



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

1974 - 2023

Celebrating 49 years of supporting and strengthening the Hispanic community



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 – 2023 by offering a variety of programs and by presenting bilingual and cross-cultural activities throughout the year.



THANK YOU, ISABEL...

FOR THE WONDERFUL LEGACY YOU LEFT US!



ODE TO ISABEL

TO THE WOMAN WHO AS A YOUNG CUBAN REFUGEE LEFT HER COUNTRY LOOKING FOR FREEDOM OF RELIGION, EDUCATION AND SPEECH
WE PROMISE THAT HER LEGACY WILL LIVE ON

TO THE WOMAN WHO DEDICATED MOST OF HER LIFE TO PROVIDING OTHERS WITH THE EDUCATION DENIED TO HER IN CUBA
WE PROMISE THAT HER LEGACY WILL LIVE ON

TO THE WOMAN WHO WORKED DAY AND NIGHT TO HELP HER COMMUNITY SUCCEED IN THIS NEW LAND
WE PROMISE THAT HER LEGACY WILL LIVE ON

TO THE WOMAN WHO, WHILE BATTLING OVARIAN CANCER FOR 15 YEARS CONTINUED WORKING TIRELESSLY TO FIND A PERMANENT HOME FOR HER BELOVED CENTRO HISPANO
WE PROMISE THAT HER LEGACY WILL LIVE ON

TO THE WOMAN WHO TRAVELED AROUND THE GLOBE TO BETTER APPRECIATE THE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE OF THOSE SHE WAS TRYING TO HELP
WE PROMISE THAT HER LEGACY WILL LIVE ON

TO THE WOMAN WHO DEDICATED HER SUNDAYS TO PRAISING GOD WITH HER MAGNIFICENT VOICE IN THANKSGIVING FOR ALL HER MANY BLESSINGS
WE PROMISE THAT HER LEGACY WILL LIVE ON

TO THE WOMAN WHO WAS ADMIRER BY YOUNG AND OLD FOR HER DEDICATION, COMMITMENT AND LOVE FOR HER FELLOW MAN
WE PROMISE THAT HER LEGACY WILL LIVE ON

TO THE WOMAN WE ALL LOVED, ADMIRER AND RESPECTED
WE PROMISE THAT HER LEGACY WILL LIVE ON

**MAY SHE REST IN PEACE AND
HER PASSING BE A BLESSING**

ISABEL E. VILLAR

A Lifetime of Advocacy and Achievement

Ms. Isabel E. Villar, a native of Cuba, immigrated to the United States with her family in 1966. As soon as she arrived in this country, she enrolled in White Plains High School and was immediately sensitized to the problems presented by the language barrier and the cultural differences experienced by newcomers to this country.

Upon graduation from high school, she was awarded a scholarship to Manhattanville College, where she received a B.A. in Political Science/Latin America Studies. She became a bilingual middle school teacher and then obtained her first master's degree through a New York University program in Spain. In 1978, she was hired as an American History, ESOL and Spanish teacher at Brien McMahon High School in Norwalk, Connecticut. Isabel then went on to receive a Professional Diploma in School Administration (a second Master's) from Iona College in 1986 and completed post-graduate studies (a third Master's) at Long Island University in Dobbs Ferry, New York, with a license in counseling. In 1988, she became a guidance counselor at Brien McMahon High School in Norwalk, Connecticut. In 1999, she founded the Brien McMahon High School Hispanic Alumni Association with the mission of having Hispanic alumni serve as role models and mentors for the current Hispanic students at the high school.

In 1974, two years after Ms. Villar began work as a bilingual teacher in Norwalk, she co-founded El Centro Hispano in White Plains, New York. This community organization offers a variety of social service programs to the Hispanic residents of White Plains and Westchester County. The programs currently offered by El Centro Hispano are changing the lives of their clients through education, technology, support services, cultural events, outreach, counseling and empowerment, and through special activities. Isabel was also co-host of the Centro Hispano cable TV program, "El Centro Hispano Informa".

Ms. Villar's affiliations and awards are remarkable and have included: Westchester Hispanic Coalition as one of its founders; Minority Round Table, White Plains Board of Education; former trustee of St. Bernard's Church, Girl Scouts of Westchester/Putnam; Boy Scouts of America Advisory Committee; White Plains Human Rights Commission; Community Development Advisory Board of the City of White Plains, Westchester Hispanic Advisory Board, White Plains High School Hall of Fame Selection Committee, the City of White Plains Comprehensive Plan Citizens' Committee, a founder of the White Plains Hispanic Parade Committee; Connecticut Governor's Scholar Committee; former member of St. Bernard's Parish Council, former member of the United Way of Westchester, and Director of the Hispanic Choir at St. Bernard's Church from the early 1970's until 2020.

