



"In many ways DBSA has become the life-saving glue that holds my life together."

– DBSA Group Participant



2008 ANNUAL REPORT



DEPRESSION AND BIPOLAR SUPPORT ALLIANCE GREATER HOUSTON

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2008 was a remarkably successful year for DBSA. This Annual Report provides an excellent opportunity for us to assure our many supporters that their contributions of time and money have been used wisely and to explain some of the challenges DBSA intends to address in 2009.

STUDIES

During 2008, DBSA concluded three studies that were organized and conducted specifically for our organization by an independent researcher. These studies will help set the direction for DBSA for the intermediate and perhaps longer term. A *Demographic Study* revealed that we need to reach out to a broader and more diverse cross-section of the population in the Greater Houston area. We are working diligently toward that goal as you will see in more detail in the Program Achievements section of this Report.

One of the most important steps taken by DBSA in the last several years is the completion of an *Outcome Study* which was designed, implemented and analyzed to measure the effectiveness of our support groups. The results were beyond gratifying. Among other information, the *Outcome Study* revealed that 85% of the responding participants reported positive change in their progress toward recovery and 89% reported better quality of life as a direct result of participating in DBSA groups. The conclusions in the *Outcome Study* are not a surprise to our Board, staff and facilitators. We know that DBSA support groups are structured to provide a compassionate environment of peers who accept and understand each other, and that peer support and comfort are indeed powerful.

The third study conducted for DBSA was an *Attendance Study* which analyzed attendance patterns of participants in our support groups. During 2009, we plan to explore several avenues that will hopefully improve regular and long-term attendance by support group participants.

DEVELOPMENT

Thanks to the continued, loyal support of foundations and individuals who invested in DBSA and its mission, 2008 was the most successful fundraising year in the history of our organization. Please take time to read the complete list of contributors included in this Report. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to each and every donor and financial supporter of DBSA. Thanks to the supporters listed in this Report, we are now more financially stable than any time in the history of DBSA.

We know that in order for DBSA to sustain itself, grow in an orderly way and expand its services, increased funding will be necessary. Recognizing that we needed professional help to achieve our ongoing funding objectives, we established as a priority in 2008 to add a new Development Director to our staff. It took the entire year to find the right person for our organization, and in December of 2008 we hired Christina Urquhart Wilkerson. Christina brings the energy, excitement and experience for fundraising that our organization needs. To support and assist Christina, we have a dedicated and deeply involved Board and an exceptional Development Committee.

CHALLENGES FOR 2009

The *Outcome Study* clearly demonstrated to us that the longer and more regularly a person attends DBSA peer support groups, the greater the benefit to the participant. Fortunately, we have many support group participants and facilitators who have regularly attended support group meetings for several years and continue to be active participants. The *Attendance Study* also shows us that there are a number of people who attend one or a few meetings but do not follow through with long-term participation. Our professional staff and Program Committee are seeking ways to improve attendance through program improvements, facilitator training and participant education to maximize the benefits which can be achieved through consistent attendance.

In addition, we are actively seeking to serve new or special groups such as seniors, individuals on probation, military veterans and more diverse ethnic populations. It will be a challenge simultaneously to accomplish our goals of starting new groups for these individuals needing access to our services, expanding initiatives to serve these additional groups and improving attendance at all groups.

The end of 2008 also marks the beginning of a year with unprecedented financial uncertainty for everyone – including our financial supporters and group participants. We know that many Houstonians are facing difficult financial conditions, have lost a sense of security and face stress and anxiety at higher levels than ever before. It is with this understanding DBSA plans to continue to provide important education, comfort and acceptance to those in need of our services. We remain confident that our individual, trust and foundation supporters will continue to make it possible for us to fulfill our mission. 2008 provided DBSA with a convincing story to tell, and in 2009, we intend to tell it.

Sincerely,



Fred H. Dunlop, 2009 Board President



*"I wish my family would come
and meet others and see that we
are not alone in our struggle."*

– DBSA Group Participant

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THE COMMITMENT OF DBSA

Our Mission:

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance Greater Houston (DBSA) sponsors free support groups that assist in the recovery of individuals with depression or bipolar disorder.

Our Vision:

With support groups provided by DBSA, every person with depression or bipolar disorder can enhance their recovery from these treatable illnesses.

Our Goal:

DBSA will be the leading provider of free, well attended, effective support groups throughout the Houston metropolitan area. This support will include collaboration with community resources to enhance the recovery of individuals with depression or bipolar disorder and to incorporate families and friends in the recovery process.



