

# NEWS

## La Casa de Don Pedro

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 1

SPRING 2010

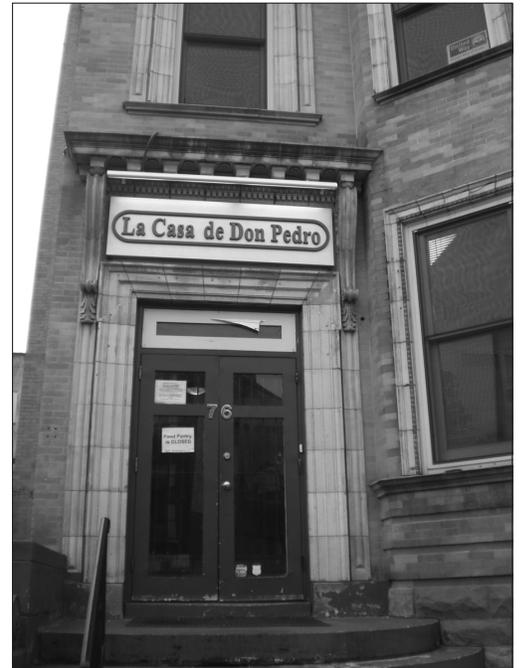
*La Casa's mission is to foster self-sufficiency, empowerment and neighborhood revitalization*

### La Casa Plants Its Roots in the Lower Broad/Lower Clinton Hill Neighborhood

In October, after about a year of concept design and negotiations, La Casa de Don Pedro officially opened its seventh facility at 76 Clinton Avenue, through the execution of an "asset acquisition" of what was sister agency El Club del Barrio.

Currently in the fifth month of this new era, La Casa has assumed responsibility for all former El Club programming, including case management, emergency assistance and meals on wheels for people living with HIV/AIDS, STD prevention outreach, after school programming for elementary age children, and a Teen Center. All the program elements formerly managed by El Club were integrated within La Casa's Youth and Family Services Division, now renamed Youth, Family, and Health Services to reflect the program expansion.

76 Clinton Avenue is also the new home of the reorganized Business Office, overseen by Enid Mendez, newly promoted to Director of Support Services. Supported by three full-time staff, the Business Office manages the Human Resources, Asset and Risk Management, and Procurement functions of La Casa. This move was absolutely necessary in order to accommodate the growth within these respective functions which provide essential support services such as payroll, personnel and benefits administration, procurement, and risk management to the entire organization.



76 Clinton Avenue

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### Broadway/Broad Community & Retail Facility Surpasses Final Hurdles Towards Closing

This winter, the development team made great strides in the Community & Retail Facility to be built in the Lower Broadway neighborhood. Valley National Bank provided a phenomenal investment of \$400,000 through NJ's Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit program that provided additional equity and lowers the financing carrying costs. The Planning Board approved the revised plans which eliminated the underground parking garage and will develop surface parking on Broad Street. We are completing details with lender Wachovia Bank and anticipate construction this Spring.

**La Casa  
Becomes a  
NeighborWorks®  
Affiliate**

This fall, La Casa was officially adopted into the NeighborWorks network due to its strength in the program areas of real estate development, homeownership promotion, preservation, and community organizing, and its strong fiscal management. Since its inauguration, La Casa has been allocated approximately \$200,000 in grant funds for operational and real estate development support.





## Executive Director's Update

Dear La Casa Colleagues:

There have been a number of significant developments and events that are important to share with the La Casa community. La Casa is growing in several ways, yet, with the current economic climate we need to remain focused,

anticipate upcoming challenges, and continue to be sensitive to our clients needs as they are especially hit hard by the impacts of the recession.

After a year-long effort we concluded the "asset acquisition" of what was El Club del Barrio, a social service agency located in the South Ward of Newark. The acquisition resulted in the official closing of El Club and La Casa's purchase of their building located at 76 Clinton Avenue, and their other valued assets such as contracts and grants that support a number of programs.

These new assets were integrated into our Youth & Family Services Division that underwent a name change to the "Youth, Family & Health Services Division" in recognition of the substantial HIV/AIDS programming we assumed under the acquisition.

By taking on the HIV/AIDS programming La Casa obtained a stronger foundation for our health related programs and we anticipate these efforts will offer us a platform to build and expand our work in this field.

As part of the post transactions we were able to employ a number of former El Club staff and additional personnel to ensure our delivery of high quality services and programs. In addition with our strong management structure and improved program procedures we are already seeing improved outputs.

The acquisition of the Clinton Avenue location provided an opportunity to address some of our organizational space needs and to match program staff in a more effective manner. A critical move was the relocation of the newly reorganized Business Office operations of human resources and purchasing to the Clinton Avenue Center.