Isabel was the recipient of the Statue of Liberty Award, Humanitarian of the Year Award; Teacher of the Year Award; Who is Who in America; NY State Westchester Hispanic Republican Assembly Outstanding Community Service Award, Slater Center; Church Women United Service Award; YWCA First Social Justice Award; the Katonah Museum of Art Millennium Recognition Award for Outstanding Leadership in the Westchester Latino Hispanic Community; Humanitarian of the Year Award from the Hispanic Democrats of Westchester, St. Bernard's Church Commitment and Dedication Award, the Leadership Award from the Westchester Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Connecticut Governor's Recognition Proclamation for 32 years of service to education.

In 2005, she received the Westchester Community Foundation Leadership Award. On May 11, 2007, the White Plains Historical Society presented her with the Citizen Extraordinaire Award and on November 16, 2007, she received the Community Service Award from the Westchester Community Opportunity Program, Inc. in recognition of her advocacy for the needs of immigrants. On October 3, 2008, she received the Americanism Award and a beautiful gold medal from the Daughters of the American Revolution, and on October 14, 2008, she received the Westchester Hispanic Coalition Champion of Community Service Award. The Westchester County Human Rights Council presented her with the Champion of Human Rights Award at their Annual Breakfast at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in December of 2008. In 2009 she received the White Plains Performing Arts Center Community Leader Award, and in March of 2011 the Friendly Gathering Monsignor Ed O'Brien Community Service Award. In September of 2012, she received a beautiful Award from the White Plains Hispanic Day Festival Organizing Committee for being one of the founding members of the festival and for all her contributions to the community.

On May 7, 2013, she was awarded the Women of Distinction Award from the New York State Senate. The same year in June, a section of Lexington Avenue in White Plains was named Isabel Elsa Villar Boulevard in appreciation for all her contributions to White Plains. In October 2015, Isabel received the Westchester/Putnam Boy Scouts Community Service Award. In 2016, Isabel received several awards, in May, she was presented with the Lois Bronz Leadership Award for Vision and Outstanding Service to Children; in September 13, Fidelis Care and New York Liberty Awarded her the Caring New Yorker Award at a presentation in Madison Square Garden. On October 28 she was honored at the 2016 Annual Richard P. Biondi Corporate Recognition Awards Breakfast for her dedication and commitment to helping the Hispanic community in Westchester for the last 45 years. In 2017, on October 26, she received the Harold Fitzpatrick Community Leadership Award from the African American Men of Westchester and the Business Council of Westchester. In 2018 she received two additional awards on March 12, the AJC Westchester/Fairfield Woman of Valor and in May the White Plains Democratic City Committee's 2018 Ted Benjamin Award. In 2019 she was honored by the Womans Club of White Plains with the Women Who Inspire Us Award, and by the Westchester County Board of Legislators for her outstanding contributions and civic activities in the community as the Founding Executive Director of El Centro Hispano.

In June 2004, after 32 years in the Norwalk School System, she took early retirement to continue her commitment to help the growing Hispanic community as Executive Director of El Centro Hispano Inc. until her passing in July 12, 2023 after almost 50 years of hard work, dedication, commitment and unselfish love to her community.

One of her proudest achievements was being selected as one of the inaugural inductees into the White Plains High School Hall of Fame, the YWCA Hall of Fame in 2004, and in December 2012 into the Westchester Senior Citizens Hall of Fame and to have a section of Lexington Ave. in White Plains, New York named Isabel E. Villar Boulevard in recognition of all she did to improve the life of so many Immigrants in White Plains and Westchester County.



About Us

1974 - 2023

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, led by our Founding Executive Director Isabel E. Villar, 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 understood that their first job, *their most important job*, was to **listen**. 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-nine 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. Our programs and services have grown and expanded along with the Hispanic population of the area.

Over the span of five decades El Centro Hispano has undergone many changes, however 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, Spanish classes for American born Hispanic children, 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 community members. However, we were also aware that new needs were arising all the time. White Plains Hospital in collaboration with Calvary Baptist Church, Thomas H. Slater Center, and El Centro Hispano began the Annual Health Fair. Years later, El Centro established an emergency Food Bank for those in need. At the White Plains High School, El Centro Hispano partnered with Pace University, and later on with Manhattanville College to help newly arrived students academically succeed. 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 Executive and Deputy Directors 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 technological change. To succeed in this new modern world, jobseekers needed to demonstrate familiarity with computers and 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 middle school students. To support families as they struggle to adapt to their new lives, we offered workshops in Parenting Development Strategies. The Pace Women's Justice Center assisted clients of El Centro who had been victims of domestic violence or sexual assault.



Leading the Way (2008-2023)

So great was the demand for our computer classes that in 2008 El Centro Hispano built a state-of-the-art Technology Center onsite at our facility. Our computer classes included three basic levels of computer classes, Introduction to Accounting, and QuickBooks. Today, these continue to be our most popular classes.

El Centro's approach to its mission is unique in that we believe that education is crucial for individuals to fulfill their full potential in becoming productive members of our community. As such, we created programs for **all** members of our community. We started three mentoring/tutorial programs: Mi Hermana Mayor and Mi Hermano Mayor programs for sixth grade students, and a Saturday Academy for 7th through 12th grade students. For second and third graders, we created the Summer Literacy Program and for kindergartners and first graders an Early Literacy Program.

