



Community Actions

2007 END OF YEAR REPORT

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Basic Needs Coalition Acknowledged

The Basic Needs Coalition (BNC) of Central Texas, a grass-roots collaboration of over 40 human service providers who seek to address core challenges for families

as they move toward self-sufficiency, received the **United Way Capital Area 2007 Spirit of Service Award** for modeling best practices in developing the Best Single Source Program, raising awareness about poverty, and conducting the food survey to improve service and outcomes. The BNC was also nominated for a **Butler Award** which will be announced on December 14, 2007, at CAN's **End of Year Event** to be held at City Hall.

The mission of the BNC is to lead the community in creating solutions that secure basic resources (food, housing and clothing) for those in need. The BNC is currently **updating its FAQ** in preparation for Poverty Awareness Month in January of 2008. For more information, visit www.basicneeds-ctx.org.

The Basic Needs Coalition *of Central Texas*

**Aging FAQ
available on
CAN website
December 2007
www.caction.org**



Ready by 21 Establishes Youth Council

The Ready by 21 Coalition, with endorsements from the CAN, City of Austin, Austin ISD, and United Way Capital Area formed a Youth Council in 2007. The Youth Council is made up of

members ages 14 to 20 (pictured above) representing Travis County high schools, post-secondary institutions, and out of school youth. The Youth Council will solicit input from other youth and young adults, develop recommendations, and advise elected officials and other policymakers about issues affecting youth. (Continued on p. 6)



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**Vanessa Sarria,
Executive Director**

CAN Vision

Our richly diverse community will be healthy, safe, educated, just and compassionate where all people work together to achieve their full potential and celebrate their lives.

CAN Mission

To achieve sustainable social, health, educational and economic outcomes through engaging the community in a planning and implementation process that coordinates and optimizes public, private, individual actions and resources.

Comments from CAN's Executive Director

A common desire for all involved in the Community Action Network is to make a difference while making the best use of resources and people's time. In order to ensure our effectiveness as an organization, it has been important to revisit the CAN Vision and Mission to remind ourselves what the purpose of our actions should be.

In line with the CAN vision, the work we do should always be about *creating opportunities for all people to achieve their full potential*. It is important to remind ourselves that although many in our community benefit from a strong economy, over 135,000 Travis County residents live below the federal poverty line of \$20,650 annually for a family of four.

Using the CAN's mission statement as a guide and building on work completed in 2007, the CAN's work in 2008 will involve guiding a process to close the opportunity gap that focuses on key areas (refer to p.3) and strategically aligning the CAN organization towards fulfillment of this purpose. It is my hope that these efforts will help position CAN to more effectively enhance the quality of life for those in need and help our community gauge its progress to close gaps.



Media and Business Partnerships Key to Closing Educational Gaps

In 2007, CAN assisted with outreach efforts to increase awareness of *La Feria Para Aprender* and helped plan for *La Feria Dos* to be held at the Burger Center on February 16, 2008, from 10 am to 3 pm.

With media coverage from **Univision Television & Radio** (pictured above with other planning team members of La Feria Dos) and Austin American Statesmen newspaper **Ahora Si**, the event is expected to draw 5,000 attendees from the Hispanic community.

Lead by Sylvia Acevedo of **CommuniCard**, CAN Partners (**AISD, United Way, Chamber of Commerce, Seton, CapMetro**) are working together with **Partners in Education, Mercury Mambo**, and the **Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce** to coordinate the event. Over 70 non-profits will provide services and information while Hispanic professionals will speak to Spanish-speaking parents and AISD students about the importance and socio-economic benefits of graduating from high school and/or college. For information on La Feria Dos, photos and downloadable brochures, visit www.feriaeducativa.org.



Community Actions

LEARNING

- Early Education & Care
- P-16
- Literacy
- Basic & Other Skills to Prepare Workforce

WORKING

- Economic Well-being
- Jobs w/ Livable Wages
- Affordable and Accessible Housing, Transportation & Basic Needs

THRIVING

- Health
- Behavioral Health
- Safe & Secure Community

CONNECTING / LEADING

- Diverse & Inclusive Community
- Civic & Community Engagement
- Leadership

CAN to Focus on Key Quality of Life Areas to Close Opportunity Gap

In an effort to position the Community Action Network to more effectively address Equity in Opportunity, the CAN has been working on a process that would address gaps in key quality of life areas and the needs of special populations experiencing challenges in accessing resources to becoming self-sufficient. Identification of focus areas involved using several studies highlighted below.

