

La Casa Norte



In Chicago's Humboldt Park, more than 41 percent of the residents live below the poverty level. The predominantly Latino neighborhood is overrun by about 20 gangs. Sadly the community claims the second highest rate for violent crime and murder in Chicago and unfortunately can't keep the 34 percent school dropout rate from rising.

La Casa Norte opened in July 2002 "committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for homeless and abandoned people, where they will benefit from a comprehensive program of education, guidance and counseling in a community setting."

In 2004, the Baird & Warner Good Will Network donated \$30,000 to La Casa Norte to support its Homeless Youth Program, which provides individual and group support counseling, prevention outreach, education and life skills training for up to 200 young people.

Our donation uniquely affected La Casa Norte. After a private family foundation heard about our \$30,000 grant they matched our gift dollar for dollar. So, within days of receiving our check, La Casa Norte had \$60,000 in its coffers.

The program we support is the Homeless Youth Program. Here participants work with dedicated youth case managers to create plans fitting each individual's needs and goals. The case managers then provide encouragement and support to work toward those goals.

After housing is found for the participants, La Casa Norte provides ongoing counseling and proactive services to help the young people create a stable environment and maintain independence since the majority of homeless youth come from unstable families where abuse – physical, emotional, sexual, alcoholic and/or substance – led to their being homeless.

In its proposal to the Good Will Network, La Casa Norte noted: "From both experience and research, we know that homeless youth can be a challenging group with which to work. Yet, we also understand that homeless youth are in need of a caring and stable force that will work with them in a positive and consistent manner."