The other important development over the winter has been the successful repositioning of the Broadway/Broad Retail & Community Center to be built at 43-47 Broadway. This came about by the purchasing of additional land to place the required parking at grade level thus eliminating the need for underground parking and the complications associated with it. The revisions were approved by the City Planning Board. In addition to this good news Valley National Bank awarded the project a \$400,000 grant under New Jersey's Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit program. These funds will reduce the debt and carrying costs. Taken together, we are on course to close the financial elements in April and see construction commence shortly after.

While La Casa is very well positioned as reflected in these positive developments, we must remain tuned to the looming financial crisis affecting our nation, state and community. We have seen an ever-increasing demand for LIHEAP, home foreclosures & rental assistance, health and emergency food services, and people looking for work. The demands and need for our services has never been greater during our institutional history. The recent steps taken by the newly elected Governor Christie are in large part a consequence of the economy which has negatively af-

ected the state's revenues and its ability to support all that has become expected of it: municipalities, schools, health service, social service, security, safety, justice and infrastructure like roads and highways to name a few.

Many of our programs are supported by governmental funding. At the Federal level we have seen the "stimulus" funds and extraordinary increases in weatherization and LIHEAP. At the state level we are only beginning to see glimpses of what might be expected. Drastic cuts are anticipated in upcoming budget considerations as the State attempts to deal with reduced revenues and an \$8 Billion structural debt [when costs exceed available resources]. There is no doubt that some negative effects of the economic downturn will be imposed upon La Casa and we are already reviewing our options to minimize the pain. We are confident that we are better postured than most non-profits to weather these difficult times. There will be some pain and sharing of the burden but we will come out on top and continue the phenomenal accomplishments that we all contribute to and will continue to strive to improve.

Our ability to remain strong is even more critical in these trying times. Many of the families and individuals we serve will be undergoing dramatic and increasingly difficult circumstances of reduced incomes and increased unemployment, leading to inadequate funds to meet rent, food and health expenses. Their needs will be severe and will reflect the harsh realities of our society's inability to care for its people. It is critical that each and every one of us be concerned and engaged in the discussions and decisions that are taking place in Washington, Trenton and Newark. Actions taken or not taken at the policy level will indeed affect our communities!

In our daily tasks here at La Casa we should be mindful of the harsh realities that so many of our clients and participants are living through. We should extend to them our very best efforts to service them well with utmost understanding and respect. At no other time in recent history has it been more true that "we are all connected" and "we are our brother's and sister's keeper."

Peace to all.



### Board Spotlight



La Casa is pleased to welcome two new board members, **Dan Czerniawski**, Lending Officer with Garden State Credit Union, and **Donna Lorenzo**, Director of the Health Career Program and Upward Bound Project of Montclair State University. Both Newark residents, Mr. Czerniawski and Ms. Lorenzo bring on new marketing, management, and banking expertise to La Casa, as well as opportunities for stronger collaboration with their respective organizations. They were appointed at the June, 2009 Board Meeting and attended an all-day orientation session in August. "We are all excited about the two new board members joining La Casa," said Executive Director, Raymond Ocasio. "Their expertise, enthusiasm and experience will continue to enhance our efforts."

: SAVE THE DATE :



**La Casa de Don Pedro**

*Annual Event*

WEDNESDAY, MAY 5, 2010

6:00<sup>PM</sup> - 8:30<sup>PM</sup>

*New Jersey*

PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

ONE CENTER STREET : NEWARK, NJ

CONTACT : CPUGLISI@LACASANWK.ORG

## *Community and Economic Development Division*

### **Foreclosure Prevention Counseling Program Continues to Impact Area Residents**

La Casa's foreclosure counseling work has made great progress since its inception over a year ago. In 2009, we saw over 200 families facing the threat of foreclosure. In 2010 the program has expanded by adding another full time counselor and Administrative Assistant.

This is a difficult climate for our homeowners in crisis and La Casa is working closely to help them achieve the best possible outcome. Most of the clients we see have either refinanced or purchased their homes in the last 5 years. In refinancing cases, the counselor often sees the signs of predatory lending practices targeted at low- moderate income families or non-English speaking borrowers.

Counseling entails a careful examination of how the family ended up in their position and works through the possible solutions. This process involves looking at budgets, employment, health, and often other emotional factors, and always includes educating them about their rights and programs available to them. In most cases, the family works with the counselor to file for mediation, which brings all the parties involved in a foreclosure legal action together to find a solution that works for everyone.

Over the past several months the program has been able to help many families save their homes, locking in temporary modifications to permanent ones. For instance, a Newark family became delinquent with their mortgage due to loss of income. After five intense months working with the housing counselor, the loan servicer finally modified the loan, reducing the interest rate to make the home affordable.

Another family who was in foreclosure for two years due to income loss was able to benefit from La Casa's mediation services. Perseverance paid off, and when the homeowner obtained a new full-time job, through mediation, their interest rate was reduced from 8.25% to 5%, lifting them out of foreclosure. Finally, a 26 year old single-mother and Newark resident received a loan modification at mediation, enabling her to hold onto the property that had been with her family for three generations.

