



CASA

Center for the Adolescents
of San Miguel de Allende

The Hard Work of Changing Lives



ANNUAL REPORT 2021





Experience this year’s Annual Report through stories of creativity and change:

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At CASA, we wear many hats . . .

Especially in a year like 2021.

Along with maintaining and growing our core programs, we were faced with providing all of our services in the midst of a pandemic. Like never before, the communities we serve looked to CASA for critical information, stability, services and hope. And they received it.

On any given day, the common goal of Changing Lives is a unifying force that moves us all forward no matter what hat we may be wearing.

A Message from Our Board President



Dear San Miguel Community and the world beyond,

I have been a local San Miguel resident for 17 years. Yet it was only three years ago that I learned about CASA, an extraordinary Mexican nonprofit in my backyard that literally touches our entire community from before birth. In addition, CASA has influenced national public health policies over 4 decades and serves as an international, successful example of what can be accomplished by grit and determination.

I am beyond honored to proudly share that I am chair of the board of San Miguel – CASA, Incorporated, a Texas-based 501c3 foundation that fundraises for CASA, thereby assisting Rocio Bautista, CASA’s new Executive Director and other local Mexican leaders to do creative and cutting-edge work such as community-based, family planning, midwifery education and clinical services, sex education, legal aid, day care and astonishing urban art and cultural activities for and by formerly gang-involved individuals.

Like CASA’s founders and staff, my fellow board members are committed and exceptional; have a range of talents. I have the best board an organization could hope for! And a growing team of Mexican and American volunteers, many of whom joined forces recently to host San Miguel’s first Annual Design House Event to benefit CASA.

Please read our 2021 Annual Report. I have no doubt that you will be impressed by our comprehensive approach to preventing and tackling today’s thorny problems. I am also sure you will be motivated not only to donate but to become a volunteer. I thank you for your needed, tax-deductible donation (www.casa.org.mx/donations) and look forward to hearing from you. Below you will see my contact informaton and Spanish-speakers are also encouraged to contact Alejandro Gonzalez, CASA Cofounder and Mexican civil association volunteer board president or Roico Bautista, CASA Executive Director.

Warmly,

Alice Sperling
Chair, CASA Board of Directors

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Fusing Rhythm and Paint

What it means to be young in Mexico

Better yet

What it means to be a Ranchero Pandillero



According to the 2020 census conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mexican population is 126,014,024. The largest represented group are youth, ages 10 to 19 with a population of 21,750,230 or 17%.

It is widely understood that in the last year 250,000 adolescents were considered at high risk and were actively being recruited by organized crime. This is undoubtedly a worrisome and frightening thought for the country. It is of note that the state of Guanajuato ranks as number one in homicides.

Violence, along with social and economic disparities, place thousands of children and adolescents at risk and destined towards two ends: jail or death. Another recent study indicates that 48.9% of 18 year olds in the country have been discriminated against for one reason or another. These reports do not favor Mexican youth in any way.

Recognizing these facts, the staff and volunteers at the Ranchero Pandillero program have worked tirelessly in 2021, providing a safe space of fellowship and trust. A total of 355 youth participated in community-based Ranchero activities or activities at CASA’s Community Center in the working-class neighborhood Santa Julia. The Ranchero artists really expanded their presence virtually in 2021 with creative YouTube productions, broadcasting their concerts and rap sessions virtually and more. Tens of thousands follow them online on Face and through other social networks. Also, it is impossible to quantify how many people daily enjoy and learn from their urban art such as their fabulous, educational street murals!

In 2021 Ranchero Pandillero worked closely with CASA’s ELEGIR program run by feminist lawyers and psychologists to end violence. Together they sponsored a month long activity in March, commemorating International Women’s Day called “Por mi madre vivo, Por mis Hainas mero” (For my mother I live, For my queens I die). This activity paid tribute to the local neighborhood women, CASA staff and volunteers, and the women of neighborhood gangs. The women who participated relayed personal stories and experiences of discrimination because of where they lived or because of how they dressed. The exhibition photographs, taken by Carlos Arturo Burgos, from San Luis Potosi and a member of Ranchero Pandillero, along with the personal stories, can all be seen on the Ranchero Pandillero Facebook page. ▶

“Hey, I’m Isaac and part of the Ranchero Pandillero collective. A few reasons why I’m down is the organization and the workshops they have. They go out into communities that other organizations won’t even touch, or don’t even bother talking with the youth. After all, it’s the young people who are the future. These plus a lot of other reasons, Ranchero Pandillero walks the talk. Peace Out...”

