

OCTOBER 2008



Staff counselor, Eddie Saucedo, helps a client work through home ownership issues.



LaCasa Needs Your Help to Stem the Tide of Local Foreclosures

LaCasa has taken steps to help families during this downturn in the local economy and national housing crisis. Last year, LaCasa staff received training and certification to effectively counsel those families that are in danger of losing their biggest investment, their home. What last year was a trickle of clients seeking help is this year a torrent: worried families coming to us for a solution. Three of LaCasa's HomeOwnership staff are dedicated to helping families stay in their homes. This concentration of counseling is hard on staff, who get personally involved with their clients. Hopefully, they will be able to save their home, but even if that is not possible, our staff can help the homeowner find a better solution than foreclosure which strips them of their equity and destroys their credit.

Families may find it difficult to make their mortgage payments for many reasons: unanticipated high interest rates on adjustable mortgages, unexpected health expenses, loss of a job. If you or someone you know is finding it difficult to make payments or are behind in payments, contact us as soon as possible. You can count on LaCasa staff to help sort your options and advocate on your behalf.

Mary's experience is one of many success stories. Mary lost her job around the time that her adjustable rate mortgage started going up. She needed help to get out from under an interest rate that was adjusting every six months. Mary had faith that she would be able to save her home. She attended LaCasa classes and received counseling advice from Amy Kennedy, LaCasa's HomeOwnership Center Director. Mary worked hard to stay current for 12 months. Then, our counselors helped her qualify for a fixed rate mortgage at a rate that she can afford. Mary says that "the classes are really helpful." She is encouraging others to take them also. Please consider making a donation to help us continue to counsel families and find solutions.

LaCasa's HomeOwnership Center has received grants from NeighborWorks America and Bank of America Charitable Foundation, but these grants cover only 50% of our costs for foreclosure counseling. **We need your help to continue this work.** Foreclosure affects more than just the family. Neighborhoods are impacted when there are vacant properties, and when these properties are sold adjacent property values often drop as a result.



Mary's home is now safe.

 **TEN THOUSAND VILLAGES®**
Community Shopping Day
at Ten-Thousand Villages is Dec. 11.
Shop that day and 20% of all sales will come to LaCasa. Thanks for your support!


LaCasa, Inc.
NeighborWorks®
HomeOwnership Center

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www.lacasagoshen.org



Resident Interview: Water Tower Place

A sit down with Franklin is a great opportunity for good conversation and a laugh or two. Franklin recently moved into Water Tower Place Apartments in Elkhart and is very happy with his new home. Retired and living on a fixed income, he heard

about Water Tower Place, which offers affordable senior apartment living, from friends when his rent was raised. He walks to the library downtown everyday. He can also walk to the Trolley stop when he wants to get to Goshen or in between. He says he just looks at the exercise equipment, but uses the free internet access available to residents. There are still apartments available at Water Tower Place. Call Linda at 574-296-7900 for more information.



Open House at Roosevelt Center

Renovations at Roosevelt Center are nearly complete! **An Open House is planned for Sunday, November 16, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

Please come and tour these 35 beautiful new apartments. Shown above are Regina and Rod Roberson with daughters Taryn and Tylar, who are planning on moving into the Roosevelt Center soon. Regina grew up in the neighborhood and has fond memories. When asked why they would move their family at this time she said, "We just want to be a part of making this neighborhood the best that it can be."

Dear LaCasa,

The reason I can call myself a homeowner today is because of the knowledgeable, dedicated staff of LaCasa, Goshen. I never thought owning a home could be a dream of mine. I was raising two children on my own and had a past credit history that was less than desirable. Though I had managed to acquire a fantastic 3-bedroom apartment (which LaCasa manages) with two bathrooms, and even had my own washer and dryer, I was still renting, still "throwing my money away" on just a place to live for one more month.

My journey to being a homeowner was a long process by choice. I met with Amy Jo Kennedy to clean up my credit report. Amy Jo made the process easy and helped me understand how to read my credit report. I also was able to set up an IDA account to begin saving for a home. Trying to grasp how the IDA works was tricky, but Debbie (Fath) was always available and patient with my questions.

I took about a year to really think about home-ownership. It was daunting to me and I wasn't sure if I would be able to keep up with all that was needed to maintain a home. Amy Jo and Debbie taught classes about home ownership and finances that really reassured me that I could do this and I wasn't alone!

After taking the classes, I began to get excited for the first time about becoming a homeowner, so I called LaCasa and asked what I needed to do to get the ball rolling. The next step in the home-buying process was meeting with Rocio (Arevalo-Espinosa). Rocio walked me through each step. I filled out the applications and a few days later got the call—I was pre-approved for a loan and could officially begin shopping for a new home! Rocio also helped me acquire two grants to assist me in my down payment and with home repairs.

When I began shopping for my home, I was fortunate to find what I wanted after only seeing three. I worked with a realtor who was willing to work with LaCasa on making an offer for my home. Once the offer was accepted, LaCasa took ownership of the home to make energy-efficient upgrades and make sure that the home was safe for me and my family.

Armand Martin headed up the construction team and worked hard to make sure everything was in place for work to be done to my home. I really appreciated the freedom he gave me to ask questions and be involved in the whole construction process. Three months after our offer was accepted, I was closing on my house and accepting the keys.

