



Annual Report, 2007-08

La Posada Providencia, founded and sponsored by the Sisters of Divine Providence, is a ministry for people in crisis from around the world, who are seeking legal refuge in this country. The Shelter staff provides a safe and welcoming home, mentors to promote self-sufficiency and cultural integration, and imparts values which *witness God's Providence in our world.*

February, 2009

From the Program Board Chair

When I review the numbers included in this annual report, I am struck by what is missing. We include all the relevant data on finances, number of clients served, etc. But numbers cannot tell the full story of La Posada Providencia. It is true that the numbers in this report hint at the generosity of many people – the individuals, foundations, businesses and other groups who share and support La Posada's mission. But to understand La Posada fully, you would need to hear the stories of each one of the 215 clients who passed through the shelter last year. *Their stories are La Posada's story.* La Posada is about individuals making bold moves to change their lives. We are privileged to play a part in their heroic tales.

I have been involved with La Posada Providencia for more than 13 years, the last five as a board member. As a case worker for International Educational Services, Inc., I often looked to La Posada to assist the family members of our clients. Sister Margaret Mertens has always been more than happy to assist anyone in need. When she asked me to serve on the board, I would not have considered turning her down!

All people deserve support. The immigrants and asylum-seekers who find help at La Posada come here seeking to improve the lives of their families. They often arrive with little more than the clothes on their backs. They usually have few possessions, limited English and little or no family support. They are among the most vulnerable members of our society.

I consider my involvement with La Posada a kind of personal vocation. La Posada helps our community by providing a much needed service to a population that would otherwise have no safe haven. La Posada's relationship with local and federal authorities is special and mutually beneficial. The work they do here makes me proud of my association.

The United States was founded by immigrants and made great by immigrants. To continue to claim the title "Land of Opportunity" our country must continue to welcome immigrants and provide a safe place where they can create their own opportunities.

The people who come to La Posada are not looking for hand-outs. They want nothing more than the freedoms we enjoy through the Providence of our birth, and the opportunity to work hard to create a better future for themselves and their children. Theirs are stories of hard work, determination, courage and transformation. Their stories are La Posada's story. I thank you for helping us help them.



Ruben Gallegos, Jr.
Program Board Chair

(Ruben Gallegos, Jr. is the executive director for International Educational Services, Inc., a private, non-profit agency that provides services to children and families. IES manages a shelter care and two foster care programs in the Rio Grande Valley county of Cameron.)

LA POSADA PROVIDENCIA
Statement of Activity and Changes in Net Assets
For the year ended June 30, 2008

REVENUES

Grants and Contributions	\$ 172,667
Sisters of Divine Providence	48,000
Fundraising	7,776
Rent	14,496
Interest	<u>612</u>
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 243,551

EXPENDITURES

Services to Clients	\$ 173,564
Management and Administrative	<u>36,525</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 210,089

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$ 29,155
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	<u>\$ 132,850</u>
Net Assets, End of Year	\$ 162,005

Grants Received
July 1, 2007–June 30, 2008

The Sisters of Divine Providence and staff at La Posada Providencia thank the following donors for their generous support during the past fiscal year:

Adorers of the Blood of Christ	\$38,000
Harry S. & Isabel C. Cameron Foundation	\$ 2,500
City of God Foundation	\$ 5,000
John G. & Marie Stella Kenedy Memorial Foundation	\$ 7,000
Rachael and Ben Vaughan Foundation	\$ 3,500
Scanlan Foundation	\$ 7,000
Sisters of St. Dominic	\$ 5,000
Sisters of the Holy Spirit & Mary Immaculate	\$ 2,260
Strake Foundation	\$ 2,000
Texas Emergency Shelter Grant Program	\$35,406
The James R. Dougherty Foundation	\$ 1,000

Providence Ministry
Corporate Board

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Sister Barbara McMullen, CDP

Sister Marilyn Bergt, CDP

Sister Maria Fest, CDP

Sister Lisa Paffrath, CDP

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Sister Thérèse Cunningham, SHSp

Client Mentor

Monica Peña-Rasmussen

Client Coordinator

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Program Assistant

La Posada Providencia

Sister Zita Telkamp, CDP

Interim Program Director

1610 Marydale Road

San Benito, TX 78586

Tel: (956) 399-3826

Fax: (956) 399-2898

Email: cdplaposada@sbcglobal.net

Grateful for Freedom. Working for a Better Life.