Up until 2022, clients of El Centro received assistance in applying to the NYS Health Insurance Marketplace by representatives of the Westchester County Health Department. Clients also receive legal assistance with a variety of issues. More than 120 families take advantage of our free food distribution program twice a month.

In the wake of our move to our new home and thanks to our partnership with BOCES, we now offer **seven** ESL, and **four** GED classes throughout the week and weekend; and **two** Citizenship/ESL classes on Saturdays and Sundays.

The year 2023 proved immensely challenging for El Centro Hispano, as we grappled with the profound loss of our beloved Founding Executive Director, we concurrently navigated the transition to our new premises. This required us to maintain our unwavering commitment to Isabel's tireless efforts.

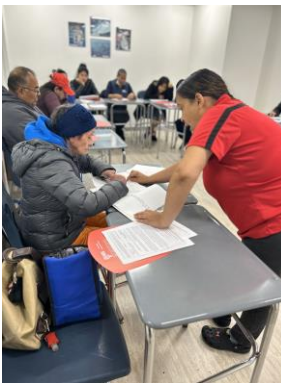
What does the future hold for 2024?

Thanks to you, our dedicated donors, El Centro Hispano has been steadfast in addressing the needs of the Hispanic and immigrant community. With your generosity and our skilled staff's creativity, we've upheld our mission in serving White Plains and Westchester County. While we rely on partnerships and grants for sustainability, it's the ongoing support of all our donors that allows us to fulfill our commitment.

The **50** 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 Cub Scouts troops; educational and informational workshops; bi-monthly food distribution; legal assistance; onsite medical insurance assistance; sponsorship of cultural events; as well as translation services and assistance in finding housing and employment; assistance with Tax ID; onsite consular services; the offering of special training sessions; and the hosting of informative meetings.

Changing Lives by... Keeping Isabel's Legacy Alive!

In heartfelt gratitude for Isabel's invaluable contributions to the Hispanic community of Westchester, we honor her enduring legacy by establishing the following programs.



*Nutrition Classes
with the Cornell
Cooperative
Extension*



Family Game Night



*Onsite Medical Insurance
Assistance from MVP Healthcare*



*Onsite Medical
Insurance
Assistance from
Fidelis Care*



*Special
G.E.D./E.S.L. Class
for Young Adults*



OSHA 30 Training



Regular visits from the Mexican Consulate



Spanish Classes for Heritage Speakers



Beauty Tips Course I



Onsite assistance with issuance of Tax ID (I.T.I.N)



Beauty Tips Course II

Changing Lives Through... Education

Scholarship Program

Since 1980, El Centro has awarded **\$564,050** in scholarship money to **580** deserving high school seniors. In 2023, **5** students benefited from the Scholarship Program. We are proud of our program aiding post-secondary education. Candidates who wish to be considered must have a GPA of 3.0 or higher and a proven track record of their voluntary involvement with El Centro Hispano. Their required essay and involvement at El Centro play an important role in determining how much money the Scholarship Committee allocates to each recipient.

El Centro also offers our high school volunteers small stipends as a thank you for their valuable time and contribution to our educational programs. To date, El Centro Hispano has awarded **327** of our amazing volunteers **\$324,837**.

Previous scholarship recipients have “paid back” their scholarship to El Centro by successfully finishing their post-secondary education, giving back to the organization upon entering the workforce after college, and serving on our Board of Directors.

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

El Centro has been providing adult classes for 49 years. This year, BOCES offered daytime, evening, and weekend ESL classes for adults, along with a weekend Citizenship class and English and Spanish HSE (High School Equivalency) classes throughout the week and weekend. In the first half of 2023, BOCES offered one ESL, HSE, and Citizenship class.

In our new permanent location, El Centro has expanded its educational facilities, adding two classrooms, a multi-purpose room, and a state-of-the-art Technology Center. This allows us to offer more classes throughout the day to accommodate student schedules. Our current offerings include:

SEVEN English as a Second Language classes:

- ❖ *Mornings:* Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
- ❖ *Evenings:* Monday-Thursday, 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- ❖ *Saturdays:* 1:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

THREE High School Equivalency classes:

- ❖ In Spanish: Monday-Thursday, 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- ❖ In English: Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- ❖ Saturdays (Spanish): 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

ONE Combined High School Equivalency and ESL class for youth:

- ❖ Tuesday through Thursday, 3:15 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.

TWO Citizenship Class:

- ❖ Saturdays and Sundays, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Last year, a total of **307** students were enrolled in in-person ESL, GED, and Citizenship classes.

The ENL Academic Success Center at the White Plains High School in Partnership with El Centro Hispano

Through this program, Hispanic students at White Plains High School receive academic support during the school year since its inauguration in 1989. Students are provided with tutoring, information on career opportunities, and direct assistance regarding post-secondary educational options.

