



*We regain a sense of normalcy here. I feel encouraged because now I am not alone and have people who understand me.*

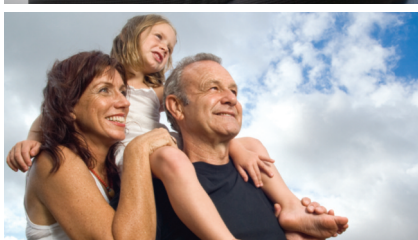
*~ DBSA Group Participant*



Depression and Bipolar  
Support Alliance  
**Greater Houston**

## 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

OFFERING FREE SUPPORT TO HOUSTON



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is a distinct honor and pleasure to serve as President of the Board of Directors of one of the most dynamic and worthwhile organizations in the Greater Houston area – DBSA. As a retired psychologist, I have seen over the course of my career a great need in our community for free, quality mental health support. I have found that DBSA is meeting that need in a most effective and efficient way. I now see hope for persons suffering from these devastating but treatable illnesses. This hope is instilled by persons in our community whose empathy and generosity bring our mission to life.

**DBSA Greater Houston has shown tremendous growth since its reorganization in 2004, and it is currently the largest DBSA chapter in the nation.** Through our network of free support groups, staff and board members are totally committed to serving persons experiencing depression or bipolar disorder, their families and friends. We have established support groups to serve people in all geographic areas of the Greater Houston area, including five counties – Brazoria, Fort Bend, Harris, Galveston and Montgomery. The financial support from the community – individuals, foundations and corporations – is crucial to our success as we implement the mission of DBSA. We want to assure contributors that their donations provide quality support groups for those suffering from despair but who are committed to their own recovery.

## PROGRAM AND GROUP EXPANSION

In 2009 DBSA not only added several new support groups, but also fine-tuned our support group program. (See the Program Achievements section in this report to learn about the fine work being accomplished by our staff and group facilitators.) DBSA will continue to focus on the growth of our two kinds of support groups:

1) Special Populations, such as seniors, adolescents, and veterans, and 2) Public Groups, open to all.

**As a result of our *Outcome Study* in 2008, we now have independently verified evidence that our support group program does effect positive changes in group participants' quality of life and progress toward recovery.**

In my professional life as a psychologist, I became interested in how the power of support could create a positive impact on those in the midst of their struggle with mental illness. Therefore, I am pleased to report that in 2010 DBSA will be conducting an *Exit Study*, a research study concerning the reasons participants remain in their groups or decide to leave. The results will help us better understand the internal dynamics of group support and will direct us toward developing best practices and implementing quality improvements.

## MARKETING

DBSA realizes the importance of making the community aware of our services.

- In May of 2009, we showcased DBSA at a public event featuring Paige Hemmis, a designer on ABC Extreme Makeover: Home Edition, as she toured the country with her program BluePrint for Hope sponsored by Wyeth Pharmaceuticals and DBSA National. DBSA Greater Houston hosted the tour kick-off with an evening event open to the public – featuring Ms. Hemmis speaking about her experience with depression; Houston's Dr. John Burruss, a nationally known expert in psychiatry; and Glenn Urbach, the Executive Director of DBSA.
- DBSA also began a Corporate Initiative to inform and inspire members of the business community to spread the word about our services. It is hoped that corporate officers will inform their employees about DBSA through internal communications and human resources involvement.

## DEVELOPMENT

Because of generous gifts from our amazing donors, we are pleased to report that **DBSA was able to raise 96% of our 2009 fundraising goal in the midst of one of the worst economic downturns in many years.** Also, 100% of our Board members made financial contributions to DBSA. Our donors know that support groups are even more important as people experience depression resulting from lost jobs, homes and incomes.

## IMPLEMENTING HOPE IN CHALLENGING TIMES

Hope is the theme of our activities this year, and fostering that hope will take all of us working together to support DBSA. Our donors are our bedrock upon which all our endeavors rely. Our Board of Directors, Advisory Board and Medical Advisors are dedicated and wise volunteers who make policy decisions and provide the framework for action. Our talented staff members are the internal activators working tirelessly to provide resources and guidance for our groups throughout the community. But out in the field is where it all comes together. Our facilitators, most of whom have also experienced depression or bipolar disorder, are the connection with those suffering from their illness. It takes all of us to overcome obstacles and instill hope. It is MY hope that DBSA will continue to reach for excellence as we work to enhance the recovery of those with mental illness.

Thank you for your part in this successful undertaking.