### **Affordable Homeownership Project Is Complete**

La Casa sold the last of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Homes this past December. Now, eleven families have joined the rank of homeownership in our neighborhood. Among them are Newark Public School and City of Newark employees, sales associates, nurses and more. They bring with them 30 children ranging in age from newborn to college students. In addition to selling homes to many Newark residents, the project has even attracted new people to our community, from Belleville and Kearny, and as far as the Bronx. Welcome to the neighborhood!

### **Neighborhood Stabilization Program Award**

La Casa is thrilled to announce the granting of a Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) Round 2 allocation. This allocation was awarded to a coalition of Essex County organizations committed to purchasing Real Estate Owned (REO) properties, rehabbing them and returning them to the market as affordable housing. Our NSP 1 program is currently underway with the goal of developing 22 units in the



*Executive Director Ray Ocasio and Former Real Estate Manager Carrie Puglisi Lara turn over the keys to one of the newest homeowners.*

**Division Updates**



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd has a completely transformed streetscape, thanks to the development of the 11 brand new MLK Homes.

Lower Broadway community. NSP 2 extends the program to the north side of Bloomfield Avenue where we have seen an unfortunate increase in the number of foreclosed properties.

Newark has one of the highest rates of foreclosure and La Casa's community has among the highest rates in the city. We are partnering with the City of Newark and others to make sure our community does not become a victim of this foreclosure crisis.

**Sustainable Communities**

Since La Casa's launch as Lead Agency in the LISC Sustainable Communities Initiative for the Lower Broadway Neighborhood in 2008, program staff has been busy designing and implementing a program model that brings all stakeholders to the table to identify and discuss community challenges and produce measurable solutions.

Successes to date include:

- ▶ Working with local merchants to improve the Lower Broadway shopping district through facilitating a Commercial Area Retail Scan. This was done in collaboration with a steering committee of local stakeholders (including



The Sustainable Communities initiative hosted a holiday window display activity and invited the Broadway businesses to participate. Here, the North Newark Pet Shop displayed snowmen in celebration of the winter season.

neighborhood residents, merchants, members of Newark City Council and Administration, Newark UEZ, Newark Police Department and funding partners). The assessment concluded that the neighborhood's diverse constituency of local residents, daytime employees, and new immigrant communities of primarily Latino and African descent are market assets and suggest opportunities for growth.

- ▶ Removing graffiti from local shops with a "Graffiti Busters" event.
- ▶ Addressing the parking congestion in the shopping district by sponsoring a parking study. (Results of the study will be available in Spring 2010)
- ▶ Facilitating meetings with Block Care Clubs and the Newark Police Department to improve community safety and security.
- ▶ Collaborating with the City Office of the Urban Employment Zone (UEZ) to plan and implement \$2+ million of streetscape improvements. (Streetscape work schedule to begin Summer 2010.)

If you would like to get involved, please contact Roberto Frugone at (973) 485-0701 ext. 4641.



**Save The Date:**

**A Community Visioning Meeting for the Lower Broadway neighborhood will be held: Saturday, April 10th – 12-5 PM at St. Lucy's Church, 118 7th Avenue.**

Lunch, babysitting and transportation provided.

Please call Roberto Frugone 973-485-0701 ext. 4641 or visit <http://www.broadwaynewark.com> for more information.

## Get Your Taxes Done For Free at La Casa de Don Pedro

La Casa de Don Pedro has once again partnered with New Jersey Citizen Action to provide FREE TAX PREPARATION for families earning \$48,279.00 or less per year. This is part of the New Jersey Citizen Action Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Initiative. NJ Citizen Action will operate a VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) site once a week at La Casa de Don Pedro's Family Success Center II at **595 North 6th Street**. Volunteer Certified Tax Preparers will be available to prepare returns every Monday throughout the tax season from 3pm -7pm.

To make an appointment at La Casa's site, please call 973-482-9002. There are additional sites throughout the state; just call **1-888-TAXES-11**.

The free tax preparation service is designed to identify families who qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and ensure that they receive their refund. These refunds can be as high as \$5,657. This provides families with a critically needed economic boost.

### What to bring to your appointment:

- ▶ Photo IDs
- ▶ Social Security Cards (or ITINS) for everyone on the return
- ▶ All W2 and 1099 forms (if applicable)
- ▶ List of childcare expenses and the agency ID #
- ▶ Sample check if you would like direct deposit
- ▶ Both spouses must be present if filing jointly

### Call For An Appointment for your Free Tax Preparation

595 North 6th Street  
Newark, NJ 07107  
**973-482-9002**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL: 888-TAXES-11 (888-829-3711)**  
**HOURS OF OPERATION: Every Monday – 3pm to 7pm (Services provided in English and Spanish)**

## Community Improvement Division

### The Need for Energy Assistance Continues To Grow

In just the first four months of the Energy Assistance season, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program has processed 27,000 applications. Additionally staff busy assisting with emergency fuel for low or out of fuel clients who qualify for the LIHEAP program, processing over \$100,000 in deliverable fuel and repair services in just over one month this winter. **The deadline to apply for emergency fuel is April 30th, 2010.**

In addition to regular LIHEAP assistance, emergency assistance for gas and electric heating **ends on April 30th, 2010 (unless otherwise informed by Department of Community Affairs).**

To address this client increase, the LIHEAP program has undertaken a number of improvements to the program including:

- ▶ A separate receptionist exclusively for LIHEAP intake.
- ▶ A heated walk-in client waiting area for clients that used to have to endure bad weather conditions waiting on line.
- ▶ An improved database and filing system.
- ▶ A client notification procedure letting clients that submitted their application via mail know it has been received and is pending processing.
- ▶ An addition of five program staff.

