



2020 Annual Report

EL CENTRO HISPANO, INC.

46th Anniversary

1974 - 2020

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 - 2020 by offering a variety of programs and by presenting bilingual and cross-cultural activities throughout the year.

Celebrating 46 years of supporting and strengthening the Hispanic community

HISTORY OF EL CENTRO HISPANO

Supporting and strengthening the Hispanic community for over 45 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.

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.

Dear Friends of El Centro Hispano,

Enclosed you will find a copy of El Centro Hispano's Annual Report for 2020. This is not a report we could have envisioned a year ago. Nor is it the report we feared we might have to write back in March when the COVID 19 pandemic first shook the world, causing us to temporarily close our doors and rethink our entire operation.

This is the Annual Report that you, our extraordinary friends and donors, have made possible. Not only has your generosity allowed El Centro Hispano to continue fulfilling our mission throughout this extremely difficult year, but it has inspired and enabled us to move into new areas of service to the Hispanic Community. We have been able to provide direct financial assistance to struggling families and individuals whose situation makes it impossible for them to receive help elsewhere.

We at El Centro Hispano are proud of what you have accomplished this year. We hope that you are, too, and that together we can continue to make a difference in the lives of so many in the Hispanic Community of White Plains and Westchester County.

With deepest gratitude and best wishes for a safe and healthy 2021,

Isabel E. Villar

Isabel E. Villar

Founding Executive Director

About Us

1974 – 2020

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 five 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 four and a half 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. And we were 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 Pace University/El Centro Hispano Outreach 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 (2008-2020)

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. El Centro Hispano sponsored SAT/ACT preparation classes. 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 Lanza 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. Almost 100 families take advantage of our free food distribution program on Thursday afternoons. Thanks to our partnership with BOCES we offer two daytime ESL classes for adults and a combined beginning and intermediate class on Thursday evenings.

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. 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.

Looking Ahead (2021-...)

As we all know far too well, 2020 was an extraordinarily challenging year in so many ways. COVID-19 rampaged through our communities, playing havoc with our health, our personal lives, and the economic stability of our community and our nation.

However, 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 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. In the face of such precarious circumstances, El Centro's dedicated team was right there on the front lines working tirelessly to find alternative ways to provide effectively our desperately needed services.

Sadly, we are far from normalcy. One thing that has not changed is the difficult situation of the most vulnerable among us. Not only are their needs increasing, but others who were just barely getting along before now find themselves truly struggling. The shutdown and the need to follow CDC protocols for social distancing have made both giving and receiving help more difficult.

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 currently offer and will continue offering a hybrid program to meet the needs of our students.

Our Youth Educational Programs are being expanded to better meet the needs of the parents, helping them to better navigate the newly implemented technology in the school system.

Currently, El Centro Hispano is also incorporating new technology to make its services more accessible while maintaining our staff and clients safe at all times. With the use of social media, and other online based platforms, El Centro seeks to aid our new and already existing clientele with readily available resources.

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 32 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, and computer classes; tutorial and mentoring programs; scholarships to graduating high school seniors; literacy support for our youngest clients; Girl and Boy Scouts troops; educational and informational workshops; bi-monthly food distribution; 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 **\$498,350** in scholarship money to **556** deserving high school seniors. In 2020, **15** 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.

This year, in addition to the above scholarships, El Centro Hispano has also awarded scholarships to the **15** college students who volunteer in the Lanza My Older Sister/My Older Brother (*Mi Hermana Mayor/Mi Hermano Mayor*) Mentoring Tutorial Program and Saturday Academy and to the **18** high school students who helped in the program during the 2020-2021 school year.