**Jan Redford, Ph.D., 2010 DBSA Board President**

*When I reluctantly faced my illness and attended my first DBSA meeting I immediately experienced a sense of community at a level I had not had for quite some time. I felt accepted. I felt like I belonged. I felt valued. I felt hopeful.*

*~ Carmen, DBSA volunteer facilitator*



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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.



## 2009 DBSA PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2009, DBSA Greater Houston experienced a tremendous surge in growth as we expanded our support group services to new geographical locations and to a more diverse population base than ever before. We are not only the largest provider of support group services for the mentally ill community in Houston, but we are also by far the largest DBSA chapter in the nation. These two accomplishments can be attributed to the following facts:

1. Depression and Bipolar Disorder are the two most commonly diagnosed mental illnesses affecting Americans today.
2. The need for ancillary mental health services, such as the support groups DBSA provides, is great and continues to grow.
3. DBSA uses a proven peer-facilitated model of support groups that in recent years, our organization has been able to refine and replicate with success.
4. DBSA utilizes well qualified volunteer group facilitators who truly know what it is like to have or to be impacted by a mood disorder. Licensed professionals are also used to open new groups or lead groups with special populations. These group facilitators have dedicated their careers to serving the mentally ill community.
5. Finally, we have one of the strongest non-profit Boards of Directors and Advisors in Houston, a dedicated and knowledgeable staff and some of the area's most generous donors who have financially invested in the mission of DBSA.

At the end of 2009, DBSA was facilitating up to **60 weekly support groups at 34 different locations** – a far cry from the five support groups facilitated at five locations just six years ago. During the past year, **DBSA started new support groups at The Women's Home** for its female residents working to get their lives back on track and at **West University Place Community Center** for seniors experiencing what can only be described as crippling depression. Also, we created support groups for the residents of **Richmond, Pearland, Pasadena** and **mid-town** Houstonians. Finally, DBSA added a second Spanish-speaking support group at **El Centro de Corazón** and introduced its first English-speaking support group at the same location.

DBSA also worked diligently to educate the public about depression and bipolar disorder through speaking engagements and other public presentations, such as **partnering with St. Luke's United Methodist Church's Counseling and Life Enrichment Center** to sponsor a series of well attended and well received public lectures about mental illness. In July, we gave a lecture at the annual conference of the Texas Society of Psychiatric Professionals. In 2009, we also participated in the annual conferences of DBSA's National organization and the National Association of Social Worker's. Finally, our newsletter, *MoodPoints*, was redeveloped to include more information about mood disorders as well as the events, activities and successes of DBSA.

To provide the best support and guidance for our outstanding facilitators, DBSA updated its Facilitator Training Manual and Policies and Procedures. To further strengthen facilitators' ability, staff Program Coordinators provided each facilitator with a suicide prevention flow chart, community resource database, and a quick reference card listing various psychotropic medications used to treat mood disorders. Our monthly facilitator trainings were more diverse in 2009, providing facilitators with guidance that will in turn benefit group participants who have come to rely on our ability to provide effective support groups week in and week out.

In 2010, DBSA will build on its past successes and address the challenge of providing more of its support group services in an **economic** climate that is sure to be a challenge for any non-profit organization. To expand services, while being good **stewards** of the funds entrusted to us, DBSA will continue to develop best practices in the delivery of its support groups. Building on the results of our 2008 Outcome Study, we will implement ongoing Participant Satisfaction Surveys, **designed** to measure variables related to the quality of our support groups. In essence, the survey will help us **build on** what works and change what does not work within each support group. Our Development Director will be working with Rice MBA students to develop innovative ways to market DBSA's brand and its individual support group locations. Recognizing that online communication is the fastest and easiest way for most individuals to learn about available community resources, DBSA has updated and redesigned the DBSA website. The website is more user-friendly, informative and visually appealing. Please visit it at [www.dbsahouston.org](http://www.dbsahouston.org) to see for yourself.

Thank you to all who have given so generously to DBSA in 2009. Our success begins with your belief in our mission. Your support provides a light out of a dark tunnel for those affected by these two difficult, yet treatable, mental illnesses.

**Glenn Urbach, Executive Director**

## FACILITATORS

The success of every DBSA support group is due to the commitment of the facilitators. These individuals are the heart and soul of DBSA, and we depend on their hard work every day of every week. Thank you to the following dedicated DBSA volunteer and professional facilitators.