### The Outreach Team Continues to Engage the Community in Weatherization and Lead Poisoning Education

The Weatherization and Lead Education outreach team has continued to reach out to neighborhoods throughout Essex County at community events. To date, more than 100 homes and 60 children have been tested for lead poisoning. In January, La Casa teamed with NJPIRG's Energy Service Corps Education Week program to teach more than 500 children at the Maple Avenue and Abington Schools in Newark about energy conservation, global warming, and weatherization. Staff also participated in the Newark Partnership for Lead Safe Children, a coalition of community partners and lead by the City of Newark Division of Environmental Health in the Department of Child and Family Well Bring.

### Low Income Home Energy Assistance and Weatherization Assistance Programs Raise Income Eligibility Limits

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is designed to help low-income families and individuals meet home heating and medically necessary cooling costs. This year, the application period is November 1, 2009 to April 30, 2010 and changes have been made in income requirements allowing more families to be eligible than past

**Community Improvement** (continued from page 5)

years.

To be eligible for LIHEAP benefits, the applicant household must be responsible for home heating or cooling costs, either directly or included in the rent; and have gross income at or below 225% of the federal poverty level, or 175% for USF. Persons who live in public housing and/or receive rental assistance are not eligible unless they pay for their own heating/cooling costs directly to the fuel supplier. The amount of the LIHEAP heating benefit is determined by income, household size, fuel type, and heating region. This year, the medically necessary cooling assistance benefit is set at \$200.

An eligible household that heats with natural gas or electricity may have its benefits directly forwarded to its utility company. Otherwise, in most cases eligible households directly responsible to a fuel supplier for payment of home heating costs receive a two-party check in the name of the applicant and the fuel supplier. Households whose heating costs are included in their rent receive a single party check

made out to the eligible applicant. A household receiving medically necessary cooling benefits also receives a single party check.

The 2010 Energy Assistance Application includes not only the LIHEAP program, but also the Universal Service Fund (USF) Program, allowing clients to apply for two programs at once. USF is a program created by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities to help make natural gas and electric bills more affordable for low-income households. If you are eligible, USF can lower the amount you pay for gas and electricity. To be eligible, a household must meet the same income guidelines as LIHEAP, and pay more than 3% of its annual gross income for electric, or more than 3% for natural gas. If a household has electric heat, it must spend more than 6% of its annual gross income on electricity to be eligible. For more information about USF, call: 973-485-0795.

For more information, please feel free to call 973-485-0795.

## Early Childhood Education Division

### La Casa's Children Enjoy the Change of Seasons

La Casa's three and four year olds from its Early Childhood Centers have been engaged in seasonal activities. In October, the children were treated to a trip to Green Meadows Farms where they each picked their perfect pumpkin. When they returned, they decorated it in their favorite colors and some teachers even made "barriga de vieja" an old Puerto Rican recipe with their pumpkins.

Children enjoyed a Thanksgiving lunch prepared by Chef Mr. Andy Henry full of the traditional delectable treats like fresh turkey, stuffing, sweet potatoes, and homemade gravy. The children learned about the holiday and enjoyed the meal together around the table.

The annual holiday parties held at each of the centers

were as festive as ever and through La Casa's annual toy drive, over 800 toys were collected, more than any other year. Parents were invited to their children's holiday performances and Santa provided gifts to each child. The Basile family, long-time friends of La Casa alone donated over 100 toys and participated in the 75 Park Avenue Center's party. Other generous and long-time contributors were the North Jersey Federal Credit Union and the Essex County Sheriff's Office. All were terrific Santa's helpers!

Parents attended a Lead Prevention workshop in December. They learned about the dangers of lead poisoning, where in the home the dangers lie, and how to remediate the problem. The center organized an immigration workshop for parents in January discussing issues of citizenship and residency status.



Children and staff of 75 Park Avenue's Early Childhood Center celebrate the holidays.

**La Casa, City Without Walls and the City of Newark Partner to Create a New Mural.**

The First Street Early Childhood Development Center received a facelift this past fall. A mural over 40 feet high and 20 feet wide of colorful Lego faces painted on the center’s south-facing wall was made possible through the program in partnership with the City of Newark, City Without Walls, Rutgers University Transitional Education and Employment Management (TEEM) Gateway, and Groundswell Community Mural Project, and with an initial boost with federal stimulus funds. The Mural Dedication was held November 10th.



