



# HELPING FAMILIES

# IMPROVING NEIGHBORHOODS

A Quarterly Publication February 2018

## An Historic Annual Meeting Coming Up



LaCasa will hold an historic Annual Meeting Luncheon on Wednesday, March 21, at noon at the Lerner Crystal Ballroom. We will talk about significant initiatives to expand our impact countywide. We will unveil a new visual identity that is part of our work to better tell our story throughout the community. We will celebrate the tremendous growth of LaCasa's impact and sustainability throughout the tenure of President Larry Gautsche, who will retire in August. We always welcome as many of our stakeholders as possible to attend this event, but especially want to invite you to join us for this historic meeting. To register to attend, call 574-533-4450 and ask for Kate, email [kate.irelan@lacasainc.net](mailto:kate.irelan@lacasainc.net) or text LCMEETING to 51555. Sponsorships are available. Contact Chris at [chris.kingsley@lacasainc.net](mailto:chris.kingsley@lacasainc.net) for more information.

## Help-a-House<sup>sm</sup> Gearing Up

At LaCasa, we're gearing up for the 28<sup>th</sup> year of Help-A-House<sup>sm</sup>. This unique program harnesses the outstanding goodwill of this community. We deploy volunteers on projects that improve the safety, durability, efficiency, and accessibility of the homes of local home owners and renters. The program has improved 552 homes throughout its existence!

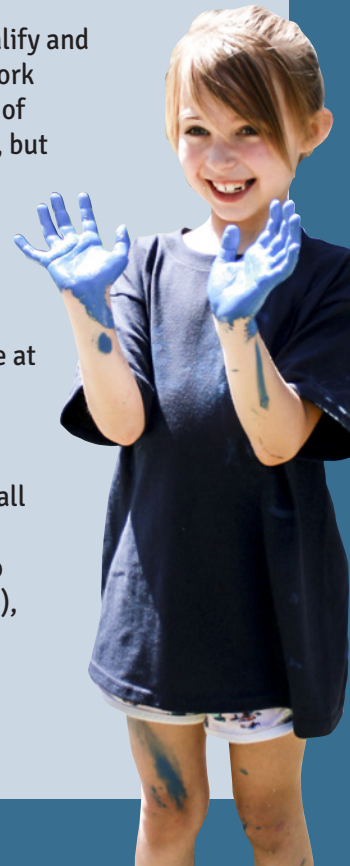


To be a success, the program needs homeowners who qualify and strong community support. 2018 is the first year of our work to expand the availability of this program beyond the city of Goshen. The majority of work will still be done in Goshen, but we seek partnerships with churches, businesses and/or service clubs in two other communities where we can complete a project to benefit a struggling homeowner. These partnerships will work to raise money, recruit volunteers, select a beneficiary, and execute a successful project. If you are interested, please email Larry Gautsche at [larry.gautsche@lacasainc.net](mailto:larry.gautsche@lacasainc.net).



What else can you do to support Help-A-House<sup>sm</sup>?

- Encourage a Goshen home owner to apply. Have them call LaCasa at 574-533-4450 to find out more.
- Make a donation to support Help-A-House<sup>sm</sup> by check (to LaCasa, Inc. with Help-A-House<sup>sm</sup> 2018 in the memo line), through our website ([www.lacasainc.net](http://www.lacasainc.net)), or by texting LCDONATE to 41444.
- Plan on volunteering. Contact Kate at [kate.irelan@lacasainc.net](mailto:kate.irelan@lacasainc.net) or text IVOL to 51555.



# A Bright Future

Many people know that LaCasa's DreamSavers program provides matched savings and comprehensive support for working adults who are pursuing first-time home ownership. Fewer know that the same program supports the goal of post-secondary education. The result? Higher earning power, greater job stability, and greater fulfillment in the workplace.

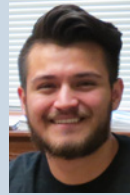


**Kaitlyn DeVries** is in her senior year of Nursing School at IUSB. "I knew LaCasa helped the community," Kaitlyn said, "but I thought it was just mortgages and that kind of thing. Then I heard from a friend who had participated in DreamSavers to pay for books and a laptop."