In 2023, this program assisted an average of **100 to 115** students. This program received support from the White Plains High School, Westchester County Youth Bureau, MVP Healthcare, and the Lorraine O'Brien Foundation.

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

The mentoring/tutorial program, established in fall 2010, matches sixth-grade Hispanic girls from White Plains Eastview Middle School with Hispanic "older sisters" from local colleges, White Plains, and Scarsdale High Schools. These volunteers mentor their "sisters," promoting academic achievement and college aspirations while honoring their Latino heritage. The program emphasizes parental involvement and operates Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. throughout the school year.

In 2023, this program assisted **40** students. This program was funded by the Lanza Family Foundation and the Westchester County Youth Bureau.

The Lanza My Older Brother - Mi Hermano Mayor Tutorial Program

Building on the success of The Lanza My Older Sister Program, a similar initiative was launched to support Hispanic sixth-grade boys at White Plains Eastview Middle School. Inaugurated in September 2013, the program operates on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. during the school year. Male guest speakers provide guidance on academic and professional success. Sixth-grade Hispanic boys are paired with tutors from local colleges and White Plains High School, assisting them in Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, and English Language Arts.

In 2023, this program assisted **50** students. This program was funded by the Lanza Family Foundation and the Westchester County Youth Bureau.

El Centro Hispano's Summer Literacy Academy

El Centro's Summer Literacy Academy, owes its existence to the generosity of Sister St. John Delany, Associate Professor at Pace University's School of Education and Director of the Center for Literacy Enrichment. This program began in July 2012, providing reading comprehension support and enrichment activities four days a week over two months in the summer. Until summer 2022, the program was held at Post Road Elementary School. Starting in summer 2023, it relocated to El Centro's new permanent location. The program serves kindergarten through third-grade students.

In 2023, this program assisted **64** students. This program was funded by the Westchester County Youth Bureau and St. Faith's House Foundation.

The Perkins Saturday Academy

The Saturday Academy, launched in 2012, offers intensive Saturday tutorials for middle and high school students from White Plains Public Schools. Participants must attend three two-hour sessions weekly for full engagement in subjects. Program success hinges on active involvement from both parents and students, consistently encouraged by the program coordinator. In 2023, this program assisted **148** students.

In 2023 the program was funded by the Perkins Family and Westchester County Youth Bureau.

The Marcia and Richard Cohen Early Literacy Program

The after-school program, initiated in January 2013, was also founded by Sister St. John Delany, Associate Professor at Pace University's School of Education and Director of the Center for Literacy Enrichment. This program offers literacy support two days a week during the school year, from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m., for kindergarten and first-grade children, and two days a week for second and third graders at El Centro Hispano. Its objectives include assisting students with weaker literacy skills, boosting confidence in handling challenging assignments, fostering an enjoyable learning atmosphere, promoting strong writing skills, and ensuring that every student achieves their reading level by the program's end.

In 2023, this program assisted **81** students. The program was funded by St. Faith's Foundation and Richard Cohen.

Bilingual Girl Scouts Troop

This troop, founded in 1974, is the oldest continually running program of El Centro Hispano. At the end of 2023, our Troop had **25** girls enrolled. The Girl Scouts carried out their activities at Post Road School.

Bilingual BSA Pack and Troop

El Centro Hispano's BSA Scouts Troop was founded in 2005 and was active until 2020 under Scoutmaster Jose Torres. In 2018, El Centro named its first Cubmaster, Irma Rivera, who has been leading the Pack until now with **20** participants. They held their scouting activities at Post Road Elementary School.

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. El Centro Hispano also hosts orientation meetings for its own educational programs before they begin each year.

Workshops on Other Issues

Since the 1980's, El Centro has offered workshops on nutrition, major illnesses affecting Hispanics, domestic violence, rights of immigrants, rights of tenants, abuse of women, the stock market, housing trends, safe communities, investments, and safe banking practices.

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. In 2023, the College of Westchester became an internship partner as well.

Changing Lives Through... Technology

Technology Center

Since its inception in May 2009 at our previous location, our Technology Center has been a vital aspect of El Centro's programming, consistently operating five days a week. Following the relocation to our new permanent home, the New Technology Center resumed technology classes in September 2023. Now open seven days a week, it caters to adults and seniors, boasting twenty-five computer stations, one teacher workstation, new TV screens, and high-speed internet access.

Computer Classes for Adults and Seniors

From January to December 2023, El Centro offered **7 in-person** computer classes: **3** Beginners, **2** Intermediate, and **2** Advanced classes. Each class is offered once a week for 3 hours for 16 weeks. A total of **113** students completed the classes offered this year. We are incredibly proud of our students and of their accomplishments.

Culture through Technology Program

The Culture through Technology Program, initiated in 2001 met last year on Saturdays in person at the Eastview Middle School Campus. This program aims to enhance students' reading proficiency and bolster their academic skills through tutoring. Additionally, students engage in discussions on various topics including nutrition, bullying, school environment, parent relationships, and global warming, exploring cultural differences in each theme. Every student develops a project as a culmination of their time in the program.

