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Table of Contents

4	Message from the Chairwoman of the Board
6	Message from the President and CEO
8	Expanding Vital Services to Meet a Growing Need
12	Empowering Latino Communities Through Leadership Training
16	A Legacy of Uplifting Growing Communities
20	Reaching Out to Help Opportunity Youth
24	Leading with Power in Our Nation's Capital
27	SER Negocios
35	National Farmworker Jobs Program
36	SER Early Head Start
38	Senior Community Service Employment Program
40	Cisco Networking Academy
42	AWS re/Start at SER National
45	Profile: Emma Treviño, Vice President of Program Operations
46	SER Welcomes New Leadership
52	SER Network Directory



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Message from the Chairwoman of the Board



Jane C. Garcia
Chairwoman
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Dear Fellow SER Leaders and Friends,
I am deeply honored and incredibly proud as your Board Chair to welcome you to this year's SER National Conference. You are indeed an extraordinary group of leaders and sponsor partners doing critical work in your communities and achieving exceptional results because of your dedication and commitment.

Leaders are tested during the most crucial times in our history. This year's conference program is designed to help you build upon your successes through insightful presentations and timely, relevant information that will provide you with additional tools for the exciting work ahead.

"Pathways to Progress," our conference theme, is about developing new strategies, innovating new solutions, and creating even more effective daily practices. These actions can and will ensure not simply confronting challenges but overcoming them and excelling even in the face of constantly changing conditions. It has been my privilege to witness men's and women's resilience during my tenure, such as yourself. You are confronting seemingly insurmountable odds, and with your teams, you have forged new alliances in your communities and developed never-before-seen ways to accomplish your missions.

Undoubtedly, the days and months ahead will continue to

present uncertain conditions, given the events unfolding daily before us that have an unprecedented impact on our lives economically, politically, and socially. However, I am convinced that as the SER Network of Affiliates, our course is clear, and our resolve to serve is unshakeable. Also, with the commitment of our corporate partners and staff, I am confident we will rise to meet the challenges and excel.

The affiliates of SER Jobs for Progress are hard at work from coast to coast, border to border, and Puerto Rico. In diverse neighborhoods from inner cities to rural fields, one-on-one encounters, or in groups, our teams make positive change happen. You are transforming lives and making our country more robust, and we are privileged to be part of this great family.

May we rise as one and rejoice in the victories of all as we look to the future, and may you each continue to be blessed.

Sincerely,
Jane C. Garcia



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Message from the President and CEO



Ignacio Salazar
President & CEO
SER Jobs for Progress
National, Inc.

Dear SER Family and Guests, I want to welcome you and extend a warm personal greeting on behalf of our entire staff, board of directors, and sponsors at SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc. to the 58th Annual SER Conference. This historic event marks our first national gathering as we emerge from a very challenging period during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are very excited that you are here leading the way forward.

Our conference theme, "Pathways to Progress," is especially appropriate because this message embraces the very mission and purpose of the SER Network of Affiliates. You are the influencers, champions, and advocates whose very presence daily at the more than 200 sites throughout the United States and Puerto Rico proves we are here, ready, and eager to continue our work. The greatest testament to the ongoing worth of our programs and services are the more than one-million stakeholders we touch and serve every year. Their needs, aspirations, and reliance on SER Jobs for progress are more significant than ever, and we are committed to delivering on our promise to each of them.

As importantly, the work of SER Jobs for Progress is a collaboration with many of the nation's most recognized corporations and the dedicated corporate citizens representing them. I cannot fully express our gratitude and deep appreciation for their continued faith in our mission and the unwavering promise to fulfill our purpose.

You have our individual and team commitment to work diligently daily and keep earning your trust.

This year's program highlights many of our vital and most enduring programs, including SCSEP and Early Head Start. Also, rapidly expanding enhanced programs like the National Farmworker Jobs Program, SER MUJER, and SER Negocios. Plus, leading-edge new educational opportunities, including the Amazon Web Services (AWS re/Start at SER National)--Cloud Practitioner Certification, and the SER Cisco Networking Academy--Cisco Certified Network Associate, both gateways into the new era of information technology to prepare the next generation of America's workforce.

