aving a place to go every night—a place to call home—is something many of us take for granted. But for others, stable housing is an elusive dream. For homeless Chicago youth, families and individuals, or those at risk of homelessness, La Casa Norte offers access to housing and more. We offer hope.
THE THREAT OF HOMELESSNESS HAS A WAY OF STRIPPING AWAY HOPE. We see it in our clients’ eyes when they first come to us. Whether they’ve aged out of foster care, lost their job, or exhausted their funds caring for a sick child, they are filled with worry about their futures. They don’t like asking for help, but most have nowhere else to turn.

You are their antidote to hopelessness. Because of you, La Casa Norte is able to step in and lift up our clients: helping a family with a security deposit for an apartment, arming a single mother with computer skills, providing a young man with bus fare for a job interview, or simply listening and mapping out a plan.

These may seem like small measures, but they can have life-changing results. In 2008, we helped hundreds of families with prevention services and critical financial assistance, in many cases averting homelessness.

La Casa Norte is proud to serve as a model for other service providers—locally and nationally. In 2008, we won a Maxwell Award of Excellence from the Fannie Mae Foundation and the Partnership to End Long Term Homelessness. One of four organizations to be honored nationwide, we won for our Solid Ground supportive housing facility. Projects were judged on their innovation, replicability and transformative impact. Solid Ground, with its male-focused, bilingual and multicultural services for homeless youth, is clearly meeting a unique need in the community.

Successes like these have opened the door for more life-changing stories in 2009. On behalf of all of our clients, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our generous supporters, dedicated board, innovative partners and exceptional staff. You make hope possible.

SOL FLORES
Executive Director
On first glance, it looks like any other vintage storefront in Humboldt Park. But step inside La Casa Norte’s Solid Ground Supportive Housing Facility and you’re instantly transported to a bright, modern space filled with energy and optimism. This is where 16 young men are overcoming the odds and working toward bright futures.
**HOMELESS AND UNSURE** of where he would spend the next night—let alone what his future had in store—20-year-old Leroy contacted La Casa Norte at the urging of a friend. After meeting with one of our case managers, he was referred to our Solid Ground Supportive Housing Program.

Leroy has thrived in this structured, encouraging environment. In addition to receiving extensive counseling, he set goals for himself and created a month by month action plan to reach those goals. He graduated from high school and enrolled at Westwood College to work toward a business degree. When he graduates from our program, he plans to get married and move to his own apartment.

“In order to learn from the past, you need to keep moving forward,” he said.

**LA CASA NORTE IS A LEADER IN SERVING HOMELESS YOUTH.** Solid Ground is Chicago’s first bilingual, multicultural supportive housing program specifically for young men (ages 16 to 21). It is also the only such program for Latino and black youth, who are most at risk for the trauma that leads to violent behavior, poor social skills and mental health difficulties.

The young men live with us for up to two years, and the intensive support they get encourages them to take responsibility for their actions and control of their futures. La Casa Norte emphasizes education, career readiness, technology training and life skills development to help clients gain stability and self-reliance. Our resident advisors work closely with them to begin to heal from the pain of their pasts and interact with others in a healthy way. They also provide access to mentors, social outings and activities that encourage their personal development.

Progress is uniquely defined for each of our residents. For one, it might be the ability to make eye contact with strangers; for another, it’s completing his first semester of college. However, all leave Solid Ground with one thing in common: an easier road ahead and big hopes for the future.
People who come to La Casa Norte are often one step away from being on the streets: a sole breadwinner who has lost his job, a woman who has escaped an abusive partner with only the clothes on her back, a young parolee who is committed to work and a productive life but not given a chance. Our Crisis Center can be their lifeline.
WHEN MARK AND SARA CAME TO LA CASA NORTE with their daughter in 2008, they were both unemployed and living with relatives who had no heat or hot water. We used emergency funds to provide them with a space heater and hot plate to make life a little more comfortable as they looked for employment and a better housing situation.

The couple worked with La Casa Norte’s case managers and placement manager to create resumes, improve their job-search skills and address other obstacles to employment, while receiving support and encouragement to stay motivated despite their precarious housing situation.

Sara landed a commission-based job, and we outfitted her with boots and winter clothing to keep warm as she went door-to-door in the cold weather. Mark received an extension in his unemployment benefits. La Casa Norte helped them find an apartment they could afford and apply for State Homelessness Prevention Funds, which paid the first month’s rent and deposit. They moved into their own apartment, avoided going to a shelter and, most importantly, became a stable family.

