

# JANICE AND HAL GORDON

Janice and Hal Gordon met and married in Washington, D.C. and it's here, in the middle of the neighborhood where Janice grew up, that they have found a calling to work with and advocate for poor, addicted and homeless men and women. As leaders of the Community Action Group, which operates out of the gatehouse of the Old Naval Hospital at Ninth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, Hal and Janice have for almost twenty years been dispensing hard-nosed advice and warm-hearted love to countless people in dire need and the occasional earful to the powers that be.

Hal grew up in a small Louisiana town and graduated from Southern University in Baton Rouge. After Army service in Korea and Germany, he returned home to work for the Small Business Administration in the clean-up effort after Hurricane Betsy in 1965. He then went to work for the Economic Development Administration in Atlanta; when the regional office closed in 1980, he moved to D.C.

Here, in the Commerce Department cafeteria, he met Janice Dessaso, a graduate of Eastern High School and Federal City College (now the University of the District of Columbia). Together they began attending Holy Comforter Saint Cyprian, and both credit a priest there, Father Raymond Kemp, with inspiring them with a sense of

urgency about the plight of the poor in this community. Hal and Janice were married at Holy Comforter in 1987 and still attend church there. Between them they have five children: Hal's sons Anthony and Mark and daughter Cathy, and Janice's sons Michael Dessaso and Eugene Dessaso.

Now retired from the federal government, both Hal and Janice devote their time to the network of programs spawned by CAG, several of which receive contracts from the District government. Janice also runs the JD consulting group which does event planning and trains leaders for CAG programs. At CAG Fellowship Hall on Fifteenth Street Southeast, clients of the programs find Bible study groups, Sunday worship services that are standing room only, a fifty-voice choir made up of CAG program graduates and directed by a former client, rap sessions, talent shows and a host of activities that connect them to each other. All of these services are animated by the warmth that Hal and Janice exude. "It's an awesome accomplishment to get out from under the hammer of addiction," Janice says. Hal calls it "unique" and says he feels "blessed" to have been given this work to do.