Yes, there is a great deal to celebrate as we come together, and we look forward to listening to regional and local affiliate achievements. So too, success stories with our many corporate sponsors as true partners in our daily endeavors. Together, these are the very backbone of what makes SER Jobs for Progress, one of our nation's most respected and influential workforce development organizations comprised of successful affiliates led by each of you.

Enjoy your time here and may we together create and expand the pathways to progress for an even stronger and brighter future. United and with a shared vision, may we salute and applaud our successes!

Sincerely,
Ignacio Salazar



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Expanding Vital Services to Meet a Growing Need

SER California Extends Statewide From Fresno

Jesús “Chuy” Padrón recalls the day vividly when he decided that serving the needs of the nation’s largest Latino population would force him to make some critical changes for the SER agency to survive and grow. Now, decades later, he reflects on how that one decision proved to be the single, most critical move that catapulted SER Jobs for Progress – San Joaquin Valley (SER SJV) into becoming one of the country’s most diversified social services, training, and workforce development agencies.

“We had gone through a tough fight for local funding, and my VP and I were sitting in my office, and I remember thinking, we cannot ever be in this position again, to be in a dogfight for a little bit of money. It was clear to me what I had to do. Look, I said, I’m a builder, so why not go into building apartments that are affordable for our Latino farmworker families? And that’s what we settled on doing; the decision was made in 1985 and the implementation in 1986. We embarked on the road to building and managing affordable housing projects to make sure we were never at the

whim of someone else for our financial survival or success. I thank God we did this when we did because it would be challenging now and would require even greater access to capital,” says Padrón.

Today, Padrón heads one of the country’s most expansive SER Affiliates. His operating site network sprawls from Southern California’s agriculturally rich Imperial Valley to the state’s verdant Central Coast region of Santa Maria and Guadalupe inland to Fresno and the Central Valley. It reaches far north into rural areas above San Francisco and Sacramento.

“Looking back from the multi-million operation we are today, some people might think it was easy, but it wasn’t easy,” says Padrón. “There was one small contract at the beginning that we needed to be able to continue offering the services our agency had. It was weatherizing homes, and I started with three crews of three men each, that’s all. We went out every day helping people protect their homes against severe weather; the process is called weatherization. In the first year, we managed to make almost \$600,000, and that was

the money we used to buy the property where we built the first apartments. The contract was not that profitable, but for us, it was a Godsend, a way for us to continue the process,” adds Padrón.

SER SJV has created a model that other non-profit agencies have since replicated. Padrón describes it as more intelligent use of the organization’s assets to leverage money to grow its financial capacity and protect its future through land acquisition that it can use, like the development of affordable housing. He adds that funds have a way of “disappearing” into operational overhead and other non-investment uses without that type of vision and proactive action.

“I am blessed that there were people who believed in me and our mission because they saw the need and our commitment to serving our communities. Today, I am most comfortable among the people who agree on service. I will go to bat for them because we share a passion and dedication to our work for others. That is not to say I cannot succeed in other, more formal settings, but I prefer being with the people on the front line in our organization. I stopped wearing coats and ties in 1988 because



**“Our Two Purposes In Life Are
to Worship God and Work.”**

– Jesús “Chuy” Padrón, President/CEO, SER Jobs for Progress
– San Joaquin Valley, Fresno, California

that is not who I am. Instead, I enjoy wearing guayaberas, and people who know me, tell others when you see the guy at our SER conference wearing the guayabera, and most likely the white one, that is going to be Chuy Padrón," he adds with a glint of pride.

Padrón is harnessing technology to advance SER SJV in the future. Today, Padrón has aligned his entire statewide agency from one central location into a cohesive, real-time connected team that can identify, respond to, and measure services with greater efficiencies and results. The new-tech programs are being piloted with SER SJV, as a beta-test organization exceeding even the initial predictions.

"In 1985, I could envision reaching this point in our agency's existence, but it doesn't come in ten, twenty, or even thirty years, but what a journey this has been. I will be 72 years old soon, and I still have new projects on the drawing boards, including some exciting new affordable housing for farmworkers. Maybe

when I reach 80 years old or cannot move around anymore, I will stop and share whatever experience I can with the next generation. For now, I say to others, just put your head down and get to work. Success will come," adds Padrón.

