

# Service Opportunity Data Sheet

## Mennonite Voluntary Service

Great Plains Office, Box 347, Newton, KS 67114; 316/283-5100  
Great Lakes Office, Box 370, Elkhart, IN 46515; 574/294-7523



This form may be submitted by e-mail or through regular mail. MVS staff may edit position descriptions. Please be as thorough as possible in describing the agency, the position responsibilities and the qualifications. The descriptions are not limited to the space below, use extra pages, etc. Notice a detailed description of the agency is required and you must include an agency contact, address and telephone number.

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**Unit:** Elkhart, IN

**Date:** April 8, 2009

**Position Title:** Community Organizer

**Organization/Agency Name:** LaCasa

**Agency Contact:** Rebecca Gascho

**202 North Cottage Ave.**

**Goshen, IN 46528**

**Rebecca.Gascho@LaCasagoshen.org**

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**1. Description of the organization and its work (include some history of the agency and the population or type of people they serve):**

LaCasa of Goshen was organized by area churches and incorporated in February 1970 to provide housing and other human services for the benefit of Goshen's low- to moderate-income households. Born out of concern for the living conditions of migrant farm-workers, LaCasa has grown into a full-service community housing development corporation with a staff of 25. LaCasa's wide-range of programs assist low- moderate-income families regardless of race, national origin, or religion. In 1998, LaCasa expanded its target area from the City of Goshen, to include Elkhart County. In 1999, LaCasa was chartered as a member of NeighborWorks Network, a national collaboration of more than 240 community based organizations. In 2004, LaCasa became a member of the National Campaign for Homeownership and was certified as a HUD counseling agency in 2005. In 2007 LaCasa expanded their work to the City of Elkhart, in 2008 they renovated the historic Roosevelt School into affordable housing and have assisted in organizing a new community association.

**2. Detailed position description (include whether position is full time or half time):**

LaCasa's work in the community is a partnership between residents, business, and government that builds healthy neighborhoods by organizing around key community-based issues facing residents. Assist neighborhoods by developing affordable housing, promoting home ownership, and supporting an array of community building activities. Key to our success is involving residents in the decisions that affect their neighborhoods.

The community organizer helps neighborhoods establish an identity, develop leaders, set priorities, organize for action and accomplish goals related to neighborhood improvement and quality of life for residents. The Community Organizer is central to LaCasa's community effectiveness, linking LaCasa's resources to family and neighborhood goals. This position also provides consulting, information and educational resources to neighborhood groups in non-targeted areas of Elkhart County. Responsibilities will include:

- A. Coordinate community organizing in selected neighborhoods.

1. Organize around key community-based issues and activities that bring residents together, issues of concern, new opportunities, and special projects to improve their neighborhood.
  2. Conduct community outreach and marketing to new and existing residents, using a variety of methods including door knocking, one-on-one meetings, flyers, literature, and informational meetings.
  3. Schedule and facilitate meetings between LaCasa staff, city officials, and other partners related to neighborhood issues.
  4. Promote interaction between neighborhood residents by creating meeting and activities that are welcoming for all residents.
  5. Meet with individual neighborhood residents and solicit their leadership in the neighborhood's revitalization. Motivate residents to become advocates for their neighborhood.
  6. Solicit participation in the community organizing process from churches, businesses, city officials, and other partners connected to the neighborhood.
  7. Assist with neighborhood meeting preparations, scheduling, coordinating activities and events. Assist committees in developing strategic plans and provide necessary support for implementing plans.
  8. Communicate regularly with LaCasa's Home Ownership Center Team to coordinate and market LaCasa services to the neighborhood and promote coordination of services across all departments and maximize neighborhood benefit.
- B. Serve as a resource for self-initiated neighborhood groups.
1. Encourage the development of neighborhood associations by serving as a resource for organizing, access to resources and leadership development.
  2. Provide leadership training. Schedule and teach the Community Builders training and provide one-on-one leadership mentoring to course participants.
  3. Promote LaCasa's model for community organizing so it can be replicated elsewhere or expanded to other communities near us.
  4. Maintain regular contact with local groups and provide appropriate support representing LaCasa to the community.
  5. Reach out to residents in our communities, learn more about their concerns and encourage them to engage in community organizing activities.
  6. Complete all required reports as needed for partners and funding sources.
- C. Other
1. Attend LaCasa's annual meeting and participate in staff meetings.
  2. Represent LaCasa in multi-agency collaborations focusing on issues, which affect neighborhood quality of life.
  3. Participate in community and professional meetings and training events as requested by supervisor.
  4. Other duties as assigned by the supervisor.

Skills and Qualifications:

- A. Demonstrated organizational, leadership, and interpersonal skills.
- B. Outgoing, friendly nature and ability to mentor, inspire, and motivate others.
- C. Ability to work and interact with people from a variety of backgrounds.
- D. Passionate about making a difference in the community and neighborhoods.
- E. Ability to work independently.

- F. Ability to handle multiple priorities and projects.
- G. Access to reliable transportation and willingness to travel for training.
- H. Available to work evenings and weekends as necessary.
- I. Strong oral and written communication skills.
- J. Experience in community outreach and leadership development.
- K. Dependable team player, flexible, and good listener.
- L. Computer literacy and willing to learn new software as necessary.
- M. Job requires employee to carry a cell phone.
- N. Education: B.S. with at least two years of experience preferred. Prior cross-cultural experience helpful.
- O. Fluency in writing, reading and oral communication skills in English and Spanish preferred.

**4. Worker's Compensation? Yes.**

**5. Comments:**

Approved by Local Leadership \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by MVSO: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_