



## *2021 Annual Report*

# EL CENTRO HISPANO, INC.

## **47<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

**1974 - 2021**

The mission of El Centro Hispano is to assist, support, and strengthen the Hispanic community; to help them become self-sufficient; and to ease their transition into their new culture while maintaining and enriching their own.

El Centro Hispano has accomplished this from 1974 - 2021 by offering a variety of programs and by presenting bilingual and cross-cultural activities throughout the year.

***Celebrating 47 years of supporting and strengthening the Hispanic community***

# HISTORY OF EL CENTRO HISPANO

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## Supporting and strengthening the Hispanic community for over 47 years

Since its inception in 1974, the guiding light behind El Centro Hispano has been **Isabel Villar**.



When asked to join members of the Community Action Program in founding an organization designed to assist newly arrived Hispanic immigrants, there was no way Isabel could refuse. Only eight years before, she and her mother and sister had come to the U.S. as political refugees seeking the freedom and opportunities denied them in their native Cuba. As Isabel loves to say, she arrived “with the clothes on her back and a suitcase full of dreams.”

Forced to leave behind her father and brother, Isabel’s early years in this country were not easy. Lonely, disoriented, and with limited English, she felt lost in a big American high school. Convinced, however, that education was the key to her future, she worked hard and eventually won a full scholarship to Manhattanville College. There she blossomed and upon graduation was offered a job as a bilingual teacher in Norwalk, CT. After earning three graduate degrees, Isabel spent many years as a guidance counselor in the Norwalk Public Schools inspiring young people to reach beyond their limits.

Filled with gratitude for all she had been able to achieve in her new life in the U.S., Isabel was eager to help others who found themselves in similar circumstances and so she created El Centro Hispano. Working evenings and weekends, she had to start from scratch. Her youth, inexperience and even her gender presented obstacles she had to overcome.

But, overcome them she did. Starting small with ESL classes and a Girl Scout troop, Isabel learned the importance of developing partnerships with other organizations and institutions, and El Centro Hispano began to offer more and more programs to serve the community.

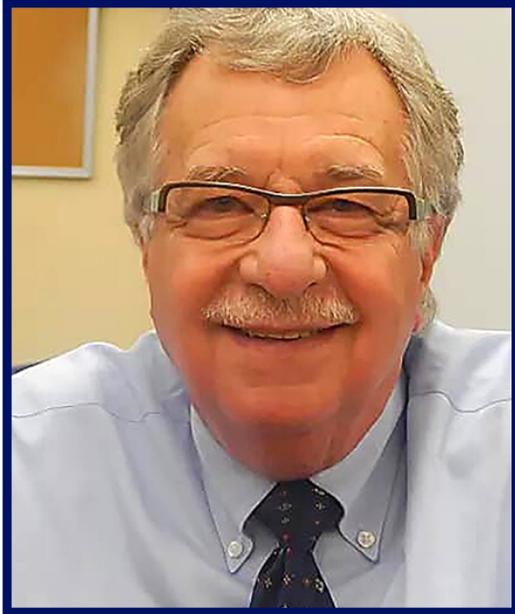
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The addition of **Judith Aúcar**, a fellow Cuban-American with a very similar background, as Deputy Director in 1978 was a major milestone in El Centro’s early history. Enthusiastic and deeply committed, Judith’s gifts and expertise both complemented and reinforced those of Isabel. Together they accomplished so much more than either could have done alone, and in 2001 El Centro Hispano became an independent non-profit organization with its own Board of Directors.



El Centro Hispano is what it is today because two young Hispanic women wanted to give back to the community that had welcomed and nourished them. Their undying commitment has turned their dream and the dreams of thousands whom they serve into reality.

# THE DR. SAUL YANOFSKY Memorial Scholarship at El Centro Hispano



We mourn the loss of our beloved Dr. Saul M. Yanofsky, the former Superintendent of the White Plains Public Schools, and are proud to honor his incredible life. He was the “**real deal**”: a true champion of public education, a wonderful friend and former El Centro Board Member, and a **sensational** King at our Annual Three Kings celebration in the 90's.

Saul led the district through a challenging transition as the demographics of White Plains shifted. He created a nationally recognized model of school choice and racially integrated schools to ensure equitable outcomes for students of color.

**He did this with creativity, intelligence, community involvement  
– and his trademark grin and wonderful sense of humor.**

After he left White Plains in 2002, Saul was appointed as an Assistant Dean at Westchester Community College, where he created and led a program to identify, inspire and train the next generation of public- school teachers.

**We treasure the time we spent with Saul and value his involvement with El Centro Hispano. We are thrilled that the Yanofsky Family and Friends have established a scholarship in his honor to carry on his legacy.**

# About Us

## 1974 – 2021

The most successful organizations, those that thrive and grow, are the ones that remain true to their initial vision while at the same time adapting to the ever-changing needs of the community they serve.

Under the sponsorship of the White Plains Community Action Program, El Centro Hispano first opened its doors at the Chapel Hall at St. Bernard's Roman Catholic Church on a cold January day in 1974. This fledgling organization was created by a group of compassionate citizens who realized that the growing Hispanic community of White Plains was in urgent need of a variety of social services that no one was offering.

Those citizens were wise enough to understand that their first job, their most important job, was to listen. They undertook a needs assessment and asked the members of the community to tell them what they perceived their needs to be. Very early on El Centro established an Advisory Council drawn from members of the community. The Council was an invaluable guide in planning and implementing programs and services offered by El Centro.

Forty-seven years later El Centro Hispano is one of the most active social service agencies devoted to supporting and strengthening the Hispanic community in White Plains and Westchester County. We have grown and expanded along with the Hispanic population of the area.