Jill Ahrens	Melissa Engel	Ronda Loving	Danny Sage
Belinda Alman	Charles Gallup	Dorothy Massie	Josie Salazar
Rex Alman	Aaron Gerstler	Stephanie McGraw*	Richard Seu
Carmen Anderson	Penny Gerstler	Jamie McIntire	Marianna Sheldon
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Linda Condon*	Wendy Larson	Freddy Porras	Cheryl Weiss
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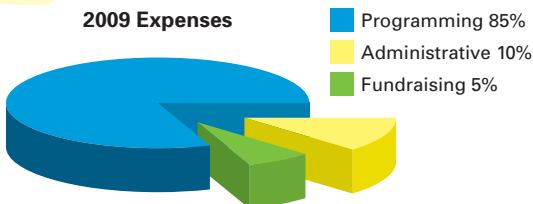
\*Also 2009 DBSA Board Members

## DBSA Greater Houston 2009 Financial Information

	Jan – Dec 09
<b>Source of Funds</b>	
Contributions:	
Corporate	\$ 5,708
Foundations	431,800
Individuals	162,694
<b>Total Contributions</b>	<b>600,202</b>
Interest on Accounts	3,018
Other Revenue	4,648
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 607,868</b>

	Jan – Dec 09
<b>Use of Funds</b>	
Personnel:	
Payroll Expenses	\$ 385,417
Contract Facilitators	98,131
Other Contract Labor	2,325
Rent and Facilities	33,231
Marketing, Printing, and Postage	37,443
Insurance	38,938
Office Expenses	25,172
Volunteer Support	16,071
Education and Training	4,915
Fundraising	1,296
Legal and Accounting	11,503
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 654,442</b>

### 2009 Expenses



## DEPRESSION AND BIPOLAR SUPPORT ALLIANCE GREATER HOUSTON DONORS

We are grateful to the following donors who generously supported our organization in 2009.

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## STEVE'S STORY

My name is Steve. I am a 40-year old son, husband and father. DBSA is an essential part of my personal health plan – enabling me to live a healthy, productive life with bipolar disorder. My sister, grandfather and three uncles had or have bipolar disorder. Others in my family suffer from chronic depression. Many self medicate with alcohol. For years I kept the disorder and any conversations about it at arm's length. I thought that if I indeed had "it", I would simply "pull myself up by my bootstraps". Now I can laugh at the sheer folly that I could diagnose and treat myself like a trained physician. But at the time, I firmly believed I could change my thoughts and actions by sheer willpower.

Throughout my high school and college years and later in my career, my mood swings greatly affected my behavior. In my manic phases, I was very productive but much too aggressive toward my colleagues. I felt that I was always right and greatly resented it when someone suggested otherwise. I often changed jobs if I felt I was being treated "unfairly". When depressed, life had no "color" and it was all I could do to get out of bed and go to work. I was even more sluggish at night, despite trying to smile and spend time with my family.

In 2004 my depression manifested itself as unprovoked anger and I began seeing a therapist. Suspecting bipolar disorder due to my family history, my therapist suggested I speak with a psychiatrist who then misdiagnosed me with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). The prescribed medication then sent me into extreme mania – an episode like no other. After the correct diagnosis I spent two weeks in outpatient therapy at Intracare Hospital – learning about bipolar disorder, coping skills and how to change my life going forward. My counselors made me aware of DBSA and I began to attend weekly meetings at the hospital.

Fearing that I would be judged, it took a lot of courage to attend my first meeting. Of course, the opposite was true and I found people with whom I could share my experiences in a warm, loving environment - people who had walked a mile in my shoes. I was so relieved to find other people like me. I truly needed to learn about others success stories, to see that light at the end of the tunnel. I read all the suggested books and devoured the DBSA brochures. While it was initially disappointing to learn there is no "magic bullet" to cure bipolar disorder, it was not hard to see that the people who improved the most came to group regularly, saw a therapist and a psychiatrist, and took their medications as prescribed.

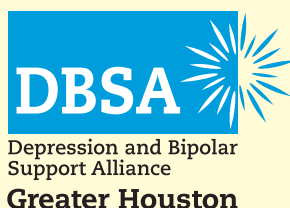
As part of my treatment plan, my wife and I made a contract that I would take my medications religiously, see my therapist and psychiatrist, and attend DBSA meetings. With God, my wife, my parents, my in-laws and my friends I have a very fulfilling life and have not had a manic episode since 2004, although I have been depressed a few times. The difference now is I know how to cope and I have a team of people supporting me, especially those in my DBSA support group.

Because of the impact DBSA has had on my life, I have become a volunteer facilitator. It is one of the most rewarding things I do as I look forward to helping others each week. One of the most inspiring things is to see family members and friends come to meetings to learn more about the disorders and to support their loved ones in their journey toward recovery.



***DBSA has been very positive for me. I need the meetings as part of my therapy. It gives me hope that I get to see others like me get better. In many ways, DBSA has been a life-saving glue for my life.***

***~ DBSA Group Participant***



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