This is the 10th year that the college mentors/tutors have benefitted from these scholarships. El Centro has awarded **\$263,207** in scholarship money to **187** 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 46 years. Up until the pandemic shut down, thanks to a partnership with BOCES, we offered at El Centro Hispano's Technology Center a daytime ESL BOCES class for adults from 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon; two combined evening ESL classes every Thursday and

Saturday evening from 6:00-10:00 p.m., a morning ESL class on Sundays from 8:00 a.m.-12 p.m. and a Citizenship class on Fridays from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. An Advanced daytime class was also being offered at the First Baptist Church of White Plains, Monday – Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, and an HSE (High School Equivalency) class in Spanish, Monday – Thursday from 12:00 p.m. to 3 p.m. during the school year.

However, during the pandemic, El Centro Hispano and BOCES worked together to continue providing the community these courses via online platforms. Despite the circumstances, these classes have been a great success, because they have given the opportunity to individuals from different geographic locations across Westchester County and other states to benefit from them.

TOTAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT:

January to October: A total of **150** students were enrolled in the day and evening English, HSE, and Citizenship classes

October – December: A total of **59** students were enrolled in the day and evening English, HSE, 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.

From January to mid-March, we served **106** students with this program. In response to COVID-19, the program was temporarily suspended for a few weeks at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year.

In mid-October, the program resumed online, providing students the tools necessary to successfully navigate the school year. A total of **61** students are currently enrolled. That number will increase as the school year progresses.

In 2020 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.

As a result of COVID-19, the Mi Hermana Mayor program has been moved online until the end of the academic school year 2021. Participating students are 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 is strongly encouraged by the Coordinator’s constant communication with all participants.

This is a collaborative program between El Centro Hispano and the White Plains Public Schools. In 2020 it was funded by the Lanza Family Foundation, the Patrina 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. Like the girls in the program, the boys have their own set of special male guest speakers that provide them with insights about how to navigate the future to be academically and professionally successful. In 2019 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.

As a result of COVID-19, the Mi Hermano Mayor program has been moved online until the end of the academic school year 2021. Participating students are 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 is strongly encouraged by the Coordinator's constant communication with all participants.

The Perkins My Older Sister/Brother - Mi Hermana(o) Mayor Saturday Academy

The Academy, 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 various academic subjects.

At the beginning of the **2020-2021** school year, **50** Hispanic seventh through twelfth grade students enrolled in the tutorial program.

As a result of COVID-19, the Saturday Academy program has been moved online until the end of the academic school year 2021. Participating students are 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 is strongly encouraged by the Coordinator's constant communication with all participants.

In **2020** the program was funded by the Perkins Family.

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 who were unable to complete our Early Literacy Program due to school closures as a consequence of the virus. A total of **50** K-3 students were served.

In 2020 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 afterschool 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** kindergarteners 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.

As a result of COVID-19, the Early Literacy program has been moved online until the end of the academic school year 2021. Participating students are 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 is strongly encouraged by the Coordinator's constant communication with all participants.

The program was funded by St. Faith's Foundation and Marcia and Richard Cohen in 2020.

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. At the end of 2020, our Troop had **44** girls enrolled. The Girl Scouts participated in several online scouting activities while learning to become better citizens.

Bilingual Scouts Pack and Troop

El Centro Hispano's Pack and El Centro Hispano's Scouts Troop, which were founded in 2005, had all of its scouting activities moved online due to COVID-19 safety measures. At the end of 2020, El Centro Hispano's Scouts and Pack Troop had **15** boys enrolled. The Pack and Scouts Troop participated in several online scouting activities while learning to become better citizens.

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.

This year, El Centro Hispano and the White Plains High School Guidance Department hosted two workshops, one in March before the pandemic shut down, and the other in mid-October via Zoom.

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.

Due to CDC protocols, we were not able to hire any interns in 2020.

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
- One laptop
- One teacher work station
- Interactive whiteboard
- High speed internet access
- Connectivity to the White Plains Public Schools

Computer Classes for Adults and Seniors

From January to March 2020, El Centro offered **5 in person** computer classes: **1** Beginner, **1** Intermediate, **1** Advanced, **1** Accounting and **1** Review/Advanced class.

Due to the mandated closures in late March, we had to temporarily suspend all onsite activity, including our Adult Educational Programs.