*Mural on First Street Early Childhood Development Center.*

***Personal Development Division***

**Immigration**

**Temporary Protected Status for Haitian Nationals**

On Jan. 12, 2010, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (U.S.C.I.S.) authorized Temporary Protected States (T.P.S.) for Haitian nationals residing in the United States after a killer 7.0 earthquake devastated their homeland. T.P.S. prevents nationals from countries where an environmental disaster, armed conflict or other “extraordinary and temporary conditions” from returning or being removed to their country. T.P.S. also allows nationals of affected countries to receive a work authorization document permitting them to work in the U.S. for up to 18 months. This work authorization document can, and is often, extended beyond the initial 18 months granted. To obtain Haitian T.P.S. you must prove that: 1) you a Haitian citizen and; 2) that you were in the United States on January 12, 2010. To prove that you are a Haitian national, you will need to present your Haitian birth certificate (translated into English) or a Haitian passport (even if expired). To prove that you were in the U.S. on or before January 12, 2010, you will need to submit any document that bears your name and is dated prior to January 12, 2010. Some examples are a passport with an entry stamp, an I-94 Arrival/Departure Record, employment records, (pay stubs, W-2 Forms, IRS tax transcripts), letters from employers, bank or credit card statements, rent receipts, utility bills, school records for you or your children or, medical records for you or your children, letters from churches, unions or other organizations, birth certificates of children born here, dated bank transactions and wire transfers, letters, contracts, mortgages, and insurance policies. To be granted Haitian T.P.S. you must file U.S.C.I.S. Form I-821, Application for Temporary Protected Status and a filing fee of \$50; Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization and a filing fee of \$340; and a biometrics / fingerprints fee of \$80.

You can get forms and filing instructions at the U.S.C.I.S. web site, [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) or by calling the U.S.C.I.S. National Customer Service Center at (800) 375-5283. You have until July 19, 2010 to file your application for T.P.S.

**Information for Immigrants Seeking an Adjustment of Status**

The Immigration Service Program would like to advise its clients that if they have a pending application for adjustment of status to lawful permanent resident, an application for relief under NACARA 203, or an asylum application, they must obtain Advance Parole before traveling abroad. It is imperative that this application be filed before leaving the country since travel outside of the United States without Advance Parole will have serious repercussions on the client’s immigration application. Any individual who violates this law may be unable to return to the United States after their trip abroad and their application may be denied. It is however, preferable to wait for your permanent resident card or adjudication of your application before traveling aboard if it not absolutely necessary to leave the U.S. Under the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, aliens who depart the United States after being unlawfully present in this country for certain periods can be barred from admission to lawful permanent resident status, even if they have obtained Advance Parole. Any alien who has been unlawfully present in the United States for more than 180 days, but less than one year is inadmissible for three years; those who have been unlawfully present for a year or more are inadmissible for 10 years. Moreover, aliens who are unlawfully present, depart the U.S. and subsequently reenter under a grant of parole, may nevertheless be ineligible to adjust their status. If it is absolutely necessary to take your travel abroad this year, please contact our office at (973) 481-4568 and ask for the attorney Ana L. Reyes (ext. 3314) or her legal assistant Josefina Leonardo (ext. 3309) to assist

*Personal Development (continued from page 7)*

you in the request for Advance Parole. Our office is located at 39 Broadway, 2nd Flr., Newark, NJ 07104. Please plan ahead if you intend to travel since the Immigration Services Program currently faces a busy schedule. Please also remember that USCIS processing time for the Advance Parole document can take up to two (2) months.

**Prisoner Reentry Program Expands its Services**

La Casa de Don Pedro has been awarded a Prisoner Re-Entry Program Grant, “Responsible Parenting” through the New Jersey Department of Corrections. This is a one-year post release program geared to provide parenting skills, counseling, education and job placement services to prisoners preparing to return to their community.



*Participants of Project Impact prepare for employment.*

This program complements La Casa’s current Newark Prison Reentry Initiative’s program “Project Impact.” Over 80 clients work with staff to help reintegrate them into society after life in the prison system. They participate in job training workshops, mentoring, life skills training, and receive direct assistance from La Casa’s job developers. Several participants have already been placed in stable

employment. For instance, after serving thirteen years in prison, one participant was proud to return to Northern State Prison, not as an inmate but as a Project Impact program facilitator. Another keeps in contact with Project Impact counselor Anibal Alveo sharing his successes as he advances in his employment. “Hey Mr. A,” he writes. “I’ve been working hard and still am here. I moved up in here got a good raise and they love my work and I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for you. God bless you.”

Staff of the program were also engaged in Newark’s “Fugitive Safe Surrender” program this past fall, offering Newark area residents with warrants an opportunity to deal with their issues immediately. Two Project Impact members attended and successfully had all of their charges dropped and warrants vacated.