CAN's areas of focus significantly align with:

2001 Austin Equity Commission Report:

Livable Wages	Education
Workforce Development	Affordable Housing
Early Education & Care	Transportation
Health / Behavioral Health	Leadership

National Assoc. of Planning Council Indicators Study:

Educational Preparedness	Economic Well-being
Wellness & Safety	Community Participation
Nurturing, Inclusive Community & Environment	

Kirwan Institute Geography of Opportunity—Austin Region:

Education	Economic
Health & Environment	Neighborhood Quality
Mobility & Transportation	

2006 Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Report:

Public Safety	Education & Children
Social Equity	Engagement
Economy	Health
Environment	Land Use & Mobility

Also Focus on Special Populations:

Aging • Children & Youth • Homeless
Persons with Disabilities • Immigrants
Poor / Low-income • Victims • Minorities • Others



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2007 CAN A-Team

The *CAN Administrative Team (A-Team)* is the implementation body made up of executive level managers from each partner organization. It advocates for agreed upon CAN strategies by providing leadership, staff support and sponsorship.

2008 A-Team Chair

Paul Hilgers,
Executive Manager,
City of Austin Neighbor-
hood Housing & Community
Development



2008 A-Team Vice-Chair

Michelle Krejci
Director of Community Invest-
ments, United Way Capital Area
(back row, third from right)



Farewell to Mildred Vuris after 10 Years of Service on CAN Administrative Team

Mildred Vuris has served as the Austin Travis County Mental Health Mental Retardation (ATCMHMR) Center representative to the A-Team since 1996. Mildred brought over 35 years of extensive experience in management of behavioral health services for children and adults, as well as program development, including residential and housing.



Mildred Vuris,
ATCMHMR
Director of
Governmental and
Community Relations

Mildred served as a member of the National Advisory Committee of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Building Health System for People with Chronic Illnesses Program, and a Board Member of Tejas Behavioral Health Management Association. She is currently the Chair of the Indigent Care Collaboration and is staff liaison with the Mayor's Mental Health Taskforce. Mildred will be reducing her time at ATCMHMR and CAN to spend more time with her grandchildren.

"In the role of a neutral convener, CAN has been instrumental in building the trust necessary for meaningful collaboration among public and private organizations. I have always valued that CAN focused on the whole person and brought together resources to develop holistic solutions to problems."
- Mildred Vuris



Sally Spill,
ATCMHMR
Director of
Programs
will be
replacing Mildred on
the A-Team in 2008.



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CAN Leadership for 2008

Resource Council

Chair, David Escamilla, Travis Co. Attorney, Comm. Justice Council
Vice-Chair, Ann Kitchen, Exec. Director, Indigent Care Collaboration

About the CAN Resource Council

The Resource Council is the policy and decision making body made up of senior leadership and representatives from each partner organization. The Resource Council provides strategic direction and governs the overall operations of the CAN.

In 2007, the CAN Resource Council worked on strategically aligning the CAN organization to better address opportunity gaps. This included developing a framework and process that will align the various CAN bodies around a common focus of addressing equity in opportunity and result in the development of recommended action steps to close gaps for consideration by the CAN Resource Council and other community leaders in coming years.



CAN Community Council

Terry Cowan, CEO of the Workers Assistance Program, will be replacing Patricia Dabbert, AISD Business and Community Liaison, as **Chair of the Community Council in 2008**. The *Community Council*, the community voice and oversight body of CAN acts as a bridge between the CAN and the community. Terry Cowan is featured with Shawn Lemieux (left) and Clint Smith of the Gray Panthers (center).