In July, our Director of Educational Programs created an online curriculum that focused on special topics, designed to enhance our students' understanding of the most commonly used software. All of the classes for the rest of the year took place via Zoom, allowing us to tremendously extend the limit on the number of students allowed in each section.

From July to December 2020, El Centro offered **7** virtual computer classes: **4** Review, **1** Review/Advanced, **2** Accounting and **1** QuickBooks class.

A total of **108** students completed the classes offered this year. Unfortunately, the circumstances 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 2020 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 4th 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 others.

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 were available Monday – Thursday from 3:30 to 5:30. On a daily basis, an average of 9-12 students took advantage of this program, 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 this program via Zoom, the phone, and socially distanced meetings. Besides 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 of 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. **240** students registered to perform community service in 2020.

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. **46** clients were assisted onsite until March 2020. From April to December, our clients were assisted via telephone to ensure safety for both our clients and the Westchester County Health Department Navigator.

Legal Assistance

On December 5, 2019, El Centro Hispano welcomed Robin Bikkal to its Legal Assistance Program, where she has been providing legal advice on immigration issues every Thursday at 2:00pm. **88** clients were assisted in 2020.

Due to COVID-19, Ms. Bikkal has been offering her services remotely, ensuring our clients receive the legal advice they need during these very difficult times.

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.



The Stephen Michael Sules Food Distribution Program

Since 2013, twice a month, El Centro has been distributing fresh bread, fruits, dairy products, meat, frozen foods, and vegetables throughout the year. Thanks to a grant from the Giving Circle of Lower Westchester, El Centro purchases food from the Food Bank for Westchester for our clients. Last year the Food Bank truck delivered a total of **163,383** pounds of food to **5,295** families from **January** to **December**.

This program has been renamed the Stephen Michael Sules Food Distribution Program in gratitude to the Sules family for their generosity and hard work in helping El Centro Hispano provide this important service to our community at the peak of the pandemic. Twice a month, the Stephen Michael Sules Foundation team provided bagged lunches for participants waiting to receive food.

During COVID-19, this program was the most essential for our community. Throughout the pandemic, El Centro Hispano, along with other organizations in White Plains coordinated their food assistance to make sure the needy members of the community had access to food on a daily basis.

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.

At the height of the pandemic, El Centro Hispano's social media pages were essential in spreading the word about important COVID-19 relief programs, food distributions, and health information from the City of White Plains and Westchester County.

The Idania Rosa Cancer Support Program

Since 2008, El Centro has supported **62** 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.

On August 14, Kari Sailowitz, founder of the NYC based Fitting Room Studio, Eric & Jessie Salvador, and Erica Ungar worked together on a virtual fundraiser for El Centro Hispano's Cancer Support Program, in honor of Eric & Jessie Salvador's late mother Idania Rosa who sadly passed away from this terrible disease.

The Board of Directors and staff of El Centro Hispano have renamed its cancer program the "The Idania Rosa Cancer Support Program" in appreciation for the generous donation and trust of the Rosa family.

OLMC – El Centro Hispano Initiative

El Centro provided employment and housing listings, translations of documents, and registration to all El Centro Hispano's programs every third Saturday of the month from 9:00 – 11:30 a.m. and every first Sunday of the month for two hours after the church service from January to March 2020. The office was supervised by a staff member from El Centro Hispano and two volunteers from the church. A total of **59** clients were assisted through this program.

Due to COVID-19, this program was suspended for the remaining months of the year. Although the program could not continue onsite, El Centro Hispano continued its partnership with the church and provided emergency services, such as financial aid stipends and food vouchers throughout the year.

