

NEWS

La Casa de Don Pedro

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 1

WINTER 2007-08

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

Seton Hall Basketball Clinic

The opening of the Prudential Arena is the new home to the Seton Hall University (SHU) Pirate's Men's Basketball Team and as such, SHU felt the need to introduce itself to some of the Newark neighbors. The basketball powerhouse set a goal of sponsoring mini-basketball clinics to over 5,000 Newark children and La Casa's children were among the lucky recipients, thanks to the efforts of La Casa Board Member and active SHU alum, Nicholas Scalera.

During a teacher workday in November, La Casa brought more than 70 participants to Seton Hall's practice gym on their South Orange, NJ campus. SHU women's basketball coach Phyllis Mangina and athletic department staffers led the boys and girls in basketball drills and later joined Pirate Blue Director Bryan Felt in providing pep talks to the children about the importance of studying hard, pursuing a college education and fulfilling their life's dreams. Each child received a blue and white basketball with the Seton Hall and Prudential Center logos, the kids also took pictures with SHU's Mascot: "The Pirate."

The highlight of the session was an appearance by Pirates Forward/Center John Garcia, who participated in a Q & A session



La Casa's students pose with the Seton Hall Pirates.

with the youths before patiently signing basketballs for every one of the 70 boys and girls. One youngster asked Garcia what he was going to be on Halloween. John responded: "A 6-10 Dominican

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LISC Honors La Casa with Neighborhood Impact Award

La Casa de Don Pedro was proud to have its work honored by one of our most enduring funders, the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) of Greater Newark and Jersey City. The 2007 LISC New Jersey Neighborhood Achievement Awards recognize community development leaders who are committed to building healthy and vibrant communities in New Jersey. A panel representing funders and peer organizations evaluate candidates and agencies based on their vision, action and results achieved. La Casa was honored with the Neighborhood Impact Award based on the extensive work we have done in the Lower Broadway Community. "LISC is one of our most significant partners and funders", said Executive Director Raymond Ocasio. "Therefore this recognition has a deeper meaning for La Casa because it comes from someone who knows the field and the players very well."



Ray Ocasio poses with members of the LISC Advisory Board.



Executive Director's Update

Dear La Casa Colleagues:

As part of our continuing efforts to maximize impact, we have attempted to marry our Community Building initiative outlined in the Lower Broadway Community Plan with our organizational strategic plans.

The redevelopment of 39 Broadway from a vacant blighting influence into a community asset stemmed from our community planning efforts eight years ago. It was also a significant investment to demonstrate our commitment to the community at large and particularly to the commercial activities along the Lower Broadway corridor. We made this investment with the hope that others would follow and some have.

For the last two years we have been following the Lower Broadway Community Plan ratified in 2005. Guided by this plan, we purchased, then planned the redevelopment of the properties adjacent to our 39 Broadway facility, referred to as 43-47 Broadway.

The proposed redevelopment plans call for the introduction of new retail space on the Broadway side. Our goal is to attract critically needed goods and services that the community lacks and needs. We would welcome a bakery, dry-cleaner, or how about a fresh produce stand, or even a family oriented dining outlet with ice cream for desert.

The rear entrance afforded on Broad Street property will provide a new reception and intake center for the Home Energy Assistance Program. This will replace the inadequate and inappropriate area allocated within our Roseville facility. In addition the entire energy assistance team that we call the Community Improvement Division would additional space on the third floor.

The second floor will provide expanded and larger classrooms as well as more private offices for consultations and a new computer learning center. By vacating all but two classrooms in 39 Broadway we will make room to house two additional classrooms for early childhood and be better suited to match the NJ Department of Education criteria for "effective and efficient" learning. There will be parking beneath and behind the bulding.

In the end we envision a project that will provide an improved working and service environment for La Casa staff and thousands of constituents, an improved business environment with new retail space and growing the customer base for all the business along the corridor. We also expect that it will continue to spur more improvement and a broader range of goods and services to meet more of the immediate community's needs.

We have achieved innovative financing and captured key foundation and corporate contributions to make the project feasible, no simple task when program funding including allowances for occupancy are contracted on a year by year basis and it is limited by the other competing program costs.

For the last ten years, we have focused on the revitalization of the Lower Broadway Community and its commercial corridor. We have always known and understood that parking is a perceived issue. Heavy traffic volume during commuting hours, and all day parking by some make it a challenge.