In more than five decades El Centro Hispano has undergone many changes, eliminating programs that were no longer needed or appropriate, instituting new ones, and expanding others. But we have never lost sight of our mission to strengthen and support Hispanics as they adapt to their new life in the United States. Right from the beginning our work has focused on six crucial areas of concern: housing, employment, health, education empowerment, community outreach and legal services.

We hope long-time supporters of El Centro will find some wonderful old memories stirring and that those who have become involved more recently will gain a deeper appreciation of the path we have taken to get to where we are today.

### **The Early Years (1974 – 1985)**

Determination and enthusiasm made up for limited resources and a small staff as El Centro Hispano first reached out to the Hispanic Community of White Plains. In addition to the housing and jobs center, clients of El Centro could take advantage of translation services for medical appointments and assistance filling out official forms and dealing with public and private agencies, a new mother's program, classes in English as a Second Language, a bilingual Girl Scout Troop, a Senior Center, and instruction in sewing and embroidery - complete with a fashion show. Interns from Pace University began working with us and in 1980 El Centro Hispano's Scholarship Program was established.

### **The Second Decade (1986-1997)**

Our experiences during those first ten years convinced us that we were truly making a difference in the lives of our clients and the community as a whole. However, we were also aware that new needs were arising all the time. In collaboration with other organizations we began co-sponsoring an Annual Health Fair and we also established an Emergency Food Bank for those in crisis. The White Plains High School – Centro Hispano Program was organized to encourage Hispanic high school students to further their education. We served as a vital link for those applying for citizenship or permanent residency by assisting them with the preparation of their documents before they were forwarded to the Diocesan Immigration Center. We began offering conferences to help Hispanic parents better understand their children's public schools. It was during this time that the Director and Assistant Director began hosting El Centro Hispano Informa – a TV program on Channel 14 designed to bring topics of immediate concern to the larger Hispanic community.

## **Spreading Our Wings (1998-2007)**

These were exciting years at El Centro Hispano. After 26 years under the auspices of the Community Action Program, we became an independent, self-governing entity. The Advisory Board was replaced by our own Board of Directors. It was also a time of important changes. As it became apparent that in order to succeed in the modern world, more and more job-seekers would need to demonstrate familiarity with computers, El Centro took up the challenge: we began offering computer classes for adults at the Mercy College Annex in White Plains. In conjunction with the YMCA we also initiated a Culture through Technology Program for high school students. To support families as they struggle to adapt to their new lives we offered workshops in Parenting Development Strategies. The Family Excel Program provided structure and guidance for Hispanic middle school children and their parents in an after-school setting. The Pace Women's Justice Center assisted clients of El Centro who had been victims of domestic violence or sexual assault.

## **Leading the Way (2008-2021)**

So great was the demand for our computer classes that in 2008 El Centro Hispano built a state-of-the-art Technology Center in our facilities at St. Bernard's Church. In addition to 3 levels of computer classes we also offer Introduction to Accounting and QuickBooks. Classes are always full. We are convinced that education is the key that will enable our clients to fulfill their potential and become productive members of the community. We started a Summer Literacy Program for second and third graders who need extra help to get a good start in school and we also run an Early Literacy Program for kindergartners and first-graders. We sponsor three mentoring and tutorial programs for middle and high school students (The Lanza My Older Sister/Brother Programs, and the Perkins Saturday Academy). Clients of El Centro have been able to get assistance in applying for health insurance through the Affordable Care Act as well as legal assistance with a variety of issues. More than 100 families take advantage of our free food distribution program twice a month. Thanks to our partnership with BOCES we offer one daytime ESL and GED class four times a week, a Citizenship class once a week on Fridays; one virtual ESL and Citizenship class over the weekend.

In the wake of COVID-19, these programs proved to be indispensable for our community, especially our food distribution program which at one point served over 500 families in one day and continued to serve as the venue for El Centro's essential programs. BOCES and El Centro Hispano worked together to make our classes available online to students all over Westchester County. Regardless of the circumstances, El Centro Hispano's team adapted to the needs of the community, responding immediately and effectively to any situation that emerged. Right at the beginning of 2021, El Centro Hispano became one of the vaccine registration hubs in White Plains and the County, ensuring that our seniors and Hispanic community were protected against the deadly virus.

## **Looking Ahead (2022-...)**

Despite the challenges left over from 2020, El Centro Hispano was able to overcome several obstacles and begin to heal with its community from such a devastating time. Immediately at the beginning of the year, El Centro spearheaded the City of White Plains' efforts to inoculate the community and begin the process of eradicating the virus.

Thanks to you, our amazing friends and donors, El Centro Hispano has been meeting the challenge from day one. Through your inspiration and generosity as well as due to the creativity of our talented and adaptable staff, we have continued to fulfill our mission to serve the Hispanic Community of White Plains and Westchester County.

Now, more than ever, the demand for the kinds of services El Centro Hispano offers continues to grow. Our ESL, GED, Citizenship, and Computer classes have continued to be a success. We have slowly moved all of our programs back into the traditional classroom setting.

El Centro Hispano continues incorporating new technology to make its services more accessible while maintaining our staff and clients safe at all times.

## What does the future hold?

In many ways, that depends on the support we receive from all our donors. El Centro Hispano has always operated on a very tight budget and we stretch our resources through partnerships with many public and private agencies and organizations. We have also been blessed to receive financial support in the form of grants from local, county and state governments, foundations and charitable institutions. However, it is the generous financial support of all our donors who share in our commitment that enables us to carry out our mission to serve those in need of our services.

The **42** programs currently offered by El Centro Hispano are changing the lives of our clients through ... Education, Technology, Support Services, Cultural Events, Outreach, Counseling and Empowerment, and through Special Activities. They include English as a Second Language, High School Equivalency Prep, Citizenship courses and computer classes for adults; tutorial and mentoring programs; scholarships to graduating high school seniors and stipends to college and high school students for their tutorial services; literacy support for our youngest clients; free summer sleep-away camps for needy children; Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts troops; educational and informational workshops; bi-monthly food distribution at Post Road Elementary School; legal assistance and a Westchester County Affordable Care Program; sponsorship of cultural events; as well as translation services and assistance in finding housing and employment.