In 2023, this program assisted **29** students. This program was funded by the Westchester County Youth Bureau.

Study Skills Program

In September 2014, we introduced a study skills improvement program for fifth-grade students, meeting every Saturday from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. between January and June. This program teaches various study strategies and techniques to enhance academic progress, covering topics such as organization, goal setting, reading comprehension, test-taking strategies, and more.

In 2023, this program assisted **26** students. This program was funded by the Westchester County Youth Bureau.

El Centro's Homework Help Center

In 2018, El Centro Hispano initiated a program to address the digital divide among students in the White Plains School District. College and high school tutors offered academic assistance Monday to Friday from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. On average, **12 to 15** students benefit from this program daily, receiving support from high school volunteers. Initially virtual, the program transitioned to onsite sessions in El Centro's Multi-purpose Room in June 2023.

This program was funded by the Westchester County Board of Legislators and the Lorraine O'Brien Foundation.

Changing Lives through... Services

Community Service Program

Since 2001, White Plains High School students have actively contributed to their community and accrued community service hours through El Centro's Community Service Program. Their involvement ranges from tutoring and translation to distributing flyers, assisting with event attendance, food distribution, recruiting, and organizing various activities throughout the year. **236** students registered to perform community service in 2023. We are **extremely grateful** to all our volunteers who are dedicated to our community.

Medical Insurance Assistance

From October 2014 to May 2023, a bilingual representative of the Westchester County Department of Health provided El Centro clients with free assistance in navigating the NYS Marketplace. As of September 2023, representatives of MVP Healthcare and Fidelis Care are onsite at El Centro at least 3 times a week, assisting our community with health insurance and other insurance related issues. A total of **610** clients were assisted in 2023.

Legal Assistance

Since December 2019, Robin Bikkal has been the head of our Legal Assistance Program, providing legal advice on immigration issues every Thursday. A total of **127** clients were assisted in 2023. We extend our most sincere gratitude and appreciation to Robin Bikkal for her services and unwavering support for our community!

Dissemination Services

Since its establishment in 1974, El Centro Hispano has served as a vital link between various agencies and organizations in the City of White Plains and the local Hispanic community, facilitating the communication and dissemination of crucial information and publications. El Centro Hispano's social media platforms and food distribution initiatives remain crucial in promoting community programs, distributing food, and sharing health information from both the City of White Plains and Westchester County.

The Idania Rosa Cancer Support & Families in Need Program

Since 2008, El Centro has supported **73** 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. In 2023, an additional **2** families received assistance from our Families in Need Fund.

The Stephen Michael Sules Food Distribution Program

Since 2013, El Centro has also been distributing fresh bread, fruits, dairy products, meat, frozen foods, and vegetables twice a month throughout the year. Together with Feeding Westchester, we have delivered a total of **168,511** pounds of food to **3,295** families from **January** to **December**.

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, we participated in the following events that celebrated our clients' Hispanic heritage: The Westchester County Hispanic Heritage Day at the Kensico Dam; the Three Kings Day celebration and El Día del Niño at Post Road Elementary School during El Centro's Food Distribution.

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 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 Senator Andrea Stewart Cousins, and the various foundations that support and maintain El Centro Hispano's Core Programs.

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



3,295 TOTAL
FAMILIES SERVED

168,511 OF FOOD
POUNDS DISTRIBUTED

**Please note: the statistics provided above are based on data collected from January to December 2023.*

In addition to the food, El Centro also distributed...



Toys and clothing
for Three Kings Day



Back to school supplies
and book bags



Bicycles and back-
packs for Day of the
Child



Coats

...and so much more!



EL CENTRO HISPANO BY THE NUMBERS

4,817
UNDUPLICATED
CLIENTS*

2,978
NEW CLIENTS*

4,172
EMPLOYMENT
REFERRALS*

3,073
HOUSING
REFERRALS*

1,490
ADDITIONAL
SERVICES*



7,795
TOTAL CLIENTS SERVED*

24,447
TOTAL SERVICES DELIVERED**



*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 2023

January

49th Celebration of the Three Wise Men On January 5, El Centro Hispano celebrated its 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 and clothing for children and adults, adult diapers, socks, and other clothing items. A special thank you to the following for making this such a special event:

- ❖ This year's Three Kings Day, Captain James Spencer, Chief Castelli, and Chris Zaia for graciously accepting to take part in this traditional celebration, and for distributing **220** toys to the children present.
- ❖ To Feeding Westchester and Westchester Reform Temple in Scarsdale for their generous donation of toys.
- ❖ To MVP Healthcare for their generous donation of **157** children's coats, which were distributed to the neediest of our community's children.
- ❖ To the Rotary Club and two other anonymous donors for their amazing donations of coats, shoes, pants, other clothing items, and diapers for adults.
- ❖ Jennifer Puja, Labor Council Director, Westchester/Putnam Central Labor Body AFL-CIO, and White Plains City Council member for her donation of toys
- ❖ To the LCLAA Westchester County Chapter, who distributed over 100 pairs of children's socks

Coats for Newcomers On January 19, El Centro Hispano hosted a special coat distribution for children and adults who were recently arrived to White Plains. Thanks to the donors who made this possible, our new community members were able to obtain a warm coat for the cold winter months.