With the introduction of 39 Broadway some suggested that La Casa has aggravated the corridor's parking issues and the new building will only make the situation worse. That could be true if nothing else is done, but we are working hard to do our part in addressing this issue. For those who choose to use their personal vehicles, parking will always be a problem. In a dense urban environment, there is simply no way to provide all the residents, commuters and shoppers with curbside parking. Short of spending millions of dollars on a parking deck to solve this problem, the challenges of parking will continue, so the question goes beyond La Casa and this project.

The new City Administration is already signaling its awareness by developing Express Bus Service along its major thoroughfares such as Bloomfield/Broadway. They have also promised to provide meter parking along the commercial corridor to allow the coming and going shopping patterns of the residents and commuters. The need for off street parking for the business owners and workers should also be contemplated, but this is a district-wide issue and the burden should not be placed on any single property owner or business. The City has a critical role here in identifying solutions and providing assistance such as financing and perhaps operating support for a parking lot as has been the case in the downtown district.

I am disappointed that some of our business neighbors have viewed the current situation as a La Casa issue. The parking question is a community issue and needs the constructive input and efforts of all of us.

It also points out that it is not enough that we use the "community perspective" in developing our plans, it is not enough that we have provided and continue to provide as well as expand critical services that the community wants and needs, it is not enough that we believe that we are connected to the community by empathy, shared culture, common experiences and mutual needs. As we work out an immediate solution, I encourage all La Casa employees to share the notion that it is not just a La Casa question. You can contribute to a solution...use public transportation, or use the designated staff parking areas. Inform the businesses that you and your clients, students etc are their customers.

The opposition we are confronting will be "won over" by our "doing the right thing" and continuously exploring and engaging them in positive work.

Peace to all.

Seton Hall Basketball Clinic (continued from page 2)

college basketball player." As a Latino college student-athlete, Garcia had a special impact on the kids, who viewed him as one of their own who has succeeded in the classroom and collegiate sports. Garcia was not required to participate but did so voluntarily after finishing classes and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. He is a terrific young man and we extend our heartfelt appreciation to him, the entire staff of the Seton Hall Athletic Department and to Nick Scalera for providing our children with an unforgettable day!

Employee Spotlight: Mr. David Padilla

Congratulations to David Padilla of the Community Improvement Division, he is this quarter's Employee Spotlight. As one of his colleague's put it "David loves his job, always works with a smile, and never says no to a client or co-worker, working instead to find a solution." David has been with La Casa for 13 years in total. Initially, David spent 7 years as a driver for La Casa's Senior Citizen Program. When La Casa relocated the program to FOCUS, a sister agency, David left the agency, but he always stayed in touch. In April of 2002, David was hired as a field tech for the Weatherization Assistance Program. In just three months, David learned the program and has not stopped advancing since.

David's co-workers love him because of his playful ways and a laugh that carries through-out the building. He also never hesitates to help a colleague in need.

Clients absolutely love him because he is well mannered, very detailed and attends to all their questions and needs. He always puts the client first and has a heart for those who really need our service, especially our senior citizens. During the



winter months he always tries to find a way to ensure the client has heat - either by fixing the heating system temporarily himself or by calling our contractors to temporarily put a "bandage" on the heating system until we are able to serve the client. When needed, he has even visited clients on the weekend and evenings because they could not make their appointments during weekday hours.

Norma Sessa, Director of the Community Improvement Division echoes the sentiments of David's colleagues and clients. "Not only has David served our clients well, he is always there when I need him to address an issue in our building. Our facility is older and David has repaired walls, floors, lighting, doors, you name it and I can assure you he had a big part in fixing it." Norma concluded by saying "David is a hard worker, dedicated employee and honest person and his loyalty to the agency is impeccable. He has always been my extra hand."

David is married and has 2 young adult children in college. Congratulations David!

Get your taxes done for FREE at La Casa de Don Pedro

La Casa de Don Pedro is partnering with New Jersey Citizen Action to provide FREE TAX PREPARATION for families earning less than \$40,000 a year. This is part of the New Jersey Citizen Action Education Fund's Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Initiative. NJ Citizen Action will operate a VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) site once a week at La Casa's new Family Success Center, at 595 North 6th Street.

The 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 \$5,659. This provides families with an important opportunity to improve their quality of life and to increase their economic status. Individuals and families that have their taxes prepared at the La Casa VITA satellite will also save money by not having to pay the costly tax preparer fees charged by private tax services. Last year, nearly \$7.6 million dollars went uncollected within Newark alone!