## Changing Lives Through... Education

### Scholarship Program

Since 1980, El Centro has awarded **\$519,050** in scholarship money to **565** deserving high school seniors. In 2021, **9** students benefited from the Scholarship Program. We are extremely proud of our unique program, which helps recipients with their post-secondary education. Students who are considered for scholarships must have both a Grade Point Average of 3.0 or higher and involvement in El Centro Hispano. They must complete an application form and write an essay. The essay and the student's involvement at El Centro play an important role in determining how much money the Scholarship Committee allocates to each recipient.

Due to COVID-19, we extended this program to benefit our high school students who were actively assisting our students in our programs. Since many of our students come from low-income households, El Centro Hispano decided to offer our high school volunteers small stipends to help them during these difficult times, while at the same time incentivizing them to continue assisting our program participants. El Centro awarded **\$3,157** to **13** high school volunteers.

In addition to the above scholarships, El Centro Hispano has also awarded scholarships to the **16** college and **19** high school students who volunteered in the Lanza My Older Sister/My Older Brother (*Mi Hermana Mayor/Mi Hermano Mayor*) Mentoring Tutorial Program and the Perkins Saturday Academy during the 2020-2021 school year.

This is the 11<sup>th</sup> year that the college mentors/tutors have benefitted from these scholarships/stipends. El Centro has awarded **\$291,217** in scholarship/stipend money to **222** mentors/tutors.

Previous scholarship recipients have "paid back" their scholarship to El Centro Hispano in many ways – by successfully completing their post-secondary education, by contributing to El Centro Hispano when they begin work after college, and by serving on our Board of Directors (two of our current Board members are former recipients).

### Classes in English as Second Language, High School Equivalency Prep, and Citizenship Classes

El Centro has offered English classes for adults for the last **47** years. Up until the pandemic shut down, thanks to a partnership with BOCES, we offered at El Centro Hispano's Technology Center a daytime and evening ESL BOCES class for adults, a Citizenship class and an HSE (High School Equivalency) class in Spanish. However, during the first half of 2021, El Centro Hispano and BOCES worked together to continue providing

the community these courses via online platforms. Starting in September 2021, our courses were cautiously moved back to the classroom, open to only **12** fully vaccinated students at a time. Along with the limited in person sessions, BOCES also continued to offer the classes online. Last year, a total of **350** students were enrolled in person and virtual ESL, GED, and Citizenship classes.

### **El Centro Hispano Tutorial Program at White Plains Highschool**

Last year Hispanic students at White Plains High School received academic support during the school year through this tutorial program, which was inaugurated in 1989. The program, which helps students successfully complete their studies at the high school, is in place this year also. The students are provided with tutoring, information on career opportunities, and with direct assistance regarding post-secondary educational options, college choices, application procedures, and financial aid.

For the 2020-2021 school year, we had an enrollment of **40** students. From September to December, and continuing this year, **85** students are currently enrolled. That number will increase as the school year progresses. The number of students has been limited due to COVID-19 precautions.

In 2021 the program was funded by the White Plains Public Schools and the Westchester County Youth Bureau.

### **The Lanza My Older Sister - Mi Hermana Mayor Mentoring/Tutorial Program**

This mentoring/tutorial program, which was inaugurated in the fall of 2010, pairs **20** sixth grade female Hispanic students at the White Plains Middle School – Eastview Campus with Hispanic “sisters” attending local colleges as well as White Plains and Scarsdale High Schools. These young women and volunteers encourage the academic success of their “sisters” and support their college aspirations. The program was designed around an environment that values the students’ Latino heritage, culture, and language and demands full parent participation and commitment. It operates three times a week (Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays) from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. during the school year.

For the **2021-2022** school year, our participating students were able to return to the classroom setting. Although our students had to adjust to the “new normal”, we had a very successful first half of the school year. All participating students were required to wear masks at all times and practice social distancing.

This is a collaborative program between El Centro Hispano and the White Plains Public Schools. In 2021 it was funded by the Lanza Family Foundation and the Westchester County Youth Bureau.

### **The Lanza My Older Brother - Mi Hermano Mayor Tutorial Program**

Because of the success of The Lanza My Older Sister Program, a similar program was designed to support Hispanic sixth grade boys attending the White Plains Middle School. The program was inaugurated in September 2013 at the Middle School’s Eastview Campus. The program is offered three times a week (Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays) during the school year from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. In 2021 the program was funded by the Lanza Family Foundation, and the Westchester County Youth Bureau.

The program pairs **15** sixth grade male Hispanic students with tutors from surrounding colleges, and White Plains High School. The older tutors encourage the success of their “brothers” and tutor them in Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, English Language Arts, and other academic subjects.

For the **2021-2022** school year, our participating students were able to return to the classroom setting. Although our students had to adjust to the “new normal”, we had a very successful first half of the school. All of our participating students were required to wear masks and practice social distancing.

### **The Perkins Saturday Academy**

The Perkins Saturday Academy Program, inaugurated in 2012 and redesigned in 2013, is an intensive Saturday tutorial program for middle and high school students from the White Plains Public Schools. It includes focused one-on-one tutoring in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science,

Spanish, and French. Thanks to the generosity of Archbishop Stepinac High School, the Academy was held in their state-of-the-art Computer Room every Saturday from 12 noon to 4:30 p.m. from its inception until June of 2016 when the program was moved to Eastview Middle School.

Since 2017, to better accommodate students' schedules, the program has been offered from 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. to seventh and eighth graders and from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to ninth and twelve graders. In 2021 we were delighted to open the enrollment to Middle school students from Elmsford. We presently have **53** students from White Plains and Elmsford. Students from Elmsford have the option of participating in the program in person or virtually.