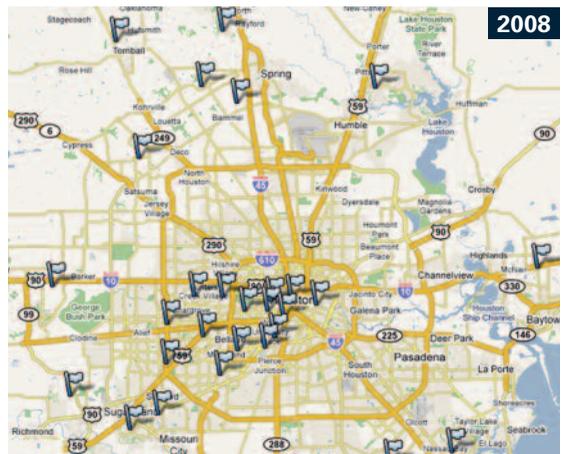
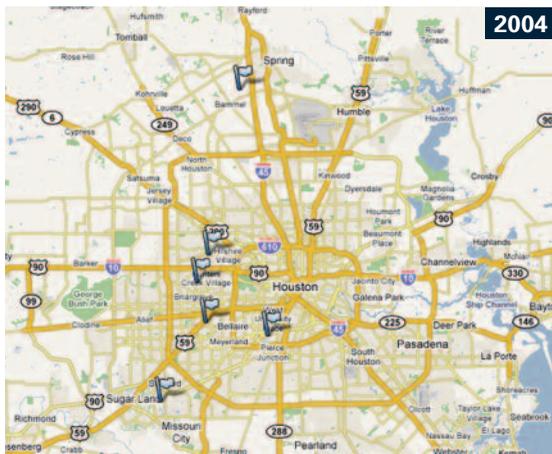
2008 PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2008, DBSA continued to sponsor a broad range of *free* support groups across the Houston metropolitan area to assist in the recovery of those who were affected by depression or bipolar disorder. Our support groups extended to those of all ages, races or socio-economic status as we know all too well that mental illnesses are non-discriminatory predators. DBSA sponsored support groups continued to offer more than support by helping to provide education, comfort, acceptance and empowerment to many. Most importantly, our support groups provided crucial understanding for those who identify with the challenges of mental illness and experienced the success that can be achieved with the support of others.

We began 2008 with 42 support groups located at 22 different sites. Throughout the year we continued support group expansion as the call for our services was needed more than ever in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike and the financial turmoil during the last quarter of the year. During 2008, an additional 13 groups were added and 6 new locations were opened to serve the public at large. By the end of the 2008, DBSA was working with hundreds of diagnosed individuals, family members and friends on a weekly basis throughout Houston and its sister cities with 55 groups at 28 locations.

We continued to focus on expanding services to meet new populations and geographic areas in the Greater Houston area. In November, we celebrated the opening of our 55th support group dedicated to serving the brave men and women of our armed forces at the Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Two of the additional groups were specifically for adolescents and their parents: one in Friendswood at the Friendswood United Methodist Church and the other is inside Loop 610 at St. Luke's United Methodist Church. The groups that opened in the cities of Baytown and Cypress expanded our services to every geographical quadrant in a four county area. To further serve both the disadvantaged and the chronically mentally ill, a new group opened in Midtown at St. Joseph's Club House. Finally, in an effort to ensure that we adequately serve the fastest growing population in Houston, a support group dedicated to Spanish-speaking adults was opened in Houston's East End at El Centro de Corazon.

To illustrate the phenomenal growth of DBSA support groups over the past five years, consider the following maps:



The expanded reach of our support group services is the direct result of the unwavering dedication of our board, the hard work of our staff and the kind generosity of our many donors. We will continue in 2009 with what was started in 2004, to help those who live with these difficult, yet treatable, mental illnesses to have more fulfilling and promising lives.

FACILITATORS

DBSA's success in 2008 was greatly attributed to the efforts and dedication of our wonderful array of support group facilitators. Many of these individuals donated the two greatest gifts any organization could ever hope to receive – one's labor and one's love. It is with tremendous gratitude that we honor these amazing men and women:

Belinda Alman	Linda Condon	Neal Krenzke	Jim Rice
Rex Alman	Bobbie Culberson	Mary Kuskowski	Bill Rudolf
Carmen Anderson	Lois Davis	Danny Lemon	Marianna Shelton
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Debbie Arnold	Dyene Galantini	Kisha Lorio	Ann Simpson
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Nola Brody	Martha Hanson	Crystal Morrison	Matt Trigg
Christopher Brown	Phil Hanson	James Mulkey	Faye Walker
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Jennifer Cole	Karen Jerger	Marilyn Patterson	Steven Weiss
Becky Cortese	Rosemary Kallinen	Branden Peters	Ted Weiss
Matt Cortese	Thomas Kennedy	Angela Raley	Darcy White

