

NEWS

La Casa de Don Pedro

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2

FALL 2007

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

Former La Casa Student Donates Mural

In 1981, Reynaldo Quinn or "Rey" as he is known to his family and friends, was just another pre-schooler attending La Casa de Don Pedro. Today, young Rey is an accomplished artist who has given back to his former preschool. When he attended La Casa, Rey was instilled with the belief that every child who walks through our doors can accomplish great things, a message we continue to impart to our students. Born and raised in Newark, Rey graduated from high school in 1998. Armed with determination and his life-long love of art, Rey went on to graduate from Seton Hall University in 2005 with a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts. While in school, he worked with autistic children as a Teachers' Aide at McKinley Elementary. As he worked with the children using color and different artistic techniques, Rey saw how art moved his students. This inspired Rey to create a mural that incorporated plenty of color and children as part of his Senior Project. When he completed his "Children" mural it was very special to him and Rey wanted to find the perfect "home" for it. Should he sell it? Should he keep it?

One night, Rey came across La Casa's website and he knew



Rey poses in front of his mural with several members of the Board of Directors.

where that mural belonged. "I loved the idea of giving something back to the children of La Casa" he said. "The Future is Yours for

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Super Summer at Stephen Crane Village

La Casa was proud to participate in the City of Newark's 2007 Super Summer initiative at Stephen Crane Village in North Newark. When the City invited us to participate as a partnering organization at Stephen Crane, we immediately began working with the Tenant Association President, Marqese Singleton. Marqese was happy to meet with La Casa and enlist our support to enhance the programs he was already operating. Together we developed a calendar of activities, hired a site supervisor and prepared for the fun to begin.

When the Super Summer site opened on Monday, July 9th, six children signed in for the day's activities. By the end of the week, word had spread and 34 children signed in. The site averaged 140 children each week and served breakfast and lunch to 40 children each day. Activities included



Children enjoying a pajama party at the Stephen Crane Recreation Center.

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Executive Director’s Update

Diversity is a popular word used in today’s business environment. It is an important part of the “global economy” and it also describes the growing number of a broader cross-section of people from throughout the world sharing life’s events within these United States of America.

We all come from immigrant stock, yet immigration today is different from earlier times. Gone are the days of uncharted territories seeking brave pioneers to discover and settle the land. As times have changed, so have many of the job opportunities and upwardly mobility previously available to many immigrants. Some of today’s immigrants have high-level skills, others lack literacy in their native language and many have no English language proficiency. Earning a living and supporting one’s family requires a far more complex skill set.

Today’s immigrants also reflect the full spectrum of hues of the human race and the coming together of different groups which conflicts with America’s tendency to view things in a simplified way...so that all Latin Americans are Latino or Hispanic [don’t ask which one is correct]. Americans also use the prism of race to define people and events.

We will quickly look at these two issues within the context of La Casa and the community we serve. We will quickly look at these two issues within the context of La Casa and the community we serve.

For much of the recent history we defined the Newark community within the “Black and White” framework, even though waves of earlier immigrants flooded Newark from Germany, Ireland, Italy and other European countries. La Casa was created to lend a voice to the “Spanish-speaking” community that was then largely Puerto Rican. Today we have large number of Puerto Ricans with little to no knowledge of the island community and speak the hybrid “Spanglish”. The number of Dominicans, Ecuadorians, Peruvian and others from points south are here in substantial numbers and share aspects of language and cultural elements with their PR neighbors. However there are distinct differences among them...a “guagua” is a “bus” to the Boricano, while to Bolivians it is a “baby”. As for the “tamales”, well there is a world of difference between the Mexican version, and the Colombian, and yet these are similar to the Puerto Rican “pasteles”.

It is said that we are no longer a “melting pot” ... where each immigrant assumed the American identity, waved the American flag and ate apple pie. Today, we can be American, or hyphenate it, such as Italian-American or Cuban-American. If a person seeks to avoid the labels, others might assign that individual to one “tent” - Guatemalan or Mexican or perhaps the catchall “Hispanic”. However, in reality, we can also cling to our native language and culture, while speaking Spanish and English. We can enjoy eating hamburgers and roast pig.

La Casa embraces the diversity model. The community we

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We are pleased to announce the addition of a new regular feature in La Casa News: the Employee Spotlight. This section will be used to introduce our readers to a member of the staff selected by his/her colleagues as an exemplary member of the team. We want to feature an outstanding person who is recognized not by his/her manager, but by their co-workers. So we circulated the Employee Spotlight Nomination Forms and were so pleased to have received responses from over one quarter of our staff!



