



## *2017 Annual Report*

# EL CENTRO HISPANO, INC.

## **43<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary**

**1974 - 2017**

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 - 2017 by offering a variety of programs and by presenting bilingual and cross-cultural activities throughout the year.

***Celebrating 43 years of supporting and strengthening the Hispanic community***

# HISTORY OF EL CENTRO HISPANO

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## Supporting and strengthening the Hispanic community for over 43 years

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

# About Us

**1974 - 2017**

In 1973 a number of concerned and compassionate members of the White Plains community met to discuss the growing Hispanic population in White Plains and their urgent need for a variety of social services. After many conversations and numerous meetings, the group, which included the current Executive Director, Isabel E. Villar, formed a charitable organization - El Centro Hispano - dedicated to offering the much-needed services.

Born out of a concerned response to a very real need, El Centro Hispano was established in January 1974 under the auspices of the White Plains Community Action Program in the Chapel Hall at St. Bernard's Roman Catholic Church. It remained part of the Community Action Program until 2000 when it became a separate entity with its own self-governing Board of Directors. El Centro Hispano is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable organization.

The area's Hispanic population has grown exponentially since 1974 and so has the need to provide a wider range of programs and services. Over the years El Centro Hispano has continually adapted to meet the ever expanding needs of its clients and every year since its founding, more and more individuals have received direct services at El Centro Hispano.

The 25 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; free legal assistance and a Westchester County Affordable Care Program; sponsorship of cultural events; as well as translation services and assistance in finding housing and looking for a job.

# Building Bridges Within the Community

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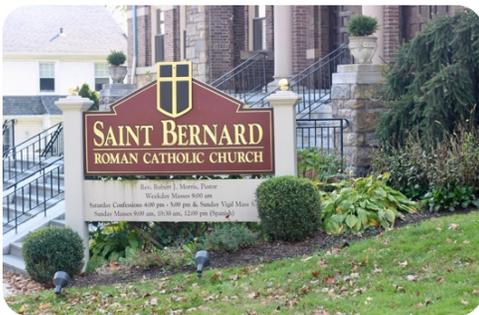
Looking back on our 43 years at El Centro Hispano, we are struck by how incredibly fortunate we are to have so much support from a wide swath of the community, from individuals and organizations, public and private. Many supporters give of their time and talent; many more support us financially whether through grants or substantial contributions or by donating \$10.00 to our scholarship fund. We are extremely grateful for each and every one of you.

We feel especially privileged to count among our supporters a core group of agencies, organizations and government entities that have been partnering with El Centro Hispano almost from the very beginning. They have stood with us over the years. Their expertise, assistance and encouragement have enabled us to provide many more services to the Hispanic Community than we ever could on our own. Quite simply, we could not accomplish our mission without them.

Starting over in a new country can be an overwhelming experience. The US is a land of opportunity, but sometimes finding those opportunities can be a challenge, especially when you don't know the language or the culture. But thanks to the collaboration of these valuable long-term partners, the Hispanic residents of our community are aware that those in authority recognize their concerns and are striving to meet their needs. We at El Centro Hispano are extremely grateful for all they have done and all they continue to do to help us reach out to the Hispanic community of White Plains and Westchester County.

Please take the time to read what these wonderful partners have to say about their experience working with El Centro Hispano. They are our super stars!

## **St. Bernard's Church, The Reverend Father Robert Morris,** **Pastor: (43 years)**



“Over the past 43 years, the Church of St. Bernard has been blessed and enriched by El Centro Hispano’s presence on our parish grounds and their outreach to our parish community. They bring the Gospel to life through the many services and programs they offer to those who come to their door.

Their mission is best described by these sacred words: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me.” (Mt: 25 36-37) May God continue to Bless El Centro Hispano and their countless labors!”



**Food Bank for Westchester, Nicole Dobson, Programs Coordinator: (6 years)**

“El Centro Hispano, a valued partner agency of the Food Bank for Westchester has always gone above and beyond for their clients. We have had the pleasure of hosting Mobile Pantry distributions at the site for the past five years. As recipients of the Michal Winter Award at our 2017 Agency Conference, this agency exudes the charisma to inspire others to make a difference in our community one step at a time.”



**White Plains Public Schools, Joseph L. Ricca, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools: (37 years)**

“The White Plains City School District and El Centro Hispano have enjoyed an amazing, collaborative partnership throughout the years. As a devoted community institution, El Centro Hispano has helped the school district to fulfill its mission to benefit our children and our educational community. There is no doubt that the partnership between the White Plains City School District and El Centro Hispano has helped to enrich the lives of many, many children.”



**White Plains Hospital, Jamie Bocchino, Community Relations & Events Manager: (35 years)**

“For over 35 years, El Centro Hispano’s commitment and support to White Plains Hospital and its community programs has been remarkable. One of the most impressive and significant areas of collaboration is the Annual Neighborhood Health Fair. Since 1977 White Plains Hospital, El Centro Hispano and other community partners have worked together to ensure thousands of people in Westchester receive essential health care services. The commitment that Isabel Villar and Judith Aucar have demonstrated through the decades to helping the underserved community is exemplary. With El Centro Hispano’s dedication and assistance, White Plains Hospital can continue to meet the needs of the community and give them care that they deserve.”