Volunteer Certified Tax Preparers will be available to prepare returns:

Mondays 11 am -7pm

**beginning Monday January 28th, through Monday April 14th
at La Casa's new Family Success Center, 595 North 6th Street**

(just off of Bloomfield Avenue)

Call 973-482-9002 to schedule an appointment

What to bring to your appointment:

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

For more details please call 1-888-TAXES-11.



Community and Economic Development

La Casa Continues Its Get Out the Vote Efforts



Staff hung 1000 posters around Lower Broadway and distributed 10,000 door-hanger flyers urging residents of North Newark to vote in the November, 2007 election.

Lower Broadway Neighborhood Council Celebrates the Holidays in Style

The Lower Broadway Neighborhood Council had its 4th Annual Holiday Celebration on Thursday, December 13. Over 80 residents, stakeholders and children braved the icy weather to attend this year's celebration, held at St. Lucy's Community Center. The celebration was funded by the stakeholders and La Casa de Don Pedro. Stakeholders were encouraged to bring a favorite family dish to share with the party. Special activities were offered for the children including: dancing, face painting, pictures with Santa, a fashion show and other activities. The children sang Christmas carols to the senior citizens from Villa Victoria and Certificates of Appreciation were presented to our community leaders and volunteers.

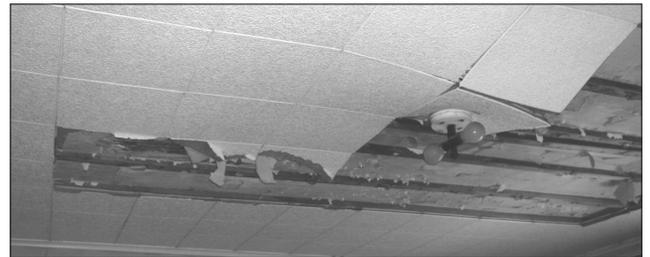


Children enjoying face painting at the Community Holiday Celebration.

Saving Neighborhoods One Home at a Time

Over the past year, the Neighborhood Rehabilitation Program has provided a great deal of relief and assistance to Newark homeowners and the neighborhoods that surround them. With over 80 applicants still hoping to access this program, so far La Casa has assisted 10 families make over \$257,000 in needed health and safety repairs.

Many homeowners find the stress of repairs unbearable and unrealistic. They are elderly and disabled, usually living on fixed incomes that prohibit them from making some or any repairs at all. We have also come across too many who have taken on a second mortgage to make home repairs, only to discover that they have been swindled out of their money and if repairs were done, the work was shoddy at best.



Pictures above show Ms Richardson's ceiling before and after the repairs. La Casa replaced her roof, ceilings, walls, floor tiles, carpet. Sections of the house were painted and a new staircase to the front porch was built.

Several homeowners have lived in their homes since the 60's and 70's. Homeowner Wilhelmina Richardson has raised her four children, as a single mother since 1976. Ms Richardson was in a serious emergency state when she contacted La Casa's Neighborhood Rehabilitation Program. Her home was retaining water and the damage had gone from mild to severe.

On rainy days, Ms Richardson would sleep in her living room because large sections of the ceiling in her bedroom caved in and Ms. Richardson had to cover her bed with a plastic drop cloth. Dripping rainwater also tricked onto the bedroom carpet, aggravating Ms. Richardson's severe asthma and further damaging her physical and mental health.



Youth and Family Services

Youth Empowerment Services

The Youth Empowerment Services (Y.E.S.) program is a program geared for adolescents ages 13-17 who are facing the challenging issues of being a teenager through one on one counseling, group counseling and computer literacy classes.

Every Friday, the Y.E.S. program is the place to be. Members of the counseling program gather for "Group Forum" which gives the students an opportunity to meet up and vent about their action-packed school week. Some of the workshops tackled this quarter included: Self-Esteem Awareness, Violence in the Schools, Positive Relationships, Gang Awareness and an intense discussion on Urban Culture.

One of our most popular events this fall was a forum entitled "The Youth Voice on Youth Issues". It was promoted by the Essex County Youth Advisory Board, Tri-City Peoples Corp. and Prevent Child Abuse in NJ and was held at the West Side Park Community Center. Guest speakers informed the audience that the key to progressing in the future lies in the student's ability to stay focused and on track.

The Y.E.S. group also coordinated with Dr. Ann Wilson from The ARK of NJ to provide a very informative safety and prevention workshop for the youths and their family members. This was an eye-opening experience focusing on fire safety in the home, family exit drills, proper uses of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, child safety in automobiles and the helmet safety laws of New Jersey. Raffles were drawn and prizes, such as smoke detectors, carbon monoxide alarms and bicycle helmets were given away at this event.