Isaac Ruben Garcia Sosa
artist, age 17



*"Hey Dudes! Whaddup?!
I'm Armando, I go by
"El Mandillo". As a member
of Rancho Pandillero I wanna
invite y'all o'ver to our crib and
see what you've been hearing
about, cuz they can hook you
up. They got their own studio,
so you can record your demo
- and even do a video. And if
you'd rather just do the graffiti
thing, they got ways to do it.
Just remember, less violence,
more hip-hop!"*

Carlos Armando Arriaga
rapper from San Miguel, age 21



Last June, Rancho Pandillero held a membership wide meeting to formally establish a managing body. It was agreed that a formal committee from the membership would more readily be able to address and support the program activities going forward. The officers elected were:

- Luis Enrique Lopez (Marlon), president
- Uriel Gamiño Lara (Daybotl), Vice president
- Itzel Mendieta, Treasurer
- Veronica Muñoz, Secretary

Throughout 2021 youth used Rancho's recording studio free-of-charge and a total of 120 songs were produced. A standout has been a song about Rancho Pandillero rendering a message regarding the program itself, and features two artists ages 8 and 12 who learned how to rap attending Rancho Pandillero workshops. A new song, scheduled to hit the public in late January 2022, has been composed and produced by 7 Rancho Pandillero member artists and is dedicated to their "hometown" - San Miguel de Allende.

Five other artists have recorded their material, collaborating with other members of the collective. This is seen as something positive, being that many had not worked together before and had met at the CASA recording studios. It is an alliance that has inspired them all to continue composing in a concerted effort.

Throughout 2021 CASA kept its public library and recording studio within its community center open, as well as other services. Nonetheless, the organization complied with public health measures and crowds were avoided. For example, Rancho continued to hold in the library 58 Black Sessions with live performances from jarocho, rap, rock and reggae artists that were transmitted live on Facebook with an increase of Facebook followers of 38%!

There were also three live musical events in 2021 with a limited number of people allowed in the audience and with social distancing, (under 125 people per performance, ages 16 to 25 years). Artists included: Sonik 420 from Jalisco, UnderSide 821 from Apodaca, Nuevo Leon, Metric Deep "RP", Kodigo Demente "RP", PSS Kan, La Real Demencia and Doble Eme Klan.



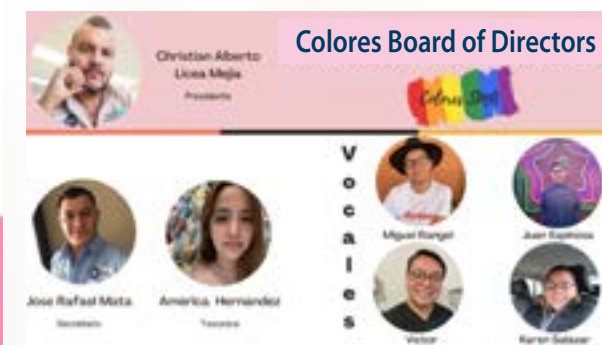
Art, along with music, was also a standout throughout 2021. The young members of the Rancho Pandillero collective painted a total of 22 murals. Among these, 18 were in the municipality of San Miguel De Allende, two government sponsored commissions in San Luis De La Paz and San Diego De La Unión. Two commissions were granted outside the area, Toluca, State of Mexico, and Irapuato, Guanajuato.

One of the goals of Rancho is for its members to earn income from their art and to train them how to run their own successful businesses. Rancho artists also worked alongside other nonprofits. For example, they painted a street mural for Patitas de Humanidad, an organization dedicated to the humane treatment of animals and another for Ojala Niños, a nonprofit that works with young children.

It certainly has been a year of many challenges. Yet, despite the violence and constant change, our youth neither stood still or held its talent back. Instead, they created their own sense of fellowship and community, and rose to the occasion for social change.