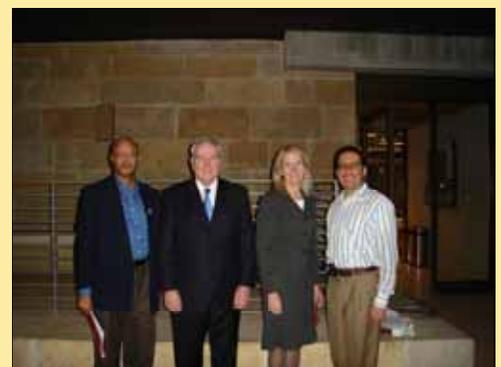
2007 Community Council Equity in Opportunity Forums

In 2007, the CAN Community Council focused its televised forums on creating awareness about community issues and initiatives within each of CAN's areas of focus (refer to p. 3). Community Council programs featured updates on efforts to implement *2001 Austin Equity Commission Report* recommendations, identify community-wide indicators to gauge progress in closing gaps, and current initiatives. **2007 Equity in Opportunity Forums** featured presentations on health, behavioral health, education, the Travis County Immigrant Assessment, youth, and transportation.

(right) Ava Woods of AISD and Austin/Travis County Health & Human Services Department leadership including Dr. Shannon Jones, David Lurie, and Health Authority Dr. Adolfo Valadez presented at the *November 2007 Public Health Forum* where they highlighted disparities such as a the disproportionate number of pregnancies among Hispanic teenagers and HIV infections among black females ages 13 years and older.



2008 Vice-Chair
Cynthia Colbert,
Executive Director,
Catholic Charities
of Central Texas





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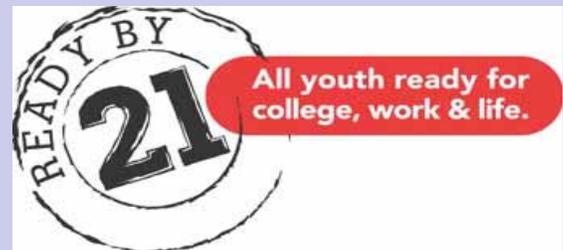


Youth Council Established cont.

(left) CAN Community Council member, **Deborah Wise**, Project Manager for the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Participation at the University of Texas and **Tim Eubanks** of Austin Voices for Education & Youth worked together on RB21 Coalition’s Youth Engagement Team to help create the Youth Council. The Team researched models in other cities and worked with a group of youth advisors to get their input. The Youth Council will provide opportunities to its members to develop leadership skills and make a positive difference in the Austin area on issues affecting young people.

The Youth Council was introduced by Deborah Wise to the CAN Community Council in July of 2007, “Our purpose is to support all young people in our community to be **Ready by 21.**”

- Ready for higher education and learning
- Ready for work and career advancement
- Ready to lead healthy lives, and
- Ready for positive social and civic connections and engagement



The Ready by 21 Coalition is a collaborative group of youth service providers, educators, government agency representatives, and teen advisors who are concerned about the youth in our community, especially youth who face challenges to achieving self-sufficiency. The Ready by 21 Coalition is sponsored by **WorkSource - the Greater Austin Area Workforce Board** and serves as the CAN Issue Area Group for Youth.

		Continuum of Youth Development Developmental Ages/Stages				
		Early Childhood (0-to 5-year olds)	Elementary (6-to 10-year-olds)	Middle School (11-to 14-year olds)	High School (15-to 19-year olds)	Young Adults (20-to 24-year olds)
Developmental Areas	Learning (Basic and Academics)					
	Working (Work/Career awareness preparation)					
	Thriving (Physical & Mental Health & Safety)					
	Connecting (Social/ Interpersonal Skills)					
	Leading (Civic and Community Engagement)					

*based on Dashboards for Youth, developed by the Forum for Youth Investment

Ready by 21 received a Quality Counts Grant on the basis of their collaborative work. Austin was one of eleven sites selected to participate in *Quality Counts*, a national initiative led by the Forum for Youth Investment who also developed the continuum of Youth Development based on the areas of **Learning, Working, Thriving, Connecting and Leading** (left). This initiative funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation will help improve the quality and reach of youth development programming.

Also, the Youth Services Mapping Team piloted a web-based information system based on the areas of the continuum and trained more than **65 youth service organizations** and AISD high school counselors to use the system to access information on services.



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Other 2007 Ready By 21 Coalition (pictured above) Successes include...The Go to College Team along with school and community partners including the Community Tax Centers, promoted 15 financial aid events helping more than 530 students/families complete financial aid forms. The Millennium Team surveyed the Booker T. Washington public housing community on their perceptions about the Millennium Youth Entertainment Complex, identified three key perceived barriers (safety, security, cost), and advocated for a more “youth-friendly” center.



