

Celebrating 40 Years!

LaCasa, Inc.

Helping Families; Improving Neighborhoods

Summer 2010



Captions from top left: Neighbors work together to plant a vegetable garden at Roosevelt Center.

Middle, from left: Michael Downing, Rick Newbill and Heidi Rupley discuss their visions for the South Central Neighborhood.

Bottom: Neighbors line up for the good food at the Roosevelt Center picnic.

Top right: Rachel Stoltzfus, LaCasa Intern and Madeline Williams, LaCasa's Neighborhood Organizer: Madeline said: "With Rachel's help as an assistant in Community Building in Elkhart, we hope to connect with new people in the neighborhood and community to generate excitement about the Neighborhood Summit in September as a part of the comprehensive community development initiative in South Central Elkhart."



## Elkhart's Comprehensive Community DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

On May 12 LaCasa held a Kick Off meeting to begin thinking about Elkhart's priorities and strategies for building and maintaining successful neighborhoods. Hal Roark from the Broadmoor Neighborhood in New Orleans shared about rebuilding their neighborhood after Katrina. He stated that Elkhart has experienced an "economic Katrina" and could also reorganize for success. Hal focused on the idea that great neighborhoods start in the neighborhood, with local residents taking responsibility for making their communities better.

The next step in working at Elkhart's Comprehensive Community Development plan is to hold focus groups. Groups will discuss their vision for Elkhart's neighborhoods and consider new ideas for engaging residents, planning holistically, and producing measurable results. All focus

group sessions will be held at Roosevelt Center, 215 E. Indiana Ave. The input from the groups will be compiled in preparation for a larger Summit with all participants and neighborhood leaders in September 2010. Focus group work will inform a Steering Committee, selected to guide the overall planning process.

LaCasa is convening this initiative because we believe that the future potential of Elkhart's neighborhoods already exists within the neighborhood and the people who live there. As a result of community input a Quality of Life Plan will be written that will vision the future of Elkhart neighborhoods, have broad based community support, guide future development, attract investment and result in measurable improvements in quality of life for our community.



Left to right: Janette Yoder and Dee Birkey spent the day weeding at Arbor Ridge.; Dale Klassen enjoys a dilly bar on Help-a-House<sup>sm</sup> Day 2010.; Volunteers from Maplenet Wireless, Wieland Design and Schrock Homes worked on a roof on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street.

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## A New Lease on Life!

Sue Myers at N. Main St. has had a rough few years. She battled cancer and then five years later found out that she had lymphoma. Sue also fell and broke her hip. Her home was a challenge she also had to face every day. The foundation of her home was not right, water was leaking into her basement while the basement walls were buckling inward. LaCasa's Help-A-House<sup>sm</sup> project was to excavate around the house, fix the walls, re-grade the landscape to drain water away from the house and pour a new basement wall. Sue said she is just so grateful for the help, she didn't think there would ever be an answer for her home. Now she says "This doesn't just improve my home, it has saved it." Volunteers from Silverwood Mennonite Church worked all day to tar the outside and shore up the existing wall. Miller Concrete and Estate home Improvement, LLC donated lots of extra time on the job. Newly insulated and dry, the home will soon have a new lease on life, and so will Sue!



# LaCasa Listens

by Larry Gautsche, *President/CEO*

In this issue you will read about: an initiative in Elkhart City involving broad participation from neighborhood residents and civic leaders to explore new models of community economic development and create a quality of life plan that will create a new vision for Elkhart neighborhoods; Help-A-House<sup>SM</sup> Community work day in Goshen that turned out 270 volunteers to help their neighbors with housing repairs; the new East Lincoln Crossroads neighborhood garden developed by volunteers and dedicated to the memory of Phebe Beachy and Glen MacIntosh who made major contributions to our community; and Connell, Rachel and Judy who are regular LaCasa volunteers. These are just a few examples of persons investing their time and energy to improve our community.