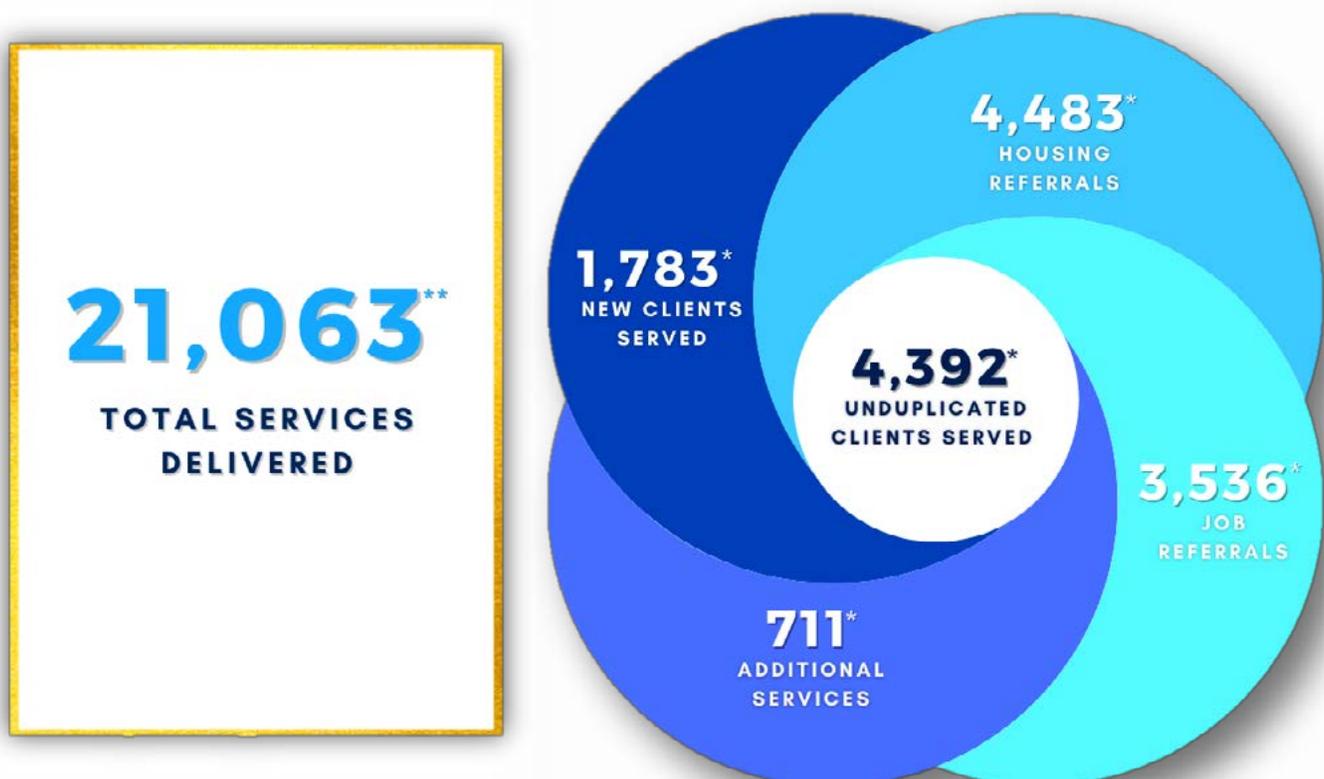
Changing Lives through... Cultural Events

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 was only able to have its Three Wise Men celebration. 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 **documents translated**. We are very grateful for the support we have received from White Plains Mayor Thomas M. Roach, the White Plains Common Council and the White Plains Planning Department, Westchester County Legislator Ben Boykin, New York State Assembly Amy Paulin, New York State Assembly David Buchwald, New York Senator Andrea Stewart Cousins, and the New York State Hispanic Initiative for El Centro Hispano's Core Programs.

El Centro Hispano by the Numbers 2020



*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.

Changing Lives through... Special Activities

January

45th Celebration of the Three Wise Men On January 6, El Centro Hispano celebrated Three Kings Day with the students in the Marcia and Richard Cohen Early Literacy Program. **25** students received toys from the “Three Kings”, portrayed by: Post Road Elementary School Principal, Jessimae Ossorio, Assistant Principal Suzanne Lasser, and Superintendent Dr. Joseph Ricca.