February

Thank you, MVP and the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) On February 2, MVP and the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement donated a fabulous array of items for our food distribution participants. Members of our community received brand new coats for children and adults, clothing and shoes for adults, toys, and other presents. A warm thank you to these wonderful partners!

Job Fair with Playland Park On Saturday, February 4, Playland Park hosted a virtual job fair for El Centro Hispano's high school students in our Saturday Academy Program. The Human Resources Recruiter Roberta Pompeu gave a total of **35** students a wonderful presentation. As a result, **2** of our program participants were hired to work at Playland Park during the summer months.

Gifts and School Supplies On February 16, our food distribution participants received school supplies and gifts, thanks to the generosity of George Washington Elementary School and the Westchester County Youth Bureau. A special thank you to Doraine Lucia of Humane Nation for the wonderful donation of pet food. A total of **155** families benefitted from this partnership.

March

White Plains High School Financial Aid Workshop On March 14, the White Plains High School Guidance Department sponsored this event in partnership with El Centro Hispano at the White Plains High School. A total of **26** parents and students received first-hand information and help on how to fill out FAFSA applications for the upcoming college semesters.

Successful Celebration of the Pinewood Derby of Pack 2005 of El Centro Hispano Congratulations to Pack 2005 of El Centro Hispano for their wonderful participation in the Pinewood Derby on March 25. A special congrats to their Cubmaster Irma Rivera for her excellent leadership. Our deepest gratitude to Irma, all the Den leaders, and the parents and children for making this celebration so special and fun. Congrats to all the winners!

Celebrating Women’s History Month! For the month of March, students in our Early Literacy, Culture through Technology, and Study Skills programs were tasked with researching women who have made an impact on society. In their research, students learned about the achievements and contributions women have had in the United States and in Latin America.

April

THANK YOU! To the LCLAA Westchester Union El Centro Hispano expresses its sincere gratitude to all members of **LCLAA Westchester Union** for their continued support and generosity towards our community. Thanks to them, **163** families from El Centro’s food distribution benefitted from their amazing donation of children and adult clothing, footwear, toys, and household accessories.

El Centro Hispano Celebrates the Day of the Child On April 20, El Centro Hispano celebrated its 8th Day of the Child, a cultural event dedicated to the children in White Plains during El Centro’s Food Distribution. To celebrate this event, **25 brand new bicycles**, which were donated by 2 anonymous donors, were raffled among the children present. This celebration also benefitted parents and adults, who participated in a raffle for a baby car seat, a convertible crib, baby diapers, and baby formula. A total of **180** families participated in this event.

A special thank you to the following for making this celebration possible:

- ❖ **Feeding Westchester**
- ❖ **White Plains Hospital**
- ❖ **MVP Health Care**
- ❖ **Westchester Medical Center’s SAAVE Program**
- ❖ **And of course, our volunteers!**

May

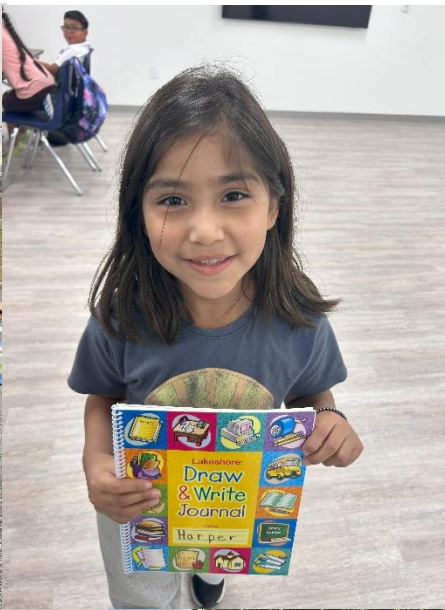
Arrow of Light Ceremony On May 5, **4** members of El Centro Hispano’s Pack 2005 were awarded the Arrow of Light in recognition for their wonderful achievements. The Arrow of Light is the highest Cub Scout award available, and we are incredibly proud of our scouts for such a prestigious recognition. Congratulations to Jadiel G., Heidi P., Michael P., and Ivan C.!

El Centro Hispano Youth join the White Plains Hospital Thanks to the commitment of the White Plains Hospital to the Hispanic community, **3** seniors from the White Plains Hospital will not only receive scholarships from El Centro Hispano, Inc., but have been chosen for their Nurse Apprentice Program. These exceptional young women have been chosen for this program due to their interest in the medical field. Congratulations to Ingrid Vázquez Velázquez, Guadalupe Caporal, and Juliana Contreras!