The program began the new school year back in the classroom setting, strictly enforced by CDC safety guidelines. In **2021** the program was funded by the Perkins Family and the Elmsford Union Free School District.

### **El Centro Hispano's Summer Literacy Academy**

El Centro Hispano inaugurated a Summer Literacy Academy for Hispanic children in July of 2010. The program offers reading comprehension support and enrichment activities to second and third graders four days a week for two months during the summer. Since 2014 this program has been housed at Post Road Elementary School, thanks to the generosity of the Post Road staff and the White Plains School System.

In response to COVID-19, the program was revised, and the curriculum fitted to be taught virtually. Unlike previous years, we extended the program for Kindergartners and First graders to better assist our students to navigate the "new normal" in their schools. A total of **50** K-3 students were served.

In 2021 the Academy was funded by the Westchester County Youth Bureau and St. Faith's House Foundation.

### **The Marcia and Richard Cohen Early Literacy Program**

This after-school program began in January 2013 thanks to the generosity of Sr. St. John Delany, Associate Professor at Pace University's School of Education and Director of the Center for Literacy Enrichment. It serves **10** kindergartners and **15** first grade Hispanic students from September through May. The program offers pre-literacy and literacy support two days a week during the school year from 4:30-5:30 p.m. to kindergarten children and two days a week to first graders at Post Road Elementary School. All of the components of the curriculum aid students to thrive in the program and in school.

The goals of the program are to help students with weaker literacy skills, build confidence in tackling difficult assignments, create a fun learning environment that keeps the interest of every student, encourage strong writing ability, and have every student reach reading level by the end of the program. Several volunteers from El Centro Hispano help with the tutoring.

In response to COVID-19, the Early Literacy Program was revised and fitted to be taught virtually. To maintain our children and staff safe, participating students had been required to actively engage with their Program Coordinator three times a week for at least an hour and half to ensure all assignment completion. In order to continue having a successful program, parent and student participation has been strongly encouraged by the Coordinator's constant communication with all participants.

The program was funded by St. Faith's Foundation and Marcia's Light Foundation in 2021.

### **Bilingual Girl Scouts Troop**

This troop, founded in 1974, is the oldest continually running program of El Centro Hispano. As a result of COVID-19, all troop activities were moved online from January to August. At the end of 2021, our Troop had **47** girls enrolled. This total includes: **9** Daisies, **8** Brownies, **4** Juniors, **18** Cadettes, and **8** Seniors. The Girl Scouts were able to go back to their regular activities in September at Post Road School.

### **Bilingual Cub Scouts Pack**

El Centro Hispano's Scouts Troop, which was founded in 2005, closed its chapter in 2020 due to COVID-19. However, the Cub Scouts Pack were very active virtually in 2021 from January to August and resumed their scouting activities in person in September at Post Road Elementary School. Presently, El Centro Hispano's Cub Scouts Pack has **19** children enrolled.

## Educational Workshops

Planned together with staff from the White Plains Public Schools, parents are given special workshop sessions on college planning and post-secondary school options, and how to apply for financial aid. The workshops were led by school district staff.

In addition to these workshops, parents of all students in all our educational programs are required to attend an orientation training meeting during the year on what steps to take to ensure their children's academic success. As a response to the safety regulations mandated by the CDC, our Director of Educational Programs has been meeting with the parents via Zoom or in person at Druss Park, weather permitting.

This year, El Centro Hispano and the White Plains High School Guidance Department hosted a FAFSA workshop on October 14 in-person at the First Baptist Church of White Plains with an attendance of 77 families.

## Workshops on Other Issues

Since the 1980's, El Centro has offered workshops on nutrition, major illnesses affecting Hispanics, domestic violence, rights of immigrants, abuse of women, the stock market, housing trends, safe communities, investments, and safe banking practices. These workshops have drawn hundreds of community members eager to learn.

Due to COVID-19, no workshops were offered this year to ensure the safety of our workshop participants. Instead, El Centro kept its social media active with important information for our clients throughout the year.

## Internship Program for High School and College Students

The Internship Program, which began in 1985, has included college students attending local colleges and high school students from White Plains High School and Scarsdale High School. Since 2019, the program was revised to be a paid internship, primarily for high school students. This year we were able to hire 1 high school intern, thanks to the availability of the COVID-19 vaccine.

## Changing Lives Through... Technology

### Technology Center

**Our Technology Center has been in constant demand since the first class began there in May 2009. This has been made possible thanks to the support of our County Executive George Latimer and many other individuals and agencies.**

Under normal circumstances, the Technology Center is open for instruction seven days a week and serves adults, seniors and school-age children. It is equipped with:

- 🌀 **Seventeen computer stations**
- 🌀 **Interactive whiteboard**
- 🌀 **One laptop**
- 🌀 **High speed internet access**
- 🌀 **One teacher work station**
- 🌀 **Connectivity to the White Plains Public Schools**

## Computer Classes for Adults and Seniors

From January to July 2021, El Centro offered **6 virtual** computer classes: **3 Review** and **3 Accounting** Classes. As eligibility for vaccine access continued to expand, our administration was very excited to reopen the Technology Center for our adult students.

From July to December 2021, El Centro resumed **6 in-person** computer classes: **2 Beginners**, **2 Intermediate**, **1 Advanced**, and **1 Accounting** class.

A total of **71** students completed the classes offered this year. Unfortunately, the prolonged COVID state did not allow us to honor our students with a special graduation ceremony as we have done in years past. We are incredibly proud of our students and of their accomplishments during these difficult times.

### **Culture through Technology Program**

The Culture through Technology Program which began in 2001 met last year on Saturdays via Zoom due to COVID-19. A total of **20** fourth and fifth graders participated in the program from January - June. **20** students were enrolled in the program from September – December.

