



# CASA

Community Action Stops Abuse

*“Rescuing Families, Creating Homes,  
Building Peace”*

2008 ANNUAL REPORT

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"I appreciate what you all have done for my family and I, (My Mom, my brother and I.) You all took care of the problem with my dad, for the most part. You found us a new school to go to so my father couldn't find me easily. Although he is still rampant out there, I know that I can still contact you guys when I need you. The Child Advocates are kind, someone that I can talk to other than my mom. When we were at the Youth Center I had a great time there. We could play games at our leisure and eat seconds if food was left. There is one more thing about my dad that you must know...he has a habit of hiring other people to do the messy work. I think he has someone in the school board leaking information to him. Every time one of our schools sends for past records, he finds the school. Then all heck breaks loose! However, I have a counter...you guys! If I suspect his presence, I'll call you. Thank you for everything!" M.J., age 13

*Dear Friends,*

*CASA exists to create a community where home, school and life in general are safe for teens like MJ to play games, eat seconds and not worry about when Dad finds them and "all heck breaks loose". **It is the staff and volunteers who are the caring hearts and hands of this CASA community. Supporting their work is a noble mission.***

*"All heck" broke loose for CASA this year fighting for the survival of Peacemakers, CASA's prevention program for children. Our public funders had to make hard decisions about which services they could afford to keep in these austere times. **CASA Staff and Board members, teachers, community volunteers and our community partners - The Haven of RCS, Operation PAR and Community Pride Day Care - stood together and spoke at public hearings and board, council and commission meetings, urging decision makers to consider funding the long-term prevention that our collaborative "Creating a New Generation of Peacemakers" provides.** When dealing with scarcity, vision tends to become myopic. We were thrilled when what was an original recommendation of zero funding turned around at the last hour and resulted in almost full funding and a new partnership with the JWB Children's Services Council and Eckerd Community Alternatives.*

*As good stewards, CASA maintains a diverse funding base of nearly 40 grants. We have our eggs in many baskets that make us stronger. The CASA Board and Trustees have set ambitious goals to raise more from the local community. **About a third of our budget comes directly from local donors and we would like to increase that to half of the budget, or about \$1.75 million.** It is a challenging goal in these times and we are working to improve our relationships with you, our donors. We encourage donors to get to know us*

*cont'd*

better by touring our facilities and becoming involved regularly or on short term projects as volunteers. **If you and your family and friends have an idea of how you would like to be involved, please contact CASA's volunteer coordinator.**

Sometimes, progress doesn't come without a struggle! In order to produce the data that funders require, CASA has tested several software options over the past 15 years. **ALICE, the data collection software CASA staff is learning will revolutionize how we work. Soon, ALICE will keep a single electronic file for each family we serve.** Before ALICE, if one individual or family used more than one CASA service, we had as many as six paper files. What an imposition on women and children to keep asking them for personal information over and over again. The learning curve is steep for staff but the results promise a kinder, more efficient service.

But what still keeps us up at night? CASA advocates watch the child protection system becoming ever more punitive towards battered mothers, blaming them for not controlling the batterer's behavior that is affecting the children. Instead of holding the batterer accountable, the system tries to "fix" victims who are not the source of the problem. Rather than creating safety for a child like M.J. and his mother, the system is just as likely to place M.J. and his brother in foster care, away from a mother who is doing everything she can to protect them. Mom receives a "case plan" that she is required to accomplish before she can see her children again. The batterer now has a system-accomplice to punish the mother for not being obedient to him. **CASA advocates are working collaboratively with the child protection system to design training to explain the unique dynamics of domestic violence and to improve our systemic response so that we can do a better job of providing support, safety for M.J. and a counter when "all heck breaks loose".**

**We hope you will join CASA in making home a safe place!**



Linda Osmundson  
Executive Director



Dan Mageras  
CASA Board President



## *Madji's amazing story*

Madji was born in Senegal, and grew up all over the world. She was living in New Jersey, finishing her degree, and working as a well paid Assistant Director of a company when she met and married her husband. Only a few months after her marriage in 2001, she and her husband moved to Florida. She soon learned that she was pregnant with her son, who was born in December of that year. She enrolled to finish her degree at the University of Central Florida; however, her husband's interception of her transcripts caused the college to refuse admission. Since she was no longer a student, she lost her legal status in the United States.



*Madji with Transitional Housing Coordinator, Verrita Walters*

As the physical abuse from her husband began, Madji immediately began looking for a safe place for her and her son to escape to. Her sister, who lived in France, opened her home to the two of them; however, she was quickly reminded that because her son was a U.S. citizen and she was not, if she left she would be charged with kidnapping.