Employee Spotlight: Mr. Walter Atkinson

This quarter’s Employee Spotlight is shining on Mr. Walter Atkinson from the Early Childhood Development Center III on First Street. Mr. Walter, as he is lovingly known by all at the First Street Center, has been a huge contributor to the success of the First Street Center since it first opened in 2004. Mr. Walter received several nominations from his peers and we are proud to share some of what his colleagues said about him: “Mr. Walter is dedicated to his job, is kind to the children and respectful to teachers”; another one said, “He is a righteous example of an outstanding employee and is always willing to go beyond expectations”; and another person wrote “He works hard at his job”.



Mr. Walter is the father of four children and six grandchildren and has worked for La Casa for three years. He is known for going above and beyond his duties – if something needs painting; someone needs to fill in delivering food to the chil-

dren, another Center needs an extra set of hands, the center needs to be opened on a Sunday – Mr. Walter is there to do it. “Mr. Walter never says ‘no’ or ‘it can’t be done’,” said Early Childhood Education Division Director Martha Villegas. “He always tells me not to worry, it will be done and it ALWAYS gets done!” The center feels like a home thanks to Mr. Walter’s caring ways. Parents, children and guests are greeted with a warm smile whenever they enter the building. He also helps teachers decorate their classrooms every month; helps monitor the safety of the children during outdoor activities; and treats every person in his midst with respect.

“Walter is an inspiration to all of our employees and his teamwork, dedication and support to our agency is admirable” said Maria Ortiz, the Director of the First Street Early Childhood Development Center. La Casa salutes Mr. Walter and we look forward to working with him for many years to come.

3 New Board Members Join La Casa

Every spring, La Casa's Board Governance Committee is tasked with nominating new members. They begin the process by assessing the organization's current board composition and comparing it to the organizational needs. They develop a list of expertise needed and share the list with the full board, staff and stakeholders who help identify potential candidates to be interviewed. This year we brought on three new board members, all of whom are Newark residents. This year's members were appointed on June 27th, 2007 and immediately began their service by attending an all-day orientation, tour of the neighborhood, overview of La Casa's projects and senior staff luncheon. "This was the most complete board orientation I've ever attended", noted new member Jesus Mercado, "I'm ready to jump right in!"



New Board Members, Gail P. Stone, Jesus Mercado and Esmeralda Cameron.

Esmeralda Diaz Cameron – Esmeralda has worked extensively in the field of communications and media relations as both a journalist and community advocate. She is currently Associate State Director for the AARP New Jersey State Office where she focuses on strategic communications, media relations and community outreach. She previously worked as a Public Affairs Producer and reporter for UPN9/WWOR-TV/FOX 5. Born and raised in Jersey City, Esmeralda currently lives in Newark's North Ward. She is looking forward to serving on La Casa's Board of Directors; "being a member of the Board is a wonderful way for me to give back to my community and to an organization which has provided essential programs to the diverse population it serves. La Casa has become a home for many and I'm happy to be connected to the 'Don Pedro' Family!"

Jesus Mercado, Jr. – Born and raised in North Newark, Jesus is a pharmaceutical territory manager currently engaged as the Senior Diabetes Care Specialist for Novo-Nordisk. His passion for healthcare and the community has been a constant theme in Jesus' career. Jesus resides in North Newark with his wife and two daughters. He has been an active leader with the Just One

Soccer League of Newark as its former President, Treasurer and Coach. He was also a volunteer for United Way of Essex and West Hudson and was Chairman of its Young Leaders Society and a reader in its Celebrity Read Program. His commitment to leadership in Newark was further developed through fellowships with both Project Leadership and Leadership Newark. One of the founding members of the Super Neighborhood Community Covenant for the Forest Hill Neighborhood, Jesus is a strong grassroots leader in his own community. "As a lifelong North Warder, I know first hand the great work La Casa has done in my community," Jesus said,

"it is a great honor and privilege to be on the Board of La Casa and I look forward to sharing my expertise and experience to meet the agency's mission."

Gail P. Stone – Gail brings her considerable expertise as a marketing, communications and management professional to La Casa's Board of Directors. She most recently completed a senior vice presidency at a NYC advertising agency after co-owning Paisley Enterprises, Inc., an ad agency in Fairfield, NJ for many years. Raised in Upstate New York, Gail heard many stories about Newark from her family who settled here when they immigrated to the US at the turn of the century. Gail's great grandfather was a vaudevillian and played many instruments including the saw and water glasses. Gail's great-grandparents, The Musical Meinerts, owned a theatre on Broad Street and performed in Newark and throughout the metro area. In an act of nostalgia, Gail moved to Newark in 2005 and lives downtown. In August 2007, she became Manager of Client Services for Hunter Group CPA. "I am delighted to be working with La Casa de Don Pedro. Being involved in my community is an incredibly important part of my life and La Casa's mission and presence are so important to the citizens of Newark that I feel honored to be able to share my enthusiasm and marketing skills with this organization," says Gail.