Half of the class time is devoted to developing students' reading ability and to tutoring them and thus strengthening their academic skills. During the rest of the class time, students discuss topics such as: the importance of nutrition, responsibility, bullying, school environment, relationship with parents, manners and etiquette, and global warming. After each discussion, the students talk about how these themes differ across cultures. Every student develops a project as a culmination of their time in the program. The project demonstrates the students' technological, academic, and cultural knowledge as a result of taking the class. These parameters remained the same regardless of the virtual classroom setting.

In 2021 the program was funded by the Westchester County Youth Bureau.

### **Study Skills Program**

In September 2014, to continue helping the students who had participated in the program as 4<sup>th</sup> graders and were no longer eligible for the program, we added a new component with the purpose of improving their study skills. The **17** 5th grade students meet every Saturday from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. via Zoom throughout the school year as a safety measure against COVID-19. In this program, students are taught different study strategies and techniques that they can use to improve their academic progress. Some of the topics that are discussed include: how to be organized, the importance of setting short-term and long-term goals, how to improve reading comprehension, test-taking strategies, and many other skills.

In 2020 the program was funded by the Westchester County Youth Bureau.

### **The Ben Boykin Homework Help Center**

In 2018, El Centro Hispano's administrators decided to begin a new program to end the digital divide afflicting the students of the White Plains School District. College and high school tutors have been available Monday – Friday from 3:30 to 5:30 to help. On a daily basis, an average of **9-12** students took advantage of this program by coming regularly to use the computers and receive one-on-one tutoring from students from the White Plains High School.

In response to COVID-19, the Director of Educational Programs and the coordinator of the program created a system to continue offering this program via Zoom, on the phone, and via socially distanced meetings. In 2021, in addition to homework help, the program offered students help in learning how to use the new school software, as well as offering parents and students materials to safely navigate the internet.

El Centro Hispano gives a very special thank you to Chairman Ben Boykin for offering his unwavering support to our students!

## **Changing Lives through... Services**

### **Community Service Program**

Our volunteers were essential in all of the activities El Centro Hispano conducted, from its Educational Programs to its bi-monthly food distributions. We are **extremely grateful** to all our volunteers who made sure our community received the help that they needed during and after the pandemic shut down.

Every year since 2001, White Plains High School students give back to their community and earn community service hours through the Community Service Program at El Centro. They serve as tutors and translators,

distribute flyers for special events, and help distribute food, recruit other students and parents to attend events at El Centro, and set up and organize various other activities throughout the year. **325** students registered to perform community service in 2021.

### **Affordable Care Program Assistance**

Since October 2014, a bilingual representative of the Westchester County Department of Health has been on site at El Centro one full day a week to offer our clients free assistance in completing the application paperwork for the Affordable Care Program. **23** clients were assisted in 2021. Our clients were assisted via telephone to ensure safety for both our clients and the Westchester County Health Department Navigator.

### **Legal Assistance**

Since December, 2019, Robin Bikkal has been the head of our Legal Assistance Program, where she has been providing legal advice on immigration issues every Thursday starting at 12:00pm. In total, **156** clients were assisted in 2021.

El Centro Hispano's Board of Directors and its staff would like to extend our most sincere gratitude and appreciation to Robin Bikkal for her services during these difficult times.

### **Dissemination Services**

Because of its closeness to and knowledge of the Hispanic community, El Centro Hispano has been called upon since its inception in 1974 by many agencies and organizations in the City of White Plains to communicate and disseminate important information or publications to the local Hispanic population.

El Centro Hispano's social media pages and food distribution continue to be essential in spreading the word about important COVID-19 relief programs, COVID-19 vaccine clinics, food distributions, and health information from the City of White Plains and Westchester County.

### **The Idania Rosa Cancer Support & Families in Need Program**

Since 2008, El Centro has supported **68** White Plains residents diagnosed with cancer with a range of services including referrals to cancer specialists, assistance in communicating with doctors and hospitals, and/or with modest monetary help.

Additionally, **6** families received assistance in 2021 from El Centro's Families in Need Fund.

### **The Stephen Michael Sules Food Distribution Program**

Since 2013, twice a month, El Centro has also been distributing fresh bread, fruits, dairy products, meat, frozen foods, and vegetables throughout the year. For many years, thanks to a grant from the Giving Circle of Lower Westchester El Centro purchased food from Feeding Westchester for our clients. However, for the last two years, Feeding Westchester has taken it upon themselves to provide these much needed services to our clients.

In 2021 the Feeding Westchester truck delivered a total of **138,244** pounds of food to **2,825** families from **January to December**.

Our Food Distribution program has become the hub of essential services and the official venue for all kinds of special and cultural events.

## **Changing Lives through... Cultural Events**

El Centro Hispano's mission statement specifically calls for our agency to help our families maintain and enrich their own culture. This is accomplished every year through events that bring families together around food, typical music and traditional clothing from their countries. The events help keep alive our families' ties to their heritage. This year, El Centro Hispano celebrated Three Wise Men and Day of the Child. All other events were cancelled due to COVID-19.





