



For the past thirty two years, CASA (Community Action Stops Abuse, Inc.) provides emergency shelter, transitional housing, outreach, support groups and legal advocacy to victims of domestic violence and their children. Additional programs that CASA provides include the Peacemaker program, Supervised Visitation and Monitored Exchange Program, the ERT (Emergency Response Team) and extensive community education and professional training on the dynamics of domestic violence. Approximately 8,000 individuals receive services from CASA on an annual basis across the southern half of Pinellas County.

CASA's mission is to raise our voices against violence through advocacy, empowerment and social change. CASA's vision is a community without domestic violence so that home is a safe place.

CASA operates a multi-faceted residential program for survivors of domestic violence and their children. Each year, CASA's Emergency Shelter is "home" for hundreds of battered women and their children who have no other safe place to go (approximately 400 victims including children, with up to 30 victims at any one time). For many of these victims, the shelter provided a safe place to escape further abuse, an opportunity to review their options, receive support and advocacy and to access community resources.

Families may stay at the shelter for up to 45 days as they begin the process of rebuilding their lives. While there, families received case management, mental health and substance abuse advocacy. Specialized services for both children (including licensed after school child care) and adults provide the essential help survivors need to integrate their victimization experience and maximize their abilities. The Safety Advocate provides additional safety planning, helps residents become aware of the possibility and prevention of child abductions, and assists them with filing injunctions etc against their abusers (i.e. legal advocacy). CASA provides: shelter, food, transportation, clothing, personal items, case management/counseling, information and referrals to other social service and community agencies, children's program, and specialized programs for residents with substance abuse/mental health crisis, and Workforce Readiness classes.

CASA's Emergency Shelter is a large structure built in 1910, with over 9,000 sq feet on three floors including six large bedrooms, children's area, communal living room, kitchen and offices. Shelter operations are made possible through several federal, state, and local governmental grants, grants from private foundations and local contributions. Building renovations and improvements are possible are dependent on non-governmental grants and private contributions.

The proposed project consists of making well needed renovations to the Emergency Shelter including:

- Removing the stained and snagged carpet in the downstairs area and replacing it with a hard surface. Due to the number of people using the facility, the carpet is in terrible condition. The carpet needs to be replaced with a floor covering which will sustain heavy traffic and last more than a few years. **Estimated cost is: \$10,000.**
- Redecorating and refurbishing the children's room along with the teens' room. **Estimated cost is \$4,000 and labor.**
- Replacing the warped and broken front and side privacy fence with a vinyl fence and landscape along the front fence. **Estimated cost: \$7,000 and labor.**
- Refurbishing/decorating the intake/interview room. **Estimated cost: \$1,000 and labor.**
- Replacing the mulch on the exterior playground available only for the children residing in the shelter to provide a softer surface. **Estimated cost: \$500 and labor.**

TOTAL ESTIMATE: \$22,500 and labor*

* Please note: Each of these renovation projects can be completed independent of the other. The projects are listed in order to preference to be completed.

What are the obstacles of this project for CASA to complete on its own, without assistance through Leadership St. Pete? This project will address a number of property improvements which CASA cannot complete for financial reasons and staff already being committed to other projects. CASA's budget is extremely tight during these difficult financial times. Major improvements including the roof (due to major leakage problems) and air conditioning replacements (several of the units were failing or not operating efficiently) were completed over the last two years. The project will not only improve the appearance and "feel" of the property but will make it safer for the residents. Not only will these improvements help the overall shelter appearance and property values, but they will help make those victims residing in the shelter feel better about staying there. Everyone staying at the shelter, all victims of domestic violence and their children, are working on their safety plans and self sufficiency. If they are safe and made to feel welcome and comfortable, they can then focus on finding a permanent safe home for themselves and their children.

Members of the Leadership St Pete Class of 2010 will gain a much clearer understanding on the dynamics of domestic violence and its impact, not only on individuals but also on children, families, workplaces and communities. They will become more knowledgeable of community resources and will be able to refer others to such sources. (Nearly three out of four (74%) of Americans personally know someone who is or has been a victim of domestic violence. 30% of Americans say they know a woman who has been physically abused by her husband or boyfriend in the past year. (Allstate Foundation National Poll on Domestic Violence, 2006. Lieberman Research Inc., Tracking Survey conducted for The Advertising Council and the Family Violence Prevention Fund, July – October 1996) It is most likely that members of Leadership St Pete class will know someone who has experienced domestic violence. As a result of the proposed project, they will be better able to assist, family members, friends, and co-workers during difficult times in their lives.