La Casa to Launch Two New Family Programs

We are pleased to announce that the Youth and Family Services Division will be rolling out two important expansions this fall. La Casa is joining four other nonprofits in Newark to launch a new initiative called Family Success Centers (FSC). The purpose of the FSC is to provide one-stop social services and referrals to Newark families in need. La Casa's Family and Children's Education Experiences (FACES) program which has been successfully assisting families for over 9 years will be inspired into the FSC model and we are opening a second site on the west side of Branch Brook Park. Stay tuned for more details!

La Casa was also recently awarded a NJ After 3 grant to open an After-School Center at Rafael Hernandez Elementary School. This center will serve 133 children from the school and the surrounding area from kindergarten through the 6th grade. This enrichment program will include homework assistance, tutoring, counseling, recreational activities and more. For more information, please contact Jacqueline Martinez at 973-483-2703.

Youth and Family Services

Summer Enrichment Highlights for 2007

The summer of 2007 has been one of the best yet for La Casa's Summer Day Camp Enrichment Program. Over 100 children, ages 5-12, participated in this year's program, forming memories and friendships that will last a lifetime.

The kids participated in cultural and educational activities. They went to Turtleback Zoo and learned about reptiles. We were also fortunate to have the City of Newark provide us transportation and tickets to Liberty Science Center where we took a total of 70 children. Theatreworks USA gave a performance of "Yarina Remembrances of Ecuador" The group used traditional instruments and dressed in native



Students pose for a "Vintage" photo.



A summer camper at Hurricane Harbour.

outfits. Yarina won a NAMMY (Native American Music Award) for "Best World Music". While the group transported us to the Andes, the children clapped and danced to the music. The children from the Early Childhood division (39 Broadway) also came to see the show.

The groups went to a number of water parks and zoos including: Shawnee Water Park, Hurricane Harbor, Dorney Park and Camel Beach. They also had fun dressing up and having vintage photos taken.

This year **Frost Valley YMCA's Newark Campership Program** gave La Casa de Don Pedro 17 scholarships. La Casa's kids joined 100 other Newark children for an exciting two week residential camping experience at Frost Valley's beautiful 6,000-acre site in the Catskills.



Campers enjoying the hands-on exhibits at Turtle Back Zoo.



Campers soaking up sun at Dorney Park.

For the first time, La Casa's own La Olla Catering provided nutritious breakfasts and lunches. The children loved

the new selection of food, one of our child-critics happily declared: "These burgers taste like Burger King". The staff worked very hard to create a range of exciting summer learning experiences for the children as well as organizing fun theme activities.



More fun at Dorney Park.

FACES Continues to Bring Families Together

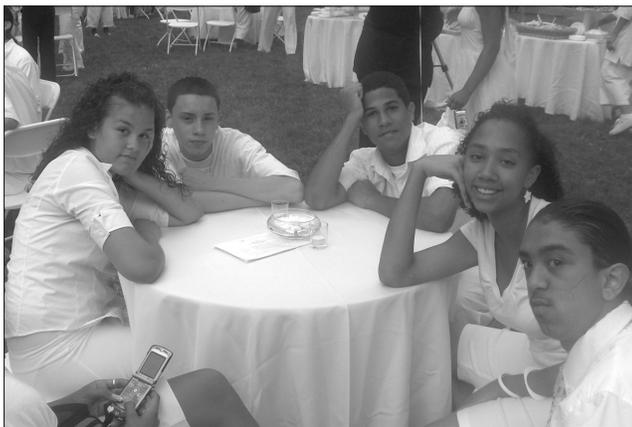
On June 15, 2007 the Family and Children Early Education Services Program (FACES) hosted a Barbecue at Liberty State Park located in Jersey City. A total of 10 families were part of the event; children enjoyed themselves playing games and Hula-Hooping while parents and Family Daycare Providers Network members took part in the potato sack race. Prizes were awarded to the winners. Most of the parents attending the barbecue were celebrating the completion of our The Incredible Years curriculum. This curriculum was designed to strengthen parenting skills, prevent and treat behavior problems in children. It teaches parents interactive play and reinforcement skills, nonviolent discipline techniques, logical and natural consequences, and problem-solving strategies.