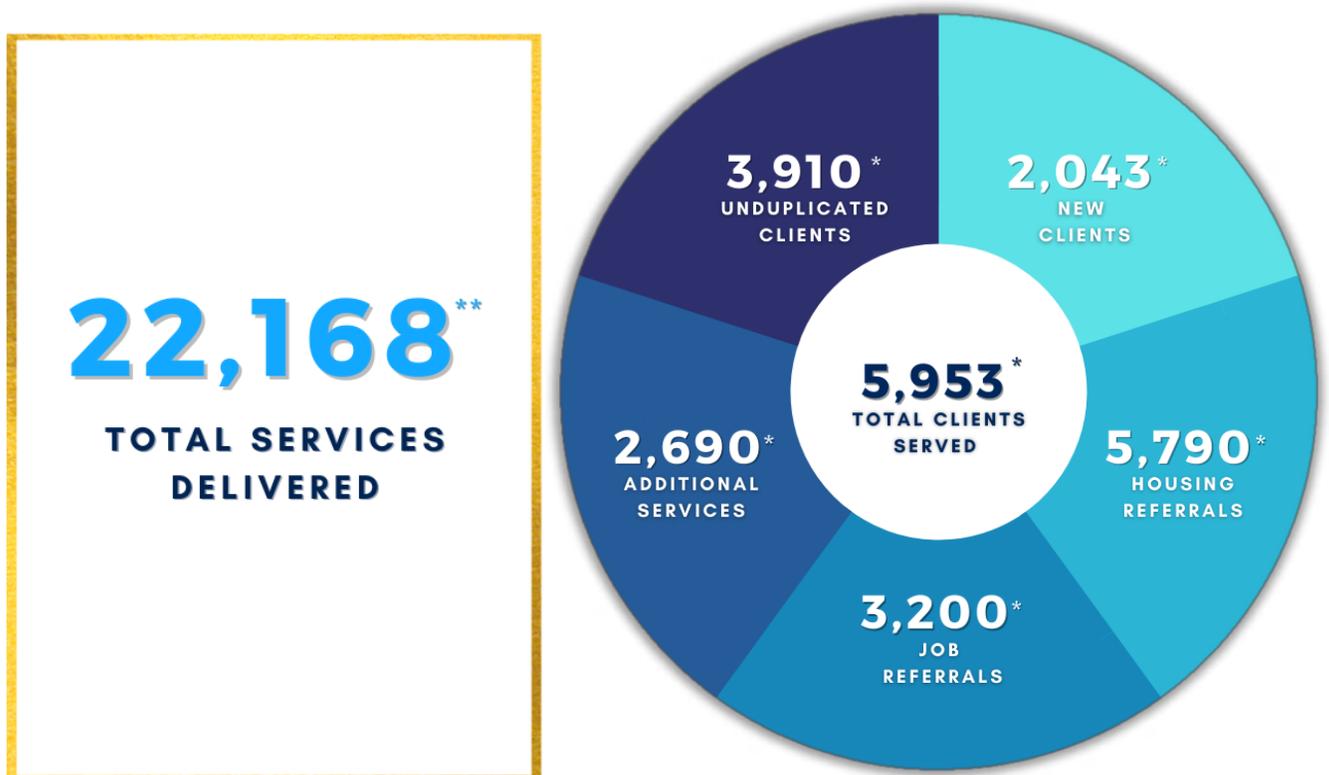
## Changing Lives Through... Outreach, Counseling and Empowerment

Thousands of individuals and families come to the center each year seeking assistance in finding **housing**, looking for a **job**, completing **applications**, composing **letters**, notarizing **documents**, or having a **document translated**. We are very grateful for the support we have received from New York Senator Andrea Stewart Cousins, New York State Assemblywoman Amy Paulin, Westchester County Executive George Latimer, Westchester County Legislator Ben Boykin, White Plains Mayor Thomas M. Roach, the White Plains Common Council and the White Plains Planning Department, and the various foundations that support and maintain El Centro Hispano's Core Programs.

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### EL CENTRO HISPANO BY THE NUMBERS 2021

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*\*These numbers were calculated by counting individual client intake records which were completed by staff each time a service was provided. They include some clients who sought El Centro's assistance on more than one occasion.*

*\*\*This number was calculated by adding the individual clients for whom client intake records were completed, and the clients served at special activities at which individual client intake records were not completed.*

# OUR IMPACT

## El Centro Hispano's Activities throughout 2021

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### January

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**47<sup>th</sup> Celebration of the Three Wise Men** On January 21, El Centro Hispano celebrated a socially distanced Three Kings Day with the participants of El Centro's Food Distribution. In addition to the toys given to each child present, our participants enjoyed the distribution of coats for children and adults, face masks, clothing for children by Scully Contracting, and prepared meals thanks to Taqueria la Frontera.

Our gratitude to Tim Dalton, Pastor of First Baptist Church of White Plains; Federico Guzman, Hispanic entrepreneur; and Brian Keating, Principal of Scully Construction, for graciously accepting to be a King at this special celebration.

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### February

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**Distribution of Essential Items at El Centro Hispano's Food Distribution** On February 4, the Latino Coalition, the Sharing Shelf, and George Latimer visited our Food Distribution and distributed diapers, hygiene products for adults and children, hand sanitizer and face masks. The participants of our community were very grateful for these necessary items.

**El Centro Hispano Celebrated Black History Month** For the entire month of February, the students in all our Youth Educational programs focused on literature, films, and other activities related to Black History Month.

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### March

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**White Plains High School Financial Aid Workshop Online** On March 4, the White Plains High School Guidance Department sponsored this event via Zoom with El Centro Hispano. A total of **10** parents and students benefitted from this presentation. Students received first-hand information and help on how to fill out the FAFSA applications for the upcoming college semesters.

**Interest Meeting for Prospective Mi Hermana/o Mayor Participants** On March 29, the Director of Educational Programs held the first interest meeting for parents interested in having their children be a part of our tutorial program. A total of **16** families participated in this meeting via Zoom.

**El Centro Hispano Began Vaccinating Against COVID-19** Starting on March 2, El Centro Hispano played a lead role in fighting for vaccine equity and access among members of the Hispanic community in White Plains and Westchester County.

In total, El Centro Hispano has referred to, registered to, and/or even volunteered in a total of **24** clinics throughout the year.