*Project Impact Participants*

Prisoner Re-entry is a promising area of work, contributing directly to the community and helping create opportunities for a vulnerable population. La Casa’s foothold with these two programs places the organization in a key position to influence future program activities and increase program impact.

***Youth, Family and Health Services Division***

**Y.E.S. Youth Programming**

The Y.E.S. (Youth Empowerment Services) program has continued to enrich the lives of Newark teens these past several months. Besides focusing on counseling services and positive mentoring, the youth have been active in volunteering efforts and personal development. Y.E.S. has also opened its doors on Mondays for homework assistance, tutoring and a computer lab for its members.

In October, the youth participated in a four-day workshop on domestic violence and awareness presented by the Domestic Violence Youth Counselor, Michele Gonzalez. The teens learned about different forms of violence, teen dating and healthy relationships. The members of Y.E.S. took a

pledge to refrain from violence in relationships and help others faced with negative relationships. The teens and counselors participated in “Teens Take a Hike,” a 3-mile hiking trip through Cheesquake State Park in Mattawan in November. The teens learned about the variety of thriving ecosystems in New Jersey such as wetlands, swamps, pine barons and forests. Everyone enjoyed the time away from their urban environment and look forward to their next hiking experience. The teens also had the opportunity to observe two presentations by Teen Link on the topics of “STI’s” [sexually transmitted infections] and what it means to be “LBGTQ” [lesbian, bisexual, gay, transsexual, questioning.] The workshops were presented by teenagers, which made it more



*Y.E.S. Youth Enjoy the crisp fall outdoors during their trip to Cheesquake State Park.*

interesting and relatable.

In January youth volunteered at Newark's St. Rocco's Family Soup Kitchen learning about the importance of volunteerism and giving back. They got a firsthand look at extreme poverty and the city's most vulnerable. The teens took part in food preparation, serving the food to families and aiding in the cleanup efforts. They took these tasks with great responsibility and many were personally affected. Overall, all had a great time and the program looks forward to expanding its volunteer efforts.

Finally, the Yoga component continues to be a successful exercise and stress management outlet, and the teens even learn about its history and meditating language techniques.

Should you have any questions regarding the Y.E.S. program, please contact Mr. Raymond Tavarez or Jennifer Lorenzo at the Youth, Families and Health Services Div. at (973) 483-2703.

### **Community Service and Dancing Team Up with Youth Community Mentoring Program**

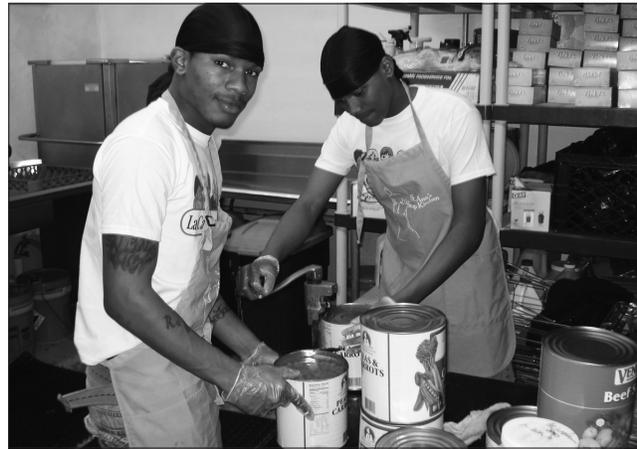
This winter, the Community Mentoring Program, which works with at-risk teens held their "Community Service and Peace Building" unit. Youth volunteered throughout the city. They served and prepared food at Rocco's Church Soup Kitchen, re-painted La Casa's Youth, Family, Health Services Division's Multi Purpose Room, volunteered for the "Senior Sweet Heart Dance" at the Wesley Towers Senior Citizen Center, and lastly hosted a "Game Night" at Broadway House, an AIDS/HIV Nursing Home. The youth completed nearly 50 hours of community service within the 2 months. This work is designed to develop their sense of accountability and social responsibility to the community.

Community service has also extended to the Dynamic Dynasty, a six-member dance troop formed organically last August. The dancers have created quite a buzz throughout the neighborhood. They have performed at numerous community events, homeless shelters and soup kitchens, a Sweet 16 Party, pep rallies, and won their very first competition with the New Jersey All Stars Talent Showcase in the fall earning the Grand Prize recognition out of 32 Acts. The

troop will perform at the New Jersey All Stars Inc. Gala at Lincoln Center in New York later this spring. Staff are extremely proud of Dynamic Dynasty's accomplishments and their leadership, and look forward to seeing what is next in store for the group. They can be followed on Facebook. For more information, and booking requests please contact Robert Cabañas at [rcabanas@lacasanwk.org](mailto:rcabanas@lacasanwk.org).

The New Jersey All Stars Talent Showcase was also good to La Casa's Junior Dance Group, "The Darling Pop Angels", led by youth leader and 2010 Miss Newark winner. The five young girls from the After School Enrichment Program came in First Place in the Junior Dance Group Category.