Y.E.S.'s Holiday Bash was held in mid-December and the youngsters had an amazing time celebrating the year with local cuisine and some exotic healthy fruit smoothies. It was all smiles and cheers as the youngsters danced away in the company of their counselors. We all look forward to the new exciting year of 2008 and wish everyone a safe and healthy New Year!

Youth & Family Services: Community Mentoring

The Community Mentoring Program kept itself busy this fall introducing new and exciting activities and workshops to its youth. Continuing their involvement with the Mayor's Office's Newark Youth Connection, the young people honed their public speaking and networking skills at the Communication Tools for Tomorrow's Leaders Program held at City Hall.

To celebrate the spirit of Thanksgiving, our youth coordinated another blood drive with the help of our colleagues and community in November. The youth were involved with every aspect of the blood drive from planning, recruiting, confirming donor appointments, visiting colleagues at their offices to encourage participation, and posting flyers throughout the community. Oh yes, and also taking turns dressing up as "Buddy" the blood drop mascot! The

Mentoring Program participants also worked with youngsters from the Afterschool Enrichment Program to heighten their awareness of the importance of donating blood. Each participant who assisted with the blood drive received community service hours that were reported to their respective high schools for community service credit.(each high school student in the Newark Public Schools is responsible for completing 60 hours of community service before graduation).

Community Mentoring Program participants and their families mixed their holiday festivities with goal-setting for the new year, celebrating the holidays at a Bloomfield restaurant. The evening was designed to provide parents with an opportunity to spend quality time with their children. The youth created a self portrait in a frame and presented it to their parents, and the youth received La Casa winter hats and hygiene materials in a gift bag. With holiday music playing in the background, youth and parents were asked to prepare New Years Resolution contracts. These contracts were created to help parents to bond, and compromise with their youth on goals they would like to accomplish as a family in the New Year and it was a successful and enriching evening.

After School Enrichment Program

The After School Enrichment Program's students were invited to assist with outreach for the Community Mentoring Project's blood drive this fall. Each student was given a blank poster board and was asked to make a picture representing what they knew about an American Red Cross blood drive. Over 90 posters were submitted and only 4 grand prizes were selected. The winners received medals and a grand prize at an assembly conducted by the CMP program. One of CMP youth dressed up as "Buddy" the blood drop and presented them with the winning students with prizes.

The After School Enrichment Program's holiday celebration was on December 19th and it was a success! The children were proud to show their parents their decorated classrooms for the holiday party. They also prepared and performed songs for their parents to enjoy. A special thanks to Medieval times for providing us with 50 tickets. On December 27th parents and children enjoyed dinner and a show there.

A group of students from the After School Enrichment Program were treated to an overnight trip to the Great Wolf Lodge Indoor Water Park Resort in Pocono Mountains, Pennsylvania during a break from school. The children had a



Buddy, the blood drive mascot, poses with children.

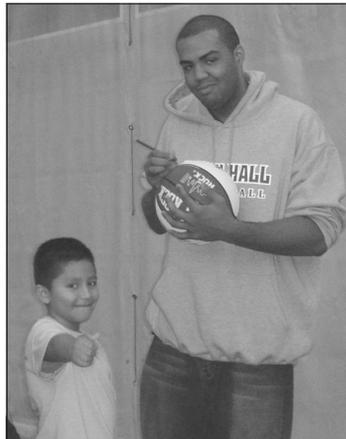


A mother and son prepare resolutions.

Youth and Family Services (continued from page 5)

great time on all of the indoor water activities, including the water slides, waterfalls, game arcade and activity rooms. They had so much fun, and hope to raise funds to return in the future!

On November 18th, 50 children and staff were treated to a Seton Hall Pirates basketball game at the new arena in Newark, The Rock. The children and staff had a fantastic time as they cheered on the Seton Hall players. Thank you to La Casa Board member and Seton Hall activist Nicholas Scalera for facilitating the ticket donation.



A student poses with SHU's star player, John Garcia.

Family Success Center

Health Fair

Over one hundred people attended our annual health fair, "Prevent Today for a Healthy Tomorrow". Among the services provided included blood pressure screening, glucose level checks, and screening for HIV and other STDs. We would like to thank the 17 organizations and institutions that made this fair possible. We would also like to thank our health fair sponsors: Goya Foods, Amerigroup, Burger King, and El Pueblo Meat Supermarket. Thanks to the Newspaper "El Especial" for advertising our event and especially to Ms. Elizabeth Roca, Sales Representative. Special thanks to Amerigroup for their continuous collaboration with our program, and their donation to La Casa.

