

Celebrating 40 Years!

LaCasa, Inc.

Helping Families; Improving Neighborhoods

Winter 2010

News



40 Years of Service to Our Community

Dedicating ourselves to addressing the community development needs of Elkhart County.



Help-A-HouseSM volunteers in 2006

Forty years ago members from six Goshen churches met to find an answer to a problem. They wanted to help migrant farm families meet basic needs and adjust to a new culture. Thanks to their work and the support of many more churches, individuals, families, businesses and local government, LaCasa has been able to improve the lives of area families for the last 40 years.

Strong community support over the years has allowed LaCasa to build capacity to expand services beyond Goshen. Homeownership Center services (financial and homebuyer education, savings accounts, lending and counseling) are available to all Elkhart county residents. LaCasa added 107 units of rental housing in Elkhart in the last two years and has begun neighborhood development work in Elkhart. As we move into the next decade, our board and staff are dedicated to extend the full range of LaCasa's community development services to all Elkhart County communities.

1969-1979

Also this year, we want to tell you the story of how LaCasa, Inc. came to be. Forty years is a long time, and many changes have taken place. That first group of elected church representatives called themselves the Spanish American Ministry Committee. They worked together to solve the problem of families that needed help paying a bill or finding a home to live in. More churches joined in as they learned about the issues being addressed by the committee. Moses Beachy was the first chairman and he said "I felt people needed help and since I spoke Spanish I began helping...it just grew."

In early 1970 another group formed which was called Man-to-Man, Inc. They helped to find houses and purchased them. They took in the rent and fixed up houses so that they were livable. Dewayne Johns was the first president of Man-to-Man. Many attended the meetings of both groups. Man-to-Man, Inc. received

their Not for Profit status early on. By 1973 they owned 7 rental units. Volunteers were an important facet of both organizations' work: counseling, paying bills and doing rehab work. In 1974 the two groups merged. That year they sponsored a summer program for Spanish speaking children and received State funding. It was also the second year that a summer fiesta was held.

The first office was at Fifth and Lincoln. It was thought of as a community center and was called La Casa. As the two organizations learned to work together they continued purchasing houses to rent and co-signing loans for new homebuyers. More and more, those on the committee referred to the organization as LaCasa. While still maintaining the Spanish focus for their work, any low income person could obtain help from the organization. The number of churches supporting LaCasa expanded, along with the groups that signed up to volunteer on their many projects.



Founding member Moses Beachy.

You can support us in many ways, and when the time is right, please consider a gift in your will.



The Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) has been awarded in both Elkhart and Goshen. Here is a simple explanation of NSP.

1. Foreclosed & abandoned properties in designated areas of each city will be purchased and redeveloped.
2. Properties will be rehabbed by local contractors
3. Income eligible homebuyers will be able to purchase the homes:

NOTE: The income eligibility levels have significantly increased: a family of four making up to \$71,175 is eligible to purchase these homes.

NSP Outcomes

- Improves neighborhoods
- Helps homebuyers with subsidies
- Increases property values in neighborhoods
- Employs local contractors
- Helps the local economy

For more information on NSP email: nspinfo@lacasagoshen.org or visit our website: www.lacasagoshen.org.



Help-A-Housesm is Twenty!

Help-A-Housesm 2010 will be on May 8. This is the 20th year that LaCasa will organize hundreds of volunteers to work on houses in Goshen. Funded by local donors and the City of Goshen, Help-A-Housesm is a program that assists low income home owners to maintain and repair their homes, lowering energy costs and allowing older or disabled individuals to stay in their houses longer.

Anyone interested in finding out if they qualify for help from this program should stop by the LaCasa office to pick up an application. After filling out the forms and gathering needed paperwork, a LaCasa staff person will evaluate the application and let you know if you qualify for this help. The program is open to low-income homeowners regardless of race, national origin or religion. At the present time homeowners must live in the City of Goshen.



Do you know where your 1991 t-shirt is?

A fundraising committee is currently seeking donations from area businesses for Help-A-House 2010. The Help-A-House Committee includes: Sanford Miller, Interra Credit Union; Jeff Showalter, Goshen Community Bank; Barb Swartley, Century 21 Landmark Realty; Amber Miller, Lake City Bank; Rob Steiner, Chase and Jeff Lund, Yoder, Ainlay, Ulmer and Buckingham.

Sanford Miller is leading the fund drive, with the goal of raising \$80,000. Lead Sponsors

State Farm Insurance and the **Fidler Family Fund** have already contributed \$20,000 to the goal.

LaCasa has consistently had the support of many volunteers from the community. Volunteer support allows us to help more families. If you would like to help out on May 8, or any day that is convenient for your group, please call Kate to get more details or to schedule your volunteer date.



LaCasa staff met on Jan. 14, 2010. We now number 30!



LaCasa Listens

by Larry Gautsche, *President/CEO*

In 1969, predecessor organizations to LaCasa formed around a mission to assist families struggling to adapt and survive in a difficult economic environment. Work was carried out by volunteers and made possible by donations. Forty years later, LaCasa's vision has broadened to include all low to moderate income families, providing resources to neighborhood development, and resourcing State and Federal grants to bring new opportunity to Elkhart County.

With 40 years of experience, 30 staff and a larger budget, LaCasa has been able to take on larger community challenges, provide more services, work with more neighborhoods, and improve more housing. We have moved beyond Goshen, to provide education, savings accounts, lending and counseling to all of Elkhart County.

In 2010, partnerships with the cities of Elkhart and Goshen will utilize neighborhood sustainability grants to repair foreclosed homes and return those homes to homeownership. A partnership with Elkhart County will continue to provide resources for removing

dangerous lead hazards from homes. These three grants will also bring over \$7,000,000 that will be used to hire local contractors and stimulate our local economy. Help-A-House Goshen will assist families with needed home repairs and LaCasa is actively pursuing funds to extend this service to include all of Elkhart County.

As we consider our 40th year, while many things have changed, the basics are still the same. LaCasa remains committed to work with individuals and community partners to create opportunities for personal growth, family stability and neighborhood improvement. Volunteer involvement in LaCasa's mission has grown with the organization and volunteers are as important as they were in the early years.

Community financial support has also expanded as our work has grown and is critical to our survival. Despite all of the grant funds in 2009 for new initiatives, without the support of individual donors, LaCasa's mission would not be possible. The 40th Anniversary Celebration on April 17, made possible by local sponsors, is a small attempt to thank you, our donors and volunteers, for your many years of support. I hope you can join us!



Thank you to our event sponsors:



Venue Sponsor





Do Your Dreams Look Like a Puzzle?

LaCasa can help put them together through a matched savings program (IDA) for:

Contact San or Debbie

Home Purchase • Home Rehab • Continuing Education

One Dream Fulfilled

My experience with LaCasa and the IDA (matched savings) account has been wonderful! Without the help of the IDA I would not have had the money needed to invest in a new home. As a single mom raising two little girls on one income, I didn't have any extra income for a down payment. IDA allowed me to take the small amount of money I was able to save, and turn it into a large down payment on a home! This is one of the first programs I've ever experienced with an opportunity like this, for someone like me. Now my daughters and I are able to enjoy a home of our own, without the worries of a high-mortgage due to the fact that we were able to put more into our home with a down payment.

—Jamie Yoder



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LaCasa believes that every family deserves the chance to build a better life. Our staff helps people access the tools they need to move from crisis to stability. We multiply the resources of a caring community to create safe, attractive, and economically stable neighborhoods.



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Helping Families: Improving Neighborhoods

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