Rightsizing Sexual Health



In recent years the internet has become an everyday tool for a large number of people everywhere. According to a recent study by Consumo de Medios Digitales en México, presented by the IAB and Millward Brown, adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 are the largest group who communicate via Facebook, WhatsApp, and other platforms and applications.

CASA's virtual platform was launched 5 years ago thanks to financial support from the John D and Catherine T MacArthur Foundation. Thousands of physicians and nurses, directors of hospitals and others have taken our online courses about the utility of the midwife in the interdisciplinary health team.

In 2021 CASA's Virtual Campus expanded its course offerings and PSC began to really get traction and interest by young folks for its online course about Pleasurable and Protected Sex. A total of 750 young people, of which 65.9% were under the age of 20, have received this online course that addresses gender identity, family planning options and more. This is one of many ways that PSC is supporting the LGBTQI+ community.

This year, with a network of 340 members, seven were appointed to serve on a board of directors of ColoresSMA. These leaders managed nine events that contributed to a change in culture, providing respect and inclusion in sexual diversity. Events which took place on the streets, online social networks, and other mass media, provided the platforms for the creation of such things as insignias, which demonstrated a badge of struggle for equality, and the provision of 115 free HIV tests. ▶

"To approach a place like this, one has to admit that it takes courage to take that first step. We live in a world that discriminates against us. But here you'll find a space of inclusion, understanding, love and complete acceptance so that you can be a person who can gain strength and grow."

"I have been living here in San Miguel for a year, so I am very excited with CASA A.C, a place that has decided to include the LGBTTTIQ+ community, especially in a country where progress is not where we would like. Belonging and being part of something like this goes beyond just helping the community. This is a wonderful opportunity, because when I started my adolescence and adulthood I did not have that sense of community. Therefore, to be able to provide a space for youth and for all of us, is to eventually have what at one time did not exist."



Throughout Latin America the green kerchief symbolizes the fight for the right to free, safe, and legal abortions.

Sex Education Together with Free & Friendly Services

In 2021, a total of 59 local business with hundreds of CASA-trained volunteers lent their work spaces to the community as CASA Family Planning Warehouses or PF BODEGAS! When folks, especially young people go to their barbers or the corner store or for a tattoo they can get free condoms, emergency contraceptives, lubricants, passes to CASA's Clinic and more. Many other places of business, such as liquor stores also participate and have hundreds of monthly clients!

- 69,149 condoms given out on request and 31% of the recipients under age 20!
- 85% of the thousands that received birth control through the PF BODEGA system have no children - CASA is helping folks delay having kids.
- The PSC is working closely with the CASA Elegir Program run by feminist lawyers to give information and services to those seeking abortions.

"It's plain and simple, it takes work to raise funds for SMA COLORES. But with the variety of activities, the ability to meet talented people, and the level of diversity, all I can say is ... you don't need to be one type of person: here, everyone fits in."



A Year of Meeting Challenges

By Luz María Velázquez, Feminist Lawyer



The years 2020 and 2021 will not only be remembered for how COVID-19 affected the world, but for how during these trying times, and even with social distancing, the feminist movement made its presence even stronger: taking over streets; using social networking and media; electing more women on par with men into office; establishing the Registry of Women's Rights; creating a registry of child support evadors; creating a registry of sexual predators; the passage of the Olimpia Law prosecuting cyber crime; and the passage of the Ingrid Law, which sanctions journalists and anyone who discloses and identifies victims at the scenes of a crime, thus causing further harm and revictimization.

Above all, 2021 will be remembered as the year the Supreme Court declared the unconstitutionality of criminalizing women for having abortions. This hard fought individual groundbreaking decision required that all 27 states and jurisdictions immediately follow suit, putting personal biases aside, and decriminalize a woman's personal choice regarding her body.

Many brave women have crossed our Centro ELEGIR doors to request a specific service, or some type of legal assistance, or council. These same brave women have been inspired by national and international movements, and who were simply just fed up living with violence.