**City of White Plains, Hon. Tom Roach, Mayor: (36 years)**



“White Plains is fortunate to have a strong network of community-serving organizations and a high level of volunteerism and community involvement among our residents. For the past 43 years that community network has included El Centro Hispano. Over that time, and through several administrations, the City and El Centro have built a strong relationship. They are a dynamic organization whose goals have always aligned with those of the City: To make our community better and to meet emerging needs with resourcefulness, compassion and a welcoming attitude. El Centro has also been a steady and reliable partner for the City, an important quality when it comes to getting things done! We are deeply grateful for all of our wonderful community-serving organizations here in White Plains and certainly, El Centro Hispano is at the top of that list.”

**White Plains Police Department, Anne FitzSimmons, Chief of Police: (43 years)**



“For 43 years, the White Plains Department of Public Safety – Police Bureau has always seen El Centro Hispano, Inc. as one of its best friends. One of the hardest things that can face a police officer when dealing with a person in need is to not have a resource to direct that person to. El Centro has given the Department the ability to say, “We know who can help.” There have been so many joint activities over the years, from teaching officers to speak Spanish to aiding in the recruitment of young members of the Hispanic community to become police officers. We have also worked together to aid victims of Domestic Violence by jointly facilitating access to bi-lingual legal assistance. Members of the Police Department have joined the El Centro community in celebrating the Feast of the Three Kings and other holidays. However, the most important benefit has been the ability for the Department to earn the trust of the Hispanic Community. This trust has helped us have a more positive interaction with the El Centro community, especially new arrivals, and to provide the best services possible to make certain the community knows it can count on the White Plains Police Bureau.”



**Southern Westchester BOCES, Claudia Murphy, Senior Director, Adult, Community & Career Services and Maria Guerrero Supervisor Adult and Community Services BOCES (16 years)**

“It continues to be a privilege for Southern Westchester BOCES to partner with the remarkable community-based organization, El Centro Hispano, in providing literacy services to adult learners.

Creating partnerships to serve the community is not new to Isabel Villar. Decades ago, she worked with the Director of Adult Education for the White Plains Public Schools at Rochambeau to establish a partnership to provide ESL classes for the community.

Today El Centro Hispano and Southern Westchester BOCES share the common vision to provide a nurturing environment for community members to seek a better life for themselves and their families through education. As such, they remain committed to providing high quality Adult Literacy programs including *English as a Second Language*, *High School Equivalency Preparation*, and *Citizenship Preparation* at El Centro Hispano. These programs, which offer flexible schedules and are operated by friendly trustworthy and knowledgeable teachers and staff, have grown to become the first steps on the pathway to a better life.

Collaborating together, El Centro Hispano and Southern Westchester BOCES make every effort to make a difference in the lives of the community they serve.”



**Hitchcock Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Pete Jones, Pastor:**

**(11 years)**

“At Hitchcock, we have been honored to work with El Centro Hispano for many years as we seek to build strong relationships with our neighbors, to welcome the immigrants in our midst, and to share in such a caring mission. As is often the case, our congregation is enriched by the relationship far beyond any support that we give, and we remain in humble adoration of those who give so much of themselves to the ethic of loving their neighbor.

# Changing Lives Through... Education

## Scholarship Program

Since 1980, El Centro has awarded **\$428,350** in scholarship money to **515** deserving high school seniors. In 2017, **17** 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.

In addition to the above scholarships, El Centro Hispano has also awarded scholarships to the **14** 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 during the 2015-2016 school year. This is the 6<sup>th</sup> year that the college mentors/tutors have benefitted from these scholarships. El Centro has awarded \$203,000 in scholarship money to 130 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

El Centro has offered English classes for adults every Friday evening for 43 years. Presently, thanks to a partnership with BOCES, we offer at El Centro Hispano's Technology Center a daytime BOCES class for adults from 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon; two combined evening classes every Thursday and Saturday evening from 6:00-10:00 p.m., a morning 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.

We also offer an HSE (High School Equivalency) class in Spanish, Monday - Thursday from 12:00 p.m. to 3 p.m. during the school year. Last year a total of **482** students were enrolled in the day and evening English, HSE, and Citizenship classes.

## Manhattanville College/El Centro Hispano Tutorial Program

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 through June we had an enrollment of **116** students. From September through December and continuing this year, **99** students are currently enrolled. That number will increase as the school year progresses. In 2017 the program was funded by the White Plains Public Schools, Manhattanville College 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 Manhattanville College, Lehman College, Mercy College, Iona College, Manhattan College, Brooklyn College, City College and Westchester Community College 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 as they tutor them in Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, English Language Arts, French and Spanish. Program participants have community/corporate role models. 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.