Lastly, one of our faithful and dedicated parents to the



*Community Mentoring Program youth learn about social responsibility through volunteering at Rocco's Church Soup Kitchen.*

Community Mentoring Program will participate in the upcoming documentary "Mother's of Murdered Sons". Her late son and former youth in the program was murdered in June 2008 due to senseless gun violence. This documentary will interview both mothers in our community and high profile mothers of celebrities in the hip hop genre whom have lost their sons to senseless gun violence. For more information or if you are a mother interested in speaking out on the issue please contact Don Richardson at [dnoteslyrics@yahoo.com](mailto:dnoteslyrics@yahoo.com).

### **A La Casa Employee Is Honored**

On August 21st, the Newark Youth Connection hosted its Third Annual "All White Affair" at The Newark Museum. The "All White Affair" honors Newark's young people engaged in community building efforts, and in particular those who participated in the Summer Community Mapping Project, a needs assessment identifying areas of importance, concern, or interest to City youth in all each wards.

La Casa is pleased to announce its very own Roberto Cabañas, Youth Counselor, was awarded the Community Connection Champion Award for the North Ward. He, and the four other exceptional young ambassadors representing each ward represent positive role models by encouraging their peers to become active participants in their respective



*Dynamic Dynasty and the Darling Pop Angels receive first place at the New Jersey All Stars Talent Showcase.*

wards throughout the City and to provide a voice within the Newark community.

The Newark Youth Connection puts selected participants

through a leadership program that enables them to gain a sense of ownership and stake in their City, which includes field trips and seminars on business etiquette, teamwork, economic development, the election process, landmark identification, and community involvement.

**Youth Leader Wins Miss Newark Pageant**

One of La Casa's youth leaders was recognized this fall as the 2009-2010 Miss Newark, a competition that rewards community dedicated leaders with opportunities for college tuition stipends and modeling. The young leader was a particularly competitive contestant due to her dedication to community youth service.



*Youth Enrichment Services Youth Mentor and 2010 Miss Newark winner.*

**FAMILY SUCCESS CENTER UPDATES**

La Casa's two Family Success Centers have kept busy with workshops and events this winter. Activities include lead testing, sewing classes, a Three Kings Day celebration, pre-natal programs, a winter health fair, parenting classes, and Parent Advisory Board meetings. Children and their families continue to be engaged in the community.



*Children completed sewing classes.*



*Parenting Class Holiday Celebration.*



*Family Success Center II's Parent Advisory Board discussed security issues in their neighborhood with the Newark Police Department and a representative from the councilman's office.*



*More than 120 people attended the Health Fair held in collaboration with Benjamin Franklin Elementary School. Providers from the NJ Commission for the Blind, Newark Department of Family & Child Well Being, RESPIRA, Jewish Renaissance Medical Center, HMO's, Department of Health & Human Services, Division of Welfare, UMDNJ, and others offered information and screenings.*