La Casa has helped over 100 individuals secure their Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate and start their own home daycare centers through the Family Daycare Providers Network. Each year, we support at least 15 Family Daycare Providers through our Network, offering supplemental training workshops, a lending library of educational materials and sponsoring activities. This summer we took 12 families and Family Daycare Providers Network members on a trip to Hurricane Harbor Water Park located in Jackson, New Jersey. The distance and expense of the park admission makes this trip very difficult for so many working families and home-daycare providers. It provided a wonderful family-child activity for all participants.

The Newark Youth Connection Hosts the "All White Affair"

On July 26, 2007 the youth of the Newark Youth Leadership, Summer Enrichment, and Community Mentoring Programs joined together with the City of Newark and the Newark Youth Connection Council for the first annual "All White Affair" hosted by the Newark Museum and the City of Newark.

Over 50 of La Casa's youth attended this special evening at the Newark Museum which called for all white "dress to impress" outfits. The agenda for the night included dinner, live entertainment, a motivational speech by Mayor Cory Booker, and an introduction of the Youth Council Ward Representatives.



Participants enjoyed the outdoor cocktail reception at the "All White Affair."

The evening began in the Dreyfus Memorial Sculpture Garden. Students arrived and walked down a red carpet, sat at round tables dressed in linen white tablecloths, with candles at the center, and served themselves at a buffet-style dinner. The Mayor addressed the youth during dinner along with the Newark Youth Council. After dinner, the youth went into the museum to enjoy live entertainment which featured several acts including a musical group called Envy, Don Richardson, some youth poets, and many more talented youth from the City. The crowd cheered their fellow youth throughout the remarkable event. The evening had a profound impact on La Casa's youth. They felt celebrated, special and mature.

La Casa was well-represented at The All White Affair and has played an active role with the Newark Youth Connection Council since its inception last year. Our students are looking forward to participating in the upcoming projects with our community partners in the new school year.

Community Mentoring Program Sees Success

Three young men recently graduated from the Community Mentoring Program. Two of these participants received their high school diploma, and one hard working young man was named as La Casa's apprentice.

It feels like only yesterday when Antonio Couto, Ismael Martinez, and Joshua Perez walked into the Youth and Family Services Division seeking to make some serious changes in their personal lives. These participants were committed to the program, attending sessions and really proving themselves to their families, and the community. They helped organize our February blood drive, attended meetings with school administrators and counselors, made presentations at high schools where they shared their life stories with others, participated in community service, and most importantly, they worked to rectify issues within their families.

First "La Casa Apprentice Named"

Congratulations to Joshua Perez, a Community Mentoring Program participant who was hired as La Casa's first "Apprentice". After a 10-week competition amongst La Casa's teen program participants, Joshua was selected as the winner. As highlighted on the last newsletter, students went through a series of workshops, and career related tasks to earn a position with our agency, and learn the fundamentals of working in one of the best community based organizations there is. Joshua continues to work with La Casa, and we wish him the best and continued success.

Congratulations Barringer High School Class of 2007

On June 28, 2007 YFS counselors proudly attended the Barringer High School where we cheered on two of our Community Mentoring Program participants. We wish all of the graduates the best, and know that you will continue to strive for success. The graduating classes at Barringer High School seem to be growing bigger, and better each year, and we congratulate the class of 2007.

We would like to thank the Barringer High School administration, particularly the School Principal, Ms. Carmen Ruiz, for her continued interest and support to our youth programs. We would also like to thank Ms. Sandra Stanziola, Student Assistance Coordinator, for her efforts in assisting with student activities and student affairs throughout the school year.

Y.E.S. Summer Program

The 2007 Youth Empowerment Services summer program was the place to be this summer! Programs were geared for adolescents ages 13-17 and provided both education and

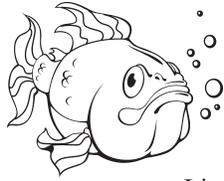


Josh Perez poses as he offers tutoring assistance.

Youth and Family Services (continued from previous page)

fond memories.

Part of the curriculum was the computer enrichment program. Students were drilled on typing and computer functions. They also learned about web design and they each built personal web pages. These are skills that the students



can use in their academic future.

The students also took a number of educational and fun field trips. One memorable moment for the students was the tour of Fort Hancock in Sandy Hook Beach. The American

Littoral Society provided the excellent tour.

The students also took a marine biology class which included getting into the water with nets to collect and identify the different species of the bay. Students were amazed with the plants, fish and crustaceans that inhabit our local waters.

