

CASA DE AMIGOS: THE HOUSE OF FRIENDS  
A Christian Social Service Center  
906 & 921 North Dallas  
Midland, Texas  
682-1761

June, 1970

Mrs. Richard Rodriguez,  
Director

Mr. Jack Hitt,  
Board Chairman

Mr. Lyle Livingston, Vice  
Chairman (Finance)

Mr. Roger Robles, Vice  
Chairman (Programs)

Mrs. Bill Garay,  
Board Secretary

Mr. Marvin E. Scrogam,  
Treasurer

Mr. David K. McAllister,  
Assoc. Treasurer

Mr. W. J. Grissett,  
Property

INTRODUCTION: Since becoming Publicity Director of the Casa de Amigos, it has come to my attention that very little is known by the public about the Casa: what it is, what it is attempting to do, who sponsors it, etc. This issue of The Casa Caller is intended to answer the questions that are most often asked. The report is based on interviews with many people closely connected with Casa.

We have begun utilizing many methods of disseminating information to the public. One, of course, is this paper. In it we shall continue to try to answer questions as they arise. We will also save the stencils from this Information Issue; at any time copies will be available. Speakers representing the Casa are available to organizations. Call 682-1761 to schedule the time and place. Also, the Little Miss Club has two dances ready to perform that are delightful entertainment; the girls enjoy any chance they may have to "show off" their talent.

We appreciate so much the attention and support--financial and otherwise--that we are receiving. In an organization of this type, that is necessary to keep us going.

Mary Garay  
694-8049

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY: The Casa was begun in 1964 through the efforts of some members of St. Mark's Methodist Church. Rev. O. A. McBrayer, former minister there, surveyed east Midland and brought up the idea of a Christian Service Center to his church's Commission on Missions. The first Casa directors were Mrs. Chester Tyra and Mrs. Donald Tollison.

Many good-intentioned efforts at community service had previously been started in east Midland, only to have them ultimately fail. This caused the community to be a bit suspicious of still another effort. So the first recruiting was done through the children. As work was done on the Casa building, children of all ages came to watch. These children became the first "class" held through the Casa--actually a summer crafts and recreation program. Word spread of the daily availability of the Casa, and in time there was enough regular attendance to necessitate separation of the children according to age group and sex. The need for volunteers from beyond St. Mark's became evident and the Casa became ecumenical in nature.

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By 1966, individuals interested in the Casa's program began sending representatives to the monthly board meetings. At this time anyone interested was automatically a member of the Board. Garner Wilde, Chairman of the Casa, felt the need of a full-time paid professional director. In 1966 Garner had travelled to Dallas with Rev. Bob Gartman of Memorial Christian Church to a Disciples of Christ convention. There the two men met with Mr. Byron Spice, an official of the United Christian Missionary Society, who headed the work of the Disciples in Latin America and among Mexican-Americans in this country. Mr. Spice recommended as a possible director Miss Elizabeth Sanchez. She was a UCMS scholarship student in sociology and theology at Union Theological Seminary in Mexico City. She had worked in the inner city of Mexico City and with Indians in villages along the Mexican coastline. In addition, she had helped with the non-denominational Inman Center in her native San Antonio. Terms of Elizabeth's scholarship required that she return to Texas for at least one year to work.

She was interviewed for the Casa directorship and accepted. Elizabeth was with the Casa from January, 1967, to September, 1968, when she left to attend Phillips University to work toward a Master's Degree in Sociology. She returned to the Casa in 1969 to help with the summer program.

Evangelina Rodriguez is the Casa's second professional director. She is a native Midlander and attended public schools here. She has had a year of business college and has previously worked in public service organizations such as Head Start and La Floricita Day Nursery. As a Catholic, she has added significantly to the desired ecumenical base of the Casa. Vangie and her husband Richard are the parents of a one-year-old son.

Having a full-time director has meant a marked improvement in the program and communications and cooperation between the Casa and other organizations.