June

Summer Internship for 10th graders with Glenfarne LLC On June 12, **10** sophomore students from the White Plains High School had their first orientation for a summer internship opportunity with Glenfarne LLC in NYC. For the second year in a row, this partnership ensured an immersive internship where participants were exposed to the financial workings of Wall Street and beyond. Participating students received a scholarship and a brand new laptop computer to aid them through their remaining two years of high school. The goal of the internship is to teach students to use their cultural backgrounds in a new setting for success.

“Art in the Park” with ArtsWestchester On June 13, ArtsWestchester hosted a summer workshop for elementary-level children. On this day, a total of **11** children participated in this program.



July

Steve's Camp at Horizon Farms Offers Free Sleep Away Camp to El Centro's Youth from July to August Steve's Camp offered students from our Educational Programs the opportunity to enjoy 12 days at a sleep-away camp. A total of **16** middle school and high school boys were chosen for this fun summer activity.

Hispanic Heritage Day at the Kensico Dam. El Centro Hispano co-sponsored this event on July 10 with Neighbors Link of Mt. Kisco, the United Community Center of New Rochelle and the Community Resource Center of Mamaroneck and Larchmont. This festival gives non-profit organizations an opportunity to make themselves and their services known to the large number of Hispanics who come to enjoy a day of typical music, food, and international crafts. Police estimated that approximately **4,000** individuals were in attendance.

El Centro Hispano and Glenfarne LLC Internship Program On July 17, our sophomore students from El Centro's Saturday Academy Program began their immersive two-week internship at Glenfarne, LLC. We are so proud of our students for being selected for such a prestigious program. Congrats, class of 2026!

ESL Classes for Recently Arrived Children During the month of July, El Centro Hispano began this special class to help students who were recent arrivals to learn English in a fun learning environment. For 5 weeks, a total of **75** students, ages 6 to 14 registered in this class.

August

The Mexican Consulate comes to El Centro Hispano! From August 1 to August 5, and again from August 29 to September 2, the Consulate General of Mexico in New York set up shop in El Centro Hispano's facilities. For the first time, Mexican community members had access to consular services in White Plains. A total of **330** community members benefitted from this service.

Steve's Camp at Horizon Farms Offers Free Sleep Away Camp to El Centro's Youth from July to August Steve's Camp offered students from our Educational Programs the opportunity to enjoy 12 days at a sleep-away camp. A total of **15** middle school and high school girls were chosen for this fun summer activity.

National Night Out! On August 1, El Centro Hispano participated in National Night Out with the White Plains Police Department. At this event, El Centro Hispano, along with other community organizations gave community members important information about our programs and services.

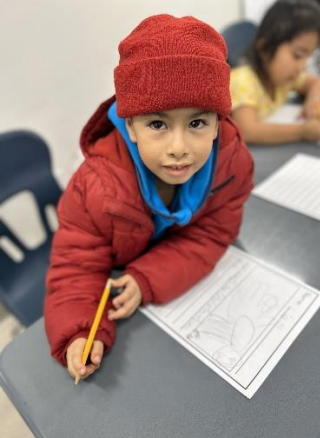
Back to School Supplies Drive and Food Distribution On August 17, El Centro Hispano distributed school supplies during its food distribution. A total of **500** individuals participated in this event. During this event, participating children also received brand new clothing courtesy of Fidelis Care. A special thank you to Lucille and Richard Fontana for their generous donation of school supplies.

Migrant Lunch with the Hitchcock Presbyterian Church On August 27, El Centro Hispano joined the Hitchcock Presbyterian Church congregation in providing translation services to asylum seekers who assisted the community event. During this event, asylum seekers received brand new clothing for adults and children, car seats, high chairs, and food items.

Back to School Backpack Drive at El Centro Hispano On August 28, El Centro Hispano distributed **100** back packs filled with school supplies to school children, courtesy of White Plains Councilwoman, Hon. Jenn Puja. A special thank you to Hon. Jenn Puja for helping these students prepare for their back to school!

September

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley Offers Community Forum at El Centro Hispano On September 6, attorneys from the Legal Services of the Hudson Valley gave a special presentation to our community members regarding housing and family defense and kinship care. A total of **40** community members participated in this informative meeting.



Adult Educational Programs Resume in Person On September 6, El Centro’s ESL, GED, and Citizenship classes began their Fall cycle. For the first time in El Centro’s history, we are offering 7 English as a Second Language classes; 4 GED/HSE classes; and 2 Citizenship classes. Since September, a total of **245** students registered for these classes.

GED/HSE Classes for Youth El Centro Hispano created this special class for recently arrived young adults 17 to 20 years of age who have completed high school in their countries and cannot enroll in local high schools or are too young to enroll in our BOCES GED class for adults aged 21 and up. A total of **17** students registered and actively participated in this class from September to December.

Family Game Night On September 15, El Centro Hispano held its first Family Game Night onsite at El Centro Hispano. This program was created to provide a space where parents and their children could come together and spend some time away from their devices. An average of **7 to 10** families participated in this fun recreational activity.