DBSA Greater Houston 2008 Financial Information

	Jan – Dec 08		Jan – Dec 08
Sources of Funds		Uses of Funds	
Contributions		Personnel	
Corporate	\$ 1,859	Payroll Expenses	\$ 262,790
Foundations	469,850	Contract Professional Facilitators	57,946
Individual	125,932	Other Contract Labor	21,836
Total Contributions	597,641	Restricted and Unrestricted Reserves	160,344
Interest on Accounts	14,697	Rent and Facilities	31,304
Other Revenue	7,111	Marketing, Printing, and Postage	12,353
Total	\$ 619,449	Insurance	29,165
		Office Equipment	12,736
		Volunteer Support	9,228
		Education and Training	5,647
		Fundraising	6,175
		Legal and Accounting	9,925
		Total	\$ 619,449

DEPRESSION AND BIPOLAR SUPPORT ALLIANCE GREATER HOUSTON DONORS

We are truly grateful to the following donors who generously supported our organization in 2008.

\$10,000 and above

Albert and Margaret Alkek Foundation
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Ms. Janet L. McNeill
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Up to \$499

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Mary Catherine Miller
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Jim Braniff

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Betty B. Williams

Evelyn and Bob Jewell

SARAH'S STORY

Every year millions of Americans struggle with depression and bipolar disorder. Many go undiagnosed for years and then spend a life learning to live with an illness that has robbed them of what many take for granted – a happy marriage, a fulfilling career a brighter tomorrow. Once individuals are able to learn how to manage their illness, they are able to live a full life. DBSA support groups play an active role in the recovery of many individuals. Here is the story of one amazing woman whose human spirit was not to be extinguished by her mental illnesses but illuminated by her participation in a DBSA sponsored support group. Through it all, she has learned to live again and is excited to share her story with you:

In 1997, I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Unfortunately, it took seven additional years for me to become an active participant in managing my illness. Once I faced it, I realized bipolar disorder had played a significant role throughout my life. Prior to my diagnosis, I failed out of college, married an old high school friend and in the blink of an eye, my world became my husband and my two children. I lived the majority of my thirteen-year marriage undiagnosed. As my husband sought comfort from others, my manic and depressive episodes became more and more extreme. I would go for days without sleep, shop excessively and start business after business. And then the lows would come – I would rarely get out of bed, sometimes only to take my children to school in my pajamas. I went through the motions of each extreme state without any idea that there was a reasonable explanation for my behavior. But the worst was yet to come.

In November 2001 my world came crashing down around me. My husband took our two young sons and went to live in another city with another woman. I lost everything dear to me, as well as my version of a support system. Without the coping skills and ability to handle the situation, I was on a sudden and dangerous downward spiral. Over the course of the next four years, I often had suicidal thoughts, was arrested numerous times and lived in a manic state. In sum, I was trapped in a tunnel of darkness with no ray of hope to be found at either end.

Finally, in January 2005 it hit me like a lightning bolt: "The storm has passed, Sarah! Make the choice to control your own life! Pick up the pieces and face the world!" The next day I called Krist Samaritan Center and was set up with a fabulous therapist. Within the next two weeks, I was with a new doctor and on the right medication regimen. Based on the therapist's recommendation, I tried a DBSA support group. I went to my first meeting and left thinking "this is not for me." My therapist urged me to try it again. I did, begrudgingly, and suddenly I was hooked. As I listened to others share their stories, and in turn told my own, I saw people nodding with understanding – for the first time I had an empathetic support system. These people really understood me!

The DBSA sponsored support group connects me with others and helps me to deal with my own illness. I have had the pleasure of being a DBSA facilitator for two years now and was the proud recipient of the 2008 Rookie Facilitator of the Year award. As a facilitator I know I am helping others by giving the participants the tools they need to help each other. In group, we do not always have the answers and sometimes there are no words that can express the feelings; but we will always listen, be a shoulder to cry on and keep working week after week to support each other. I am honored to be a part of DBSA, and am thrilled with the growth and vision of the Greater Houston chapter.

As my life has come into clarity, I now have a job with more responsibility than I ever thought possible, and I have returned to school to get my degree in Social Work. I am excited about the opportunity to share my story with others; while some will be shocked, I know many will nod and understand. Because I know my life has had some anguished times, I want to share my story with others, giving them hope and encouragement to have the strength to keep coming back to our groups, knowing that a better life is out there for them. Thanks in large part to DBSA, a life that was once full of sadness and pain is now a life worth living. I know I deserve it, and now I look forward to every day with hope, promise and the adventures that await my new life.



"It gives me hope when I see others such as myself get better with the support of DBSA groups."

– DBSA Group Participant



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