The clinics were made possible by the following institutions, pharmacies, and organizations:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  <b>Burke Rehabilitation Hospital</b> |  <b>Thomas H. Slater Center</b>    |
|  <b>City of White Plains</b>          |  <b>Westchester County</b>         |
|  <b>Forme Medical Center</b>          |  <b>Westchester Medical Center</b> |
|  <b>Mt Hope AME Zion Church</b>       |  <b>White Plains Hospital</b>      |
|  <b>Sunshine Pharmacy</b>             |   |

# COMBATING COVID-19 ONE VACCINE AT A TIME

VACCINE CLINICS MARCH - DECEMBER 2021



MARCH 2 - APRIL 27  
TOTAL INOCULATED: 1,561

MAY 1 - MAY 7  
MAY 6: EL CENTRO HISPANO CLINIC  
TOTAL INOCULATED: 33

MAY 10 - MAY 20  
TOTAL INOCULATED: 40



JUNE 17  
EL CENTRO HISPANO CLINIC  
TOTAL INOCULATED: 18

NOVEMBER 4  
EL CENTRO HISPANO BOOSTER CLINIC  
TOTAL INOCULATED: 69

DECEMBER 28  
CITY OF WHITE PLAINS BOOSTER CLINIC  
TOTAL REFERRED & INOCULATED: 9



 **1,730**  
**VACCINES**  
**ADMINISTERED**

 **24**  
**VACCINE CLINICS**

MARCH - DECEMBER 2021

# THE STEPHEN MICHAEL SULES FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM

at El Centro Hispano

Twice a month, our food distribution program served as the **venue** for **essential services**, **special** and **cultural** events throughout the year.

We are **grateful** for our partnerships with other Westchester County organizations, institutions and agencies that made this a memorable year for our community.



**2,825**  
total families served



**138,244**  
pounds of food distributed

\*Please note: The statistics provided above are based on data collected from January - December 2021

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## April

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**“Art in the Park” with ArtsWestchester** Starting in April, ArtsWestchester began the Arts in the Park program for the elementary level students in our Youth Educational Programs. From April to May, these workshops benefitted a total of **55** students.

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## May

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**El Centro Hispano Celebrates Mother’s Day** On May 6, El Centro Hispano celebrated the mothers of White Plains during our Food Distribution by distributing **100** self-care “goodie bags” generously prepared by members of the Sharing Shelf. Each bag contained toiletries, cosmetics, and other items to help each mom feel special on her day. The Sharing Shelf also distributed shoes for women and clothing for children.

**El Centro Hispano Celebrates the Day of the Child** Also on May 6, El Centro Hispano celebrated its 6<sup>th</sup> Day of the Child, a cultural event dedicated to the children in White Plains during our Food Distribution. To celebrate this event, **16 brand new bicycles**, donated by 2 anonymous donors, were raffled among the children present. The children also had the opportunity to receive **1** of **50** brand new back packs filled with school supplies, donated by the UNICEF Club from Scarsdale High School. In total, **452** children attended this event.

**First COVID-19 Vaccine at El Centro’s Food Distribution** In addition to the events taking place on May 6, El Centro held its own vaccine clinic for the first time. This clinic was made possible thanks to Sunshine Pharmacy, who made this clinic accessible to day laborers in the community who would have otherwise been unable to get an appointment elsewhere due to scheduling issues. A total of **30** people received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

**The White Plains Department of Parks and Recreation Offers Free Recreational Camps** Towards the end of the Springtime, **16** of our elementary school students had the opportunity to participate in free tennis camp for 11 weeks. Additionally, **20** students were invited to participate in a free baseball camp.

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## June

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**ERAP Application Assistance** Starting on June 7, El Centro Hispano began assisting our community with the filing of the New York State Emergency Rental Assistance Application Program (ERAP). This program was created by NYS as an emergency assistance for state residents to relieve the burden of up to 12 months in owed rent. From January to December, El Centro’s team submitted **85** applications on behalf of our clients, of which **33%** have been approved for the full amount. A total of **220** individuals were assisted with this program.

**Art in the Park – Summer Session** Thanks to our partnership with ArtsWestchester, students from El Centro’s Youth Educational Programs continued to have the opportunity to participate in these engaging art workshops. From June to July, **42** students participated in these workshops.

**COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic at El Centro’s Food Distribution** On June 17, the Westchester Medical Center partnered with El Centro Hispano to offer another COVID-19 pop up clinic for the community. A total of **17** individuals benefitted from this clinic.

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## July

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**El Centro Hispano’s Girl Scouts Bridging Ceremony** On July 15, a total of **30** Girl Scouts celebrated their Annual Bridging Ceremony at Druss Park. This event was celebrated following strict CDC social distancing guidelines. As of September, they are meeting regularly in person at Post Road Elementary School once a week on Fridays.

**Steve’s Camp at Horizon Farms Offers Free Sleep Away Camp to El Centro’s Youth** From July – August, Steve’s Camp offered students from our Educational Programs the opportunity to enjoy 12 days at a sleep-away camp free of charge. A total of **14** students were chosen for this fun summer activity.

**El Centro Hispano Resumes In-Person Computer Classes** On July 21, El Centro resumed its Computer Classes in-person for all levels: Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced. All participating students were required to present proof of full vaccination and practice the recommended CDC guidelines. From July to November, a total of **52** students have participated and benefitted from these classes.

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## August

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**School Supplies Drive at El Centro's Food Distribution** During our August 19 food distribution, El Centro hosted a school supplies drive made possible by several generous donors. A total of **250** brand new back-packs filled with school supplies were distributed to the children present at the food distribution. A warm thank you to following individuals for making this event possible: Colleen Durphy, the Hersh Family, Sergeant Thomas Hess, Libby Hollahan, Sara Mainster, Catherine McDonald, Lisa Panaro, and Laura Reidy.

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## September

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**School Supplies Drive and Mammogram Appointments** On September 2, El Centro Hispano distributed individual supplies kits from Staples Connect, donated by the George Washington Elementary School Pantry. A total of **180** kits were distributed to children who attended our food distribution and had not previously received supplies at the School Supplies Drive. Our deepest gratitude to the George Washington PTA in making this distribution possible: Thank you!

