



HELPING FAMILIES

IMPROVING NEIGHBORHOODS

A Quarterly Publication July 2017

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Rock the Block and Community Registration Day Benefit Elkhart



On April 29, twenty-five volunteers from the community gave up their Saturday mornings to help beautify two blocks on Prairie Street in Elkhart.

The effort was spearheaded by LaCasa's Resident Services Coordinator, Pam McGregor. Work included landscaping and trash removal and it made a big difference in the appearance of the block.

On May 25, LaCasa kicked off its first annual Community Registration Day at Roosevelt Center. Approximately 20 organizations participated in the event. The event brought awareness of both summer and year-round programs available to neighborhood youth and adults. Participation was great and each organization had the opportunity to provide information about the programs being offered. Educational programs, sports, veterans, seniors, camps and much more! Volunteers from LaCasa's Roosevelt Center and Water Tower Place helped in making the event a success.



More Successful Home Buyers

Toya Sheppherd and Paloma Ortega are two of our newest successful first time home buyers. Both used the matched savings Dream\$ savers program and courageously overcame obstacles, saving money and attaining valuable tools for financial success.

Reflects Toya, "The constant support has been significant. LaCasa encouraged me to keep going and to keep on track. I needed this type of support. I knew staff were available and would be there to answer my questions."

Asked what she found particularly beneficial, Paloma responded, "The entire homeownership program: the home buyer class, the Money for Life classes and the one-on-one coaching sessions helped me. If I wouldn't have come here, I'd still be lost!

I might have reached my goal on my own but it would have been difficult.

LaCasa helped me enormously along the way. I've paid off all my debts for a good cause; my own home!"



Pictured: Paloma (left) and Toya (right)

Citizenship Classes Continue to Meet Need

Since starting to offer citizenship classes in 2016, demand has remained strong and the needs of many Elkhart County immigrants are being met. Currently nearing the end of the sixth offering of this service, 79 participants have graduated, with another 15 set to complete in July. There will be one more session this year, starting in September.

LaCasa's President/CEO to Retire

For the past 16 years, I have had the honor of serving as LaCasa's President/CEO. I am grateful to the Elkhart County community for its generous support of LaCasa's mission to work "with individuals and community partners to create opportunity for personal empowerment, family stability and neighborhood vitality."

I am fortunate to work with an amazing staff and board, leaders in all sectors of our community and very loyal donors. The impact we make on housing quality and the vitality of neighborhoods is very visible. What is most rewarding is to witness the many individuals who have the courage and determination to engage LaCasa services to improve their lives and their family's future.

After careful thought, I have made the decision to retire from my role at LaCasa in August of 2018. I feel that the timing of this transition is both good for me personally and, I believe, ideal for LaCasa. It is important for a transition like this to happen in a time of strength and LaCasa is stronger and more financially stable than at any point in our 47 year history.

I am very proud of the accomplishments of our partnership and excited about the work to be done over the next 13

months. With the benefit of broad community input, we have adopted a new strategic plan to guide the organization over the next 5 years. LaCasa has a very talented and dedicated management team and a Board of Directors that is working tirelessly to ensure that LaCasa's future is one of growth and greater impact for our community.

LaCasa's Board of Directors is proactively overseeing the transition process and I feel fortunate knowing that LaCasa's future is in good hands. I and the LaCasa team will continue our focus on sustaining the progress we've made and extending new services to working families in our community.

Thank you for your continued support of LaCasa's mission. Your partnership is critical to our impact in Elkhart County. I request your continued investment in this work that changes lives and improves our community. We will keep you informed of updates as we proceed with the transition process.

Sincerely,
Larry Gautsche,
President/CEO

Help-A-Housesm Community Work Day Does Good in Goshen



Goshen College volunteers smile as well as they swing hammers.



Families enjoy serving together



Playground improvements

On May 13, 230 community volunteers came together to benefit low income home owners and renters in Goshen at LaCasa's 27th Help-A-Housesm Community Work Day. The weather could not have been better and morale was high. Nine home owners benefitted from projects that improved their homes' efficiency, safety, accessibility, and durability. Ten additional LaCasa properties benefitted from volunteers' hard work. On page 3, we thank those who financially supported this great day. On page 4, we highlight great news on the East Lincoln Crossroads Revitalization Project. Three properties in that project benefitted from demolition and clean out work on the Community Work Day. Help-A-Housesm is fueled by the inspiring good will of this community. Thanks again for joining us in this effort!

