

'Survive and Thrive'

New name, same mission: As of today, LaCASA is officially Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center

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GURNEE -- Though it has become a familiar name over the last decade, "LaCASA" had become a point of confusion for the Lake County Council Against Sexual Assault.

For one thing, LaCASA was often mistaken for Nicasa, the Northern Illinois Council Against Substance Abuse in Round Lake. Officials also say that LaCASA clients who speak Spanish might be led to believe that the agency is a residential shelter, since "casa" means "house."

Finally, LaCASA backers say that having the term "Lake County" in the title proved to be a handicap in fund-raising, with potential donors turning down requests for funding due to a perceived geographical limitation.

And so, as of today, LaCASA has become the Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center, providing the same services under a name that has been on the agency's headquarters since 1997.



As of Jan. 1, LaCASA will be known as the Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center.

(Andre J. Jackson/News-Sun)

Executive Director Torrie Flink said in a statement that the change was made "in order to clarify its mission and focus for future generations ... By eliminating the LaCASA acronym, we are strengthening our agency's ability to 'Survive and Thrive,' just as we have helped so many people to do over the years."

The Zacharias Center is named in memory of businessman and entrepreneur Richard Zacharias, known as the financial backer who made the Dove Bar a national brand. Five years after Zacharias passed away in 1989, his family donated \$100,000 to set up a foundation in support of the LaCASA mission.

"(His family and friends) interviewed many and chose LaCASA," said his daughter, Nancy Zacharias, in a recent letter to agency supporters. "And they did so precisely in the way my Dad would have wanted. No shiny hospital wings, no fancy publicity or public recognition, no notoriety in philanthropic journals.

"Instead, they got straight to the heart of the matter by establishing the framework for a revenue stream that enabled LaCASA to establish and maintain a spectrum of support for children and others traumatized by sexual violence."

The name change also comes as the agency prepares to celebrate its 25th anniversary. Flink said that during the time, the Zacharias Center "evolved from a small, first-response rape crisis organization (into) a diverse healing/ advocacy and prevention organization that provides bi-lingual outreach into each of our community's diverse age and cultural groups."

As the name change is put in place, the agency's correspondence and Web site will feature the title Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center (formerly Lake County Council Against Sexual Assault). The Web site itself will switch addresses from www.lacasastoprpe.org to www.zachariascenter.org.

Phone contacts will remain the same, with the main line at (847) 244-1187 and the 24-hour hotline at (847) 872-7799.