February

El Centro Hispano and Eastview Middle School Parent Meeting On February 1, El Centro Hispano hosted Guidance Counselor Jessica Rivera, who gave a presentation to parents of the Mi Hermana/o Mayor 6th grade Tutorial Program. After the presentation, parents were encouraged to engage in an open discussion, and express their concerns and work towards a solution to optimize their child’s academic well-being from home. Because of its incredible success, the parent – counselor meetings have been integrated as an essential part of the program.

Soup Jar Distribution to Food Distribution Participants On February 6, El Centro Hispano staff distributed **25** Soup Jars, which were generously donated by Bet Am Shalom. Our food distribution participants were very grateful for this wonderful donation.

HHA Initiative by El Centro Hispano and Unlimited Care, Inc. On February 10, El Centro Hispano held a meeting for clients interested in obtaining the NYS Home Health Aide (HHA) license. Present were John Lopez, Director, and Grisselle Feliciano, Branch Manager, who spoke to individuals about the requirements and benefits of obtaining this license. The meeting was attended by more than **65** individuals, all eligible to receive the certification.

Informative Meetings for Parents of Children in the Lanza Mi Hermana/Mi Hermano Mayor and the Perkins Saturday Academy Mentoring/ Tutorial Programs From February 11th to February 25th, the Director of Children’s Educational Programs and the coordinators of these programs met with the parents of those students who had not worked up to their academic potential that given quarter.

March

Eagle Scout Recognition El Centro Hispano was invited by the Eagle Scouts of America to celebrate our first Eagle Scout in El Centro Hispano’s history. Present were County Executive George Latimer, Mayor Tom Roach, and the White Plains Commissioner of Planning Chris Gomez. We send a very special thank you to Pastor Tim Dalton for his support in allowing us to honor our Eagle Scout at the First Baptist Church of White Plains.

El Centro Hispano Counts! On March 6, El Centro Hispano staff and volunteers were given a special training by the White Plains Library about the 2020 Census. Staff and volunteers were taught the proper way to approach the Census, and the importance behind the decennial count.

College Planning Night Hispanic parents and their children in eleventh grade participated in this special presentation by the White Plains High School Guidance Department on March 10 at El Centro Hispano. The **45** Hispanic families who attended the meeting learned about the opportunities available for their children to attend college or other post-secondary institutions

EL CENTRO HISPANO COMBATS COVID - 19

On **March 16th, 2020** El Centro Hispano closed its office following Governor Cuomo's Executive Order to shut down all non-essential businesses. Understanding and responding to the urgent needs of the community has been a hallmark of El Centro Hispano's work for **46 continuous years**. During this time of COVID-19, El Centro Hispano, with the help and support of caring individuals, and other community organizations and partners, continued its work to support our community, by providing necessary services remotely, financial assistance, and food distributions.

EL CENTRO HISPANO GOES REMOTE

During the mandated closures, El Centro continued to deliver its Drop-In services via email and our office number was redirected to an employee's phone. From **March 16th, 2020 to June 5th, 2020**, El Centro Hispano offered **1,610** virtual services:



FINANCIAL AID TO DISPLACED FAMILIES

Thanks to the benevolence of generous donors, a grant from the Hispanic Federation, a major anonymous donor, and the Westchester Community Foundation, we were able to start and maintain an **Emergency Fund**.

Additionally, Westchester County granted El Centro Hispano **\$40,000** to distribute to our displaced community in the form of restaurant vouchers.