Influenza Vaccination

La Casa's Family Success Center, and the City of Newark, hosted the Influenza Vaccination Program at the 23



People packed La Casa's Health Fair.

Broadway community center. Free flu shots were administered to all Newark residents and anyone who works in the City of Newark. We are very proud to announce that 125 people received a flu shot through this program.



Adults and children bravely received flu vaccinations.

Parents and Childrens' Club



As part of our curriculum of our Parenting Skills Sessions we continue to give parents opportunities to engage in stress-relieving activities.

Family Violence Prevention

In October, La Casa's Family Violence Prevention program organized a "Walk for Hope" as part of Domestic Violence Awareness month. The purpose of the walk was to give a voice to victims of Domestic Violence and to promote community awareness. Over 40 program participants, family members and staff participated in, the walk which began at our 23 Broadway center, proceeded to City Hall and back to the center. During the walk, purple ribbons, flyers, and Family Violence Prevention Program Brochures were distributed to bystanders. The walkers began and ended the walk chanting "No more, No mas, Basta, Enough is Enough!" while holding up handmade posters. The walk was an empowering moment for victims to raise awareness, for family members to demonstrate their support and for the issue of domestic violence to emerge from the shadows. Since the walk, the Family Violence Prevention Program has received a number of new clients, many of whom reported

that they learned about the program from an advertisement in El Especialito Newspaper. This was our first year of participating in Domestic Violence Awareness Month and we plan to hold the “Walk for Hope” next year.

On October 12, 2007, ten clients from the Family Violence Prevention Program went to see a play at El Repertorio Español. The trip was designed as a way to allow women to enjoy time away from their families on their own. Some of these women had never been to a theater to watch a play before. The play was not only enjoyable but also really helped to build confidence and self-esteem.



Domestic violence survivors supporters and family members participate in a Walk For Hope.

Personal Development

Personal Development’s Basic Needs Drive

The Personal Development Division provides a number of critical adult education and empowerment services including, Immigration Assistance, English as a Second Language Classes, and Adult Basic Education. However, the Division has recently noted a tremendous increase in incidences of undocumented families seeking the most basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter and furniture. Because of their “undocumented” status, these families are not eligible for many types of assistance and have been referred to or turned to La Casa de Don Pedro for help. As a result, the Personal Development Division began a “Basic Needs Drive” in November which will take place all year long to collect a wide array of supplies for families including food, diapers, formula, clothes, and furniture for these undocumented families. So far, the drive has been a success and we have been able to assist these families. This cause was adopted by the South Orange/Maplewood branch of Mothers and More who contributed over 15 bags of baby supplies so far. Many La Casa staff have also made significant contributions and we ask that staff and our friends continue to remember these families contribute what we can.

Improvements and Refinements About at the Hispanic Women’s Resource Center

In order to better serve the needs of the community, The Hispanic Women’s Resource Center (HWRC) has revamped its English as a Second Language classes, expanding the number of levels from three to five levels. The beginner and intermediate levels were each broken up into two levels apiece in order to give adequate time to cover the concepts and to better align with National Reporting System standards. This change increases the opportunity for achievement at each ensuing level. It also has allowed for the implementation of an intensive advanced level course, which will be offered once a year for a 12-week cycle.

Of course, the point of any ESL program is to produce English speakers. To facilitate this goal, two month-long conversational classes have been added to the slate. The first

one came to a successful conclusion in December. The Rosetta Stone language learning software has also been instituted on Fridays in the LULAC computer lab to complement the classroom instruction.

The HWRC continues to offer workshops in areas such as breast cancer awareness, domestic violence, and immigration in addition to a job readiness series.

La Casa’s Network Helps Change Lives

When Maria* first came to the Personal Development Division for immigration assistance, she was a frightened young woman. Facing a domestic violence crisis at home, this young mother and her newborn needed guidance, counseling and hope, all of which she found at La Casa. The Immigration Services Program quickly conducted intake and prepared her case. They also referred her to La Casa’s Domestic Violence Intervention Program in the Youth and Family Services Division. Mayra followed the steps we suggested. The INS approved her case, and she is awaiting her green card. Her whole world turned around and now Mayra is happy, working, studying, and taking care of her 1 year-old son.