It is a collaborative program between El Centro Hispano and the White Plains Public Schools. In 2017 it was funded by the Lanza Family Foundation, the Patrino Foundation, Hitchcock Presbyterian Church, and the Westchester County Youth Bureau.

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

Because of the success of The Lanza My Older Sister Program, a similar program was designed to support Hispanic sixth grade boys attending the White Plains Middle School. The program was inaugurated in September 2013 at the Middle School’s Eastview Campus. The program is offered three times a week (Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays) during the school year from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. In 2017 it 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, Stepinac High School 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, French and Spanish.

## **The Lanza 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 English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Spanish, and French.

In 2017, **50** Hispanic seventh through twelfth grade students participated in the tutorial program from January - June. A total of **50** students were enrolled in the program from September - December.

In 2017 the program was funded by Lanza Family Foundation and the Patrino Foundation.

## **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. The Academy is divided into two sessions of two hours each: one session for **25** second graders Mondays and Wednesdays and another session for **25** third graders Tuesdays and Thursdays. 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.

The children in the program were selected because their performance in school and on standardized tests demonstrated a need for support in reading. They came from families where the parents were not able to help them because of their own unfamiliarity with English, because they were working several jobs and did not have time to help their children, or because of lapses in their own education. In 2017 the Academy was funded by the Westchester County Youth Bureau and St. Faith's House Foundation.

## **El Centro Hispano 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.

Several volunteers from El Centro Hispano help with the tutoring. In 2017 it was funded by St. Faith's Foundation and County Executive Robert P. Astorino.

## **Bilingual Girl Scouts Troop**

This troop, founded in 1974, is one of the oldest continually running programs of El Centro Hispano. In 2017, our Girl Scouts troop was composed of **25** Daisies, **22** Brownies, **25** Juniors, **12** Cadettes, and **8** Seniors and **4** Ambassadors for a total of **96** girls. The girls met for two hours every Monday and Tuesday. The Girl Scouts participate in scouting activities and perform countless hours of community service while learning to become better citizens.

## **Bilingual Boy Scouts Troop**

In 2017, this troop, which was established in 2005, included **6** Lions and Tigers, **11** Wolves, **4** Webelos, and **10** Boy Scouts for a total of **31** boys. They meet every Friday for two hours and participate in scouting activities, cultural events, and educational programs. Like the Girl Scouts troop, they also perform countless hours of community service while learning to become better citizens.

## **Educational Workshops**

Since the early 80's, educational workshops have been offered to parents of children in the White Plains Public Schools. Planned together with staff from the White Plains Public Schools, the workshops were held on weekday evenings at the Chapel Hall at St. Bernard's Church. This year parents attended sessions on how to prepare their child for Regents' exams, the importance of the exams, college planning and post-secondary school options, how to apply for financial aid, and the regulations and mandates of the Special Education Program. 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.

## **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.

Representatives of the White Plains Department of Public Safety frequently visit El Centro Hispano's Computer Classes or come to our bi-monthly food distribution to explain the different services and programs available in Westchester for the victims of domestic violence. Also, representatives from the Food Bank for Westchester, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Center for Vein Restoration, Fidelis Care, and Formé Urgent Care made presentations about their services to the food recipients.

## **Internship Program for High School and College Students**

The Internship Program, which began in 1985, has included college students majoring in Spanish from Pace University, Purchase College, Manhattanville College, and Berkeley College. High school students from White Plains High School and Scarsdale High School have also been involved. The program exposes interns to the Spanish language and culture of our clients while working in our social services-oriented environment. Students complete over 100 hours of volunteer service at El Centro and keep a detailed journal of their experience. In 2017 we had 2 interns from Scarsdale Alternative High School.

# **Changing Lives Through... Technology**

## **Technology Center**

Our state-of-the-art Technology Center has been in constant demand since the first class began there in May, 2009. It advances the workforce training goals of the County Executive Robert P. Astorino and we thank him for his steadfast support.

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**

Last year El Centro offered **12** computer classes: **3** Beginner, **1** Beginner/Intermediate, **1** Intermediate, **3** Advanced/Intermediate, **1** Access/ Intermediate, **2** Beginner/Advanced, and **1** Accounting. The **166** students who completed the classes received a certificate at the end of each 64-hour long class that they took and were honored at a special “graduation” ceremony.

## **Culture through Technology Program**

The Culture through Technology Program which began in 2001 met last year on Saturdays at the Technology Center and **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 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.

In September 2014, to continue helping the students who had participated in the program as 4<sup>th</sup> graders and were no longer eligible for the program, we added a new component with the purpose of improving their study skills. The **17** 5th grade students meet every Saturday from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. at El Centro Hispano’s Technology Center throughout the school year. 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 2017 the program was funded by the Westchester County Youth Bureau.

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

## **Community Service Program**

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, 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. **80** students registered to perform community service in 2016.