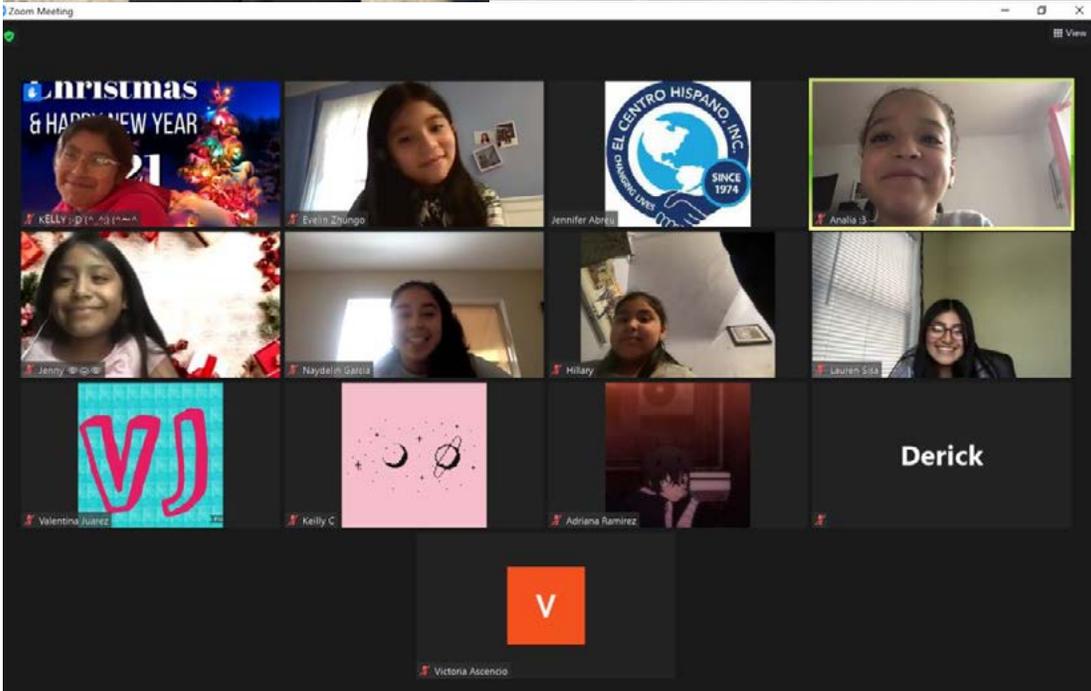
3,886

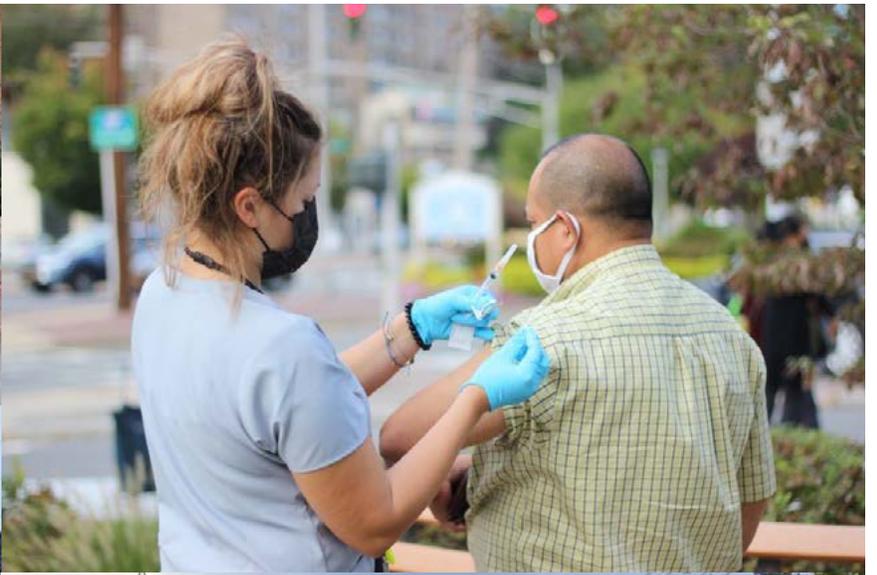
Number of individuals impacted

\$196,145*

Amount distributed to displaced families

*Includes grant given by Westchester County





THE STEPHEN MICHAEL SULES FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM

at El Centro Hispano

This program was **crucial** for **hundreds** of families throughout Westchester County, especially during the most **disastrous** months of the pandemic.