PREVENTING THE SLIDE INTO HOMELESSNESS is La Casa Norte’s overarching goal, and our Crisis Center is the first line of defense.

We provide free, bilingual counseling and life skills to people with immediate housing, personal and financial challenges, helping many families avoid homelessness and empowering others to escape homelessness. By teaching our clients how to secure stable housing, obtain proper identification, purchase bus passes, open bank accounts and budget their finances, our case managers help them gain stability and build self-reliance.

As a leader in providing innovative, tailored services to the Latino and African American communities, we are closely connected to a vast network of agencies. We are able to provide referrals for almost any issue that we cannot directly address.

In 2008, La Casa Norte helped a record 808 households take steps to find safe homes, rewarding jobs and strong social supports. Bolstering our efforts was a significant increase in homeless prevention funding from the State of Illinois last August. In the first 120 days of this infusion of funds, La Casa Norte was able to help 89 families avoid homelessness at an average cost of $941 each.
ven when one is fortunate enough to have stable housing, a good education and sufficient resources, it can be challenging to find a job—a reality that’s only been magnified in our current economic climate. Three years ago, we created Esperanza Trabajando for those who do not have these advantages.

97% of our clients have never owned a computer, and most are unfamiliar with the numerous housing, employment and service resources accessible online.
AS AN EX-OFFENDER, Tim knew he was at a disadvantage when applying for jobs. Despite having overcome his challenges and committed to a new, productive life, things were looking bleak. Then he overheard someone mention La Casa Norte’s Esperanza Trabajando program and decided to give us a call.

The help Tim has received through our job readiness, training and placement services has given him a huge boost. Guided by our counselors, he has determined the field he is interested in, created an effective resume, practiced interviewing and learned computer skills. Tim says he feels infinitely more confident and “back on his feet, moving in a positive direction.”

“Please continue working with ex-offenders and parolees,” Tim said. “It makes all the difference!”

ESPERANZA TRABAJANDO provides our clients with free job readiness, training and placement services. Our experienced counselors help with everything from resume writing to preparing for job interviews to acquiring the documentation and clothing necessary to be successful in the world of work.

Our innovative computer training program, Casa TeraU, addresses the digital divide faced by our clients, who are indigent and living in poverty with limited or no access to technology. Once they master the basics, they can go on to learn network security, engineering and web development applications, which markedly increases their employability in today’s market. They also have free use of our computer lab.

In 2008 we fostered unique partnerships with many employers, strengthened the marketable skills of 131 clients, and placed 45 adults in full and part-time employment. An additional 14 clients went on to further their knowledge in college and specialized vocational training programs. Ultimately, our clients experience stability, upward mobility and increased confidence through gainful, long-term employment.
2002
- La Casa Norte is born with the vision of co-founders Keith Decker and Peter McQueen to create a place where young men in need of homes—and hope—could begin to turn their lives around. The first step is creating the Crisis Center, which opens with two employees.

2003
- La Casa Norte is awarded $400,000 in capital and operating funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for our youth supportive housing program.

2004
- La Casa Norte conducts a large capital campaign for our supportive housing facility for homeless male youth.

2005
- Work on supportive housing facility begins. Program is named Solid Ground, conveying a safe, encouraging environment.
- Our third program, Esperanza Trabajando, launches, providing free career and educational assistance to ex-offenders, limited English speakers, and those without a high school diploma or GED.
- La Casa Norte purchases a second building at 3533 W. North Avenue. Crisis Center and staff offices are relocated to the new space and expanded. Landon Bone Baker Architects are enlisted to renovate the original building to create Solid Ground.
- La Casa Norte participates in the first statewide survey of youth homelessness in Illinois in conjunction with the Youth Committee of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.

2006
- Solid Ground opens its doors and the first young residents move in, excited about having a place to call home and an opportunity to succeed.
- La Casa Norte Executive Director Sol Flores receives the inaugural Ruby Slipper Award for leadership and advocacy from Mayor Richard M. Daley on behalf of the City of Chicago’s Plan to End Homelessness.