Other educational activities included a trip to the Camden Adventure Aquarium, the Bronx Zoo in New York and even trips to the Newark Public Library. Of course, the students also loved cooling off with an awesome trip to Dorney Park which gave them a chance to let loose and enjoy the summer.

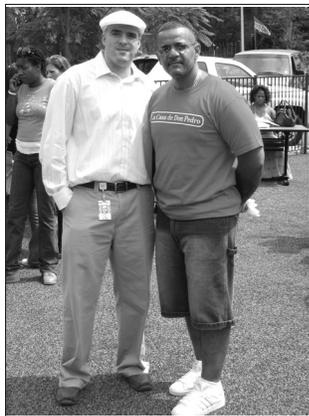


The campers gathered marine life samples at Sandy Hook.

Personal Development

Summer Career Day Picks Up Steam

Once again the Summer Career Day barbecue held on July 27th was a success. This is the fifth year the summer event has been sponsored by Fed Ex Ground, and this year's cookout featured delicious barbecue. Representatives from seventeen different institutions and employers attended including: Fed Ex Ground, Securitas, YouthBuild, Chrill Care, Saint Claire's Social Society, Youth Counseling Services, Washington Mutual, Unlimited Care, Express Personnel, Hampton Suites, the US Army, Goodtemps, Job Corps and New Jersey Transit. Please call Mr. Anibal Alvelo at 973-481-4713 ext. 208 for the date and time of the next Career Day.



Anibal Alvelo, Job Developer and Career Day organizer, takes a moment to pose with the Barbecue Sponsor, Mr. Jerry Alvare from Fed Ex Ground,



Over 17 vendors attended the barbeque.

Personal Success Story

When Mayra Marty, a single mother of three, was first referred to La Casa in 2005 she exhibited a personality that was protective, untrusting, and unwilling to change. Past indiscretions were negatively impacting Ms. Marty's attempts to secure employment. But this time, she was determined to rectify her mistakes to earn an honest living and support her family.

Originally referred for just the Job Search program, Ms. Marty was subsequently referred to our GED, Adult Basic Education (AWEP), and Job Search programs over a two-year period. Working closely with a number of staff members, Ms. Marty was able to move from dependency to self-sufficiency. She became an active participant.

The four-week Job Search program, which includes employment related lectures and activities, life-skills training, and attitude and personality related subjects influenced Ms. Marty. Significant change occurred in her ability to seek and receive assistance without resistance. Sessions involving one-on-one interviewing training raised her confidence while the GED and AWEP classes elevated her literacy and work skills.

In an extremely gratifying culmination, Ms. Marty was offered and accepted employment at the Fairfield Inn as a Service worker with a starting salary of \$8.50/hr.

Personal Development Staff Achieves GCDF Certification

This summer, Gloria Garcia, Program Coordinator for the Homeless Prevention Program attained her Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF) Certification. This multifaceted occupational certification covers individuals working in a variety of career development settings. A GCDF may serve as a career group facilitator, job search trainer, career resource center coordinator, career coach, career devel-

opment case manager, intake interviewer, occupational and labor market information resource person, human resource career development coordinator, employment/placement specialist, or workforce development staff person. The GCDF certification program for career guidance providers has also been implemented in Bulgaria, Canada, China, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Romania, and Turkey.

While managing various responsibilities including work, school and children, Ms. Garcia could not be any happier in attaining this great achievement. "As a single working mother with three children, I thought it would be impossible, but I am glad I made the effort and succeeded" said Ms. Garcia. "I consider it one of my greatest accomplishments."



Upcoming Computer Classes

The next computer class will be offered through La Casa's STEPS program and runs from October 1st-November 19th. For more details please contact Julie Rodriguez, the new case manager for the STEPS program at 973-481-4713.

Upcoming ESL Classes

The next session of ESL begins October 1st and ends December 14th. For more information, please contact: Anyelis Cordero at 973-481-4713.

Free Mammogram Screening

The next screening is tentatively planned for Wednesday, November 14th. For more information and to sign up, please contact Anyelis Cordero at 973-481-4713.

Community Development

First Day of School

On Thursday, September 6th, La Casa shared an annual rite of passage with thousands of Newark's schoolchildren—the First Day of School. Each year, over 30 volunteers from all five of the organization's divisions set up tables in our local public schools to greet parents and students. This year La Casa was represented in sixteen local schools. Our mission is to share La Casa's programs and involvement in the community with parents and students. "The First Day of School event is an important part of La Casa's linkage to the community. It gives us a timely opportunity to introduce parents to La Casa's network of programs as well as our school advocacy efforts", noted Ray Ocasio Executive Director. Brochures and flyers describing the various services we provide were distributed as are basic civic documents such as voter registration forms. Interested parents were also asked to sign up to participate in the leadership activities and committees we organize to improve the quality of life in North Newark.