Additionally, the White Plains Hospital made available **43** appointments for free breast exams. During the food distribution, women who were interested in receiving this exam had the opportunity to make an appointment with one of El Centro's team members. This was part of the larger effort by White Plains Hospital to offer free breast and cervical exams to women in our community who do not have medical insurance.

**Adult Educational Program Resume In-Person** After many months of online English as a Second Language, G.E.D., and Citizenship instruction, our students were finally able to come back to our Technology Center on September 2. All participating students were required to show proof of full vaccination in order to participate in these classes and each class was limited to a maximum of 12 students at a time. A total of **24** individuals registered for these courses from September to December.

**Adult Educational Programs Resume Online** The online component of the English as a Second Language and Citizenship classes was extremely successful during the shut-down and many months after. Students who were not able to attend the in-person session due to scheduling issues or because of the attendance limit were given the opportunity to continue their studies via Zoom. A total of **47** students registered and remained active from September to December.

**Art in the Park – Fall Session** ArtsWestchester offered this end of the year session to students from El Centro's Youth Educational Programs. Our students greatly benefitted from this incredibly fun art workshop. A total of **21** students participated in this workshop.

**El Centro Hispano Youth attend the NYCFC vs. Red Bulls Game at Yankee Stadium** On September 25 El Centro's Director of Educational Programs took **25** students to Yankee Stadium to enjoy an evening at a soccer match. We would like to give a very special thank you to the White Plains Department of Parks and Recreation and to St. Faith's Foundation for making this memorable event possible.

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## October

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**The White Plains Hospital in Partnership with El Centro Hispano and Calvary Baptist Church Hosted the Annual Health Fair** For the first time since the start of the pandemic, **206** individuals benefitted once again from our Annual Health Fair by receiving free medical services. The following exams and services were offered:

**38** Blood Pressure Screenings

**35** Dental Exams

**14** Podiatry Exams  
**15** Breast Exams and **11** mammogram vouchers  
**52** Pap Smears  
**12** BMI Screenings  
**32** Cholesterol Tests Performed

**32** Diabetes/Glyco Tests Performed  
**10** PSA Tests Performed  
**27** Participants for Chair Yoga  
**97** Individuals benefitted from the Fresh Market food pickup

#### IMPACT:

- 9 women who received a mammogram required follow-up imaging
- 5 women who received a Pap Smear screened positive for HPV

- 21 attendees were identified with high cholesterol
- 6 attendees were identified with high glucose levels.

**Flu Vaccine Clinic at El Centro's Food Distribution** On October 7, El Centro Hispano hosted a pop-up flu vaccine clinic, sponsored by MVP in partnership with CVS. The vaccines were free of charge for any food distribution participant who wished to receive the vaccine. A total of **52** individuals benefitted from this service.

**Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month with the Art Mobile and COVID-19 Vaccines** On October 9, El Centro Hispano celebrated Hispanic Heritage month by coordinating its first event with the Elmsford School District. A COVID-19 clinic was available for first dose vaccines. The Art Mobile from ArtsWestchester was also present to entertain the children in attendance. A huge shout-out to the Vice President of El Centro's Board of Directors, Nick Wolff for sweetening the occasion with the Wolff Cotton Candy Machine.

**White Plains High School Financial Aid Workshop** On October 14, the White Plains High School Guidance Department sponsored this event in partnership with El Centro Hispano at the First Baptist Church of White Plains. A total of **77** parents and students received first-hand information and help on how to fill out FAFSA applications for the upcoming college semesters.

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## November

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**A Booster Vaccine Clinic and Mariachis** On November 4, Sunshine Pharmacy held another pop-up vaccine clinic during El Centro's food distribution. A total of **69** eligible participants received the Moderna Booster shot. We want to express our most sincere gratitude to Sunshine Pharmacy for their efforts in making this vaccine accessible to our community.

In addition to the pop-up clinic, the White Plains High School Mariachi Band delighted our food distribution participants with timeless Mexican songs. A total of **132** participants enjoyed this distribution.

**Soup Jar Distribution to Food Distribution Participants** On November 18, El Centro Hispano's staff distributed **96** Soup Jars, and other typical Hispanic foods, which were generously donated by Bet Am Shalom. Authentic Hair Studio, a local barbershop in White Plains, also distributed coats and clothing for men, women, and children. The **160** families that participated in this food distribution were very grateful for these wonderful donations.

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## December

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**Fidelis Care Donates Holiday Turkey Vouchers** On December 2, during our food distribution, El Centro's staff gave out **50** vouchers for ButterBall Turkeys, generously donated by Fidelis Care. The recipients of these vouchers were very grateful for this early holiday gift.

The participants of our food distribution also had the opportunity to speak with an insurance navigator from the Westchester County Health Department. The navigator was available during the entire food distribution, giving clients the opportunity to apply for insurance before the Marketplace deadline.

**End of the Year Food Distribution** On December 16, we closed the year with our final food distribution, where participants were able to receive a brand new tote bag, courtesy of Atlas Air. A special thank you to Dorraine Lucia, from Humane Nation, for setting up for our final distribution, and for ensuring that the pets of our community were taken care of all year long. Thank you!

# El Centro Hispano's Family Circle

Our most sincere gratitude to the following members of **El Centro Hispano's Family Circle**. Their special contributions of **\$500 or more** in 2021 have helped us tremendously to carry out our mission and to meet the needs of our community during the COVID-19 crisis.

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And a special "thank you" to the following, who are our most loyal supporters!

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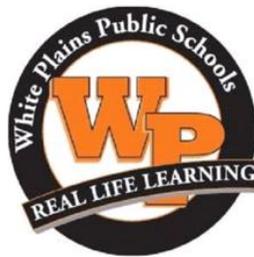
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