Padrón admits he went through a period in the organization's growth when he spent most of his waking hours working at the agency. In time, he realized that any successful CEO must be balanced in work and personal life. Thankfully, his use of technology now allows him to monitor and oversee the organization from even remote, off-site locations without missing a beat.

"I like to tell my team that if you have a family matter or emergency that is happening, go take care of that because there is nothing more important," says Padrón. "Work will always be here but go take care of your family, then come back and focus on the work we have to do. This makes for better workers and a stronger team in the long-term, and this is what we all want."

SER SJV today operates significant projects which are growing exponentially, including the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP), High-School Equivalency Program (HEP), the Arts and Technology, and of course the Service to Children with Disabilities and their parents. The COVID pandemic has created challenges and opportunities, says Padrón; to re-evaluate and re-focus on the true mission of his agency, which he says, is to continue with a sense of deliberate urgency to help as many people as possible.

"The wisest man who ever lived said, after examining all the knowledge of his day, I have come to one conclusion. Our purpose is to worship God, and the second is to work. Who am I to question that wisdom? I am going to continue serving as long as I can. After all, the rewards of serving others are among the greatest we can have in life on this earth," says Padrón.



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SER National Affiliates

Empowering Latino Communities Through Leadership Training

El Sol Shines Bright in Southern California

For 20-years, Alex Fajardo and El Sol Neighborhood Center (El Sol) have been quietly working every day, transforming society one person at a time. The SER National Network Affiliate is located in San Bernardino, California. It trains men and women passionate and committed about serving their communities into becoming Influencers, energized, powerful promotoras, and promotores. The two Spanish words are gender-specific translations for the word Community Health Workers. Yet, the catch-all generic English term does not do justice to the impact being seen from the work of these highly skilled community leaders, most of whom are women. Nor does it adequately convey the respect and influence their title commands when a promotora trained by El Sol Promotores Training Center arrives and helps lead the community in tackling a local issue. To mistake them for people simply passing out flyers at corners or door-to-door is like comparing ordinary ketchup to pico de gallo spiked with habanero chiles and thinking they are the same because they both contain tomatoes.

"We are recruiting people from their community to lead from where they live," says Fajardo. "These are men and women in the neighborhoods who speak the language of their area. Also, they have the heart, passion, and spirit to serve. They are effective because they know the challenges firsthand of their community, so no one can deny that when they speak. For example, a woman may be going through one of our domestic violence programs, and maybe she has gone through this herself. So,

we try to recruit her to become a promotora who can help reach and empower other women going through that experience to seek and accept help to free themselves.

Bottom line, our promotores face and live the same conditions and convey that truth when they are face-to-face with a politician or policymaker. El Sol develops the skills in promotoras to do the work of transformation. We are making leaders from the community who can create their own changes in their neighborhoods. The victory is when the community does not depend solely on outside services to improve their lives. They are sustainable when they find their solutions also," adds Fajardo.

Another reason why El Sol's approach to its mission is successful is because the template of local promotoras leading transformation can be applied to any issue that residents are facing in their community. Today, areas with significant Latino populations continue to confront chronic challenges in health and education to environmental needs. These can be as simple yet critical as even access to safe pathways to and from school or clean drinking water.

This was the lesson learned in Adelanto, California, located in the high desert, an hour-and-a-half northeast of Los Angeles. The city of 32,000 people, two-thirds Latino, is one example of a community where El Sol promotoras are making a significant difference. Nearly one-in-three residents live in poverty, and El Sol initially went into Adelanto to help families with basic programs, including mental health services. Then, they made a discovery that changed their focus entirely.

"Adelanto is a unique city in

the region," says Fajardo. "For example, there's one part that has a lot of money, but then there are other parts of the town that have mobile homes, and the people who live there do not even have running water or their basic needs being met. When our promotoras were invited in, they got with the community, and we were able to, first of all, adopt safety as a priority issue," he adds.

The Adelanto residents participating with El Sol went through a process like mapping out the branches of a tree themselves. This step

"Lasting Transformation is About Changing Society to Serve our Communities."

- Alex Fajardo, Executive Director, El Sol Neighborhood Center, San Bernardino, CA



helps stakeholders see what action is needed to make the necessary changes happen in their community. The people said they wanted to start with safety for their children. The promotoras learned that many of Adelanto's boys and girls did not have sidewalks to and from school. Also, they found out the youngsters had to take a shortcut when it rained, but the shortcut was not safe. So, the parents advocated for change, and they mobilized to begin getting sidewalks built. Now, they are tackling the water issue.