In the late 1960's a crisis in the existence of the Casa was to help determine the future course of identity. A movement was started to expand from the small rented building at 906 N. Dallas into a church that had become available. It was agreed that facilities at 906 were very limited; but after much discussion the feeling evolved that the money available to the Casa should be put into programs rather than facilities as such. It was also agreed that the smaller but definitely secular building would help to emphasize the all-inclusive character of the Casa--open to all, to give and receive help, regardless of race or church affiliation.

Part of the problems resulting from lack of space were solved in ~~1969~~, when the gift of a private individual made possible the purchase of a house at 921 N. Dallas from the FHA for \$350.00. Both facilities are in full use today. In addition, the YMCAs and some churches make their buildings available as specific needs arise.

Under the chairmanship of Bill Reid, a major event took place in the life of the Casa: a car was purchased. Transportation has always been a problem and to have the constant use of a vehicle was no small achievement. This car was sold when its upkeep cost became too great. Currently a Volkswagen bus is on loan from the Methodist Board of City Missions. The next chairman, Bill Riveire, further expanded the commitment of the Casa to the community at large and helped significantly in making the government of the Casa more efficient. Jack Hitt has recently become the current Casa Board Chairman. He has pledged to continue and to further enlarge the areas of service and would like to even more involve Blacks and Mexican-Americans in the planning and direction of the Casa.

**PURPOSE:** Casa de Amigos is intended to serve and to educate in areas needed and desired by the community it represents. The emphasis is on cooperation with all available, similarly-interested sources, even to a willingness to lose its unique identity toward attaining this goal. It is not specifically church centered and is not a Protestant organization. The hope is that Casa and its people can be Christ-like in giving and accepting all needs; in fact, part of the fulfillment felt by Casa participants is the opportunity to respond to the call of Christ by expressing a true concern for those who are in the most literal sense our neighbors.

**FINANCES:** Original funding was from St. Mark's Church and an interested individual. The income for the first year was \$1,359.00. As word of the success and potential success of the Casa spread, financial contributions increased. Current support comes from some churches, civic and social organizations, and individuals. In addition, businesses often offer their services at cost or

Financial contributions increased. Current support comes from some churches, civic and social organizations, and individuals. In addition, businesses often offer their services at cost or without charge. These figures cannot be accurately reflected in our financial statement although the help offered is deeply appreciated. Less than 50% of the income is dependable, i.e. pledged.

We receive no specific funds from the Government.\* However, Casa does cooperate to its fullest extent with such government-sponsored organizations as the Neighborhood Centers, OEO, and Head Start.

\*In the spring of 1968 a young man was hired through the Presidential Work/Study program to help with the summer schedule of the Casa. The federal government paid 85% of his salary with the Casa paying 15%. Currently, teenagers are employed to help, particularly in summer, through the Neighborhood Youth Corps. This money is paid by the government directly to the employees and is not reflected in Casa's budget. Teenagers so employed may work no more than 10 hours per week per worker. One girl has helped in this way during the past year.

Part of the purpose of the Casa is a very personal involvement with a true local mission program. Therefore there has been no request for inclusion in the United Fund because it is felt that it could mean the loss of much private and church-committed support that is now available. Certainly no criticism of the United Fund is intended by this philosophy.

The Casa has from its beginning received considerable moral support from the Midland Council of Churches and a great deal of help from people within the Council, although it is not and never has been included in the Council's budget. The Council has, however, made available funds on loan as the need has arisen. There is no current debt to the Council.

Income for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1970, was \$6,974.25. Approximate percentages are as follows: Churches, 62.8%, Individuals, 18.4%; Other organizations, 14.0%; Casa-sponsored weekly rummage sales, 2.2%; and miscellaneous, 3.4%. Disbursements for the same period totalled \$7,020.88. In addition, there is a Building/Savings Account balance of \$2,123.63, which includes a \$2,000 conditional grant from the Methodist Reconciliation Funds for use in new programs.

A copy of the financial statement is available from Marvin E. Scrogam, treasurer.