## **Weekly Bulletin**

Since 1974 El Centro Hispano has published a bilingual page in St. Bernard Church’s weekly bulletin to inform the **700** to **850** Hispanic parishioners who attend Mass each Sunday about all the programs, events, and matters of concern relating to El Centro and the Hispanic community in general.





## **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. **204** clients were assisted from January to December 2017. Some were referred by El Centro Hispano and others by the Westchester County Department of Health. The representative answered clients' questions, helped them to complete application forms, and screened them under the New York State Department of Health Marketplace.

## **Legal Assistance**

For the last two years, a representative from the Hudson Valley Justice Center had been coming to our premises every Friday to offer legal advice and representation to our immigrant clients on legal issues concerning house repairs, rent overcharges, harassment and leases. They had also provided these clients with legal advice and representation when seeking legal status in the United States. In March we were told that due to lack of funding, the agency was going to discontinue these services at El Centro Hispano. After explaining how important their services are to our clients, the representatives of the Hudson Valley Justice Center agreed to extend counseling until May 5 to those who had existing appointments.

Presently, thanks to the generosity of some of our donors and the initiative of our Board of Directors, we have continued to provide these services. We have hired an attorney who comes to El Centro Hispano every Friday for 4 hours from 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. This year we helped **193** clients.

## **Food Distribution**

Last year El Centro distributed **1,550** pounds of bread and bakery products to its clients every Thursday afternoon. This program has been offered since 2011 thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor.

Since 2013, twice a month, El Centro has also been distributing fresh bread, fruits, dairy products, meat, frozen foods, and vegetables to an average of **98** families each time (averaging **380** individuals). Through 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 **127,664 lbs.** of food.

## **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, including the local school system, the White Plains Public Library, White Plains Hospital and all the Spanish language newspapers to communicate and disseminate important information or publications to the local Hispanic population.

## **Cancer Support**

Since 2008, El Centro has supported **48** 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.

## Changing Lives through... Cultural Events

El Centro Hispano's mission statement specifically calls for our agency to help our families to 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. We participated in the following events that celebrated our clients' Hispanic heritage: the Westchester County Hispanic Heritage Day event at the Kensico Dam; the Hispanic Day Festival in White Plains, the Three Wise Men celebration and El Dia del Niño at St. Bernard's Church.

## 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 for El Centro Hispano's Core Programs.

In 2017:

- **2,215 new clients** came to El Centro Hispano seeking some type of assistance.\*
- **5,512 unduplicated clients** were served.\*
- **5,606 job referrals** were made for jobs in White Plains and nearby communities. **943** to new clients and **4,663** to repeat clients.\*
- **6,556 housing referrals** were made for available rooms, apartments, and studios in Westchester. **1,086** to new clients and **5470** to repeat clients. \*
- **642 additional services** were provided by our staff. Staff translated or notarized documents; filled out job/school applications; composed letters; and made phone calls on behalf of our clients to doctors, clinics, lawyers, schools, hospitals, employers, landlords, and social service agencies.\*

***In 2017, El Centro Hispano provided a  
total of 16,440 services. \*\****

\*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

**43rd Celebration of the Three Wise Men.** During this celebration, which took place on January 6, the Three Wise Men, represented by René Rodríguez, Owner of Don Coquí Restaurant, Anthony Ruiz, Vice President of Astoria Bank, Rafael Veras, Sales and Client Experience Manager at Cabanillas and Associates, P.C, distributed more than 300 toys donated by Archbishop Stepinac High School, Bread Winners Organization, Councilwoman Milagros Lecuona, Don Coquí Restaurant, Fidelis Care, Little Angels in China, Rye Presbyterian Church, Scarsdale High School (Spanish Club), The BASH Foundation, Temple Beth El, Toys for Tots, Westchester Hispanic Law Enforcement Association, and White Plains High School. All the attendees were delighted with the joyful music from the musical group from the White Plains Police Department “Los Cuchifritos” directed by Sargent Luis Muñiz.

**Special Presentations about El Centro Hispano’s Services to Catholic Churches in Yonkers.** El Centro Hispano’s staff made presentations to the parishioners of St. Peter’s and St. Joseph’s Catholic Churches in Yonkers. The many services offered by El Centro Hispano were explained to the congregation at three different masses. In addition to the presentations made in church, the staff gave flyers and important contact information to more than 320 parishioners.

## February

**Special Education Workshop for Hispanic Parents.** The White Plains School District Educational Department explained to 95 parents and 15 children what they need to know in order to navigate the Special Education system so as to ensure that their children receive the proper services while in the Educational Department Programs. This informative program took place on February 1, 2017.

**Computer Class Graduation.** 55 adult students who attended computer classes at the Technology Center from October 2016 - February 2017 received diplomas and were congratulated for completing their course work by elected officials and guest dignitaries on February 3. The ceremony was followed by a delicious international dinner.

