



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Casa Valentina Receives Prestigious Dr. John T. Macdonald Foundation, Inc.  
Grant For Two-Year Pilot Program On Nutrition And Healthy Lifestyles**

**MIAMI** (August 6, 2007) – Casa Valentina, a non-profit organization that addresses the unique gender-specific needs of young women ages 18 to 23 who have aged out of foster care, is pleased to announce that they have received a \$20,000 grant from the Dr. John T. Macdonald Foundation Inc. The grant money will be used to create and implement a two-year pilot program that teaches nutrition and healthy lifestyles to Casa Valentina residents using an experiential approach geared towards young adults and sensitive to their cultures and limited budgets. The program will be incorporated into Casa Valentina's existing life-skills curriculum that covers topics ranging from budgeting to job-skills to domestic violence.

"Our residents' histories of maltreatment, instability, and lack of positive role models have placed them at a huge disadvantage when it comes to mastering the life-skills that most of us take for granted," said Sharon Katz, Program Director for Casa Valentina. "Their knowledge of nutrition and self-care is limited to the point where, without intervention, their health is at great risk."

The idea for the pilot program came about after Dr. Diane Krieger, a board certified endocrinologist and clinical nutritionist and a Casa Valentina Board member, provided nutrition education and cooking classes to the Casa Valentina residents earlier this year. Her assessment of the residents was that the majority of the young women participating in the program are overweight or obese, and in light of their body weights, ethnic backgrounds and limited nutrition knowledge, are at high risk for developing diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease.

The program was designed by Dr. Krieger and will be implemented beginning in the fall of 2007. It will include food budgeting, menu planning, shopping and cooking. Additionally, a nutritionist will be hired to prepare an individualized food and exercise plan for each resident and monitor their progress. She will meet with the group weekly to provide ongoing practical training and support.

"This is an incredible opportunity to put forth the time and resources necessary to really make a difference for our residents, " said Ms. Katz. "It aligns perfectly with our mission of giving these young women the skills, knowledge and experience they need and deserve to become independent, successful and healthy adults."

Casa Valentina is an innovative residential program that addresses the unique gender-specific needs of young women who age out of foster care at age 18 without the life experience, financial stability and support they need to survive on their own. Facing numerous transitional

challenges, these young women are vulnerable to prostitution, incarceration, pregnancy, domestic violence, sexual abuse and homelessness. Casa Valentina's mission is to provide them with safe, affordable housing and the support services they need to become successful, independent adults. Visit Casa Valentina online at [www.casavalentina.org](http://www.casavalentina.org).

The Dr. John T. Macdonald Foundation Inc. is a private grant-making foundation, supporting projects and programs designed to improve, preserve or restore the health and health care of the people in Miami-Dade County. For more information or a grant application, please contact Ms. Kim Greene, Executive Director, 1550 Madruga Avenue, Suite 215, Coral Gables, FL 33146, (305-667-6017, website: [www.jtmacdonaldfdn.org](http://www.jtmacdonaldfdn.org)).

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