles of each per month
- Children’s underwear – we need all sizes (up to 16) per month
- Diapers size 3, 4, 5, 6 – we use 20 boxes of each size per month
- Baby shampoo/conditioner – we use 20 bottles of each per month
- Shampoo/conditioner for older kids – we use 30 bottles of each per month
- Body Soap (liquid) – we use 30 to 35 bottles per month
- Deodorant for the older children – we use 15 sticks per month

If you know of a group or organization that is able to focus on monthly (or more often if you would like) collections of these items, please contact Dan Gregory, Community Relations Coordinator at 520.624.5600 x300, or via e-mail at dang@casadelosniños.org.

JOIN US FOR THE
family fiesta
SAT, APRIL 9TH, 2016, 10AM | REID PARK BAND SHELL
Thank You to Our Partners...

Our community partnerships are crucial to our mission of the prevention, intervention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Jasam Foundation Of Arizona</th>
<th>Casa de los Niños has received annual funding from The Jasam Foundation for the last 10 years. Their continued dedication and support has allowed us to provide much-needed services for our community, strengthen families, provide shelter to children, educate parents and help families find resources to enable them to provide children a safe, nurturing home.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sun City Vistoso Community Foundation</td>
<td>Casa de los Niños is very grateful to be the beneficiary of a $10,000 grant from the Sun City Vistoso Community Foundation. Their generous donation will help us provide basic needs such as personal hygiene items, clothing, and nutritious meals and snacks for the children in our Crisis Shelter Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Cross® Blue Shield® of Arizona</td>
<td>Blue Cross® Blue Shield® of Arizona is truly committed to the health and well-being of children and families. They demonstrate this through generous support of our Crisis Shelter. Thank you for your partnership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wells Fargo Corporate Giving</td>
<td>Thank you to Wells Fargo Corporate Giving for their grant award of $2,500 that will help us further our mission of providing a safe, nurturing environment for each child in our Crisis Shelter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Lopez Family Foundation and the Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>We would like to thank the HS Lopez Family Foundation and the Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce for selecting Casa de los Niños to receive a $10,000 Community Donation grant that will provide tremendous support to our Crisis Shelter Program and allow us to impact the lives of many children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Barry Blonder and Fashion Eye Center</td>
<td>Thank you to Dr. Barry Blonder and Fashion Eye Center. They will make a donation of $5 for every eye exam from now until December 18th, and they have guaranteed a minimum donation of $1000! If you bring in a new, unwrapped toy they will also give you $20 off new eyeglasses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How You Can Help Children and Families in Need This Holiday Season

Help “Pack the Covered Wagon” for Casa de los Niños at Trail Dust Town (6541 E. Tanque Verde Road). Now through December 20th, they are collecting new clothing and pajamas, sizes 4 to 20; hygiene items (baby shampoo, soap, baby wipes, toothpaste, etc); new toys. With each donation, Trail Dust Town will give you free wooden nickels good for the train, Ferris wheel and merry-go-round rides.

Bring your family and join us on Sunday, December 20th from 3pm to 5pm at Trail Dust Town for a Winter Wonderland, with free refreshments, train rides, carolers and maybe some snow as we top off the wagon with donations! Listen to 106.3 The Groove for more details.

Stop by a Holiday Wish Tree at any Old Navy, Macy’s or National Bank of Arizona and adopt an ornament or two. Each contains a wish for a clothing item for the children in our care.

Please drop off a new, unwrapped toy, at any Christie’s Appliance Co. in Tucson, now until Christmas.

Now you can take advantage of either these tax credits to redirect some of your state taxes to help children and families in need in our community.

More information: casadelosninos.org/TaxCredit

Tucson’s Best Thrift Department Store™ stocks new items all day, everyday. Your donations are tax-deductible. Licensed and bonded drivers available to pick-up donations.

1302 E. Prince Road (corner of Prince Rd. & Mountain Ave.)
520.325.2573
Monday–Saturday 10am to 6pm
Sunday 10am to 5pm

Please consider making a tax-deductible gift by December 31st for your dollar-for-dollar tax credit.

More information: casadelosninos.org/TaxCredit
The mission of Casa de los Niños is to promote child well-being and family stability in our community.

ACCREDITED BY:

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DAN GREGORY, Community Relations Coordinator

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