I'm now proud to tell everyone I know that I bought my first home this spring and brag on all the wonderful services of LaCasa. It truly is because of their organization and the dedication of those who work for LaCasa that I am on the road to success! Thank you isn't big enough to cover the gratitude I have to these hard-working, caring individuals. Your services are much appreciated and needed—thank you!

Sincerely,

Brandy Cavanagh, New Homeowner



The Cavanagh family celebrates a positive outcome.



LaCasa Listens

by Larry Gautsche, *President/CEO*

How We Respond to the Current Economic Conditions

Many of our donors, neighborhood leaders and partners have asked me in the last month how LaCasa and the families we work with are impacted by the current financial crisis. I'm writing this the day after Congress failed to pass "rescue" legislation and the stock market lost 7% of its value in one day, so the situation continues to deteriorate.

At the National level, we hope that when legislation is passed, it will include a mandate for modification of loans purchased to provide relief to homeowners, not just financial institutions. This would also be an opportunity to include anti-predatory lending provisions to eliminate unfair and deceptive lending practices from the mortgage market to reduce the likelihood of a future foreclosure crisis.

At the local level, LaCasa continues to provide financial education, budgeting assistance, homebuyer education and individual development accounts, all basic services to help families make good financial decisions and build assets. With increasing unemployment and under-employment, more staff time is spent helping families protect their savings and homes. Post purchase counseling, helping families deal with the challenge of making home payments while their income shrinks, requires additional resources. We are pleased that, of the many families who have purchased homes utilizing over \$6,000,000 of LaCasa's loan fund over the past 7 years, only one mortgage is in foreclosure.

LaCasa has also dedicated 3 full time staff positions to provide assistance to families facing foreclosure. While we have been successful in obtaining a few grants, most recently \$10,000 from Bank of America, to help with this necessary expense, funding for this service is inadequate and unpredictable. With a full year's property taxes coming due over the Holidays, reduced income for many families and increased utility costs this winter, we anticipate even greater demand for foreclosure counseling. While staff has been successful in helping many families avoid foreclosure, we are often contacted too late in the process.

Persons renting from LaCasa are also stressed and more families are moving in with relatives or falling behind with their rent and utilities. Neighborhoods are impacted by more vacant homes, both foreclosures and vacant rental properties. I receive at least 5 requests each week from persons who want to sell their homes or rental property to LaCasa. We have selectively purchased or accepted as donations, a few rental properties that we are rehabbing for homeownership, but cannot begin to respond to the full community demand.

As State and Federal initiatives develop to address the housing crisis, we will do our best to bring those resources to Elkhart County. We also request your continued support to help us protect as many homeowners as possible and preserve the gains our neighborhoods have made over the last number of years. Your financial support will be carefully reinvested to help your neighbors and preserve our neighborhoods.

IRA Charitable Rollover

Congress has passed the IRA Charitable rollover for 2008 and 2009. Withdrawals from your IRA are normally subject to being taxed. However, for those over 70 1/2 a direct gift from an IRA to a charitable organization eliminates the tax, even if you have already maxed out your charitable deduction for the year. The gift is not counted as income, however do you not received a tax deduction for the gift either. Ask your IRA custodian or financial advisor for more information on this excellent opportunity.

WISH LIST FOR ROOSEVELT

1. Pool table
2. Gently used table lamps and bookcases
3. Perennial flowers or grasses that you would share with us in the Spring
4. Historic photos of Roosevelt School that we could borrow

**CALL BECKY AT
574-533-4450**

Are you looking for guaranteed income for life? Do you want to save on taxes?

Consider a gift annuity.

Why? Because a gift annuity is a great way to support your favorite charities—while helping to secure your future. Call today to discuss how a gift annuity can help support programs here at LaCasa.

LaCasa Offers Accredited Immigration Counselors

Karen Viveros and Monica Newcomer Miller, LaCasa's Immigration Counselors, recently received accreditation from the Federal Office of the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA), which authorizes them to represent clients before the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, formerly INS. This accreditation ensures that LaCasa can continue to offer quality, low-cost services to local immigrants and refugees who need assistance with the immigration legal process. Clients come from all parts of the world with significant populations coming from Mexico, and Central and South America as well as the Ukraine, Iraq, Kenya and the Philippines. Karen and Monica work with these individuals and many more to navigate the immigration system and prepare applications for citizenship, work authorization, and permanent resident status. Karen and Monica also help legal residents in the US to apply for foreign-born family members.



*Karen Viveros and Monica Newcomer Miller,
LaCasa's Immigration Team*

Open House at Roosevelt Center

Sunday, November 16, 2008, 11 am till 3 pm, Program at 2:30

Please join LaCasa and the Historic Roosevelt Center Association as we celebrate the opening of these new apartments.

Come and see this dramatic renovation from class rooms to homes. Call 574-296-7900 for Leasing information.

LaCasa News is published 4 times a year by LaCasa, Inc. Bonnie Martin, Editor. Contributing writers: Brandy Cavanagh, Becky Gascho, Larry Gautsche and Monica Newcomer Miller. Layout by Sties Design. 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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