Community Garden Beautified

Let's Planting our leadership Work on La Casa's Open Space Initiative continues with the completion of the newly christened Ramon Rivera Community Garden. Completed in April, 2007 at corner of Mt. Prospect Ave. and Victoria Ave, this garden was truly a labor of love for a street corner with a tumultuous history. Community leaders asked La Casa to help them transform this corner from a dark garbage-strewn lot conducive to nefarious behavior into something beautiful and constructive. Working with local stakeholders, the new garden has 11 plots assigned to different members of the community. On Beautify Newark Day, children from Franklin School participated in the garden to help make the Ramon Rivera Community Garden a special place.

Summer Avenue loves Pregones Theater!

On August 9th the Pregones Theater Company visited La Casa for the fifth year, presenting the 2007 JPMorgan Chase Summer Arts Series play entitled "The Caravan/La Caravana" by Alvan Colon Lesprier. The play is based on the poem "The Saltimbanco's Elegy" by Puerto Rican poet Luis Pales Matos and it was performed in both English and Spanish. This year's show was held on a balmy evening on Chester Street across the street from the Casa Mia Senior Housing Complex. The performers used the facilities at Casa Mia to change into their costumes and ate dinner there after the show.

This yearly event gives the community an opportunity to connect with their neighbors. The residents slowly came out of their homes to watch as the stagehands began to set up for the show. Many seniors from Casa Mia were escorted by La Casa employees to reserved front row seats and were happily



Pedro Nuñez helps a student from Franklin Elementary plant flowers.

Community Development (continued from previous page)

singing along with the performers. The play had a little bit of folklore, music, magic, and a whole lot of imagination. The children particularly enjoyed the performance, including the colorful, traditional vejigante carnival masquerader costumes and masks worn by the actors. “I look forward to the show every year, but this year, it was great to see the children participating!” said a resident of Chester Avenue. As always, we can’t wait to see what Pregones Theater has in store for us next summer!



The audience was blown away by the beautiful production offered by Pregone this year.

Progress Made with Tri-State Transportation Campaign for Pedestrian Improvements

Members of the Neighborhood Restoration Committee have worked closely and diligently with representatives from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign to identify problem intersections within the neighborhood. The following improvements were made intersection by intersection:

INTERSECTION	REQUEST MADE	ACTION TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT
Broadway and Bloomfield	Wider, planted medians and a wider sidewalk.	Repainted crosswalks.
Webster and Bloomfield	A crosswalk and blinking street signs	Non-blinking signs marking that pedestrians cross here
Bloomfield and MLK Boulevard	Repaint intersection	None
Bloomfield and Park	Repaint intersection	None
Bloomfield and Mt. Prospect	New crossing signals. Repainted intersection. Wider crosswalks	Everything, and some pedestrian crossing signs to boot.
Clifton and Bloomfield	Repaint intersection	Repainted intersection
Ridge and Bloomfield	A crosswalk	Signs marking that it is a pedestrian crossing
Parker and Bloomfield	Repaint intersection	Repainted intersection. Another sign prohibiting cruising
Park and Lake	Repainted crosswalks and fixed traffic signals	Repainted crosswalks and fixed traffic signals. There is also new pedestrian signage and a sign prohibiting trucks from getting on local roads.

Community Improvement

Happy Client

“I used to hate and dread winter approaching. Today I can’t wait for it because of our new heating system thanks to La Casa de Don Pedro’s awesome program. I can’t thank you enough!



Dianara Ontaneda inspects a client’s heating system.

Weatherization has a busy season for air conditioner

This summer kept members of the Weatherization team very busy. The team delivered and installed 106 air conditioners and fans to Essex County senior citizen. Great work!



Rigo Irizarry installs air conditioners for seniors.

Weatherization Program Receives Award

The New Jersey Department of Energy/Department of Human Services recently recognized La Casa's Weatherization Assistance Program for their Outstanding Timeliness in Reporting. Programs such as Weatherization Assistance rely heavily on self-monitoring and fiscal reports as thousands of dollars are spent on hundreds of units each year. We congratulate the Weatherization team, Norma Sessa, Director of the Community Improvement Division as well as our Chief Financial Officer Niladri Bagchi and the Fiscal Unit. Keep up the good work!



