Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world.

Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.

—Margaret Mead
What started with the dream of two men has become a life-changing reality for an entire community.

In 1999, Keith Decker and Peter McQueen decided to create an organization to meet a dire need in Chicago’s Humboldt Park neighborhood: transitional housing and support services for homeless young men. Through tireless perseverance and devotion to the mission, La Casa Norte was born.

The first phase was completed in July 2002 when our Crisis Center opened its doors. Since that time, La Casa Norte has serviced 500 households with case management, housing advocacy and referral services. We have established ourselves as a viable and competent resource for the community and participate in numerous local city and state initiatives that address homelessness and help at-risk families and youth.

Over the past year, La Casa Norte has been raising funds for the development of the second phase—our transitional housing residence. While we have made significant progress in the capital campaign, we must remain focused to secure the balance of our unmet need. La Casa Norte is committed that our residence will be ready for occupancy in early 2005. We need all of your continued efforts and support to see that commitment come true.

Being a part of the La Casa Norte family has been the greatest personal and professional challenge and accomplishment that any individual could desire. I get to do great work every day for the community that my family and I live in. Thank you for this opportunity to make a difference.

2003 was an incredible year for La Casa Norte. Let’s continue to work together to bring hope and success to our clients and community. The possibilities are endless!

In love and peace,

Sol Flores
Executive Director
La Casa Norte aims to impact the social issue of homelessness at the individual and community levels. As indicated by the diagram, our approach incorporates three components—mission, service and delivery—all of which continuously inform one another.

We are committed to:

• creating **opportunity** and an **uplifting** experience
• listening in a **compassionate** and **non-judgmental** manner
• promoting a spirit of **community** and **teamwork** between staff and clients
• approaching our work with **passion** and **enthusiasm**
• examining all the circumstances of a problem to come up with the best **solution**
La Casa Norte’s Crisis Center opened in July 2002 and since that time has become a valuable resource, providing unique services for Chicago’s Humboldt Park community.

**How We Work**

La Casa Norte’s integrated service delivery approach includes four components:

**Intake:** The central aims of the intake process are to establish an understanding of the clients as human beings, to understand their needs, and to create a repository of relevant information.

**Case Management:** The primary objectives of the case management process are to develop, execute and constantly revise an action plan that effectively addresses the client’s high priority needs.

**Housing Advocacy:** The major goals of the housing advocacy process are to fully support and represent the needs and interests of the client through interaction and negotiation with prospective landlords and other stakeholders in the process.

**Follow-up:** The primary aims of the follow-up process are to understand and evaluate the status and progress of the client as they relate to the service plan.

**Our Clients**

- The Crisis Center services families, youth and single adults.
- We have serviced 500 households since July 2002.
- Our clients are predominantly Latino and African-American.
- Over 50% of our clients are monolingual Spanish speakers.

**Our Difference**

La Casa Norte is unique because we are the only organization providing free, accessible, bilingual and bicultural case management and housing advocacy services to homeless and at-risk individuals, families and youth in Chicago’s Humboldt Park community.

By contracting with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, La Casa Norte has provided unprecedented housing advocacy services to DCFS clients. The partnership has strengthened our community by reconnecting families and assisting them in finding stable housing.

The Crisis Center has developed and implemented support groups for women and youth, providing them with resources and motivation through various means of self-expression including poetry, movement and art therapy.
Nearly 12,000 youth experience chronic homelessness in Chicago every year, yet there are only 150 shelter beds allocated to these youth. With such a severe lack of services, these young people most often cycle into a life of crime, destitution and adult homelessness. La Casa Norte aims to break this cycle by providing a supportive and safe environment for homeless youth.

La Casa Norte’s transitional housing residence will give 16 homeless male youth, ages 16 to 21, the opportunity to create a meaningful and positive future for themselves. Professionally staffed 24 hours a day, the residence will provide the young men with case management services, education and vocational training, independent living skills, and mental health counseling. Our program will emphasize motivation and empowerment, allowing our residents to recognize and grow into their full potential as productive and healthy young adults. Residents may participate in the program for up to two years.

In order to develop a comprehensive program with the highest quality services, La Casa Norte has launched an extensive research effort. Funded by a Corporation for Supportive Housing capacity-building grant, our staff will visit and interview nearly 30 homeless youth shelter providers in Chicago and other cities, including New York, Minneapolis/St. Paul, San Francisco and Burlington, Vermont. Learning about the experiences and best practices of these youth service providers will help us to create the most effective program for our community.