**Informative Meetings for Parents of Children in The Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor, Mi Hermano Mayor and Saturday Academy Mentoring/ Tutorial Programs.** The purpose of the meetings, which took place on February 17 and 18, was to discuss individually the academic progress of their child with each of the parents in attendance.

## March

**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 9 at El Centro Hispano. The 22 Hispanic families who attended the meeting learned about the opportunities available for their children to attend college or other post-secondary institutions.

**St. Patrick's Day Parade in White Plains.** On March 11, El Centro Hispano's Boy and Girl Scout troops participated in the parade. Accompanied by their leaders and parents, the boys and girls, dressed in beautiful and colorful uniforms, marched through the streets of White Plains.

**Community Forum at St. Bernard's Church.** El Centro Hispano and the White Plains Police Department conducted a community forum to discuss how to best prepare for the President's Executive Order on Immigration, and its effect on the White Plains and Westchester communities. The forum took place on Wednesday, March 22, 2017 in the gym of St. Bernard's Church. Mayor Roach, the Chief of Police Anne Fitzsimmons and the Westchester County Social Services Commissioner assured the 483 attendees that they would always be welcomed and protected in White Plains and Westchester. The Immigration attorneys who attended the forum discussed immigrants' rights, Powers of Attorney for custody of children, what to do in case of deportation, important legal recommendations and other topics of concern.

**Community Forum at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.** El Centro Hispano and the Hudson Valley Community Coalition conducted a community forum to discuss how to best prepare for the President's Executive Order on Immigration, and its effect on the Elmsford and Westchester County communities. The forum took place on Sunday, March 26, 2017 in the gym of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church in Elmsford. The 185 attendees were welcomed by Rev. Father Bob, and Deacon Jorge Montealegre. Isabel E. Villar Executive Director of El Centro Hispano explained all the programs and services offered by this agency, and the representatives from the Hudson Valley Community Coalition explained the rights of the undocumented. After the presentation, the Hon. Larry Delgado met individually with many of the participants and addressed their concerns.

## **April**

**Informative Meeting for Parents of Children in The Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor, Mi Hermano Mayor and Saturday Academy Mentoring/ Tutorial Programs.** The purpose of the meeting, which took place on April 22, was to discuss individually with each of the parents in attendance the academic progress of their child.

**El Centro Hispano Early Literacy Program Graduation.** On April 20 and 22 all participating students and their parents attended this special celebration during which students were presented with Achievement Certificates. Parents were delighted with their child's academic progress, and at the end of the presentation, everyone enjoyed a variety of appetizers provided by the families.

**Second Annual Celebration of El Día del Niño.** This event, held on Saturday, April 22 was sponsored by El Centro Hispano and MVP Health Care with the collaboration of Danny's Cycles, Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson. Boy Scouts of America Westchester - Putnam Council and the White Plains Department of Public Safety. The 355 participants of whom 163 were children enjoyed 42 bicycle raffles, a bicycle obstacle course, and demonstrations from the White Plains Department of Public Safety. Anthony's Coal Fired Pizza donated pizza and chicken wings for all the participants. The parents of the Boy and Girl Scouts also delighted everyone with homemade healthy snacks and sandwiches. CheChe the clown entertained the children with music, contests, the breaking of a piñata and many other fun activities. Rachel Gumina, a Westchester Dog Trainer, trained several dogs brought by the participating children.

**Annual Health Fair.** White Plains Hospital, in collaboration with El Centro Hispano, Slater Center, and Calvary Church, sponsors this health fair every year in order to provide members of the community with a complete check-up at no cost. Informational materials were available in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. 210 African Americans, Haitians and Hispanics registered to benefit from the many medical exams offered at the fair which took place on Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup>.

## May

**Special Presentation on the Importance of Regents' Exams.** On May 17, 35 Hispanic students from White Plains High School and their parents attended a special meeting at El Centro Hispano with science teacher Robert Pettingi who discussed the importance of the Regents' Exams and how to prepare for them.

**Special Presentation to the New York State Assembly and Senate Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force.** On May 22, the Executive Director and the Deputy Director of El Centro Hispano made a presentation on the issues facing the Latino community in White Plains and Westchester County as well as the accomplishments of the agency over the last 43 years. In the afternoon they were both introduced to the New York State Assembly by our New York Legislator David Buchwald.

## June

**Computer Class Graduation.** 59 adult students who attended computer classes at the Technology Center from February 2017 - May 2017 received diplomas from elected officials and guest dignitaries on June 8 and were congratulated for completing their course work. The ceremony was followed by a delicious international dinner.

**Presentation of El Centro Hispano's Scholarships at the White Plains High School Awards Ceremony.** This ceremony took place on June 7 at the high school and 17 Hispanic seniors received a total of \$21,700 in El Centro Hispano scholarships in recognition of their academic achievement and involvement with El Centro Hispano.