Such is the case with Cristina S, from San Miguel, who remembers being a victim of violence since her childhood. Her father, whether or not under the influence of alcohol or drugs, had been violent towards her, her mother, and sister for almost 20 years. Yet, Cristina was the brave one who brought an end to such violence. ▶



CASA
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"I went to Centro ELEGIR asking for psychological help. I was very sad and I didn't feel like doing anything, and I knew that if I didn't ask for help, that one day I would just drown,"Cristina shared. Yet it was a couple of months after dutifully attending her therapy sessions that her psychologist came to me and said, "Cristina wants legal advice, and wants to press charges against her father, and use every tool necessary and have him stop the torment."

The following day Alma, a feminist lawyer from Centro ELEGIR, accompanied her to the prosecutor's office to press charges, and requested a restraining order so that the perpetrator would not come near her home. After this brave act, Cristina's mother also decided to press charges after she too received psychological help. Following suit, along with the womens' personal and even neighbors' testimonies, attorney Karla, from the Guanajuato State Prosecutor's Office, and in charge of the unit for Comprehensive Legal Care for Women, and who is highly sensitive to such cases, asked the judge to have Moisés M. to stand trial.

Motions were requested by the prosecution while Moisés M. was awaiting trial, including harassment restrictions, his ability to come close to the home, and require in-patient treatment for addiction. The accused was fully aware that should any of these restrictions be broken, his trial would have to be held while in prison. For now, Cristina, her sister, and mother are safe and awaiting paid damages and reparations.

The success of Centro ELEGIR for Cristina, along with dozens of other such positive outcomes in 2021, required partnering services. With the provision of approximately 2,162 psychological sessions, and over 423 people attending an average of eight therapy sessions each, these services were provided through a network of 12 volunteer licensed psychologists.

Furthermore, Centro ELEGIR provided 309 legal services. The services included: legal counseling; legal representation; guidance to file complaints; initiation of divorce proceedings; as well as alimony lawsuits, hearings and other proceedings. A total of 28 lawsuits were filed; eight of which were successfully processed and completed, and 20 are currently active.

The Centro ELEGIR shelter, which now functions as a safe house, welcomed 32 people in various states of need and vulnerability. Centro ELEGIR provided all services, guiding them through a process to flee their violent environments, and initiate an action plan.

It is of note that this year, our emergency helpline "ELEGIR" registered more than 475 calls.

The year has been challenging, yet inspiring for those of us who identify with the search for justice, dignity and equality. It is with hope and encouragement that we continue the daily struggle, with fewer people denied their human rights and happiness.

President Lopez Obrador's 4T Government Invests in Regulating Birthing Models

In 1994 CASA opened a family health clinic and maternity hospital where cesarean operations were performed when needed. For twenty years, this facility with its physician and midwife team provided excellent care that was documented by outside evaluators. In 2015 it was decided that the CASA Family Health Clinic outpatient services that include laboratory and dental, as well as general outpatient medical care and free family planning would continue. It was also decided to continue the midwifery model of care for births and to close the onsite surgery suites, thereby converting the CASA maternity hospital into a national example of a cost-effective, high-quality, free-standing birthing center.

In 2021 the CASA midwives and other health care providers provided one or more services to 8,923 people and a total of 1,322 received free, effective birth control methods such as the implant and IUDs.

Thirty percent of those that received family planning had never used birth control before and the vast majority are under the age of 25. Last year, 2021 was particularly rewarding for the CASA midwives because they worked effectively with other nonprofits such as Casa Linda, Casa de Apoyo a la Mujer and Instituto de la Mujer de Leon in promoting family planning.

Today in the United States there are some 400 birthing centers and in Mexico there are less-than-a-half dozen "birth centers" or health care facilities for childbirth where care is provided in the midwifery and wellness model. Some birth centers are located physically within hospitals but most are like CASA's and are referred to as "freestanding" or first-level facilities. Unforeseen emergencies during birth that require surgery are rare but happen and these women need to be immediately transported, often in an ambulance, from the birth center to nearby hospitals.

In 2021 a total of 289 persons gave birth vaginally at the CASA birth center and only 4 had to be transferred to the local public hospital in San Miguel de Allende; in all 4 cases mother and baby were born without problems.

Midwives are trained to respect and facilitate a pregnant person's right to make informed choices about their health care and their baby's health; this means the woman decides when, with whom and how she wishes to give birth. Also, at CASA the woman's family, as she defines it, is welcome to participate in the pregnancy, birth, and postpartum period.

