

***Every child deserves a childhood. Your support helps kids be kids!***

Dear Friend of LACASA,

Protector. Peacemaker. Caregiver. These are three words we tend to associate with adults; big titles that carry big responsibility. They become even bigger when attached instead to children who've been forced to grow up too soon.

Kids who witness violence in their homes often grow up very quickly. They feel like it is their job to step in and try to protect, comfort and care for their parent who is being abused.

This was the case for Nicholas, and it is the heartbreaking reality for many children in families where abuse is occurring.

Perhaps the most difficult reality for kids is that the person hurting the parent they love and want to protect is often the other parent, whom they also love and long desperately to please.

Imagine the fear, confusion and sadness this creates for a child. Imagine the helplessness and guilt they feel when they cannot stop the abuse.

The **good news** is that **because of you, there is hope and healing for children and their families.** Generous gifts from friends like you help LACASA provide a wide array of programs and services that empower victims to address and end the violence in their lives.

Your contributions allow LACASA to provide emergency shelter and meals for victims and their children. Your support ensures that children receive counseling to help them process and heal from trauma they have experienced, lifting the weight of sadness and confusion and easing the heavy burden of responsibility they carry.

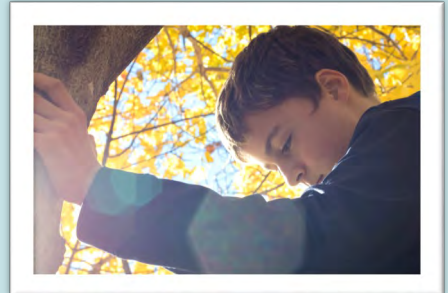
**Your donation to LACASA helps give children the freedom to be children.**

What could be better than that? We'll tell you...

Give now and **an anonymous LACASA friend will match your donation**, dollar for dollar, which means **your help will go twice as far this year!**

**MEET NICHOLAS**

Nicholas is a 12-year-old boy who has seen and heard things no child ever should. He served as the self-appointed protector for his mom and his little sisters for many years.



Nicholas and his family came to LACASA for help last year. At first, Nicholas was quiet and pensive, reluctant to talk and keeping his thoughts and feelings to himself. Months of counseling helped Nicholas open up and talk about some of the things he witnessed.

In his sessions, Nicholas spoke about the many nights he lay awake in bed, listening to his parents fight. They thought he was asleep but he heard everything: his dad's vicious words and fast, heavy footsteps; thuds against the wall; his mom's pleas and muffled sobs.

Nicholas worked through memories of a December afternoon when he was 8 and his sisters were 5 and 3. All three were helping their mom get ready to surprise their dad by decorating the house for the holidays. Instead of being happy when he got home from work, his dad grew angry and yelled at his mom for making a mess of the house. Nicholas remembers fighting back tears as he rushed his sisters to their room and then scrambled to put decorations back in boxes so his dad would stop screaming at his mom.

He recalled a morning just before they visited LACASA for the first time when his father came downstairs to find Nicholas and his sister eating the last of the cereal. Bowls, milk and soggy flakes flew through the air, landing on the kitchen floor. His dad yanked his mom from the chair where she sat, forced her onto the ground and shoved her face into the cereal on the floor. Nicholas tried to make his dad stop, offering to walk to the store to buy more cereal, but his dad was so mad he did not hear him.

Once at LACASA, Nicholas, his mom and his sisters knew things would be okay. LACASA staff helped them develop a safety plan. His mom received support from a legal advocate who told her what to expect in court. All of them received counseling to help them heal from everything they had been through.

Today, Nicholas lives with his mom and sisters at his grandma's house. He feels safe and no longer worries about having to protect them. He enjoys hanging out with friends and playing video games. He does not need to be the peacemaker anymore.

**Thanks to generous support from friends like you,** Nicholas and his family are safe and Nicholas can be a kid.

## How does my contribution help?

LACASA is an independent non-profit agency that relies on fundraising events and private donations to provide crucial programs and services **at no cost** to victims and their families. Last year, with the help of friends like you, LACASA was able to:

- \* Provide 4,470 nights of emergency housing for victims and their children in our **Crisis Shelter**
- \* Provide an additional 10,056 nights of shelter in our **Transitional Supportive Housing** program where victims and their kids live rent-free for up to two years in a fully-furnished apartment while they work on creating financial independence and rebuilding their lives after leaving a dangerous home where abuse was occurring
- \* Conduct 201 child forensic interviews through our **Child Abuse Response Effort (CARE)** project that reduces the risk of additional trauma to children who have been victimized, helps children tell their stories and increases the likelihood that abusers will be prosecuted
- \* Help 209 children at our **Counseling Center** where they are able to process and heal from abuse they witnessed or experienced

**Donating to LACASA means 100% of your contribution stays local.** Your generosity this year will continue to support the programs above. Your donation will also enable LACASA to do other important work:

- ◇ **Parent Education & Prevention Programs** — LACASA educators teach parents, school personnel, child care providers and other professionals how to keep children safe so kids never have to suffer the trauma of abuse. They also teach them to watch for signs and symptoms of abuse so intervention can be sought quickly when something is wrong in a child's life.
- ◇ **In-Home Support for At-Risk Families** — Our family support workers provide in-home visitation and guidance from conception through a child's 5th birthday to ensure that parents have knowledge and skills to take care of those children and raise them in a healthy, nurturing environment.

## Give today and make twice the impact

Make your donation to LACASA today, and rest assured that you are making a real difference for children and their families. Your support will help victims escape from violence and enable children to tell their stories so they can begin to heal.

Instead of being protectors, caregivers and peacemakers in their families, your support allows kids to be kids. What a meaningful and life-changing gift!

Please act now while you have the ability to make twice the impact and **every dollar you donate will be doubled!** Return your donation in the envelope provided, or visit us online at [lacasacenter.org](http://lacasacenter.org).



*With heartfelt gratitude,*

**Patricia Claffey**

LACASA Board of Directors Chair

Retired Executive Director, St. Joseph Mercy Livingston Hospital