Twice a month, our food distribution program became the **hub** for **essential services** granted by partnerships with several organizations, institutions, and agencies from all over Westchester County.



4,961
total families served



142,571
Pounds of food distributed

Please note: The statistics reflected above are based on data collected from March – December 2020

August

The Fitting Room Virtual Fundraiser On August 14, Kari Sailowitz, founder of the NYC based Fitting Room Studio, Eric & Jessie Salvador, and Erica Ungar worked together on a virtual fundraiser for El Centro Hispano's Cancer Support Program, in honor of Eric & Jessie Salvador's late mother Idania Rosa who sadly passed away from this terrible disease.

The Board of Directors and the staff of El Centro Hispano, thank everyone involved in this wonderful project. We deeply appreciate their support and trust in El Centro Hispano. To honor the memory of Idania Rosa, an exemplary woman, mother, and friend, El Centro Hispano renamed its cancer program, "The Idania Rosa Cancer Support Program".

¿Y Nosotros Qué? Essential and Excluded Rally in White Plains On August 21, El Centro Hispano joined the Westchester Labor Alliance in a community rally. El Centro Hispano and several other not-for-profit organizations, peacefully asked for Governor Cuomo to fight for the immigrant community in New York.

The White Plains Hospital offers Free Medical Exams for Women In lieu of our Annual Health Fair, the White Plains Hospital offered free breast and cervical exams to women in the community who did not have medical insurance. On August 24, **25** women that were referred to them by El Centro Hispano benefitted from this service.

"Art in the Park" program on behalf of ArtsWestchester Starting on August 28, **110** children enjoyed a pilot workshop hosted by ArtsWestchester in Druss Park for 6 consecutive weeks. The participants painted a personalized landscape, while learning basic painting techniques, all while practicing safe social distancing. Thank you, ArtsWestchester!

Distribution of Gift Cards to Summer Literacy Students thanks to Richard and Lucille Fontana On August 28, **40** students enrolled in the Summer Literacy program received gift cards on behalf of Lucille and Richard Fontana to purchase school supplies for the upcoming school year.

September

Training and Introductory Meeting for El Centro Hispano's Online Mentoring/ Tutorial Programs On Saturday September 5, the Director of Educational Programs gave all of El Centro Hispano's mentors, tutors, and volunteers specialized training on what to expect now that all of the programs were moved to online platforms.

El Centro Hispano's Educational Programs Begin On September 14, El Centro Hispano's Educational programs were launched online. All participants, including staff, students, and parents, were given special training to ensure they have a successful school year despite the current circumstances.

Census Event at Taqueria La Frontera In an effort to incentivize the Hispanic community to participate in the Census, El Centro Hispano teamed up with Taqueria la Frontera, a popular Mexican restaurant in the heart of Battle Hill, to give special Taqueria la Frontera meal vouchers to anyone who participated in the Census. This Census event took place on September 14.

Taco Tuesday Census Event On September 22, El Centro Hispano hosted a second Census event at Taqueria la Frontera after the major success we had in the first event. Participants received special food vouchers to be used at Taqueria la Frontera

Thanks to both events, and El Centro Hispano's role as a Census hub, we were able to Census a total of **546** individuals from hard-to-count communities in White Plains and all over Westchester County.

October

MVP Healthcare distributes Flu Shots for Food Distribution Participants On October 1, MVP Healthcare, in collaboration with CVS and El Centro Hispano, Inc. offered free vaccines to participants of El Centro Hispano's food distribution. Anyone who got a flu shot was eligible to receive a voucher to eat at a restaurant in White Plains, thanks to the Community Table Partnership Program by Westchester County. A total of **90** individuals benefitted from this service.