When asked about her experience with LaCasa, Kaitlyn said, "I was impressed with Money 4 Life. The information you get there is really beneficial. I wish more people in the community would take advantage of it."

Regarding the financial component, she reflected, "When I was taking pre-requisites for Nursing, it was easier to hold down a job and still attend classes. I worked three days and went to classes the other two days. But in Nursing School, with the time commitment and academic level required, you can't work as many hours without sacrificing between work and your

studies. Using the IDA to pay for tuition helped me to keep my grades up."



**Adolfo Sigala Flores** is studying at Goshen College and is part of the IDEA program, an innovative partnership between Goshen College and LaCasa that creates a matched savings scholarship opportunity. Adolfo's major is Molecular Biology/Biochemistry.

His goal is to go to medical school.

Adolfo has worked hard ever since the prospect of college became possible through the DACA program. "I really tried to pick myself up to get a better GPA. I was able to start college at Ivy Tech: I chose it because of the cost. I have always had two jobs. When I had gone as far as I could at Ivy Tech, I heard about Goshen College and the scholarship. Then I really applied myself so I could get into GC!"

As part of the IDEA program, Adolfo took Money 4 Life. "It helped a lot. It's all about how to save money and not go into debt," he explained. "The IDEA program requires a \$500 savings commitment, which can be done in installments. Once it is saved, the program puts in its share." The combined total is then used to pay for tuition cost.

Adolfo sums it up with a smile. "This is the perfect scholarship for me."

## NeighborWorks America Celebrates 40<sup>th</sup> year

You may not know that LaCasa is a member of the national NeighborWorks network, an affiliation of more than 250 nonprofit organizations located in every state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The NeighborWorks

network was founded and is supported by NeighborWorks America, which creates opportunities for people to live in affordable homes, improve their lives and strengthen their communities.

variety of sectors. We are held to a high standard, with rigorous organizational assessments and monitoring that ensure we are an impactful and fiscally sound organization.



LaCasa's connection to NeighborWorks is a good thing for Elkhart County. LaCasa is larger and stronger than most local organizations because of our network membership. NeighborWorks America network organizations receive technical assistance; flexible grants; comprehensive, tailored training; and the opportunity to interact with and learn from fellow professionals from a

For 10 years, LaCasa has been rated by NeighborWorks as "Exemplary," the highest possible designation. We are fortunate to have access to the excellent training, connection to national standards and trends, industry colleagues, and stringent accountability that our NeighborWorks network participation provides. We're stronger and more impactful for it!

# 2018 – A Year of Opportunity

Larry Gautsche, President/CEO

As we begin LaCasa's 48<sup>th</sup> year of service to the Elkhart County community, more persons benefit from LaCasa services than at any point in our history. At the same time, we recognize that all LaCasa services are not equally available or known in every community in the county. Implementation of our 5 Year Strategic Plan, adopted in 2017, will result in more accessible and comprehensive financial empowerment services and additional quality housing to support our workforce. Promotion of home ownership opportunities will continue to be a high priority. Opportunities for preservation of home ownership will be expanded through new partnerships that make Help-A-House<sup>SM</sup> available county-wide. A greater emphasis on telling our story and promoting LaCasa services will support our county-wide focus.

The challenge is to achieve this expansion of services with sustainable models, at a time when national priorities and policy are less aligned with our mission. On the positive side, we are convinced that our strategic plan is strongly aligned with local priorities. Over the last six months, I've had many conversations with community leaders, area employers and LaCasa donors and volunteers. I've been encouraged by the interest in the business community to partner with LaCasa to bring financial empowerment services to their employees. This model has the potential to significantly expand access to financial education, quality loan products, and savings and credit building tools that will result in greater financial stability for working families.

Review of our strategic goals with donors has also been met with enthusiasm and support. LaCasa's many community partnerships, broad donor support and active volunteer participation provide a strong base for growth. LaCasa's annual meeting on March 21 will provide an opportunity to celebrate progress and share new initiatives.

Mark your calendars for the Help-A-House<sup>SM</sup> community work day in Goshen on May 12. It's always a great opportunity to help a neighbor and improve our community. We would also welcome opportunities for new partnerships with your business, church or civic group to address housing needs in other communities in the county.