2007
- Casa TeraU pilot program begins to provide computer skills and training to Solid Ground, Crisis Center and Esperanza Trabajando clients.
- During Solid Ground’s first year of service, the program provides 4,120 nights of residence to 30 unduplicated clients.
- The Crisis Center serves 678 clients, providing them with housing assistance, life skills and other support to build their self-reliance and sustainability.
2008

• La Casa Norte wins the Fannie Mae Maxwell Award of Excellence, one of four given nationwide to innovative homeless service providers. Co-Founder Keith Decker and Executive Director Sol Flores travel to Washington, D.C. to make a presentation and accept the award.

• Casa TeraU becomes part of our permanent curriculum, ensuring that our clients are technologically proficient.

« Executive Director Sol Flores wins the AFLAC Hispanic Business Person of the Year Award for Impact & Civic Responsibility.

• Landon Bone Baker Architects win the Richard H. Driehaus Award for Architectural Excellence in Community Design for their work on our Solid Ground facility.

• La Casa Norte assists 808 households with financial assistance, including for transportation, utilities, deposits and first month's rent, or funding to maintain their current housing.

• Staff grows to 28 full and part-time employees.
2007 Individual Donors

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Michelle and Peter Willmott  
John and Victoria Winter  
Diana York-Miller  
Barbara Zoub and Mac Traub
2008 Individual Donors

La Casa Norte 2008 Annual Report

La Casa Norte sincerely regrets any errors or omissions in the above lists. Please call La Casa Norte at 773.276.4900 x212 with any corrections. Thank you!
Institutional Donors

2007

Civic and Churches

Christ Church of Winnetka
First Congregational Church of Wilmette
First Presbyterian Church of Wilmette
Glencoe Union Church Fund
Junior League of Chicago
St. Paul’s United Church of Christ
St. Thecla Church Women Board
Winnetka Congregational Church

Corporations

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BP America, Inc.
D.D. Furniture, Inc.
Gabeau Group
Goodheart-Willcox Publisher
Harris Bank
HSBC
Kielker & Berman
Landon Bone Baker Architects
McMaster-Carr Supply Company
Moisey Financial
Miner, Barnhill & Galland
Parkwest Furniture
Pearce & Associates
Ravenswood Disposal Service, Inc.
Renaissance Social Services
Sembrando El Futuro
Stevenson & Co.
The BusBank
Walgreens
Wences Hair Studio

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Baird & Warner Good Will Network Fund of The Chicago Community Trust
Basic Needs–The Chicago Community Trust
B.U.I.L.D.
Chapin-May Foundation of Illinois
Charter Oak Foundation
Col. Stanley R. McNeil Foundation
Fannie Mae Foundation
George M. Eisenberg Foundation
Hewitt Associates Foundation
Hispanics in Philanthropy
Irvin Stern Foundation
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Northern Trust Charitable Trust
Polk Bros. Foundation
Richard & Elizabeth Ross Foundation
Taproot Foundation (non-monetary)
The D&R Fund of The Chicago Community Trust
The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation
The UBS Foundation USA
United Way Venture Investment Fund

Government

City of Chicago–Department of Housing
City of Chicago–Department of Human Services
Federal Home Loan Bank
Illinois Arts Council
State of Illinois–Department of Children and Family Services
State of Illinois–Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
State of Illinois–Department of Human Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services–SAMHSA–Counseling Center of Lakeview
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
U.S. Department of Labor–Employment and Training Administration

2008

Civic and Churches

Christ Church of Winnetka
First Congregational Church of Wilmette
First Presbyterian Church of Wilmette
Fourth Presbyterian Church
Glencoe Union Church Fund of The Chicago Community Trust
Glencoe Community Church Fund
Rotary Club of Wilmette Foundation
St. Paul’s United Church of Christ
Winnetka Congregational Church

Corporations

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Foundations

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Advocate Bethany Hospital
Community Health Fund
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Baird & Warner Good Will Network Fund of The Chicago Community Trust
Chapin-May Foundation of Illinois
Charter Oak Foundation
Col. Stanley R. McNeil Foundation
Cubs Care–Fund of the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation
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Richard & Elizabeth Ross Foundation
Sea bury Foundation
Spencer Foundation
The Chicago Community Trust
The D&R Fund of The Chicago Community Trust
The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust
The Emergency Fund
The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation
The UBS Foundation USA

Government

Chicago Low-Income Housing Trust Fund
City of Chicago–Department of Housing
City of Chicago–Department of Human Services
State of Illinois–Homeless Prevention Fund
State of Illinois–Department of Children and Family Services
State of Illinois–Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
State of Illinois–Department of Human Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services–SAMHSA–Counseling Center of Lakeview
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
La Casa Norte 2008 Annual Report