** not her real name*

ANNOUNCEMENT:

Hispanic Women’s Resource Center Scholarship Applications are due March 14th..

Applicants must be:

- ▶ Hispanic woman
- ▶ Demonstrate a financial need
- ▶ Be enrolled or going to be enrolled in post-secondary education
- ▶ Write an essay

Applications are available at 39 Broadway, 2nd Floor. Contact Anyelis Cordero acordero@lacasanwk.org for more information.

**La Casa de Don Pedro employees do not qualify.*

Community Improvement

LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM Office Hours and Locations

La Casa de Don Pedro LIHEAP/USF Main Office 317 Roseville Avenue Newark (973) 485-0795 or (973) 485-0796	Monday, Tuesday and Thursday	9am - 4pm
	Wednesday	9am - 7pm
	Every second Saturday	9am - 1pm
La Casa de Don Pedro LIHEAP/USF Satellite Office at PSE&G Newark Customer Service Center 80 Park Plaza Newark	Monday through Friday	9am - 4pm
	Wednesday and Friday	9am - 4pm
La Casa de Don Pedro LIHEAP/USF Satellite Office at PSE&G West Orange Customer Service Center 59 Main Street West Orange	Monday through Friday	9am - 5pm
	Wednesday	9am - 5 pm
Irvington Office	Wednesday	9am - 5 pm

LIHEAP Update

The 2007-08 Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program season began on November first and the staff has been working hard to keep up with the huge demands we're seeing. In Home Energy we have been extremely busy as usual. Between November 1st and December 31st, we have received a little over 8,400 applications for energy assistance.

We have also addressed 166 fuel emergencies so far, expending more than \$100,000 on fuel oil. Needless to say, application submissions by mail are coming in by the bucketfull on a daily basis.

LIHEAP Application Deadline:

March 31, 2008 (unless extended by the State)

Oil Emergency Program:

November 29 - March 15, 2008

Gas Emergency Program:

March 16, 2007 - April 30, 2008

All clients who have been deemed eligible have received a benefit in the past and have not moved **do not** need to complete a LIHEAP application. These clients can be re-certified simply by filling out the blue recertification form, updating their income and submitting their current utility bill and/or household size. These forms were mailed out in the fall, however La Casa can send another one out or clients can visit any of our branches to obtain one.

We are also happy to announce that we have also partnered with the Irvington Neighborhood Preservation Program to bring more Weatherization services to that community.

Weatherization Program Receives National Recognition

Norma Sessa and the Community Development Division received a national recognition award at the National Weatherization Conference. La Casa's Weatherization Assistance Program was recognized for outstanding service. According to conference organizers, La Casa has the highest number of weatherized units based on poverty statistics for our area. The national nominating committee questioned Clarice Sabree, the NJ Department of Community Affairs representative who monitors La Casa's program. Ms. Sabree informed the committee that Division Director, Norma Sessa was a resilient person who does not let obstacles stand in the way, even in the face of adversity.

Norma reported that La Casa received high praise at the conference. She quickly recognized the hard work of her entire staff as well as the Fiscal Unit and the Executive Director. "I would like to thank our Executive Director Ray Ocasio for allowing me to grow and having confidence in me" Norma said. "There have been many challenges and there is still so much more to accomplish, but I care about this community and I love the agency so the work remains rewarding" she added.



Weatherization is 'Tagging' Its Work

Look for signs of on weatherization assistance coming to a neighborhood near you! La Casa is now posting signs in front of buildings it weatherizes to help promote the program and spread the word.

Early Childhood Education

Early Childhood Education: Center III

The children at First Street received a visit from the Fire Department in October. The children listened carefully as the firefighters taught them about fire prevention safety and offered demonstrations. Afterwards they were treated to tours of a real fire truck parked outside the building and were even shown how the ladder and the fire hose worked! Many thanks to the firefighters for their visit and for helping to keep our town safe.



Center III learns about fire safety.

Early Childhood Development Center I

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.

As he does every year, our Chef, Mr. Andy Henry, provided all the students with a traditional Thanksgiving lunch. This year was no different and the children enjoyed the delicious meal while sitting around the table.

On December 4th, the school had a Lead Prevention Workshop for the parents where it explained to them what to look for regarding lead and where children can get lead poisoning by being exposed to such things as dust from peeling paint, and lead in drinking water because of possible lead pipes and solder in home plumbing.

An Immigration Workshop is being planned for the parents in January. Interested parents will learn more about immigration issues including their citizenship and residency status.