Fajardo recalls when El Sol first visited Adelanto. "When we arrived, the promotoras were thinking about doing things like a class on mental health. Then we heard the people asking how we can talk about mental health or have peace of mind when we are worried about our little ones'? We are not going to be healthy until the needs of all the residents are heard by city leaders. To them, sidewalks may be something they take for granted where they live, but to our families and us, these can make a big difference in our area. So that is where the promotoras started working, and things are happening now because the people are the ones who dictate what they want to do. Our role is to help teach them how, so they learn and become their leaders." Says Fajardo.

EL SOL has been recognized for its COVID-19 community outreach and education by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and Chief Medical Advisor to the President. El Sol is also very active in health education on chronic conditions like asthma or diabetes. Also, developing and providing data to shed light on the underlying

causes of these diseases in the Latino community to attack the root causes, not just their effects.

Fajardo says what keeps him motivated and working with El Sol is the reward of witnessing the transformation of ordinary, working men and women who go through the transformational training find their voice as leaders. "I recall vividly one man who works as a landscaper to care for his family between 8 AM and 5 PM, but after that, he is meeting with the Mayor and other leaders who seek out his counsel and leadership in their community. Seeing that promoter seated at the table where decisions are made inspires and keeps me going. Hopefully, having El Sol Neighborhood Center recognized and receiving this award will encourage founders to look at our model and want to support our work."





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A Legacy of Uplifting Growing Communities

LaAmistad Is Raising Families in Greater Atlanta

What began in 2001 with one person asking, what can we do to help students after school in Atlanta, Georgia, has flourished over the past two decades into LaAmistad Inc. Amistad is Spanish for friendship. In this case, LaAmistad is the name of a thriving, growing organization whose hallmark is finding a way to reach every member of the families they serve. We can only wonder if Bill Maness, Director of The Gym at Peachtree Presbyterian where it all started, could have imagined that his dream would one day grow to become after-school programs at twelve different locations. Or that the parents of the community's children would eventually attend multiple locations to learn English as their second language, even as the demand for both programs is more significant than ever.

The true secret to LaAmistad's success over the years in serving thousands of families is its team members' commitment to genuinely caring about every person they touch and striving for excellence. The dedication is across the board and includes LaAmistad's staff and community partners. Also, program funders not only help sustain the work financially. They join in by donating their time personally and rolling up their sleeves to help as volunteers. Funders say the

experience gained through these mentoring opportunities has been the most beneficial. They can see firsthand and understand how their financial assistance makes a tangible change in people's lives and the return on their investment is beyond their wildest expectations.

"The knowledge that a volunteer cares about a student's success inspires gains in their academic performance, language fluency, and overall quality of life," says Cat McAfee, Executive Director. "Proof of this is stories like that of Vanessa C., who initially attended LaAmistad's after-school program as a first-grader. Her parents migrated to the United States from Mexico, and they made sure that Vanessa continued in our programs through high school. They also enrolled Vanessa's siblings, and then Mom took our ESL course and graduated successfully. After Vanessa earns her college degree, we dream that she might come back and become a part of LaAmistad's team. Now that would be exciting and a great example for other young people and families," adds McAfee.

A recent major demonstration of LaAmistad's keen understanding of its critical role for the Latino communities the organization serves happened when COVID19 led to massive

school closures. "This meant that many of the students who depend on school lunches would have missed out on one or more of the most critical meals of their day," recalls McAfee. "We adapted our school transportation bus into a meal delivery vehicle to reach and nourish our school-age students. During the past two years, we delivered more than 40,000 meals. This is a major achievement, and I am grateful to everyone who made this possible," adds McAfee.

