



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Casa Valentina Celebrates Generosity of Donors, Sponsors and Supporters
*Cocktail Reception Highlights Progress of Supportive Housing
Effort for Girls Who Age Out of Foster Care in Miami***

MIAMI (February 28, 2006) – “Home sweet home” was on everyone’s mind at Casa Valentina’s cocktail reception on Thursday, February 23rd. The party, held at Gibraltar Bank in Coral Gables, was thrown to celebrate the generosity of Casa Valentina’s supporters and to announce the opening of the first Casa Valentina residential facility for former foster girls.

After a successful year of awareness-raising and fundraising efforts, the first Casa Valentina Home will open in June 2006. In partnership with CHARLEE Homes for Children, Casa Valentina will provide seven former foster girls with a safe, affordable place to live and the support services they need to transition successfully from foster care to independent living. A second Casa Valentina residential site is in development to open later this year.

“The outpouring of support from the community during our first year has been extraordinary,” said Sharon Langer, director of the Legal Aid Society in Miami and Chair of the Casa Valentina Executive Committee. “Hosting this reception was a great opportunity for us to bring together and thank everyone who has been instrumental to the success of this effort to help foster girls in our community.”

Guests at the cocktail reception enjoyed passed hors d'oeuvres and drinks under the clear night sky on Gibraltar Bank’s outdoor terrace. Honorary Chairs Ellen Catsman Freidin and Julie Catsman Simon presented highlights of Casa Valentina’s extraordinary first year, including a successful Casa Valentina Visionary fundraising campaign; significant support from private donors and foundations; and the sold-out benefit performance of Eve Ensler’s *The Vagina Monologues* produced in November 2005.

Event Chairs Hollie Altman, Kadie Black and Kimberly Feinberg mingled with guests, and the Casa Valentina Leadership Team – Sharon Langer, Marcia Reisman, Susan Lampen, Lisa Schejola Akin, Sharon Gurman Socol and Claudia Kitchens – were on hand to give thanks and encourage continued support for Casa Valentina’s housing effort.

More than 100 community members attended the reception, including Commissioner Sally Heyman, Commissioner Katy Sorenson, Mary Cagle, Sonia Jacobson, Vicki Lukis, Wansley Walters, Nedra Kalish and Judge Cindy Lederman. The reception was generously underwritten by Gibraltar Bank, and the Miami Performing Arts Center and Broadway Across America donated two tickets to Opening Night of The Light in the Piazza in September 2006 for the evening’s raffle prize.

Casa Valentina was created to address the immense challenges faced by girls in Miami-Dade County who age out of foster care at 18 without the life skills, financial stability and support they

need to survive on their own. Facing life alone on the streets, these young women are at risk of experiencing prostitution, incarceration, violence, sexual abuse, homelessness or worse. Housing is their greatest need and their biggest obstacle, and Casa Valentina's mission is to provide them with a safe, affordable place to live and the support services they need to become successful, independent adults. For more information, visit www.casavalentina.org.

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