Center II Celebrates Three Kings Day

On January 4, 2008 La Casa de Don Pedro Early Childhood Development Center II at 39 Broadway celebrated the “Three Kings Day.” With the collaboration of all the parents we were able to provide gifts to the students. The President of the Parent’s Committee, Edith Atahualpa (right), Center Director Wanda Recio (middle) and Administrative Assistant Karina Cordova (left) distributes gifts to the students at 39 Broadway.



Celebrating Three Kings Day.

Association for Children of NJ Releases 2007 Newark Kids Count at La Casa

La Casa de Don Pedro’s Family Success Center at 23 Broadway was the site of a press conference held by the Association for Children of New Jersey and the City Administration to unveil the latest Newark Kids Count report. This report is a critical resource for La Casa de Don Pedro as it offers a snapshot of child and family wellbeing in Newark from one year to the next. For the second year in a row, Mayor Booker and Maria Vizcarrondo, Director of the City’s Department of Child and Family Wellbeing accepted the report as critical document in the City’s agenda for children and families.



Mayor Booker poses with La Casa staff after his remarks.



Pre-school students performed holiday songs for their parents and guests.



Members of the Basile/Comerci Family at Center I.

La Casa's Annual Holiday Toy Drive

Each year, La Casa's toy collection efforts are challenged by the increasing numbers of families we serve, and every year, we meet our goal. Beginning in October, the names, ages and gender of La Casa's needy children were gathered to establish our collection goal for Christmas. This year, over 500 names were collected! La Casa turned to it's staff, friends and corporate supporters to ensure that each child was not empty-handed this season. This year, we received donations from our friends at the Hispanic Federation, North Jersey Federal Credit Union, Essex County Sheriffs' Department, Councilman Carlos M. Gonzalez's Office, and others. For the second year in a row, two of La Casa's centers were adopted by La Casa friends who purchased toys for each child and came to distribute them. At the 75 Park Avenue location's Holiday Party, the Basile/Comerci Family, friends of Board Member, Nick Scalera arrived with dozens of bags of toys for the prekindergartners and their siblings. The North Jersey Federal Credit Union (NJFCU) adopted our 39 Broadway center, where they also have a branch office. NJFCU President Lourdes Cortez-Garcia states, "We are happy to help make the holiday brighter for these children. It is this spirit of giving that reinforces the credit union philosophy in today's world."

Hundreds of toys were also collected and distributed to our Youth and Family Services, Personal Development and Community and Economic Development Divisions. La Casa's staff members donated almost 200 toys and enthusiastically volunteered their time to help sort the toys by age and gender for delivery to our various sites. Thanks to the generosity of our staff and donors, we successfully collected and delivered toys to every needy child served by La Casa. Thank you to all who participated in bringing this joy to our community. We look forward to continuing our toy drive and making it a success for many years to come.



Lourdes Garcia from NJFCU with Santa and a student.



Sheriff Fontoura poses at First Street.



Councilman Carlos Gonzalez Supports Holiday Drive in a Big Way

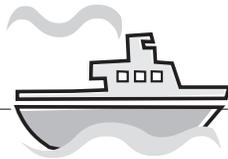
This year, La Casa received a very generous donation from Councilman Carlos M. Gonzalez toward our annual holiday toy drive. Because of the Councilman's generous donation, La Casa was able to purchase toys, gift cards and assembled 92 food bags for our neediest children and families. Thank you Councilman Gonzalez!



La Casa's Holiday Celebration

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Staff News



Welcome Aboard

Community and Economic Development
Carrie Puglisi - Program Manager

Youth and Family Services

Betsy Balbuena - Instructor
Faeli Dussan - Program Coordinator
Anakar Millan - Instructor
Tanisha Ocasio Cruz - Instructor

Community Improvement

Ivan Rodriguez - Home Energy Assistance
Moraima Sierra - Home Energy Assistance
Tanya Meyers - Home Energy Assistance

Personal Development

Vivian A. Gil - Assistant Coordinator

Early Childhood

Mia Roldant - Wrap Around Instructor (ECC II)

Bundles of Joy

Rakelmis Montas - It's a Girl!!!!