Atlanta is projected to continue being one of the nation's fastest-growing metropolitan regions with a robust Latino presence in virtually every sector of its economy. LaAmistad is poised to grow with this population, which is younger, more mobile, and eager to gain an education, plus a good-paying job that provides for its families and ensures their future. Traditional county and local government agencies realize that reaching and serving this population segment presents both a challenge and an opportunity. Community education programs on such issues as preventative health care can help stem the need for more expensive acute care. Also, housing assistance and nutrition programs work best when coordinated with community agencies on the ground where the need is



**"Serving the Latino Community
Means Reaching the Entire Family."**

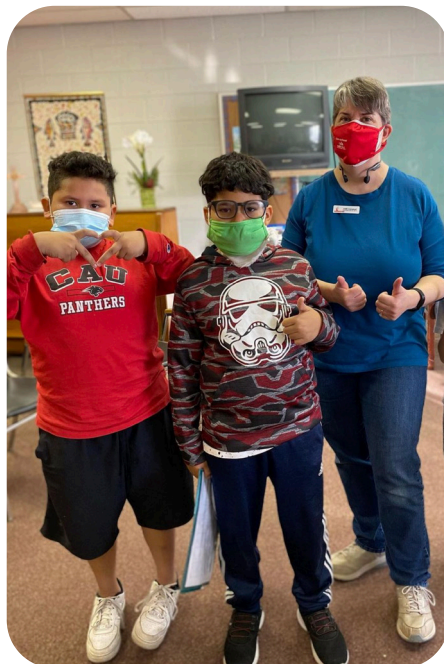
- Catrina DaCosta McAfee, Executive director, LaAmistad, Inc.

greatest. Local safety nets now include faith-based, secular, and business partners working together to forge solutions that address specific needs systematically.

LaAmistad has made tremendous strides by meeting stakeholders where they live and work. Sometimes the initial outreach and contact may be at a neighborhood church or social services distribution center. "The first step is building trust with new families, many of whom have heard of LaAmistad but may not know how to enroll or apply," says Brendon Jaramillo, LaAmistad's Communications Manager. "We are moving now into being very laser-focused with our messaging so that we can locate, identify and engage with multi-generational Latino households and be able to provide a value proposition for each member to become involved. Our access to technology enables us to geo-fence a specific five-mile radius and target whom we reach and what we say. By enabling our leadership and team to analyze big data collaboratively, we are able to leverage all of our resources and maximize our quality," adds Jaramillo.

At the same time, LaAmistad is constantly taking the pulse of critical people in its service family. Jaramillo continues by saying, "I think one of the most vital activities we invest in involves constantly surveying students, volunteers, and staff asking how we can improve programs? Also, how can we make our communication processes smoother, better, and continuous? As importantly, LaAmistad is always interested in being on the leading edge of education, so we are always working to improve the learning materials we utilize at every level." McAfee affirms that strategy and sees the opportunity to expand efficiently

and effectively as LaAmistad increases its move to tap into new technological pools of knowledge. "Our decision-making remains data-driven, as we utilize the most current research and practices to inform the services we provide. We see both the need and the space to provide services beyond Metro Atlanta into other regions of Georgia and even beyond. We will examine each opportunity on its merit to see whether it aligns with our vision for the future to deliver educational services through a holistic approach. LaAmistad wants to understand and respond to all those factors that impact both school-age and adult students. Another cornerstone of LaAmistad we pledge to continue supporting is being an organization that welcomes and fully embraces all who wish to volunteer and be active agents of change for the better in their communities. Progress takes place incrementally, and every volunteer helps along the way. In this way, we can be true to the mission Bill Maness envisioned from the beginning and meet our commitment today to our wonderful sponsors and program partners who help sustain this work," she adds.







SER National Affiliates

Reaching Out to Help Opportunity Youth

CSS Forges a Success Story in Chicago

It takes authentic passion and compassion about serving communities to make transformative change in places like Little Village, a popular neighborhood located in the heart of Chicago, Illinois. Its more than 90,000 residents, primarily immigrants, is where Central States SER (CSS) is making a dramatic impact, especially among opportunity youth ages 16-24. The term is used in describing young men and women who dropped out of school, are unemployed or underemployed, and need individualized wrap-around services to prepare for today's workforce. Chicago's gang activity is massive and very prevalent in Little Village, inevitably touching the lives of every resident. CSS youth staff are intimately knowledgeable in serving this particular population. Indeed, this is the setting where the team at CSS makes it their life's mission to see beyond the person sitting in front of them today and instead envision how SER can transform their futures.