**GOVERNMENT:** Casa de Amigos is incorporated and has a set of by-laws and a constitution drawn up by Midland attorney Tom Scott. These were formally adopted in May, 1969. The Board of Directors is now the governing body and members are elected (rather than simply interested, as earlier.) There are 15 members on the Board, 1/3 of them elected annually at the Casa Membership Annual Meeting. (Membership includes anyone interested.) Each director serves a three-year term. Board officers are not necessarily elected members of the Board of Directors, although the Board must, in turn, elect its officers annually. Current slate of officers appears on the first page of this paper. Board members are as follows: (Term expires 1971) - John Frannea, Jack Hitt, Mrs. Edith King, Mrs. W. F. Mueller (Barbara), Valentin Reyes. (Term expires 1972) - Rev. John Alexander, Lyle Livingston, Clarence Rankin, E. W. Riveire, Mrs. Ed Van Petten (Marilyn). (Term expires 1973) - Earl Booker, Verne Griffith, Chris Olin, Roger Robles, Mrs. J. P. Warren (Jo).

**SUCSESSES:** Just surviving! And being able to stay flexible enough to vary the programs as the needs become known. Kindergarten and Preschool programs have been particularly effective, as have the sewing classes and English classes for adults. Some past successes have included Citizenship and Driver Training classes and even a do-it-yourself plumbing course. Through the Casa has been available real personal involvement and an opportunity for individual contact and understanding--although not necessarily always agreement--between racial, ethnic, and economic groups within Midland.

**PROBLEMS:** Casa is always in need of more volunteer help. This is particularly true in summer (teenagers take note!) The boys' programs have historically been especially weak because of the lack of men available on a regular basis to supervise and plan. Although it is being overcome, there has been a "communications gap" between the Casa and the people of Midland. There have been cultural crises between Anglo and Mexican-American ideas of what can and what ought to be done. There is greater need for participation from men within the Latin community and for more Negro participation

what ought to be done. There is greater need for participation from men within the Latin community and for more Negro participation. The Director does not have enough time to do the personal visiting that might help in more fully overcoming these last problems. Of course, there is still the limitation imposed by not enough space to operate efficiently, and a playground with equipment is desperately needed. Money is always necessary--especially any increase in dependable, therefore budgetable, income.

THE PLANS FOR THE FUTURE reflect both the problems and successes. It is hoped that playground space will be acquired very soon. There is a concern for meeting the needs of the teenagers in Midland --Latin, Negro, and Anglo--with perhaps increased awareness for service through Casa. The Fund for Reconciliation money is providing the means for training in marketable skills; a hope is that some small private businesses may be started as a result of this training. It is hoped that in cooperation with other service organizations an Organization of Volunteers can be begun, which will be a central location to which adults and young people can

call to discover current needs and volunteer their services.

FINALLY, a sincere thank you to the many, many people directly or indirectly involved who have helped the Casa de Amigos to exist and to work for still another year. Always there are needs not met, so much more to be done. But it is more than a beginning and is done in Midland by Midlanders.

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SUMMER PROGRAMS: Preschool will meet twice a week in the afternoons from 1:30 to 3:30. The Elementary Girls Club and the Little Miss Club will continue to meet once a week. A Junior High-Senior High Girls Club will be added. If teachers can be found, art classes will meet twice a week or oftener. This can be an excellent opportunity for High School Seniors who have been active in art classes! A substitute leader is needed for the Boys Club, which meets Saturday afternoons from 1:30 to 3:30. A sewing instructor is needed for the summer only, for the group that has been meeting on Tuesday morning from 9:30 to 11:30. Call the Casa at 682-1761 to volunteer for any of these.

The Citizenship Classes and the English programs will continue through June. New units will be forming in September.

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Remember Action Line, the Presbyterian-sponsored Referral Agency that is available on Tuesdays and Fridays from 11:00 - 2:00. The number is 682-1830. (In a previous issue the Action Line number was listed as the same as the Casa. This was in error.)

Have a nice summer!