Welcome Back

- ▶ Ambreen Sheikh (Jr. Accountant, Fiscal)
- ▶ Marina Tejada (Early Childhood Development II)

Farewells

- ▶ Ana Bracamonte (Teacher, Early Childhood Development III)
- ▶ Gerald Gonzalez (Instructor, Personal Development)
- ▶ Naemah Sarmad (Program Manager, Community and Economic Development)



Topics of the Quarter

Supplemental Insurance

A total of 97 employees enrolled into the Colonial Supplemental Insurance Program which offers supplemental life, accidental, cancer, critical and short-term disability insurance.

United Way

A total of 99 employees participated in the 2007-2008 United Way Campaign with a total of approximately \$4,056 for the pledge year. We would like to thank all those staff members who pledged and contributed during the campaign. Thank you very much for your generosity and for joining us in making a difference and for investing in what matters, our community!



Employee Spotlight

A total of 32 nominations were submitted for this quarter's Employee Spotlight

401K enrollments

A total of 18 employees enrolled in the 401 K program in the past quarter.

NJFCU

Thank you to the La Casa staff members who participated in a NJFCU survey. Employees who participated will be placed in a drawing to win \$50.00 VISA Gift Card. NJFCU will announce the drawing during the month of January. Thank you for your opinions and for participating.

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

ERIC RIVERA, 5th Grader and participant of La Casa de Don Pedro's After School Enrichment Program is shown here holding his work of art which was chosen as La Casa's holiday cards this year. Over 100 pictures were submitted. Congratulations Eric!!



Raymond Ocasio, *Executive Director*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Zoraya Lee-Hamlin	<i>President</i>
Esmeralda Cameron	<i>Resource Development Committee</i>
Frederick P.H. Cooke	<i>Finance & Asset Management Committee</i>
Angel Luis Juarbe	<i>Board Governance Committee</i>
Jesus Mercado, Jr.	<i>Finance and Asset Management</i>
Lanny Kurzweil, Esq.	<i>Resource Development Committee</i>
Rita Robles-Navas	<i>Board Governance Committee</i>
Jeremias Ocasio Jr.	<i>Special Events Subcommittee</i>
Nelson Perez	<i>Resource Development Committee</i>
Louis E. Prezeau	<i>Treasurer, Finance & Asset Management Committee</i>
Gloria Ramos	<i>Secretary</i>
Richard W. Roper	<i>Vice President,</i>
Nicholas Scalera	<i>Finance & Asset Management Committee</i>
Gail P. Stone	<i>Resource Development Committee</i>
Hector Velazquez	<i>Chair, Special Events Subcommittee Resource Development Committee</i>

La Casa de Don Pedro

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La Casa de Don Pedro

Editors:
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Doris Ramos (DRamos@lacasanwk.org)
973-482-1883 (fax)

Association for Children of NJ Releases 2007 Newark Kids Count at La Casa

La Casa de Don Pedro's Family Success Center at 23 Broadway was the site of a press conference held by the Association for Children of New Jersey and the City Administration to unveil the latest Newark Kids Count report. This report is a critical resource for La Casa de Don Pedro as it offers a snapshot of child and family wellbeing in Newark from one year to the next. For the second year in a row, Mayor Booker and Maria Vizcarrondo, Director of the City's Department of Child and Family Wellbeing accepted the report as critical document in the City's agenda for children and families.

This year the Association for Children of New Jersey took a closer look at youth violence, among the findings in Newark Kids Count 2007:

- ▶ Juveniles in Newark were no more likely to be arrested for violent crimes in 2006 than youth in Essex County or New Jersey as a whole.
- ▶ Arrests of Newark juveniles for violent offenses have fallen sharply over the last five years.
- ▶ In contrast to the overall pattern of declining crime, juvenile arrests for weapons are the same as five years ago and arrests for drug offenses are up. This could reflect increased gang activity in the city.
- ▶ Newark Kids Count 2007 also looks at many other measures of child well-being. It finds encouraging signs of change and evidence of continued, deep problems.
- ▶ Newark's child population has fallen to about the same level as the county and state. This might make it easier for the city to offer children better services, better schools and a better place to grow up.
- ▶ The number of children in families below the federal poverty line has declined sharply. The city's median household income, although higher than in 2005, is still just \$34,521. That is barely more than half the New Jersey median income.
- ▶ The level of educational attainment among adults remains disturbingly low. More than a third of adults over 25 lack even a high school degree.

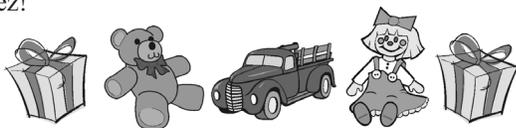
Councilman Carlos Gonzalez Supports Holiday Drive in a Big Way

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