"Their work revolves around the people facing challenging situations every day," says Manuela M. Zarate, Vice-President and Chief Operations Officer of SER Metro Detroit (SMD). "We all realize that we share many of the same beliefs and commitments to serving our community. For us, making an impact in the neighborhoods is being right where the people are; being where they live and work, so they see you every day, not in remote executive offices on State Street or Michigan Avenue in Downtown Chicago. CSS is embedded in communities like Little Village or reaching across Greater Chicago, Cook and Kane Counties, and the State of Illinois at large. CSS and SERCO in Illinois offer a wide range of services for youth and adults of all ages. These include after-school tutoring and mentoring, GED, vocational and pre-apprenticeship training; in partnership with Apple, we offer Coding and STEM, among many other services. SERCO in Illinois is the South Suburban American Jobs Center operator in North Riverside, IL, and a training partner of the Kane County Workforce Board in Aurora, IL. We are essentially among the people we serve," she adds. For Zarate, that same clear focus of purpose continues to be a hallmark of her career and understanding of what it means to help an individual who walks into a SER site today. "I say to our staff, always look at the

person that's coming in for a service with care and respect. That's the only way you're going to be able to assess their needs – by caring truly. You have to make sure that we not only look at the immediate needs, but how can we open additional opportunities for that person? The answer may come, not just through the person sitting in front of you; rather, it may be that we need to help the family to address other, underlying challenges they are facing," she adds.

The Little Village team at SER is focused on outreach and education within one of America's most diverse inner-city neighborhoods in the Midwest. Team members attribute the successes of CSS to understanding firsthand what residents need and the services that can help address those needs. "As servant leaders and role models, we have to remember who our customers

"At SER, We Are All Innovators and Caring Is at the Heart of Our Work."

–Manuela M. Zarate, Vice-President & Chief Operations Officer – Central States SER, Chicago, Illinois

are and what they expect from us. This purpose is why we are here and entrusted with public funding. This work is how we meet our responsibilities," says Zarate.

Zarate says CSS and SERCO in Illinois have achieved respect for consistently meeting and exceeding the benchmarks of program performance. Its stakeholder partners include the State of Illinois, the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, the City of Chicago, the Illinois Department of Human Services, the Kane County Workforce Board, and

many other governmental agencies, foundations, and philanthropists. "We have to be accountable to them while at the same time remembering that the most important measures of our work are the results that we see in the people we serve," she adds.

Zarate cites one example of that holistic approach to community service that now includes offering more than 100 different social service programs and services across a broad spectrum. "We have one particular program that transformed our service delivery model through a grant we received back in 2008 to start the Center for Working Families.

The project is a financial education program that acts as an umbrella incorporating financial literacy and education, income supports, and workforce development into every service and program we offer. These



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services are available to the community at large. In this program, we take a deep dive into the participant's financial needs and explore additional economic supports they might need. We then qualify our participants for the most suitable services: financial aid, public support, and a comprehensive financial education package offered in partnership with partner financial institutions while working towards their self-sufficiency. The goal is to help them through transformative change that breaks a socio-economic cycle so they can become self-sustaining long-term."

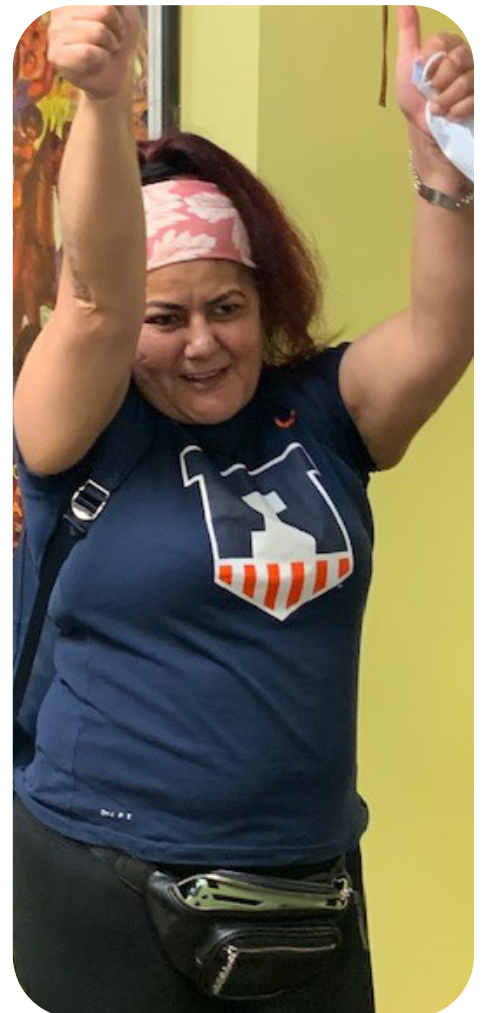
Zarate and the CSS leadership team share another passion readily apparent to anyone who speaks with them. They see their role in their work as planting seeds of social change for future generations. "In Chicago, I