Construction on the transitional housing residence will begin in the fall of 2004, and the facility will be ready for occupancy in early 2005. Our development partners in this project are Landon Bone Baker Architects and the Prim Lawrence Consulting Group.

We have raised over $400,000 toward the development of the transitional residence and continue to seek additional capital funds from foundations, government sources, churches and individuals.
During our first month of operations in July 2002, La Casa Norte secured a contract with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to provide housing advocacy services for DCFS clients who are homeless or at-risk for homelessness. La Casa Norte is one of four such DCFS providers in Cook County and the only agency providing much-needed Spanish bilingual and bicultural services. DCFS clients include families with minor children as well as older youth and teens who are aging out of the child welfare system.

In September 2002, La Casa Norte held a Grand Opening Celebration at the Horse Stables in Humboldt Park. Local organizations, elected officials, friends and supporters came together in the festive event to share our vision and celebrate our commitment to the community. In a keynote address, Illinois State Senator Miguel del Valle articulated the urgent need for the services of La Casa Norte. All enjoyed a delicious spread provided by “La Casa Norte chef” Rosa Flores. We also premiered a video featuring community members, clients, and our founders and staff.

In December 2002, La Casa Norte hosted its first Christmas Party for our clients and their families. With the help of volunteers, we transformed our office space into a Christmas wonderland. Through the La Casa Norte Needs Network, an electronic listserv created by Russ and Carole Beck, volunteers generously donated presents, clothing and funds for our clients and their children. Volunteers joined in a potluck wrapping party to decorate and wrap all of the gifts. On the big day, Santa, Mrs. Claus and a few elves made their way from the North Pole to hand out gifts to some 60 children, and fun was had by all. The party was such a success that we recreated the magic again in 2003, this time partnering with St. Nicolai Church since we had outgrown our office. Thank you to all who have participated and donated these past two years. We are already planning for Christmas 2004!
In June 2003, La Casa Norte was selected by the Chicago Continuum of Care to receive funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the development of our transitional housing facility for homeless male youth. La Casa Norte will receive almost $400,000 from HUD to be used toward construction costs and operating expenses.

In August 2003, La Casa Norte hosted a Back to School Picnic for 15 client families and their children. Held in Humboldt Park, the picnic included all the elements of summertime fun, from three-legged races to grilling hot dogs and burgers. Each of the 40 children received a large colorful bucket filled with school supplies generously donated by individuals. Food was donated by Whole Foods and Trader Joe’s. The Back to School Picnic will be an annual event and we look forward to the next one!

In September 2003, we held our Under Construction: One Year Anniversary Gala at Rancho Luna de Caribe Restaurant. The event commemorated La Casa Norte’s first year of service to the community and all of our successes, and gave us the opportunity to honor our tremendous supporters. More than 150 people attended to learn about our latest accomplishments and goals, view our new video, and enjoy an evening of entertainment. Through a raffle and donations, we raised over $6,000!

In September 2003, La Casa Norte was awarded a grant from the Field Foundation for general operating support and a grant from the Polk Bros. Foundation for support of our housing advocacy program at the Crisis Center. These grants were very important as they were the first major gifts from large private foundations in the Chicago area.

As a personal challenge, Fred and Marilyn Webster, our great supporters, initiated a fundraising campaign among their friends and colleagues for the transitional residence. As a result of their efforts, we have received almost $35,000 in donations.
Santa’s little helpers—Children help make decorations before Santa’s arrival.

Moment of silence—Guests at our Anniversary Gala attentively watch La Casa Norte’s video.

Meet and greet—La Casa Norte Executive Director Sol Flores and Co-founder Peter McQueen greet guests as they arrive at the Grand Opening Celebration.
La Casa Norte is very caring about their clients and their well-being. I’m so very thankful to them, I can’t even begin to say how much. I thank them for helping me out, listening to me and talking to me as a friend. Since working with La Casa Norte, I found the will to do something for myself. I have been living in the city and I found a job that I like doing. Most importantly, I have my kids back! When I thought that my boys were going the way they shouldn’t, I talked to a worker at La Casa Norte. Now I don’t have to worry about him getting into anything bad and he is doing better in school—and he says he wants to be just like that worker.