**El Centro Hispano's Scholarship Presentation.** On Thursday, June 15th, Cabanillas & Associates, P.C. and El Centro Hispano honored thirty two students and graduates from the White Plains area for high academic achievement and strong community leadership. Seventeen of the recipients were graduates from White Plains High School and fifteen were college students who have served as tutors/mentors in El Centro's Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor/Mi Hermano Mayor (My Older Sister/Older Brother) Tutorial Mentoring Program and Saturday Academy.

In addition to the outstanding students and their families, attendees of the event included El Centro Hispano Board members, staff, volunteers and supporters, and the White Plains School District Director of the World Language and ELL Programs Lisa Panaro. A special appearance was made by [La Mega 97.9's](#) DJ [Tony Sanchez a.k.a. "El Tiburon"](#).

All the attendees enjoyed an unforgettable evening at the Cabanillas & Associates, P.C. Penthouse. This is the third year that Cabanillas & Associates, P.C. have generously donated to El Centro Hispano's Scholarship fund and hosted this magnificent event.

**Closing Ceremony of The Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor, Mi Hermano Mayor and Saturday Academy** On June 10, El Centro recognized the students who participated in The Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor, Mi Hermano Mayor and Saturday Academy Tutorial/Mentoring Programs. Tutors and volunteers were recognized for their service, dedication, and commitment. After the ceremony 255 people enjoyed a delicious international luncheon prepared by all the parents in appreciation for the academic help their children received during the school year.

## July

**Hispanic Heritage Day at the Kensico Dam.** El Centro Hispano co-sponsored this event on July 16 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 **10,000** individuals were in attendance.

**Bronx Zoo Trip.** On July 29, **31** children and **4** adults visited the Bronx Zoo. The children enjoyed a day full of excitement and unforgettable educational experiences. The trip was made possible by funds received from St. Faith's Foundation and by the generosity of the Zoo, which gave the children a substantial discount.

## **August**

**Gift Card Distribution to Purchase School Supplies for Children in El Centro Hispano's Summer Literacy Program for Second and Third Graders.** Thanks to the generosity of Lucille and Richard Fontana, El Centro Hispano was able to distribute 47 Target gift cards with a value of **\$25.00** each to the children in the program. The distribution took place the last day of the program on Thursday, August 17.

**Training and Introductory Meeting for the Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor, Mi Hermano Mayor and Saturday Academy Mentoring/Tutorial Programs.** On August 26 mentors, tutors, and volunteers in these programs received a half day of training. That same day, students and parents were informed about the regulations of the program along with the required commitment and responsibilities.

## **September**

**Celebrating Autumn with El Centro Hispano Dinner Dance** at 7 PM, Saturday, September 9, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in White Plains.

More than 400 distinguished guests including civic leaders and supporters of the non-profit attended the elegant cocktail attire event to celebrate the legal firm of Cabanillas & Associates, P.C. and the healthcare facility of Formé Medical Center and Urgent Care, both based in White Plains.

Accepting the honors on behalf of their firms were Christopher R. Cabanillas, Founder and Principal of Cabanillas & Associates; Gina Cappelli, Founder and President of Formé Medical Center and Urgent Care and Maria M. Trusa, Chief Executive Officer of Formé Medical Center and Urgent Care.

**Isabel E. Villar**, founding Executive Director of El Centro Hispano which was celebrating its 43<sup>rd</sup> anniversary, said that the contributions to the Hispanic community of this year's honorees were recognized for the "positive, long-term impact they have been making in the lives of individuals and families."

She noted that Mr. Cabanillas, a son of Hispanic immigrants, had not only been a strong voice and effective advocate for the immigrant community but also that "he has devoted his energies in supporting El Centro Hispano's signature Scholarship Program awarded each year to promising, hard-working students," adding that "For the past three years, Christopher and his associates have generously hosted our graduation ceremony for high school scholarship and college mentor scholarship recipients. By recognizing these young and aspiring people in such a special and visible way, he is helping to fulfill our mission of encouraging and fostering tomorrow's Latino leaders."

Ms. Villar noted that Formé Medical Center and Urgent Care, under the leadership of Mses. Cappelli and Trusa, was recognized for its long-time commitment to providing affordable, dignified and high-quality healthcare regardless of culture and economic background, especially via the innovative Formé Medical Membership program. Launched in March 2016, for just \$1 per day, it enables non-insured members to have access to quality healthcare providers at the urgent care facility as well as physical therapy services.

“Unquestionably, this is one very valuable and deeply appreciated service for Westchester’s uninsured population,” Ms. Villar explained. “We are very pleased to express our deepest appreciation to Gina, Maria and their team of medical specialists and support staff for helping to address the health and wellness needs of our community.”

The co-chairs of this year’s dinner dance committee were **Kim Nichols, M.D.** and the **Cappelli Family**.

**Tony Sanchez**, celebrity host of New York City radio station La Mega, 97.9, served as the master of ceremonies and entertainment was provided by the Mambo Blue International Band.

Guests had the opportunity to fund the non-profit by participating in a fund-a need live auction.