El Centro Hispano’s Youth Educational Programs Begin On September 18 all of our K-12 educational programs began the new school year. Students in our K through 3rd grade programs have been moved to in person instruction onsite at El Centro Hispano. Our program for 4th and 5th grade students have also been moved onsite at El Centro. Our 6th to 12th grade programs remain at Eastview Middle School and the White Plains High Schools. A total of **243** students are currently enrolled.

Steve’s Camp Annual Gala to Benefit Camp On September 28, Steve’s Camp held their annual gala and invited one of El Centro Hispano’s own to deliver a speech on her experience as a Steve’s Camp scholarship recipient. We are incredibly proud of our student who, after participating as a camper, has been invited to work as a camp counselor for summer 2024.

The White Plains Hospital, Calvary Baptist Church, and El Centro Hispano Host the Annual Health Fair On September 30, 2023, the White Plains Hospital, in conjunction with El Centro Hispano and Calvary Baptist Church, hosted a socially distanced Health Fair. A total of **122** participants benefitted from this free community event. This year, El Centro helped to register **78** women to receive free mammograms and pap smears. The following exams and services were offered:

44 Blood Pressure Screenings	91 Screenings for Breast or Cervical Cancer
35 Dental Exams	46 Flu vaccine inoculations
41 Hearing Exams	12 BMI Screenings
63 Lab Screenings	97 Households benefitted from Fresh Market Food pickup

IMPACT:

- ❖ **10** attendees required follow-up imaging for abnormal mammogram results
- ❖ **2** attendees tested positive for HPV
- ❖ **2** attendees were referred for colonoscopies

October

One White Plains Comprehensive Plan On October 18, officials of the City of White Plains gave a presentation onsite at El Centro, sharing with community members the future for the City of White Plains. During this event, City officials had one on one interactions with community members to ask their opinions about the plan implementation timeline.

College 101 Presentation by the White Plains High School Guidance Department and the College of Westchester On October 26, the White Plains High School Guidance Department and the College of Westchester hosted a meeting at El Centro Hispano for parents with high school seniors. During this presentation, parents of first generation students learned about the college admissions process, the different types of applications, and special education plans. A total of **105** parents participated in this informative meeting.

El Centro Hispano receives the Whitney M. Young Jr. Service Award On October 26, El Centro Hispano received a very special honor on behalf of the Boy Scouts of America. The Whitney M. Young Jr. Service Award recognizes outstanding service by an adult individual or by an organization for demonstrated involvement in the development and implementation of Scouting opportunities for youth from rural or low-income urban backgrounds. We extend a very special and heart felt thank you to troop leader Irma Rivera for nominating El Centro for such a prestigious award.

Bet Am Shalom Synagogue hosts fundraiser for El Centro Hispano On October 29, Bet Am Shalom Synagogue hosted Matisyahu, an American reggae singer, rapper, beatboxer, and alternative rock musician. This Select Action Concert raised funds for Midnight Run and El Centro Hispano. We are very grateful to this partner for their unwavering support of El Centro's mission. Thank you, Bet Am Shalom!

November

Winter Theme Distribution to Food Distribution Participants On November 16, El Centro Hispano staff distributed **90** Soup Jars, which were generously donated by Bet Am Shalom. A special thank you to the Rotary Club for their donation of hat and glove sets for children, and to Lero's Limousine for their donation of children's face masks.

Turkey Distribution with the White Plains Firefighters On November 19, El Centro Hispano referred **50** families to receive a turkey from the Thanksgiving Turkey Takeaway at White Plains Fire Local 274. Thank you so much to our firemen for their service and for giving our families a wonderful gift in time for Thanksgiving!

The Mexican Consulate revisits El Centro Hispano From November 28 to December 2, the Consulate General of Mexico in New York set up shop in El Centro Hispano's facilities. During their third visit to El Centro, a total of **108** community members benefitted from this service.

December

College Financial Aid presentation by the White Plains High School Guidance Department and the College of Westchester On December 7, the White Plains High School Guidance Department, College of Westchester, and Westchester Community College hosted a second meeting at El Centro Hispano for parents with high school seniors. During this presentation, parents of first-generation students learned about the different financial opportunities available to them. A total of **75** parents participated in this informative meeting.

El Centro Hispano Offers Onsite OSHA30 Training For the first time, El Centro Hispano has begun to offer the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) training. The training took place over two weekends on December 9,10, 16, and 17. At the end of the training, a total of **37** individuals received their certificate of the **40** individuals registered.

End of the Year Gifts by Steve's Camp On December 21, our partner Steve's Camp at Horizon Farms partnered with UNI-T Fashion to provide girls who had previously participated in the camp with pajama sets. We are incredibly grateful for such a thoughtful gift!



El Centro Hispano, Inc.

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OFFICE HOURS:
Monday – Friday
12 noon-7 p.m.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS
Sunday – Saturday
9:00 a.m – 9:00 p.m.

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