I have always felt that Elkhart County was a very special place and that the generosity of our community was uncommon. Despite

a difficult economy, corporate and individual donations to Help-A-House 2010 exceeded previous year's gifts. Individual donors also contributed \$100,000 to match the savings of low income families who are saving to purchase their own home.

LaCasa is affiliated with NeighborWorks America, a group of 245 leading community development organizations across the country. LaCasa's performance is benchmarked against the performance of all of these organizations, some of which serve entire states. For 2010, LaCasa ranked #1 nationally in resident participation and #9 in volunteer involvement. This is a tremendous confirmation of commitment to community involvement and the volunteer spirit of our community. These accomplishments represent a reality that should give us all confidence that, working together, we will continue make our communities an even better place to live, work and raise our families.

## LaCasa History: 1980-1990

In 1981 LaCasa served a record 434 families! Services included emergency assistance, counseling, advocacy, interpreting, referral and housing. LaCasa now had letterhead with the tag line: *The House is Your House*. The office had moved from 129 E. Lincoln to 108 E. Lincoln. State tax credits were offered to donors in 1982 through the Neighborhood Assistance Program. The projected income in 1983 was \$95,500.

The number of families served continued to grow. In 1985 emergency assistance was again the most needed program as 49% of those helped were unemployed. Half of the families helped in 1985 had incomes below the poverty line. Moses Beachy was still the Director in 1986. Don Yost, resource coordinator, left LaCasa to work with Bridgework Theater. Moses introduced supporters to Arden Shank, who was Don's replacement. Ada Beachy began working with LaCasa as a Home Management Counselor. She helped tenants with food buying and preparation, child care, budgeting and general home care.

In January of 1988 Moses and Ada left LaCasa and Arden Shank became the Executive Director.

LaCasa of Goshen had three regular programs: Emergency Assistance, Housing (rentals) and Community Services, which includes Immigration Counseling, Home Management and Housing Advocacy. The budget for 1988 shows Income at \$176,968 and Expenses as \$185,930. By 1989 LaCasa owned 17 rental units, with rental rates as high as \$65 per week for a 3 bedroom house. Amos Ramer and Jerry Lapp, along with volunteers, work on these 17 houses to keep them in good shape. During 1990 LaCasa was working on establishing a Home Ownership Education program.

LaCasa celebrated 20 years of community development in November of 1989 with workshops and a banquet which about 200 people attended. LaCasa's tenants meet regularly with the Home Management Counselor to set financial and educational goals and work toward meeting them. This is the beginning of our Financial Fitness Counseling. Also as part of a Three Year Strategic plan, LaCasa is establishing a HomeOwnership Training Program. Three families successfully purchased homes in 1990.



*Arden Shank and Dan Shenk have a spirited discussion at LaCasa's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.*



*Moses Beachy and Art Stoltzfus, LaCasa Board Member at LaCasa's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.*



The Dedication of East Lincoln Crossroads Neighborhood garden in Goshen was on May 30, 2010. Phebe Beachy worked to improve her neighborhood while Glen MacIntosh was committed to the gardens of Goshen. This stone was dedicated in their memory. Also pictured: A spring view of the East Lincoln Crossroads garden on E. Lincoln Avenue.

## Around LaCasa

William Tindle, LaCasa Carpenter, with volunteers Connell Coyne and Judy Stoltzfus. Connell has been volunteering with LaCasa since 2008 and has worked with our staff a total of 452 hours. Judy volunteers at our front desk to relieve our receptionist for other duties. She has worked 170 hours for LaCasa since November of last year. Will Tindle says "LaCasa is a great place to work, and everyone has done a great job getting me up to speed. I would also like to say thanks to Doug and Jon for everything."

**Continue your support of the values and causes you believe in.**

If you can, please consider including LaCasa in your will. We would like to know if you have made a bequest to LaCasa so that we can recognize you in your lifetime.



NeighborWorks®  
HomeOwnership Center

202 N. Cottage Avenue  
Goshen, IN 46528  
Tel.: (574) 533-4450  
www.lacasainc.net

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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