**Training and Introductory Meeting for the Culture through Technology and Study Skills Program.** On Saturday, September 16, all students of the Culture through Technology and Study Skills Program and their parents attended a special meeting in which they were trained and informed about the objectives and expectations of the programs.

**The Early Literacy Program at Post Road Elementary School and The Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor and Mi Hermano Mayor Mentoring/Tutorial Programs at Eastview Middle School Opening.** The official opening of these programs for Kindergarten, first and sixth grade students took place on Monday, September 18. A Bilingual Social Worker from the White Plains School District made a special presentation to the parents of the children in the Early Literacy Program regarding the importance of parental involvement in their children’s education at an early age.

**Emergency Drive to Help the Victims of the Earthquake in Mexico.** This drive took place September 27-28. More than 2,750 pounds of medical supplies, diapers, bed sheets, pillows, bedcovers, baby food, first aid kits, sleeping bags and other items were collected. The drive was organized by the Boy Scouts of El Centro Hispano, El Centro Hispano, Inc., St. Bernard’s church and La Casa Puebla.

## **October**

**Computer Class Graduation** 52 adult students who attended computer classes at the Technology Center from June 2017 - October, 2017 received diplomas and were congratulated for completing their course work by elected officials and guest dignitaries on October 5. The ceremony was followed by a delicious international dinner.

**White Plains High School Financial Aid Workshop.** The White Plains High School Guidance Department sponsored this event in cooperation with El Centro Hispano. It took place on October 12. 85 parents and students benefitted from this presentation.

**Drive to Help the Victims of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.** This drive took place October 17. More than 4,824 bottles of water and 1,470 pounds of Ensure drinks, protein bars, water purification tablets, bug spray and flashlights with batteries were collected. The drive was organized by the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts of El Centro Hispano, El Centro Hispano, Inc., St. Bernard’s church and the Yonkers Hispanic Cultural Foundation.

**Special Honor for El Centro Hispano's Founding Executive Director.** El Centro Hispano's Founding Director Isabel E. Villar was honored by the African American Men of Westchester Inc. and the Business Council of Westchester at the 27th Annual African America Men of Westchester Brotherhood Breakfast at the Crowne Plaza in White Plains on October 26, 2017. She was presented with the Harold Fitzpatrick Community Leadership Award. Isabel was selected because of her efforts for the last 43 years to foster the spirit of unity among all segments of our county.

## **November**

**The Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor, Mi Hermano Mayor and Saturday Academy Programs' Student Progress Meeting.** On November 21 the Director of Children's Educational Programs and the coordinators of these programs met with each of the parents in attendance to discuss individually the academic progress of their child.

## **December**

**Distribution of Knitted Hats to Students in our Early Literacy Class, Culture through Technology and Study Skills programs.** 62 students received a hat knitted by a volunteer group at Our Lady of Sorrows Church. We are very grateful to them for making our children's holiday celebration so special.

**Distribution of 25 Food Vouchers Thanks to the Generosity of Fidelis Care.** 14 needy families benefitted from two \$15 vouchers distributed on December 7 to help them with their holiday food expenses. The vouchers were raffled to families participating in our Educational Programs and also to senior citizens who participate in El Centro Hispano's food distribution.

\* \* \*

## **Board of Directors**

Cecilia Bikkal, Esq., President  
Nicholas Wolff, Vice President  
Dr. Scott MacDonald, Treasurer  
Lucille Fontana, Esq., Secretary

Luz H. Barrera  
Chris Cabanillas, Esq.  
Hon. Larry Delgado  
Dr. Martha Duval  
Lucille Fontana, Esq.  
Lourdes Lopez Valle  
Dr. Annette Rotter  
Ingrid Ordoñez-Street  
Dr. Annette Rotter  
Jhuriko Then  
Leslie Zane

Robin Bikkal, Esq., President Emeritus  
Maria Amado, Media Specialist

\* \* \*

## **Administrative Staff**

Isabel E. Villar, Founding Executive Director  
H. Judith Aucar, Deputy Director  
Claudia Málaga- Chief of Operations  
Laura Floréz- Director of Children's Educational Programs  
Keyla García - Director of Marketing/Branding and Adult Educational Programs  
Jennifer Abreu - Administrative Assistant  
Daisy Flores- Outreach Worker 1

# Above and Beyond in 2017

This year we give special recognition to several groups and individuals that in 2017 have especially helped us ensure the sustainability of our programs for years to come and the continuance of our mission to serve the Hispanic community.

We are grateful for these donors in 2017:

- The Congregants of Bet Am Shalom Synagogue who through their generous donations have helped us continue to provide the legal services desperately needed by many of our clients.
- An anonymous donor who has been helping us fund the technology center and our core program, and who this year went above and beyond to also contribute to the financing of our legal services for the clients of El Centro Hispano.
- The Hitchcock Presbyterian Church who has helped us fund many of our educational programs.
- An anonymous donor who is providing for scholarships for high school and college students and for the maintenance of our middle school and high school tutorial programs.