Weatherization staff members (l to r) FRONT ROW: Norma Sessa (Division Director), Lisa Rivera, Oscar Otaola, BACK ROW: Dianara Ontaneda, Rigoberto Irizarry, Marisol Santana and David Padilla.

Early Childhood Education

Great Summer Memories

The Early Childhood Education Summer Program was a big hit with the children and parents this year. While many of the school-year teachers went on summer break, the students continued their studies with a summer teaching staff. We are happy to report that the program ran seamlessly with the summer staff – parents, students and teachers were all very happy. Thank you to our summer teaching staff!

The students had a number of special activities including fashion shows, ice cream sundae parties and of course plenty of outdoor water play! They also took several fun field trips.

The fulltime teaching staff returned to work on September 4th and greeted our full enrollment of students on the First Day of School, September 6th. We are looking forward to a fun-filled and educational year with our pre-schoolers as we explore everything from the seasons, to animals, to transportation to families and more!



Group 3 held a Hawaiian Party. The girls dressed in hula skirts and the boys in summer hats as they danced to Hawaiian music, did the limbo, and enjoyed pineapple drinks and other treats.



On Monday August, 20th. Trooper Thomas Walsh and Trooper Alex Pena from NJ State Police presented a mini-workshop to the children at the 75 Park Center on how to act when strangers try to talk to them. The students were also allowed to

tour the police car and manipulate/push the different buttons in it. It was a wonderful experience for the children!



The preschoolers cooled off one afternoon as they held a 'car wash' on the playground.

MEMORIES WANTED:

Rebuilding Newark

The Memory Project

LISC-The Local Initiatives Support Corporation is sponsoring an exhibition scheduled to open Thursday, November 29, 5:30 - 8:30 PM, at the Aljira Center for Contemporary Art, located at 591 Broad Street in downtown Newark. The public is invited to attend the opening reception of this memory collection entitled "Rebuilding Newark: The Memory Project." Gerard Joab, Executive Director of the Greater Newark & Jersey City LISC office said "anyone who lived through the 1967 civil disturbances or has worked to rebuild Newark since then is invited to suggest memorabilia to be incorporated into this communal room of memories at the event".

This exhibit commemorates Newark's the 40th anniversary of Newark's summer of discontent. The Newark disturbances galvanized community action to new levels of focused organization and accomplishment, the effects of which carry on today. In the aftermath of the Riots, groups like La Casa de Don Pedro, New Community Corporation and United Community Corporation provided leadership and organization in the neighborhoods and paved the way for the modern community development movement in Newark.

November 29th - thru February 23rd 2008, select memories and mementoes such as letters, photos, notes, etc. will be exhibited at Aljira Center for Contemporary Art, as part of the three-month exhibition. Community members are invited to submit mementos of their experiences of reclaiming and rebuilding their homes, schools, and neighborhoods as well as of creating organizations that have affected community change. For more information, please contact Aljira at 973-622-1600.

SAVE HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS on your HOME HEATING OIL

Join New Jersey Citizen Action's Oil Group Today!

If you heat your home or commercial property with oil, the New Jersey Citizen Action Oil Group can save you up to 30% on the cost of oil. Plus, if you sign up and reference La Casa de Don Pedro, your first year of membership is free! That is an additional \$15-\$30 savings. You can call NJCA for more information or visit their website at www.njcaoilgroup.com or call toll free 1-800-464-8465.



Executive Director's Update (continued from page 2)

serve shares the neighborhoods within the northern reaches of the City of Newark. It is an ever-changing community. In the same way that it once was an Italian enclave that changed to a Puerto Rican neighborhood, today it is a community inhabited by people from all over the Americas and from throughout Newark itself. As the community composition changes, so have we changed as an organization. Look at the spectrum of people and cultures represented by our constituencies and personnel. We come from many different lands and backgrounds, yet we are committed to a common mission. We relish our native cultures as we embrace and mold the shared American culture and allow them all to co-exist and to nurture what we do and who we are.

In the racist world, the Hispanic community is viewed as "in", "out" and batted around, depending on the perspectives of the individuals. The recent triple murders in the Western corner of Newark, has focused on the "immigrant status" of the alleged assailants. Some individuals feared a backlash along racial lines. The crime was not racial, nor was the immigration status of any real import other than through the prism of racism that permeates America. Poverty, deprivation and other social issues shared by the people of Newark and in general people of color in this country are to blame. If we looked at crime in the City of Newark and its immediate surrounding, we would see that it is the residents and the poor who are both the victims and criminals.

Mayor Cory Booker is correct; we must take back our communities. Yes, we need to control crime and the criminal elements. But we also must improve our educational systems and care for our children. We need to expand our employment prospects and opportunities. We need to put community back into neighborhoods.