Other housing projects of interest include progress along South 7<sup>th</sup> St. in Goshen. 418 S. 7<sup>th</sup> will host an open house this spring. Renovation work will begin at 114 S. 7<sup>th</sup> in April and renovation of 213 S. 7<sup>th</sup> will be completed in July. An additional permanent supportive housing development, in partnership with Oaklawn, will be announced later this year.

A special thank you to all of our volunteers, donors and neighborhood leaders who contributed to the vibrancy of our community in 2017. Your support is critical and makes the pursuit of our mission, "...to create opportunity for personal empowerment, family stability and neighborhood vitality" possible. Thank you!

## “Some Kind of Wonderful” Gala Fuels the Ben's House Mission

On November 3, more than 100 people from the community came together to celebrate the transformational impact of the work happening through The Little House That Ben Built. Also referred to as Ben's House, it is a LaCasa owned and operated home that serves women and children who are working to get back on their feet after suffering abuse. The house is named in memory of Ben Roth, the son of Scott and Lori Roth, whose life was cut short. Scott and Lori have poured countless hours and resources (and heart!) into this mission. We are honored to be a part of the impact it has made on the

women and children whose lives are forever changed for the better. Scott and Lori championed the gala just as they champion the mission, doing all of the planning, inviting, and preparing. Their hard work paid off in a big way. The effort netted \$20,000, eliminating remaining debt and funding a small reserve for the program. Scott and Lori, we can't thank you enough for your sacrificial and passionate investment in changing lives!

Scott is a local State Farm agent and we want to thank State Farm again for their generous support of LaCasa's



programs and missions. Nine State Farm agents attended the Gala and gave generously, adding to a \$1,000 grant from State Farm's foundation. Thank you, State Farm!

To find out more about Ben's House, visit [benslittlehouse.org](http://benslittlehouse.org). Donations to Ben's House are made to LaCasa, Inc. with Ben's House in the memo line or by selecting Ben's House on the online donation form at [www.lacasainc.net](http://www.lacasainc.net).



# Bang for Your Charitable Buck

We are grateful to have faithful and committed donors to LaCasa. Many of you give regardless of incentives. That said, certain ways of giving can have greater benefits tied to them and this is important to consider. The beginning of the year is often a time when we make plans and charitable giving is an important part of that planning.

If you will turn 70½ this year, you might consider making gifts directly from your IRA that fulfill your Required Minimum Distribution. If you have highly appreciated assets, such as stock, real estate, or other valuables, there may be tax benefits in donating portions of these assets.

We encourage you to speak with your financial adviser as to how these or other options, like a donor advised fund, may suit you. If you do not currently have an advisor, feel free to call us and we will work to connect you to someone who can answer questions and help you plan your giving in a way that makes the most impact for the cause and provides the greatest benefit to your financial situation.

Regardless of how you choose to do your giving, we appreciate the charitable values of our support base and we thank you for your consideration of gifts to LaCasa. Giving is fulfilling, and increasingly so as one sees the impact. To better understand how your gifts create impact through LaCasa, and to hear what initiatives are in the pipeline to create increased impact, email me at [chris.kingsley@lacasainc.net](mailto:chris.kingsley@lacasainc.net) or give me a call at (574) 533-4450. I'd love to meet with you.



Sincerely,

*Chris Kingsley*

Donations from people like you are the lifeblood of this inspirational work. Thank you for considering making an online donation at [www.lacasainc.net](http://www.lacasainc.net) or sending a check to LaCasa, Inc. at 202 N Cottage Ave, Goshen, IN 46528. Please always feel free to email or call Chris Kingsley at [chris.kingsley@lacasainc.net](mailto:chris.kingsley@lacasainc.net) or 574-533-4450 x16 to have a conversation about how LaCasa uses donations and works with donors. Philanthropy should be a fulfilling and joyful experience. Let's work together to make that happen!

All LaCasa activities and services are provided without regard to race, age, sex, disability, national origin, ancestry, or status as a veteran.

LaCasa, Inc. is a Community Development Organization serving Elkhart County. Our programs are designed to improve neighborhoods and strengthen families. LaCasa's programs are open to all people regardless of race, nationality, ethnic origin or religion.



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