## El Centro Hispano's Family Circle

Our most sincere gratitude to the following members of El Centro Hispano Family Circle. Their special contributions of \$500 or more in 2017 has helped us tremendously to carry out our mission

**H. Judith Aucar  
Juan A. Almanza  
Manuela Arnal  
Robert H. Arnow  
Donald B. Baez  
Holly K. Benedict  
Matthew D. Brenner  
Robin Bikkal  
Ana Bolivar  
Betsy and Steven Bush  
Christopher Cabanillas, Esq.  
Aguedo Camacho  
Gina Cappelli  
Louis R. Cappelli  
Susan Cappelli  
Millie and Elizardi Castro  
Kevin Conroy  
Leo J. Corbett  
Catherine and John Cronin  
Anita and Larry Delgado, Esq.  
Martha and Brendan Duval  
Ramón Eduardo  
Linda A. Ellis  
Rosa Fonseca  
Lucille and Richard Fontana, Esq.**

**Rhodee Gine  
Rachel and George Gumina  
Federico Guzman  
Evelyn and Herbert Hadad  
Jeffrey and Ronny Hersch  
Rev. Pete Jones  
Mary Helen Jordan  
Nola Jordan  
Judy and David Katz  
Anthony Lanza  
Louie Lanza  
Frank L. Lanza  
Joel Laitman  
Reyna Lefkowitz  
Dino Liso  
Lourdes Lopez Valle  
Hon. Nita M. Lowey  
Scott B. MacDonald, PHD  
Lisa and John Manuele  
Hon. John Martin  
Katherine Moore  
Anita Nordal  
Esther Joanne Nuhfer  
Lizardo E. Ordoñez  
Alice Perkins**

**Yvonne Pollack  
Jean and Henry Pollak  
Joyce and Paul Rheingold  
Ann Rockefeller Roberts  
Christine and Mark  
Roithmayr  
Annette Rotter PhD  
Mark Stagg  
Richard E. Stout  
Donald W. Stever  
Jhuriko Then  
Tomás Tineo  
Norberto Torres-Otero, MD  
Maria Trusa  
Dorothy and Jonathan Schere  
Richard Veccio  
Yani Vilca  
Isabel E. Villar  
Dr. Mark and Laurie  
Warshofsky  
Nicholas Wolff  
Leslie Zane**

# Acknowledgements

We give thanks to our wonderful volunteers and to all those who have helped us in the past 43 years to accomplish our mission to assist, support, and strengthen the Hispanic community.

Our sincere appreciation also goes out to the following special benefactors and collaborators - private, corporate, and governmental - for their help this past year.

**Alloy Printing**  
**Boy Scouts of Westchester and Putnam**  
**Cablevision**  
**Calvary Baptist Church**  
**Center for Vein Restoration**  
**Fidelis Care**  
**Food Bank for Westchester**  
**Formé Medical Center and Urgent Care**  
**Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson**  
**Giving Circle of Westchester**  
**Hitchcock Presbyterian Church**  
**Honorable Amy R. Paulin**  
**Honorable George Latimer**  
**Honorable Robert P. Astorino, Westchester**  
**County Executive**  
**Honorable Thomas Roach, Mayor of the**  
**City of White Plains**  
**Katherine and David Moore Foundation**  
**Key Bank Foundation**  
**LPL Financial**  
**Lanza Family Foundation**  
**Manhattanville College**  
**MVP/Hudson Health Plan**  
**Our Lady of Sorrows' Gladhatters**  
**Kevin Plunkett, Westchester Deputy**  
**County Executive**

**Patrina Foundation**  
**People's United Community Foundation**  
**Play Group Theatre**  
**Post Road Elementary School,**  
**Rye Presbyterian Church**  
**Scarsdale High School Spanish Club**  
**Scarsdale Woman's Club**  
**St. Bernard's Catholic Church, White Plains**  
**Thomas H. Slater Community Center**  
**Toy for Tots**  
**Westchester Community Foundation**  
**Westchester County Office for Women**  
**Westchester County Youth Bureau**  
**White Plains Planning Department**  
**White Plains School System,**  
**White Plains Middle School – Eastview**  
**Campus**  
**White Plains High School**  
**White Plains Hospital**  
**White Plains Woman's Club**

**We sincerely apologize to any individual or group of individuals whom we have inadvertently omitted from this list.**



## El Centro Hispano, Inc.

346 South Lexington Avenue  
Isabel Elsa Villar Boulevard  
White Plains, New York 10606  
914.289.0500

Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 12 noon-7 p.m.

### Educational Programs at the Technology Center

Mondays and Wednesdays -- 6:30 -8:30 p.m.

Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays - 6:00 - 10:00 p.m.

Saturdays - 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Sundays - 8:00 a.m. - 12 p.m.

[elcentrohispano1@gmail.com](mailto:elcentrohispano1@gmail.com)

[www.elcentrohispano.org](http://www.elcentrohispano.org)



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