2007 Education Initiatives of the Austin Chamber of Commerce, a CAN partner, have included working with other Ready By 21 partner organizations to **expand regional efforts** to assist students and parents/guardians with filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and other financial aid forms during Financial Aid Saturdays scheduled in February and March of 2008.

In line with its **20,010 by 2010 Initiative**, the Chamber has also been instrumental in leveraging business resources to support regional efforts to **increase completion of the Apply Texas Application** (formerly known as the Texas Common Application), **increase college-ready graduates** through Austin Partners in Education, assist with adult education preparation and enrollment through the **Skillpoint Alliance College and Career Fair to be held on March 6, 2008**, and assisting Foundation Communities in **preparing IRS tax forms** to help expedite the financial aid application process. For more information or to sign up to volunteer, contact Cyndi Contreras de Robles at crobles@austinchamber.com or 512.322.5644.



Austin Chamber of Commerce Coordinates InterCity Visit to San Diego

In October 2007, the Austin Chamber of Commerce coordinated an InterCity Visit to San Diego. Vanessa Sarria, Executive Director of CAN, and other leaders from Central Texas were invited to learn about San Diego's efforts to **manage regional growth** related to affordable housing, transportation, health, water conservation, downtown development, economic development, and education.

Among others, Austin delegates AISD Superintendent Pat Forgione, AISD Board President Mark Williams, E3 Executive Director Susan Dawson, and RRISD Superintendent Jesus Chavez, visited **High Tech High** which offers a project based learning environment to prepare all students for college, work and citizenship. Education-related presentations also included San Diego's **Compact for Success**, a collaboration of the Sweetwater High School District, Education Foundation and San Diego State University that offers disadvantaged students (starting at 7th grade) a guaranteed track for admission to San Diego State University.



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2007 Issue Area Successes

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

HousingWorks coordinated their first annual “There’s No Place Like Home” bus tour to show community leaders and representatives examples of outstanding housing solutions; sponsored the **4th Annual Austin Housing Summit A Place to Do Homework: Connecting Affordable Homes with School Success**; and convened, with the support of CAN, key organizations addressing affordable housing to identify current research, plans and messaging initiatives. October meeting notes are posted on the CAN website. For more information call (512) 326-3356.



CENTRAL TEXAS AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

In 2007, the Central Texas Afterschool Network (CTAN) worked on a **mapping study** of populations in areas most in need of quality programs, hosted seven **professional development opportunities**, participated in the national **Lights On Afterschool Rally** involving over 50 Central Texas programs, sponsored a **Breakfast of Champions Banquet** to honor supporters, created a **video** on the value of afterschool programs, and **expanded funding** for programs at Gus Garcia MS and Ann Richards Girls Academy. CTAN’s **best practices** were also **recognized** by local and national organizations including Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, Texas Education Agency, and American’s Promise Alliance. Contact gsmythe@abrakadoodle.com, Sjustice@austinisd.org or visit www.tcafterschool.org for more information.



CTAN Success Story

“Chris Ockletree is the perfect example of the impact afterschool makes on young teens.

In 2004, he dropped out of Reagan High School, but, through the persuasion of caring adults who reached out to him while he was in the streets, he decided to return to school, got involved in afterschool Poetry and Music/Video Production classes, and became inspired to do even more.

He became class president of a newly formed student council his senior year and used his leadership and influence to convince his peers to become better students and join more after school activities.”

COMMUNITY JUSTICE COUNCIL

Did you know that... CTAN was formed after a July 21, 2001, CAN and Community Justice Council sponsored retreat where children’s out-of-school time was identified as a critical issue.



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EARLY EDUCATION & CARE

The **Success By Six** program supported by United Way Capital Area released the **Child Well-Being Report Card** in 2007 which provides a complete analysis of how Central Texas schools, parents, and child-care facilities are preparing our children to be happy, healthy, and smart adults. The report card identified areas demanding serious attention, helping to shape and improve how our youngest children are being educated. Visit www.unitedwaycapitalarea.org/sb6/ for more information.