Pictured at right: Help-A-Housesm beneficiary, Vera Fradenburg with LaCasa VP of Finance, Jim Davis



LaCasa Finalizes 5-year Strategic Plan

LaCasa works with individuals and community partners to create opportunities for personal empowerment, family stability, and neighborhood vitality.

After 18 months of conversations, collecting feedback, and assessing the needs of Elkhart County, LaCasa finalized its strategic plan for 2017 – 21 at the end of May. The plan reinforces our commitment to creating opportunities for personal financial empowerment, family stability, and neighborhood vitality. It outlines strategies for expanding the impact of this work through cultivating close partnerships with the business community and offering LaCasa services in all Elkhart County Communities.

Highlights of the plan include priorities to:

- Rebrand LaCasa's services supporting asset-building and financial capabilities as a Financial Empowerment Center
- Partner with local employers to combat payday lending with an innovative community lending program

- Expand the Help-A-Housesm program to serve all of Elkhart County
- Create at least 150 new units of affordable, workforce housing
- Expand our property management impact from 325 units to 700 units

The plan recognizes funding pressures that exist due to changes in federal funding priorities and looks to capitalize on revenue-producing opportunities and engage with a broader base of donors. It sees these challenges as opportunities to strengthen local ties and more fully engage all of Elkhart County in the work of changing the lives of working adults and families.

We're looking forward to together making an even great difference in our community in the years to come!

To see the full plan, please visit our website at lacasainc.net, hover over "About" and select "Strategic Plan 2017-21." Contact us as 574-533-4450 or lacasa@lacasainc.net with comments and questions.

Thank You Help-A-Housesm Supporters!

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Two Large Grants Close the Funding Gap on LaCasa's East Lincoln Crossroads Revitalization Project

LaCasa recently received two substantial grant awards that, along with existing grants, gifts, and pledges, fully fund an important real estate redevelopment project in Goshen. LaCasa's East Lincoln Crossroads Revitalization Project is turning five blighted multi-family properties in the East Lincoln Crossroads neighborhood into 20 units of quality housing within walking distance of the thriving downtown. A Project Reinvest grant in the amount of \$500,000 plus other grant funds from Neighborworks America and donations will fund renovation costs for 213 S. 7th, 418 S. 7th and 410 E. Jefferson. A HOME grant through the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCD) in the amount of \$272,000 in conjunction with other funds, will cover the renovation costs of 114 S. 7th.

408 E. Lincoln was the first property completed in the project. It is now fully occupied and contributing to the neighborhood. The two new grant awards complement previously received grants and pledges to ensure full funding for the redevelopment costs and sustainability of the properties as quality rental opportunities going forward. Previous funding included a \$250,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Elkhart County, a HOME grant of \$260,000 supporting renovation costs for 408 E. Lincoln, \$10,000 from the Mutual Bank Foundation, an \$125,000 anonymous pledge, and other cash gifts.

"These new grant awards are great news for LaCasa and for the East Lincoln Crossroads neighborhood," commented LaCasa President/CEO Larry Gautsche. "These were problem properties for a long time that created safety issues and detracted from property values. This investment will help stabilize and improve home values and morale in the neighborhood. We believe that it will also serve to attract other private investments in the neighborhood, which is an important part of our strategy for neighborhood development."

LaCasa is pairing this investment with an intentional focus on supporting the neighborhood's interests through community engagement efforts. Community Engagement Specialist, José Elizalde reports that "we've already had a well-attended gathering of interested neighborhood residents and have more planned. We're doing surveying to gauge the needs. We're working to reinvigorate the neighborhood association. I'm excited to see what will happen in this neighborhood in the years ahead."

The first units will be available for rent in the spring of 2018. LaCasa plans to have all property renovations completed by the end of May, 2019.

Properties (from top): 114 S. 7th, 213 S. 7th, 408 E. Lincoln, 410 E. Jefferson, 418 S. 7th



Donations from people like you are the lifeblood of this inspirational work. Thank you for considering making an online donation at 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 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, religion, sex, color, 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, ethnicity, or religion.



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

202 N. Cottage Avenue
Goshen, IN 46528