Freedom. Jesús Rodríguez Lopez left his native Cuba to find it. “I left Cuba first, for freedom. And second, because I was starving,” he says. Jesús was a dentist and an oral surgeon. “Sometimes my paycheck was \$1.50/month. Things are expensive in Cuba. I couldn’t afford to feed my family.”



Former resident, Jesús, *still makes regular visits to La Posada Providencia. Here he shows his truck to Sister Zita Telkamp, CDP, his first teacher at La Posada.*

Jesús went to Ecuador to earn money to support his family, but when he tried to return to Cuba, he was not allowed to enter. “They told me I was a traitor,” he said. “I haven’t seen my family in 10 years.”

In 2005, Jesús made his way to La Posada Providencia, where he stayed for more than six months. “They helped me in many ways. I am so grateful,” he said. “It is so important to have safe shelter. They took me to all the places I needed to go – the Social Security office, immigration, the lawyer’s office. They helped with all the processing and the translating.” Jesús expressed particular gratitude for Sister Thérèse Cunningham, SHSp, La Posada’s client mentor, who teaches English as a Second Language.

Since leaving La Posada, Jesús earned a certificate to become a truck driver, but his ultimate goal is to return to dentistry. His next step is to find a part-time job so that he can have 5 – 6 hours available each day to study to become a dental hygienist. After that, he will begin his studies to become a dentist again. “He is a hard worker,” said Program Director Margaret Mertens, CDP. “I know he will succeed.”

“I am a free man now,” Jesús says. “I feel free to do what I want without worrying that someone is watching me. In Cuba, they can put you in jail for anything you say or do. In Cuba, there are no freedoms. Here I have the freedom to have one job, two jobs, whatever I need to do to get what I need.

“Freedom has no price.”

Providence Provides for North Korean Asylees

La Posada welcomed its first clients from North Korea in 2007. Two women arrived at the shelter, fleeing what we believe to be violent oppression. (We are not certain of the details of their cases, because of the language barrier and their extreme emotional distress. We honor their request not to use their photographs.) The two women served as manifest reminders of how much we Americans have to be grateful for. Their appreciation for the shelter and support they received was expressed in words and deeds, the smiles on their faces and the tears in their eyes. They stayed at La Posada for several months, until they received their work permits and Social Security cards. Then they moved on with gratitude to a life full of challenges, but also one of safety and freedom.

Providence played a part in the stories of our two Korean clients. Shortly after they arrived, Sister of Divine Providence Veronica Gum Ja Kim, CDP, a member of the religious community that sponsors La Posada, visited the shelter, swooping in like a veritable Fairy Godmother. A native of South Korea, Sister Veronica accompanied the women to the local social services agency and the immigration office to help them with paperwork and assist them with the next steps in their resettlement process. She also stayed with one of the women when she required surgery. Sister Veronica’s translation skills were invaluable, but her compassionate presence helped make the flight to freedom more manageable for two vulnerable women.



Sister Veronica Gum Ja Kim, CDP teaches a class on currency and personal finance.

With Sincere Appreciation

The Sisters of Divine Providence are grateful for the contributions made to La Posada Providencia. Following are the names of those who made financial contributions to La Posada Providencia during the twelve months July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008. We offer our heartfelt thanks.

A

Mr. Emmanuel Adetowoju
ASC Foundation
Mrs. Margie Adrian
Ms. Ayda Alfaro

B

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Ms. Diane Bailey
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Paula Waddle Leaves Behind Legacy of Caring

La Posada Providencia lost a dear friend last year. Paula Waddle, a former judge and a member of the La Posada program board, died January 4, 2008.

Program Director Margaret Mertens, CDP met Paula, an immigration lawyer, soon after arriving at La Posada. "She was interested in our mission and wanted to get involved, but then she was diagnosed with cancer," Sister Margaret said. Providence brought the two women together again when they ran into each other several years later. "The cancer was gone, so I invited her to join the board. She was very enthusiastic about helping the shelter through the board."

Paula was the first woman appointed municipal court judge in Corpus Christi. In 2001, she was legal counsel with the South Texas Immigration Counsel. She served as the Fifth Circuit Court Librarian for the Southern District of Texas from 2006 until her passing.

Paula upheld La Posada's mission even in death: the shelter was one of the primary beneficiaries of Paula's estate. In addition, La Posada received several memorial gifts in her name. A tree will be planted in Paula's honor this spring, in thanksgiving for her friendship and her compassionate generosity.