Thank you so much, La Casa Norte!

—Margarita and Family

I started working with La Casa Norte in December 2003, a few weeks before my “emancipation” as a DCFS foster youth. It has only been a few months and my experience with La Casa Norte has been wonderful. Not only have they helped me tremendously, but they have a genuine concern for my well-being. La Casa Norte has an absolutely great program that helps all types of individuals.

—Candice Humphrey

I ended up homeless with four children on June 4, 2003. The following day, I went to the Department of Human Services, which placed me in a shelter very close to where I grew up. One of my children was staying with a family member and couldn’t return until I had a stable home. I could not even afford a security deposit and didn’t know what I was going to do. That’s when my DCFS worker referred me to La Casa Norte. Not only did they help me find housing and reunite my family, but they helped me feel a part of the community again. Cynthia, my social worker there, invited me and my children to a picnic for families who were working with La Casa Norte. It was wonderful! They had food, activities for the children, and La Casa Norte provided all the children with school supplies, which were highly needed. In September, La Casa Norte put together a brilliant support group for women. While the children played, the mothers got together and talked about subjects such as STDs, parenting and budgeting. We even got professional massages and makeovers and had a Thanksgiving dinner. La Casa Norte has done so much for my family. They are just wonderful. I’m thankful for being involved with them. God bless them.

—Maria Martinez and Family
In order to provide the best services to our community, La Casa Norte participates in various collaborative efforts and community networks.

**Chicago Continuum of Care**
La Casa Norte is a member of the Youth Committee of the Chicago Continuum of Care, working with other organizations across Chicago that provide services to homeless youth. The Continuum of Care has adopted and is implementing a plan that will attempt to end homelessness in Chicago within ten years.

**Partnership to End Homelessness**
La Casa Norte is a member of the Advocacy Committee of the Partnership to End Homelessness, an association of homeless service providers that works to shape public policy and influence funders in order to provide the best services for homeless people.

**Humboldt Park Empowerment Partnership**
La Casa Norte is a member of the Housing Action Team of the Humboldt Park Empowerment Partnership, a network of organizations, institutions and residents in the Humboldt Park community working on issues of housing, youth and economic development.

**Latino Coalition for Prevention**
La Casa Norte is a member of the Latino Coalition for Prevention, a network of social service organizations that serve Latino communities in Illinois. The Coalition works on advocacy and policy issues for Latino populations.

La Casa Norte is also involved in the following working groups:

**The Public Allies Team Service Project**
**The New Communities Program in Humboldt Park**
**The Humboldt Park Ministerial Association**

As the challenges and strengths of our community change, La Casa Norte will respond appropriately by working with and leading other community-based organizations, advocacy networks, institutions and local residents.
Financials

Revenue 2003

- Individual Contributions $29,860.34
- Church Contributions 18,842.00
- Foundation Contributions 35,150.00
- Corporate Contributions 12,038.45
- Government Contracts 62,124.79
- Building Fund & Other Revenue 62,887.44

Total Revenue $220,903.02

Expenditures 2003

- Program Costs $131,302.56
- Administrative Operating Costs 57,622.73
- Resource Development 12,348.00

Total Expenditures $201,273.29
La Casa Norte expresses its appreciation for the generous support of the following contributors in 2003:

Private and Family Foundations

The Chapin-May Foundation
The Young Leaders Fund–Chicago Community Trust
Circle of Service Foundation
Engel Family Foundation
Exxon Mobil Foundation
The Field Foundation
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The Schwab Fund for Charitable Giving
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Yellow Bird Worldwide, Inc.
The Young Women’s Leadership Charter School of Chicago
Westwind Interiors

Churches

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First Congregational Church of Wilmette
First United Church of Oak Park
Glencoe Union Church
Glenview Community Church
St. Nicolai Church
Illinois Conference of UCC
Ravenswood UCC
Union Church of Hinsdale
UCC Justice and Witness Ministries
St. Agnes of Bohemia
St. Paul’s UCC Mission Board
Woman’s Association of Union Church

Public Agencies

Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA)
Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

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Justin Heilenbach, MSW Intern
Jennifer Miller, MSW Intern
Carin Weingarten, MSW Intern

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Building Hope for the Future