The City of Austin funded the United Way Capital Area (Success By 6 and Hands on Central Texas) to **administer a program designed to improve child care center physical facilities** over a three-year period. For more information, contact Bonner.Brown@UnitedWayCapitalArea.org.



(above) Before and after photos of improvements made at Trinity Child Development Center that recently received national accreditation.



RE-ENTRY ROUNDTABLE



The Re-entry Roundtable recently co-sponsored a workshop with United Way's Success by Six Program related to one of their goals to support children during their parents' reincarceration and release. Sydney Gurewitz Clemens (*pictured left*), an early childhood teacher for 30 years and recognized author, presented on best practices. Clemens is promoting the Children's Bill of Rights.



Related to the goal of enhancing communications and contact visits between parents and children, the Re-entry Roundtable is working on a **service plan for Family Visitation**. For more information, contact c_harris@grandecom.net. To access information on the Re-entry Roundtable and available resources for offenders, families and victims, visit <http://>



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2007 Issue Area Successes continued...



Children & Youth Mental Health Success Story

"I was 13 and I was horrible. I was into running around with the wrong people. I did drugs. I was sneaking out of the house at night. I was vandalizing property. My therapist taught me how to communicate and he saved my life. I became a productive adult. "

~ Pam



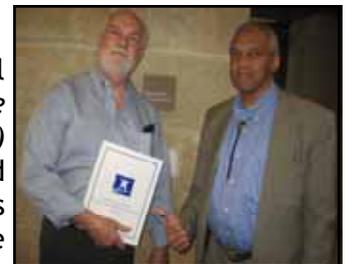
(above) CYMHP members present at a Seton sponsored Children's Optimal Health meeting on behavioral health system opportunities, barriers, strengths and weaknesses and the need to assist and engage the faith-based community to meet current needs.

Addressing Behavioral Health Gaps

The Children & Youth Mental Health Planning Partnership (CYMHP) offered trainings on QPR (Question/Persuade/Refer) suicide prevention techniques to staff and students of AISD, UT, Concordia and St. Edward's Univ.; raised funds for suicide prevention; sponsored monthly suicide prevention workshops; and enhanced community awareness by hosting Children's Mental Health Awareness Day with proclamations from City and County officials (*Mayor Wynn featured right*) and coordinating bookmark and green ribbon campaigns with local media coverage.



David Evans, Executive Director of the Austin Travis County Mental Health Mental Retardation (ATCMHMR) Center (*pictured with Mike Manor, Board Member of Austin Area Interreligious Ministries*)



presented on partnerships and other initiatives to address behavioral health gaps at the CAN Resource Council.



In 2007, CAN assisted in the merger of the Adult Mental Health Planning Partnership and the Substance Abuse Planning Partnership, now the Behavioral Health Planning Partnership.



CAN staff also provided linkages to other CAN Partners to identify funding to create Command Spanish Classes for behavioral health providers.

With WorkSource funding and instruction from Austin Community College, Spanish class instruction has been provided to over 300 social service providers in Austin.



The Travis County Healthcare District (TCHD) and ATCMHMR worked together, in their respective roles, to expand the availability of integrated behavioral health services in each of the 13 Federally Qualified Health Centers where patients were better served and provided more co-effective medication through co-enrollment. Furthermore, with TCHD in the lead, a community-wide crisis plan was developed which resulted in a mobile crisis team funded by Travis County. TCHD funded 12 new psychiatric beds at Seton Shoal Creek with utilization management from ATCMHMR. The City of Austin also planned and budgeted for a residential treatment facility.



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HOMELESSNESS

The Ending Community Homelessness (ECHO) Coalition, a merger of the Homeless Task Force and End Chronic Homelessness Organizing Committee, helped host the **Seventh Annual Stand Down** on Saturday, November 3, 2007. The number of homeless attending the 2007 Stand Down was **648**. Hundreds of volunteers joined forces to connect service providers with people in need. The Stand Down event provided access to basic health, legal, financial, housing, employment, training, social services and veterans' benefits. **CAN helped leverage student resources** from the Univ. of Texas to assist with the Stand Down and to create MySpace and Facebook pages (*UT students pictured*) to increase awareness about CAN and community issues among youth.