Madji remembers 2004 well. It was the year that four hurricanes visited Florida, two of them leaving Orlando damaged. Madji had been working with Catholic Charities in Orlando on her immigration papers, but the office closed during the storms. Desperate to find an alternative, Madji found CASA on the internet. After talking on the phone with an advocate, she and her 4-year-old son moved into the shelter. She learned about the Transitional Housing program and applied at the end of her 45-day shelter stay. She was granted a divorce in 2005 and continued to work on her immigration status by learning the laws and taking every step that was required. She told her story to every government agency that could help her until she won legal status. While in transitional housing Madji went back to college and worked as a software translator. Madji used every moment at CASA to prepare a better life for herself and her son.

Since her divorce, her husband has made no effort to see his son. He was issued visitation rights through the CASA Visitation Center, but when he learned that the meetings with his child would involve a police officer, he never showed up. Madji made many petitions for sole custody, and was turned down many times. As her time at CASA was coming to an end, she made another motion to be allowed to take her son to New Jersey. She finally won her fight for custody.

Madji's amazing story did not end when she left CASA. In New Jersey she returned to college and started her own language services business, providing accounting and commercial cleaning services in English, Spanish and French, all of which she speaks fluently. She says that her two years at CASA gave her the time and peace to grow and bloom as a person, a woman and a mother.



## A resident's gratitude

The Transitional Housing program at CASA is structured so that participants who have made the decision to leave a home filled with violence and create a new life can build the skills they need to survive and thrive on their own. The following is a letter from a Transitional Housing resident requesting to move to the next level in the program...

Dear CASA,

I feel that moving up to level two of CASA's transitional housing program is a very big step. I came to CASA determined to finish this escape, make something of myself and become a woman. It has been hard, and also a relief. I'm determined to move forward in life. I want to stay positive and help others like myself. Let them know the storm will pass. Tell them to keep their head up. They should realize this program is rough for a reason. Would you rather have it rough with your abuser? Or have it rough with positive women who have been through the similar pain we have?

This discipline is to help mold us into stronger, independent women. It's to help us become more aware of how to avoid an abusive relationship. To have our children, as well, heal from the pain they may have within themselves. Also they will be proud of us as their Mother who did not take the madness any longer. We stuck up for ourselves and did not let anyone stop us from being who we really are. They too will become stronger individuals like us.

I try hard to keep my apartment clean. I work with the program because I know this program is for me. The women here are so positive. That makes a big difference when it comes to motivation for success. I feel I should move up to level two because I'm honest and own up to my mistakes. I am not trying to run games with CASA or their staff. I just want to learn more and be guided in the right direction for success, as well as help other that are in real need like me. I will follow all the rules level two requires. I also will miss everyone here when I graduate and fly away a beautiful butterfly that you kept safe.

Lots of love and thank you,

"A CASA Gateway Transitional Housing Resident"

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## CASA Wins Non-Profit of the Year Award

On June 19, CASA was named "Non-Profit of the Year" for 2008 by the *Tampa Bay Business Journal*. The annual award recognizes the fiscal responsibility and business acumen of Tampa Bay area nonprofits. CASA received the award in one of 6 categories.

At the awards luncheon in Tampa, Executive Director, Linda Osmundson had the opportunity to address the audience, stating "Every day I get letters from women who say we made a difference and changed their lives. This award shows that even our business community recognizes the services we provide to help people feel whole again."



# AUDITED FINANCIAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2007 - JUNE 30, 2008

## INCOME

### GOVERNMENT:

FEDERAL	\$	795,283
STATE	\$	182,683
LOCAL	\$	1,373,212
	\$	<u>2,351,178</u>

### FUNDRAISING:

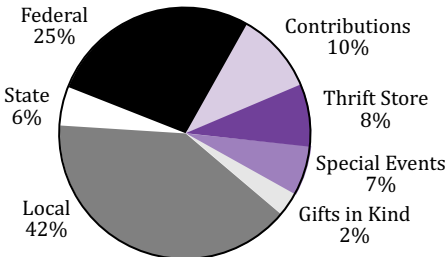
SPECIAL EVENTS (net of expenses)	\$	236,419
THRIFT SHOPPE SALES (net of expenses)	\$	246,952
CONTRIBUTIONS AND BEQUESTS	\$	318,089
GIFTS IN KIND	\$	61,096
OTHER	\$	3,226
	\$	<u>865,782</u>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>3,216,960</b>

## EXPENSES

PROGRAM SERVICES	\$	2,656,855
ADMINISTRATIVE & GENERAL	\$	426,121
DEVELOPMENT & FUNDRAISING	\$	268,404
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>3,351,380</b>
<b>DECREASE IN NET ASSETS</b>		<b>(\$134,420)</b>