know we are making an impact beginning with staff," says Zarate. "Many of them are former program participants and come out of challenging backgrounds themselves, so they know in very personal terms the kind of help our customers are desperately seeking, and they do everything they can to reach out and take the hand that the system has often slapped away. We may well be the first and only people who have ever said to that young man or woman, I believe in you, or I know you can do it. Those simple gestures can mean so much to people, and we never know when we will have that opportunity."

Manuela M. Zarate and the CSS leadership team exemplify the true spirit of people serving people. Zarate's journey from a young student applicant to eventually becoming one of the organization's top leaders

results from answering a personal calling of caring for others. "At SER, we are all innovators, so we continuously reinvent ourselves. Together, we will continue to lead SER to be consistently present and relevant to the needs of those we serve. So, even if the entire world was employed and well trained, we can be sure to find a way to provide needed services. This is because people's lives are always changing, and human nature is to want to improve and advance," concludes Zarate.

With the dedication of that caliber, there is no doubt that Little Village and Greater Chicago will continue to benefit from the services of Central States SER.



Here's to
endless optimism,
— ¡Brindemos! —



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Leading with Power in Our Nation's Capital

Mission of Love Opens the Way Through Service

Every successful organization has a driving force behind it. At Mission of Love Charities located in Capitol Heights, Maryland, just minutes from the nation's center of political power, that catalyst is Deborah "Deb" Martinez. Yet, this seasoned community advocate known by a who's who of Washington leaders quickly credits her parents when asked about the source of her positivity and energy. She adds that they instilled in her pride in her identity, a fearlessness in life, and the constant determination to make every moment count.

"Each of us has something good to contribute, and I believe that when we find that purpose in our lives, we have the duty and the joy to share it with the people we can help through our actions, our words, and our support," says Martinez. "In my case, my mother worked hard and sacrificed for her children so that we could go to college. She held several government jobs so we could attend Howard University tuition-free. She told us if you want to go somewhere else, you pay for it, but I am who I am today, in part, because I attended Howard and appreciate what my mother did for us."

That upbringing has shaped Martinez's vision for the work she does leading Mission of Love Charities. The organization offers various services and delivers vital everyday social assistance to the community throughout the immediate region. From rent and utility assistance to job training and workforce development, Martinez says the role of the Mission of Love Charities is to help people in practical ways that recognize the challenges they are facing.

"During the pandemic, our students cannot always access the internet, which impacts them disproportionately," says Martinez. "So, if helping a family with their internet service is needed, we try to be there to ensure that the children

can stay connected to their educational lifeline. It is that real and immediate. Or, if I meet a young person who needs a job sooner rather than later, I encourage them to consider a trade or a program like Certified Nursing Assistant because CNAs are in high demand due to COVID. We don't believe every person has to incur massive college debt to become employable in a good-paying job and be successful. However, I also encourage people to stay curious, learn everything they can every day, and read a book as often as possible. Whether it is the Bible or some other book that interests you like *Before the Mayflower*, the point is to stay open to improving yourself as a person."





That can-do spirit of looking for genuine, practical, and immediate solutions is what Martinez teaches her staff. The Mission of Love Charities team meets weekly, and Martinez says people make the gatherings uplifting and more successful because of the respect and interpersonal relations. "This is not home; we are a place of business, and it is important to keep our work separate from our personal lives. Still, our goal is to make each other feel appreciated, listened to, and that we are all working towards making our jobs better and more effective for the people who rely on us."