CASA and allies have advocated for the inclusion of birth centers as an integrated part of Mexico's universal health care system for decades. Mexico, like the U.S. and many countries, has medically unjustified cesarean rates and simultaneously, too many women and babies dying preventable deaths, (unacceptably high maternal and perinatal mortality rate). Birth centers are guided by principles of prevention, sensitivity, safety, cost effectiveness, and appropriate medical intervention. Midwives at birthing centers support physiologic birth.

Evidence-based research has demonstrated that midwife-led care at birthing centers is an important avenue for families to access quality and cost-effective care, especially during pandemics. As a means to improve maternal-infant outcomes in Mexico and to support solutions to the maternal mortality crisis the federal health ministry is committing to more primary care options and to scaling up and regulating innovative community-based models of care.

Dr. Hugo Lopez/Gatell, Assistant National Health Minister for the country visited CASA this past October and recently advised that a national midwife task force has been formed as per instructions from Dr. Jorge Alcocer, the National Health Minister, (Dr. Alcocer visited CASA in February 2020 with Dr Karla Berdichevsky of the National Center for Gender Equity and Reproductive Health). CASA was also proud to receive Dr. Celida Duque Moilina, Medical Director of the Mexican Social Security Institute in late 2021. Dr. Celida is responsible for the public medical care option (IMSS) that more than 90 million Mexicans use annually. Dr. Alejandro Svarch is the director of Mexico's health regulatory body and is due to visit CASA in late January 2022.



Dedicated Teachers: Within the Classroom and Into the Neighborhood



Like the rest of the children, these children love CASA's music teacher, Mr. Humberto Villanueva Rangel.



Since 1985 CASA has run an inclusive day care and preschool program. For us this means that we accept infants and children with special needs, especially because we know that these families are often rejected from other institutions.

In 2021 in spite of the pandemic three children with special needs flourished at CASA:



Brandon, age 6, has been at CASA since he was a year and a half old. Brandon successfully finished our preschool program and is on his way to first grade now. Diagnosed with autism, Brandon was determined to progress and he did! His father in particular and his teacher Irene Rayas Gonzalez worked daily with this child whose improvements, especially his language skills have been remarkable.



Fidel, age 3 years 3 months also received a diagnosis of autistic traits and has motor development delays. At 5 months old he started at CASA's facility. This charismatic child is now able to sit up, hold up his head, pick up and shake a rattle and he responds in a happy manner to both other children and adults.



Matteo, age 2 years 10 months also has autistic traits and motor delays. In 2021 Mateo began to walk for the first time, is jumping, singing, working with clay and puzzles; making necklaces for this grandmother, mother and teachers!

"The challenge to provide an innovative inclusive education is clear. This view is seen collectively by our teachers and collaborators at CASA, that as a non-profit organization, makes it our business to bring all the necessary learning tools from daycare to preschool to the people in most need within the furthest reaches of the community."

In 2021 a total of 129 families had their children safe, stimulated and content at the CASA day care and preschool center. As in past years, at least a third of the families receiving this service are female-headed.

Throughout the whole year the CASA teachers offered their services and worked closely with the library staff as exposure to books is a staple from birth is a staple at CASA. The staff and parents and children also continued to work in the community garden.



In addition to their normal work load, the CASA teachers went into the community on a regular basis and worked with children ages 6 to 13 that have been out of school for so long now. A total of 221 kids have engaged in activities with CASA's teaching staff and one can see by the pictures below that the kids are obviously happy to receive needed attention and engage in activities.



The Covid pandemic continues to challenge us and we continue to be creative non-stop to meet the need and then some.

"My name is Lucia and I am a social worker at a hospital in Dolores Hidalgo, about 40 minutes from San Miguel de Allende. I am the mother of Jose Matteo Pacheco Balderas, a beautiful wanted and planned child who is 2 years, 9 months. We do not know why Matteo was born premature and since his birth we have been worried about his development.

I need to work and I searched and searched for a day care and early stimulation program for my son but they were all out of my financial reach. Then I remembered that my brothers that are now 22 and 19 had been infants and preschool age at the CASA daycare. My mother had been very happy with the quality, low-cost and sometimes free service.