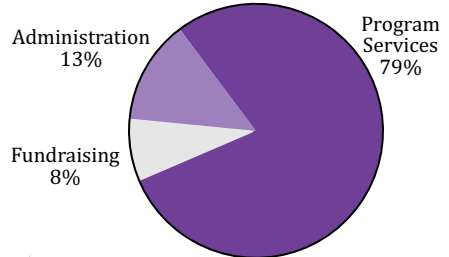
### Revenues

Year ended June 30, 2008



### Expenses

Year ended June 30, 2008



# A Community Making a Difference

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*ValPak volunteers paint a mural in the shelter playground.*

*The Industrial Company presents Linda Osmundson with \$8,000 from their event.*



*Verizon presents CASA with donations from "Shower for Shelter"*



*James Fezell is a MoneySmart® trainer with the National Foundation for Debt Management. He provides free classes to residents of CASA's residents on budgeting, saving, credit, banking information, home buying and other financial needs. At the end of the class, residents receive a certificate which can be used to demonstrate to potential loan officers that they are reasonable credit risks.*



# CASA Programs

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CASA, Community Action Stops Abuse, has been providing lifesaving services to the Tampa Bay area since 1977. Over the last 31 years, the community has relied on CASA to provide a safe refuge, crisis intervention, advocacy, prevention, professional training, outreach, and community education to end domestic violence and bring hope, independence and peace to families.

From July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008, **more than 10,000 people received services** from CASA.

## RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS

CASA's residential programs provide refuge and empowerment to survivors and their families when home is no longer safe. The 30-bed shelter offers families a healing sanctuary for up to 45-days. The 14-unit transitional housing facility provides up to two years of safe apartment-style living for survivors working toward their educational goals or strengthening their foundation as providers for their family.

CASA's licensed Youth Center offers residential children a healing environment where they learn to live free of violence.

- Last year, **228 adult survivors** sought refuge in CASA's shelter.
- **145 children** were able to live free of violence and fear in our residential programs.
- Transitional Housing provided **13,482 nights** of shelter to long term residents.

## 24-Hour Crisis Line:

CASA's 24-hour crisis line is the link for survivors to empowering programs that help rebuild lives. **8,970 calls** were answered last year, and each one was met by a trained advocate that provided intervention, safety planning, information, and referrals.

## CLOUD PROGRAM(Community & Legal Outreach Department)

### Support Groups and Outreach Advocacy:

Last year, CASA provided **927 domestic violence support groups** strengthening survivors and empowering them to live a life free of violence.

### Legal Advocacy:

Legal advocates provided assistance with **1,551 injunctions for protection**, and **2,208** return, felony, or misdemeanor hearings.



# CASA Programs

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## **Emergency Response:**

CASA's **Emergency Response Team** provided critical intervention to **188 families in crisis** referred by a Child Protection Investigator.

## **Survivor Referral:**

### **YESS PROGAM (Youth Education and Support Services)**

**Peacemakers:** In collaboration with Operation PAR, The Haven of RCS, and Community Pride Child Care, Inc., CASA works directly with Pinellas County schools to present multi-week programs focused on peaceful alternatives to violence. Peacemaker graduates develop values that promote compassion, empathy, and respect for themselves, others, and the environment. Last year, more than **6,000 children** from preschool to middle school participated in the Peacemaker's program.

## **Visitation Center:**

CASA provides a secure environment for court ordered visitation and exchanges of children between their residential and non-residential parent. Through the use of a Girls, Inc. facility in Pinellas Park, CASA **supervised 1,567 visits**, and **monitored 417 exchanges**.

## **COMMUNITY AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING**

Much of the success of CASA's programs is the result of the **332 presentations** and professional training workshops conducted by staff. Last year, **7,921 people** learned about the complexity of domestic violence and the lifesaving services CASA provides to those in need. Professional training was provided for **1,008 people** working with domestic violence survivors.

## **SPECIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS**

The **CASA Collections Thrift Shoppe** provides survivor families the opportunity to shop, at no expense, among the numerous donations of gently used items received by generous supporters in the community. **Families received \$49,000** in donated clothing, house wares, and furniture. Open to the community, all revenue generated from thrift store sales supports CASA programs.

**Volunteers** are CASA's key to supporting families and staff on their journey to creating a community free of violence. Last year, **389 volunteers** provided more than **10,421 hours** of service to residential and outreach programs, legal advocacy, the thrift store, administration and community awareness efforts.



# CASA Peacemaker Society

*Peacemaker Society members are a select group of donors who have committed to make a difference through a multi-year pledge of \$1,000 or more per year for five years. Peacemaker Society gifts ensure the longevity of CASA's advocacy for survivors of domestic abuse.*

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July 1, 2007 - June 30, 2008

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