The Mexican Consulate Donates Food Items to El Centro Hispano's Food Distribution Additionally, on October 1, The General Consul of the New York City Mexican Consulate and his Vice Consuls visited El Centro Hispano's food distribution. They made a very generous donation of more than **5,500** pounds of typical Hispanic food items which were very welcomed by the recipients of the food distribution that day.

El Centro Hispano's Girl Scout Troop Bridge Ceremony On October 2, **44** of El Centro Hispano's Girl Scouts, their mothers and leaders celebrated their Annual Bridge Ceremony outdoors at Druss Park. Following COVID-19 safety regulations, our Girl Scouts "bridged" to their new levels wearing a mask and keeping social distance at all times. All the participants received a food voucher from El Centro Hispano to eat at 1 of 5 restaurants in White Plains, courtesy of Westchester County as a reward for their achievements.

White Plains High School Financial Aid Workshop On October 20, 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 and parents received first-hand information and help on how to fill out FAFSA applications for the upcoming college semesters.

The White Plains Hospital offers Free Medical Exams for Women In lieu of our Annual Health Fair, the White Plains Hospital once again offered free breast and cervical exams to women in the community who did not have medical insurance. On October 24, **25** women that were referred to them by El Centro Hispano benefitted from this service.

November

Distribution of blankets and pillows thanks to the Generosity of Delta Airlines and United Way On November 19, El Centro Hispano distributed blankets and pillows to **248** participants thanks to the generosity of Delta Airlines and United Way of Westchester. We are also grateful to Nick Wolff and Barbara Mair for their time and hard work in distributing these necessary accessories.

December

Free Ice Skating day for El Centro Hispano's Educational Programs thanks to The City of White Plains For 3 consecutive Wednesdays in December (12/2,12/9,12/16) El Centro Hispano's educational programs were invited by the City of White Plains to ice skate at the ice rink free of charge.

El Centro Hispano's End of the Year Food Distribution on December 3 It was a special distribution. The community enjoyed a donation of winter coats for children and adults; vouchers for the purchase of holiday turkeys; free flu shots; pet food and face masks.

Thank you, Westchester Community Foundation! Thanks to the generosity of the WCF, a total of **53** families, representing **228** children and adults, received financial assistance right before the holiday season. These families were incredibly grateful to the WCF for their benevolence and continued support during these difficult times. **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 2020 have helped us tremendously to carry out our mission and to meet the needs of our community during the COVID crisis.

Manuela Arnal
H. Judith Aúcar
Cathleen Barnhart
Mathew D. Brenner
Michelle Brody
Betsy & Steven Bush
Millie & Elizardi Castro
Marcia & Richard Cohen
Leo Corbett
Ruth Cowan
Larry Delgado
Linda A. Ellis
Antonio J. Enea
Rosa Fonseca
Lucille & Richard Fontana
Gerardo Galarza
George & Rachel Gumina
Federico Guzman

Ronnie and Jeffrey Hersch
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The Rosalie Katz Family Foundation
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Rona Muntner
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Jean & Henry Pollak Fund
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Paul & Joyce Rheingold Family Foundation

Stephen & Nita Lowey
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David & Rosemary Mace
Tania Rosales
Sheryl Sachs, The Grey Street Foundation Inc.
Joan Saslow
Harriet P. Schieifer
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Isabel Villar
Elaine Weiler
Elaine Yellen
F.Q.R. Zacharia

El Centro Hispano's Board of Directors and Staff are very grateful to those who have gone above and beyond the call of duty in 2020.



American Red Cross



The Scarsdale Woman's Club



FIDELIS CARE



First Baptist Church of White Plains





As well as...

The Arnow Family Fund, Inc.
 Robin Bikkal
 Hon. Ben Boykin
 Betsy & Steve Bush
 Clara Civetta
 Ford Foundation
 Humane Nation, Inc.

Lanza Family Foundation
 Martha Lopez
 David & Katherine Moore
 Foundation
 Heidi & Tara Seruya
 St. Faith Foundation



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