Our mission and our daily work are committed to attacking all of these fronts. From organizing a block watch to creating a neighborhood garden – creating a sense of community is what is needed. Teaching Pre-K to adult education and making jobs a reality, are all parts of the solution. Helping families in need and providing direction and insight to program participants is also essential. Rebuilding the infrastructure, the housing, the streets, facilities and businesses are equally important. It takes a variety of options and solutions, a comprehensive approach to address our mission of fostering self-sufficiency, empowerment and revitalization of the community.

Stephen Crane Village (continued from page 1)

Build Your Own Sundae, Slime-Making and a Pajama Party, visits to Liberty Science Center and outings to the Rotunda Pool. Tenant President Marqese Singleton was very pleased with the summer's activities. "This summer was great because La Casa, the City and the Housing Authority gave our program extra help. The children on site enjoyed the new programming a lot and we all wish it was offered all year round." All in all, the children of Stephen Crane had a Super Summer!

Staff News

Welcome Aboard

Community Development

Yuriko De La Cruz - Program Coordinator

Youth and Family Services

Kristyne Felicies - Program Coordinator

Sergio Ferreira - Instructor

Maria Guachamin - Counselor

Administration

Doris Ramos-Executive Assistant

Community Improvement

Ivan Rodriguez - Data Processor

Moraima Sierra - Data Processor

Personal Development

Julie C. Rodriguez - Case Manager

Early Childhood

Limary De Jesus – Administrative Assistant, 75 Park

Bundles of Joy

Rosmilda Lizardo – It’s a girl!

Mavie Bravo – It’s a boy!

Diana Gamarra – It’s a boy!

Omayra Martinez – It’s a girl!



Congratulations

- ▶ Virginia Atahualpa, a longtime member of the Early Childhood Education staff received her Bachelor’s Degree and was promoted to the position of Teacher at the First Street Center.

- ▶ Yolanda Martinez, Accounting Assistant - Received her Associates Degree with High Honors from Essex County College. She received an academic scholarship to continue her studies and pursue a bachelor’s degree at Rutgers University.

- ▶ Blanca Herrera, a member of the Early Childhood Education staff received her Associates Degree in Early Childhood and Elementary Education from Essex County College.



- ▶ Congratulations to Weatherization employees Rigo Irizarry and Oscar Otaola who have both successfully completed the first round of their BPI (Building Professional Institute) Certifications. They are now both State Certified Building Analyst Professionals. Round two consists of heating system and shell certifications and will be taken within the next six months. La Casa’s goal is to support all of its techs through the State certification process.

Farewells

- ▶ Martha Roldan

Topics of the Quarter

Orientation Group Meetings

Supplemental Insurance Orientation Group Meetings were held during the month of August 2007. Individual meetings were also held offering the staff an opportunity to update their current coverage and ask questions and orient themselves on additional coverage. Open Enrollments are held once a year.

Spotlight Nominations

As you know, this newsletter has our first Employee Spotlight. We opened the nominations process to the full staff, discouraging nominations from or of senior management and our employees answered the call. Over 55 employees nominated their colleagues, praising their professionalism and generosity. Thank you to all who nominated, congratulations to the nominees and stay tuned to read about another Employee Spotlight in the next edition of La Casa News.

JHR MISSION: *To provide confidential quality service in all personnel operation with integrity, responsiveness and sensitivity to all of the employees and management.*

HUMAN RESOURCES STAFF:

Enid Mendez, HR Manager | Celena Cordova, HR Specialist | Office E-mail: HR@lacasawk.org

Former Student Donates Mural (continued)

the Taking” is the message delivered to each child and this became the title for this special artwork. “It was exciting and special for me to know that I could give something back to the community I feel contributed to my success” said Rey.



Rey Quinn's 1981 La Casa "graduation" photo.

The mural is now permanently installed in the lobby-entrance of La Casa's 75 Park Early Childhood Education Center where it provides daily inspiration and encouragement not just to our children, but to their parents who can be assured that La Casa is the right vehicle directing their children on the path to success. Martha Villegas, Director of the Early Childhood Education Division was thrilled when she learned about the mural. “Reynaldo’s generous donation sets the right tone for our center and we are so proud to tell our children the story about how the artist started out as a La Casa student just like they are!” Rey is looking forward to fulfilling his next goal by becoming an art teacher in Newark and giving back to our children what he feels he was so fortunate to receive.

Raymond Ocasio, *Executive Director*

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La Casa de Don Pedro

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