La Posada Welcomes Grant Writer Carmen García-Cáceres



Dr. Carmen García-Cáceres joined La Posada Providencia's development team during the past fiscal year. She writes grant applications for the shelter on a part-time basis. Carmen is a professor at the University of Texas at Brownsville and a reading specialist with strong bilingual skills (Spanish/English). She holds additional credentials in administration, bilingual cross-cultural instruction, and community college certification.

Dr. García-Cáceres resides in Rancho Viejo, in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. By accepting the position of part-time grant writer Carmen satisfies two significant needs for La Posada – the need for a dedicated grantwriter and the need for a local development presence. She considers her work at La Posada as part of her own personal ministry.

Thank you to our generous friends
who have chosen to remain
anonymous. While your name
does not appear on these pages,
it is recorded in our hearts and
spoken in our prayers.

Did we miss you?

We try very hard to make sure all our donors are recognized, but sometimes we make mistakes. We sincerely apologize if we have made an error, and we want to know about it. Please contact Colleen Price at 314-209-9181 or cprice@divineprovidencesisters.org. Your information will help us avoid making the same mistake in the future. Thank you!

Highlights from the Year:

- Thanks to a grant from the Scanlan Foundation, we installed new kitchen cabinets in both Casa Carolina and Casa Belen.
- La Posada's raffle fundraiser took in about \$3,216.
- La Posada held its third annual dinner fundraiser. The brisket dinner netted approximately \$5,000. We also enjoyed increased board participation and greater attendance for the event.
- The Cameron Foundation helped us check an item off our "wish list" when they provided funding for a new telephone system. Communications are much improved!
- Undergraduate students from St. Louis University and law students from DePaul University and Northwestern University spent their spring breaks volunteering at the shelter and at ProBAR, a non-profit, legal services organization for immigrants and asylum seekers.
- The shelter hit a milestone: clients served have come from more than 70 different countries.



- La Posada hosted its first wedding! Clients who fled Cuba together were reunited after the prospective groom spent seven months in a Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention center. Truly, a joyful occasion!

La Posada Providencia Client Statistics July 1, 2007 - June 30, 2008

Countries Served	No. of Clients	
Burundi	1	
Chad	1	
China	1	Males: 137 (64%)
Chile	2	Females: 78 (36%)
Columbia	1	
Cuba	50	Children: 47 (22%)
Ecuador	1	
El Salvador	49	Young Adults: 27 (13%) (Aged 18 - 20)
Ethiopia	2	
Guatemala	13	
Haiti	1	Pregnant: 17 (8%)
Honduras	39	
Iran	2	
Ivory Coast	1	
Jamaica	2	
Kenya	1	
Lebanon	1	
Mali	1	
Mexico	3	
Morocco	1	
Nicaragua	7	
Nigeria	2	
North Korea	2	
Somalia	8	
Sudan	2	
Trinidad	2	
Uzbekistan	1	
United States	18	
TOTAL	215	

**Total Served since founding in 1989:
5,151**

Client Outcomes

- 2,337 hours of English as Second Language (ESL) instruction were logged for 84 students
- 44 clients received asylum
- 23 clients gained employment after receiving their Social Security cards and work permits.



A sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Divine Providence



La Posada Providencia
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Sisters of Divine Providence
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Señora Santana. Dormite Niñito. Estrellita. Este Niño Lindo.

La Posada has been alive with the melodies of these beautiful songs – lullabies from Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico respectively – as we welcomed 47 children, including many infants, during the past year. This continuing trend means more than nighttime feedings and extra loads of laundry; it requires us to reexamine our programs and procedures to ensure we meet all the needs of this special population.



The Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement prefers to bring pregnant women or women with very young children to a shelter, instead of keeping them in detention centers, which explains the increase in their numbers at La Posada. The needs of these clients are both wide-ranging and specific. Program changes include modifying the English as a Second Language (ESL) program and offering parenting and health care training and nutrition information for the mothers. As an example: ESL lessons for new mothers and expectant women use terms and lessons focused on babies and child development.

La Posada has also begun offering lessons to pregnant women and the mothers of small children in Casa Carolina, the women's residence. Usually, instruction is conducted in the more formal classroom setting in the commons building, Casa Belen. By holding the classes in Casa Carolina, we can work around babies' feeding schedules and allow expectant women to feel more comfortable.