# Staff News



## Welcome Aboard

Annette Acevedo  
*Outreach Coordinator*

Carlos Acosta  
*Driver*

Aida Lombeida  
*Career Teacher*

Lateesha R. Amos  
*Data Keyer*

Patricia Anthony  
*Instructor*

Angela A. Arboleda  
*Group Leader*

Susana B. Carandang  
*Nutritionist*

Carlos J. Castillo  
*Health Services Manager*

Alex Ceron  
*Group Leader*

Valentina Cintron  
*Data Keyer*

Elsa J. Cipriani  
*Prevention Coordinator*

Barbara D. Colon  
*Mental Health Clinician*

Guadalupe Colorado  
*Group Leader*

Sonia Cordero  
*Outreach Worker*

Stephanie Crespo  
*Group Leader*

Adeline Criado  
*Case Manager*

Ivelisse Cruz  
*Coordinator Assistant*

Patricia L. Cunas  
*Group Leader*

Irma Davila  
*Wrap Around Instructor*

Yvette M. De Los Santos  
*Family Worker*

Migdalia Hernandez  
*Receptionist*

Miriam Hernandez  
*Data Keyer*

Cynthia Jacob  
*Administrative Assistant*

Israel Jimenez  
*Driver*

Ebonee M. Johnson  
*Carrera Group Leader*

Marybel Joven  
*Assistant Coordinator*

Jennifer Lorenzo  
*Youth Advisor*

Julio Martinez  
*Group Leader*

Nicholas Nassiff  
*Real Estate Development Manager*

Catherine Nunes Martins  
*Group Leader*

Nora F. Ocampo  
*Administrative Assistant*

Vanessa Pena  
*Accounting Assistant*

Yenny Pestana  
*Group Leader*

Marckens Pierre  
*Youth Advisor*

Gabriel J. Pratts  
*L-N-T Teacher*

Karla Quintero  
*Group Leader*

Anna Rivera  
*Case Manager*

Carla M. Ruivo  
*Group Leader*

Nancy Saborido  
*Program Coordinator*

Americo E. Sanchez Laguard  
*Outreach Coordinator*

Abigail Santiago  
*Group Leader*

Shirley Schwartz  
*Teacher*

Tisa M. Singleton  
*Data Keyer*

Jose Luis Solis  
*Janitor*

Christian Valentin  
*Group Leader*

Cynthia M. Vera  
*Group Leader*

Violeta Vergara  
*Group Leader*

## Welcome Back

Susana Aguilar  
*Accounting Assistant*

Daisy Quiroz  
*Counselor*

## Farewells

Claudia Baca  
*Jr. Accountant*

Randy Brathwaite  
*Instructor*

Anthony W. Eguez  
*Group Leader*

Emajonite Etienne  
*Group Leader*

Frank James  
*Job Developer*

Vanessa Martinez  
*Family Worker*

Estol Molina  
*Driver*

Wanda Roman  
*Teacher*

## Promotions and Transfers

Alexy Batista  
*Housing Counselor to Foreclosure Housing Counselor*

Celena Cordova  
*Human Resources Specialist to Sr. Human Resources Specialist*

Rossana Gallegos  
*Wrap Around to Assistant Teacher Floater*

Zoila Irizarry  
*Assistant Teacher to Teacher*

Yolanda Martinez  
*Jr. Accountant to Accountant*

Enid Mendez  
*Business Manager to Director of Support Services*

Julia Ochoa  
*Fiscal Manager to Director of Finance*

Carrie Puglisi Lara  
*Real Estate Manager to Program and Fund Development Officer*

Allecyn Ries  
*Director of Program and Fund Development to Division Director, Community and Economic Development Division*

Brenda Rivera  
*Receptionist to Administrative Assistant*

Amparito Villarreal  
*Wrap Around to Assistant Teacher Floater*

## Bundles of Joy & Congratulations

Damaris Andino  
*B.A., Special Education*

Mary Rose Bartolomei  
*It's a boy!*

Gloria Jerez  
*MA in Teaching*



## Topics of the Quarter

### 401K Enrollments

A total of 8 employees enrolled in the 401K program in the past quarter



### United Way Campaign

A total of 83 Employees participated in the 2009-2010 United Way Campaign. La Casa's staff stepped up to the plate. This dedication speaks volumes about our staff and how committed they are to our mission and assisting others in need in our community. Thank you very much for your generosity and for joining us in making a difference and for investing in what matters, our community.

### Supplemental Insurance

Supplemental Insurance Orientation meetings were held during the month of October 2009. Individual meetings were also held offering the staff an opportunity to update their current coverage and ask questions and orient themselves on additional coverage available. Colonial Supplemental Insurance offers supplemental life, accidental, cancer, critical and short-term disability insurance and it is paid for by the employee. A total of 80 employees enrolled and enhanced their benefits portfolio.

*La Casa de Don Pedro*

**: SAVE THE DATE :**



*Annual Event*

WEDNESDAY, MAY 5, 2010

6:00<sup>PM</sup> TO 8:30<sup>PM</sup>

*New Jersey*  
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER  
ONE CENTER STREET : NEWARK, NJ

This year's event celebrates La Casa's 38 years of service to the community. Lucia DiNapoli Gibbons, Wachovia Bank Regional President of Northern New Jersey is serving as this year's Event Chair. Sponsorships, journal ads and tickets are all available. Please contact Doris Ramos at (973) 482-8312 ext. 1116 for more information.

## La Casa de Don Pedro

Raymond Ocasio, *Executive Director*

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Zoraya Lee-Hamlin    | <i>President</i>   |
| Richard W. Roper     | <i>Vice President</i>  |
| Louis E. Prezeau     | <i>Treasurer</i>   |
| Jesus Mercado, Jr.   | <i>Secretary</i>   |
| Frederick P.H. Cooke | <i>Finance &amp; Asset Management Committee</i>              |
| Dan Czemiawski       | <i>Finance &amp; Asset Management Committee</i>              |
| Angel Luis Juarbe    | <i>Board Governance Committee</i>                            |
| Lanny Kurzweil, Esq. | <i>Resource Development Committee</i>                        |
| Donna Lorenzo        | <i>Resource Development &amp; Policy Planning Committees</i> |
| Ivette Mendez        | <i>Resource Development Committee</i>                        |
| Rosalind Murphy      | <i>Finance &amp; Asset Management Committee</i>              |
| Maria Ortiz          | <i>Board Governance Committee</i>                            |
| Gloria Ramos         | <i>Chair, Board Governance Committee</i>                     |
| Rita Robles-Navas    | <i>Board Governance Committee</i>                            |
| Nicholas Scalera     | <i>Finance &amp; Asset Management Committee</i>              |
| Gail P. Stone        | <i>Chair, Resource Development Committee</i>                 |

## La Casa de Don Pedro

Executive Office

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Fax: 973-482-1883

## La Casa de Don Pedro

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