Matteo started to attend the CASA program in August 2020 and at first it was so hard because he was constantly sick. But I saw first-hand how the facility was clean and the teachers dedicated and I learned that both my child and I had to adapt and we did. Matteo stopped getting sick and daily he became more lively, aware and upbeat. He loves his teachers.

I am so grateful for this service and to Pilar, my mother whose also unconditionally supports me and my small family!"

Books & Online Programs Grew to Meet the Need

Without a doubt, 2021 was a most challenging year worldwide. In Mexico it seemed that everything shifted entirely online, which could be seen as positive. The digital divide needs to be reduced, processes streamlined and access to information for all improved.

Yet in Mexico at least 28% of the population still does not have internet access. The CASA professional librarian team has been working for decades with its trained volunteer team in rural areas that precisely still do not have internet access and have become even more isolated during the pandemic. In 2021 thirty CASA "street libraries", primarily in rural vilages, stayed open every day so both children and adults could have access to free books. CASA professional staff traveled weekly to assist the strong and dedicated core of volunteers.

Overall, a total of 25,882 books were lent out and a book drive with a goal of adding 10,000 new books to the CASA collection was achieved. A Mexico City organization called Escritoras MX was especially helpful and Senator Jesusa Rodriguez and author Isabel Allende also were donors to this cause.

The CASA librarian team also continued its online programs such as a weekly program called, "Lo que a mi me contaron - mitos y realidades". At CASA there is no shortage of great storytellers and they are always looking for others to share their stories during this weekly program that is live on Facebook every Wednesday. This online program received a total of x hits in 2021.

In 2022 we are determined to further increase our collection by at least 10,000 new books and we ask all those that wish to contribute funds or books to contact us at: biblioteca@casa.org.mx.



"The library program helps by lending me books to take home. I'm sure happy to be able to read as many books, because buying them is hard. I am thankful for the kind and thoughtful customer service provided by the library since day one. They not only have many books, but make me feel comfortable and very much at home."

Mr. J. Refugio Murillo Gonzalez patron of the Rosario Castellanos main library



"I like to come because I learned how to draw and read more about it. I already knew how, but books helped me even more. They also helped me learn how to get along."

Daniel age 7 From Fraccionamiento El deportivo

A Thank You from Our Executive Director

2021 was really my first year on my own as Executive Director at CASA. Without a doubt the year was filled with anticipated and unanticipated challenges. It was twenty years ago that I started at CASA as a teacher's assistant, then teacher, then Director of the Early Childhood Program and now overall director. The time has flown by! I am honored to be CASA's Director.

I know that the tremendous growth I have achieved would not have been possible without Nadine Goodman, my mentor who continues to believe in and act on her admiration and love for youth and for those of us who are a bit older now...Nadine's energy and perseverance still ignites us all.

In 2021 I also had the fortune to work with the growing board of directors whose support is unconditional, needed and, together I know we will be able to accomplish a lot. All of us are getting to know better many of our donor partners who continue to be faithful and obviously without their financial support, our work would be impossible. Thank you and thank you again! I have decided against listing donors as I don't want anyone to be missed and also we have very generous donors who ask not to be identified.

The talent and dedication of the CASA staff is well-known and in 2021 it was particularly moving to see the Ranchero Pandillero program grow and the dedication of our colleague Claudia Arizbeth Varela Rodriguez was outstanding.

2022 has started with a search for new members for the CASA team as in late 2021 several colleagues from the sex education and family planning and from our legal department moved on. I have no doubt that we will soon have a complete and dedicated team that will accomplish yet more miracles one day at a time.

Abrazo,

Rocio Baustista
Executive Director, CASA



CASA

Center for the Adolescents of San Miguel de Allende





How can you express your support of CASA?

- Donate Online to CASA at: www.casa.org.mx
- Fund a Scholarship for a Young Person
- Become a Part of Our Volunteer Program
- Organize a Fundraiser for CASA
- Give an In-Kind Donation Such as a Spanish Book, Educational Materials . . .



*A copy of the 2021 Financial Statement is available upon request.
Please email: presidente@casa.org.mx*

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