Financials

2007 REVENUES
Total $1,246,586
- Government $679,305
- Foundations $290,062
- Corporations $103,790
- Individuals $62,962
- Special Events $48,306
- In-Kind and Other $9,031

2007 EXPENSES
Total $1,196,127
- Management and General $148,690
- Fundraising $93,883
- Solid Ground $546,638
- Crisis Center $406,916
- Churches $13,050
- In-Kind and Other $9,031

2008 REVENUES
Total $1,331,790*
- Government $618,553
- Foundations $486,481
- Corporations $60,067
- Individuals $34,485
- Special Events $110,069
- In-Kind and Other $3,385

2008 EXPENSES
Total $1,377,285*
- Management and General $147,847
- Fundraising $154,874
- Solid Ground $597,266
- Crisis Center $290,458
- Esperanza Trabajando $186,840

LA CASA NORTE BOARD OF DIRECTORS*

Officers
Mario Ortiz, President
Harry Zander, Vice President
Bob Taylor, Treasurer
Martha Pierce, Secretary

Board Members
Bernadette Atuahene
Andrea Conklin Bueschel
Judy Hicks
Jill Negronida

La Casa Norte STAFF*

Executive Director
Sol Flores

Administration
Bianca Berkhia
David Mowery
Carin Weingarten

Crisis Center
Beatriz Albelo
Laura Bass
Maggie Connell
Shawn Decker
Daisy DelValle
Jennifer Garcia
Donta Lucas
Jesus Marquez

Solid Ground
Shazaad Ahmed
Joe Hankey
Sandra Jones
Suzanne Kleckner
Sheila Lacy
Frederick Maclin

* Unaudited financials

* Officers
  Mario Ortiz, President
  Harry Zander, Vice President
  Bob Taylor, Treasurer
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* Board Members
  Bernadette Atuahene
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LA CASA NORTE STAFF*

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Carin Weingarten

Crisis Center
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Laura Bass
Maggie Connell
Shawn Decker
Daisy DelValle
Jennifer Garcia
Donta Lucas
Jesus Marquez

Solid Ground
Shazaad Ahmed
Joe Hankey
Sandra Jones
Suzanne Kleckner
Sheila Lacy
Frederick Maclin

* Current as of 2009

Keith Decker (emeritus)
Peter McQueen (emeritus)
You Make the Difference

La Casa Norte would not be possible without your support and involvement. From selflessly giving of your time to generously contributing financial resources, you make our life-changing stories possible. Read below for ways you can continue to help.

ALL GIFTS COUNT!

All contributions made to La Casa Norte have a direct impact on our work and mission. By donating to La Casa Norte’s unique and innovative programs, you are making a solid investment in the futures of youth, individuals and families in Chicago. Join us in empowering homeless and abandoned people to reach their full potential.

Every amount donated makes a difference.

For example:

- $5 provides a meal voucher for a homeless youth.
- $20 provides a single mother with a weekly bus pass to get back and forth to a new job or allows an individual to obtain a state ID, needed for school or work.
- $100 provides materials and instruction for one at-risk youth for a five-week job readiness workshop.
- $500 provides a security deposit, enabling a family of four to move into a new apartment.

Ways to give:

- Send a check or pay with VISA or MasterCard using the enclosed envelope.
- Make a contribution and ask your employer to match it.
- Make a gift of stock to La Casa Norte.
- Leave a bequest to La Casa Norte, designating the organization as beneficiary of a life insurance policy, retirement plan or another part of your estate plan.

La Casa Norte is always grateful to receive in-kind donations in the form of clothing, school and office supplies, household items, and new or slightly used toys. In the summer, La Casa Norte collects school supplies for families and in the winter, new toys and clothes for our holiday party. Donations may be dropped off at our Crisis Center office, located at 3533 W. North Avenue, Chicago.

VOLUNTEER WITH LA CASA NORTE

Volunteering is a great way to give back to the community and help those in need. La Casa Norte has many exciting volunteer opportunities available. From working one-on-one with clients to providing administrative support, your help will be invaluable to the organization. And you’ll join a fun diverse group of people who share your passion for making a difference.

BECOME A MENTOR

It has always been said that the youth are our future. Join La Casa Norte’s Mentor Program and play a role in shaping that future. As a mentor, you will participate in a wide range of activities, including job shadowing, recreational and cultural outings, and tutoring. Most important, you can help change a life for the better.