Other ECHO achievements included development of the **10 Year Plan** endorsed by Travis County Commissioners' Court, presentations at Texas Homeless Network Conference, launch of a **permanent supportive housing initiative** at Spring Terrace, completion of a **Homeless-Myth-Buster Video**, and integration of the Collaboration Technologies for Organizations Serving the Homeless (CTOSH) into the ECHO Website (www.AustinECHO.org). For more information, contact Gilja.Koo@ci.austin.tx.us.



DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Accomplishments in 2007 for the **Developmental Disabilities Planning Partnership** included formation of an **advisory group to focus on dental health initiatives** for elderly and people with mental retardation, mental health, and developmental disabilities; **grant request to Glimmer of Hope Foundation** for training media to be used by caregivers, especially in nursing homes; collaboration with Gray Panthers on the **Community Health Forum** (pictured left); involvement in **Capital Metro eligibility and Accessible Taxi Cab issues**; and **Legislative initiatives to include development of priorities**; and initial contact with House Committee on Human Services to provide input for the next session. For more information, visit <http://www.caction.org/mrdd/index.html>.



Ann Kitchen, Exec. Director of the Indigent Care Collaboration, was among various panelists presenting at the Community Health Forum that addressed issues impacting the aging population and persons with disabilities.

AGING

In 2007, the **Aging Services Council of Central Texas** distributed 800 "Stay Put" Emergency Kits to homebound, low income seniors, created and aired a **Public Services Announcement** regarding transportation options for older adults resulting in a **50% increase** of calls to 211 from seniors regarding transportation, produced **FAQ and Statement of Recommendations** on aging population and the "demographic imperative" of addressing their needs; and completed a **resource book and questionnaire** to assess the social engagement needs of isolated older adults.

DID YOU KNOW ...

that the St. David's Foundation provides staff support and meeting space to the Aging Services Council.

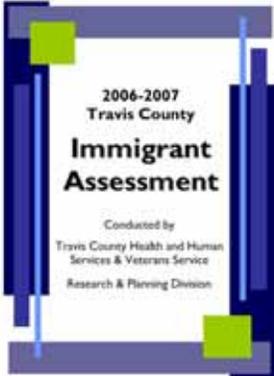
For meeting times, visit www.caction.org/agingservices/





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More CAN News



Visit caction.org to access informative reports like the...

Immigrant Assessment completed by Travis County Health & Human Services & Veterans Services Research and Planning in 2007.

Transportation Initiatives

With guidance from CapMetro, CAPCOG, the Alliance for Public Transportation, and the Regional Transit Coordination Committee (RTCC), CAN Intern Brandy Carroll of the UT Urban Studies Graduate Program:



- conducted a series of focus groups on transportation needs and compiled a report with findings and recommendations (posted on caction.org)
- created a guide on transportation organizations and initiatives, and
- assisted with RTCC forums related to JARC and New Freedom grants for Central Texas transportation initiatives to fill gaps.



Watch CapMetro and the RTCC present on initiatives at the CAN Community Council *Equity in Opportunity Forum on Transportation* from 5:40 pm to 7:40 pm on Channel 6 on December 17.

CAN Web Designer Acknowledged for Enhancing Awareness



Karen Cook, Austin Community College and CAN web designer, received a "Certificate of Appreciation" from the Austin Police Department for her work and support of the Basta Ya campaign. William Petty nominated Karen for the Award which was signed by Chief of Police Art Acevedo.



VICTIM SERVICES

Through the creation of the Basta Ya website in 2007, the CAN assisted the Victim's Services Taskforce to enhance awareness about the No Lo Permis campaign designed to increase the safety of Spanish-speaking immigrants in Austin who are victims of crime. This campaign helps to inform Spanish-speaking immigrants of their rights and available resources. Victim's Services Taskforce members are also working together on a program that offers low interest loans to eligible immigrants to pay fees associated with becoming legal permanent residents or citizens. Call 478-0546 for more information.



DID YOU KNOW THAT CAN Web Designer Karen Cook also maintains over 10 issue area websites. These services are made possible through financial support from St. Edward's University and other CAN partners. St. Edward's also provided meeting space for the 2007 Immigrant Assessment Forum.

The Community Action Network (CAN) is a private/public partnership of major community organizations committed to enhancing the health and well-being of Central Texas. The CAN provides a forum and tools for creative and collaborative problem solving, community participation and consensus building.