



# Kelli Casto

St. Petersburg, Florida



[Saving Our Seniors](#)

## *Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Kelli Casto:*

Before founding Saving Our Seniors (SOS) in July 2016, Kelli Casto saw a need and took action. While working as an Occupational Therapy Assistant in Tampa she would often treat seniors that couldn't afford the durable medical equipment (DME) they needed. On many occasions, she reached into her own pocket to cover the cost. Other times, she was able to locate a used piece of equipment. The need for no-cost or discount DME continued and, out of Casto's desire to help more seniors, SOS was born.

"I started in my living room with approximately 20 pieces of equipment," she said. "The word got out quickly because so many therapists I know work with low income clients. Churches, individuals and other organizations caught wind of what we were doing and before we knew it, we had 500 pieces of equipment. At that point I was using friend's

garages and also paying for a small dedicated storage space, but even that wasn't enough. A gentleman from Home Instead Senior Care donated a warehouse space to me for free. Today we have nearly 4,000 pieces of equipment. Everything is tagged with a number and cleaned when we receive it and before we deliver it."

Casto continues to work as an Occupational Therapy Assistant, while running her non-profit. She estimates that some weeks she works up to 72 hours, but is fully committed to both roles. She doesn't think it's fair that a lack of money should hurt the low-income senior citizens that rely on DME. "Everyone should have the same level of respect and dignity and have the ability to lead an independent life, regardless of age or income," she said. Casto usually asks her customers for a donation, equivalent to a small percentage of their yearly income, but will never turn someone away if they can't pay at all.

Bay News 9 recently recognized Casto as an 'Everyday Hero' and featured a story on the difference she's making in the community. Casto isn't exactly sure who nominated her, but credits the exposure as generating a spike in interest and donations. Her goal is to be able to service 45 requests per week. This would allow her to hire two people to help with picking up equipment, coordinating sales and donations and managing inventory. For now, however, it's still Casto doing it all. "I love when I drop off a hospital bed and people say, 'you do all this by yourself?'. I think they're expecting to see a delivery truck pull up with two SOS employees unloading the equipment."

Casto is very optimistic about the future and can see her involvement with SOS turning into a full-time job at some point. "What we're doing

now is really phase one of a four phase vision," she said. "Phase two includes helping seniors with the resources needed to keep them in their homes longer. Phase three and four involve subsidizing the cost of companion care, home health aides and transportation. We're hoping to reach our goal by 2020."

In order to reach her goal and get to a place where SOS can help seniors with resources other than DME, Casto needs the support of the community. She needs volunteers to give equipment and to volunteer their time to drop it off. She needs donations and people to understand that seniors are just as worthy of receiving help as other less fortunate populations. Casto has yet to turn anyone away and doesn't plan on having to do so anytime soon. "I think people felt sorry for me," she said after donations spiked after her interview with Bay News 9. We think it's a matter of people feeling inspired and wanting to support someone that believes in what they're doing.

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