Mission of Love Charities stays in constant communication with state, county, and local leaders who seek Martinez's and her team's input on local issues impacting the increasingly diverse community. Whether working-class Latino, Black, Caucasian, or more recently, Afghani and Central American immigrants in need, the problems they need help

with require that the agency partner with many different individuals and organizations. The starting point may be learning English, but their needs grow exponentially, and no one organization has all the solutions.

"Without partnering, the civil rights movement would not have happened," reminds Martinez. "We would not be



here as an organization without partnering, and after the last four years, we are better today because we are partnering now, so I think that looking back and blaming the past administration and grieving all that is a waste of time. We are blessed to be here now and need to focus on where to go from here. This fact becomes abundantly clear when you travel to see what conditions are like in other countries. Also, when people complain to me about their situation, I tell them change starts with education, and if we do not do that for ourselves, we have no one else to blame. Also, we need to become informed and stay engaged in our civic duty to vote in the mid-terms, which are just as important as elections during presidential election years. So too, in working with our school systems, even if we don't like everything they are doing, we must stay involved in what is happening to our children in the public schools." Martinez says Mission of Love Charities will soon be relocating into a newer facility. Seven

rooms of its new headquarters will be dedicated to education training, the lifeline for participants seeking to make a significant change in their lives. She adds that among her education goals is to continue mentoring women to strive for leadership roles and says the non-profit sector has served to open many doors for women to succeed. "This is an exciting time in my life because I am ready and eager to pass on the knowledge and what I have learned over the years to the next generation woman who wants to lead a community-based organization. The notion of giving back to our community is something that my mother instilled in me, and when I am ready to step away, what will give me the peace of mind needed will be knowing that I did it the right way, preparing a successor who can step in," she said.

"Partnering Is the Way to Progress in America and An Education is Where You Start."

– Deborah Martinez, Executive Director, Mission of Love Charities, Capitol Heights, Maryland

Numerous awards affirm that Mission of Love Charities is getting the job done and doing it right. The organization has been recognized as one of the Essence Essential Heroes. Also, the agency was selected among the nation's Top 100 by Charity Navigator. Plus, its work was profiled by the ABC7 Helping Hands series and received the Community Crisis Service's Hero Award. Even CNN featured Missions of Love Charities during

nationwide coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact.

Martinez concludes by saying that she owes her success and Mission of Love Charities to her board of directors and its chairperson. They support and endorse the daily decisions she has to make in running the organization. "They agree with me nine times out of ten and work hard to help find the money for us to carry out our programs. This is all I could ask for, and without them, we would not be where we are today. I accept this recognition from SER National on behalf of all the men and women who work tirelessly every day to keep doing the work of Mission of Love Charities. As the name says, what we do for others is not for gain for ourselves but an expression of our love for others," she adds.



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A program that is changing lives through assistance for small businesses.

Every day, Natalie Candice Cooper is helping scores of entrepreneurs as SER NEGOCIOS Program Manager, an initiative that identifies, assists, and mentors promising small business owners.

"What we do is go into the community and assist our minority groups in starting up new businesses as well as entrepreneurship," says Cooper. "What I've seen in all of them is where all of them are eager to strive in what they're doing. Tienen ganas. They have the will and want to come out and put their name into the community to succeed in what they're doing."


The program is one of the fastest growing and in increasing demand for SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc. Participants are interviewed, and an initial assessment of their needs helps develop a blueprint that guides Cooper in providing the most appropriate small business assistance needed. "It's amazing seeing different cultures, different people, different stories, roadmaps of just people's journey coming together and somehow finding each other's stories in the same path. It can't be all the same. We all fall somewhere along the line, but we all get back up and keep striving to move forward," says Cooper.



SER NEGOCIOS is working with a wide range of small businesses offering various products and services. From professional media consultants to chefs, hairstylists, life coaches, and even party planners, the program is proving to be an invaluable ally to help small business owners from all walks of life and backgrounds. "Success can be a whole lot of things in the areas where we are working," says Natalie. "Success is, for one, just getting their Limited Liability Company (LLC) where they didn't have any clue how to be able to accomplish that. Some are already somewhat startups and moving on to possibly a second location. Maybe a food truck where they're able to start putting their business out in the community and stop working out of the kitchen. There are just so many victories on different levels for the people that we are serving," adds Cooper.

Small business owners in the SER NEGOCIOS program develop a close bond with the SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc team. There is a shared sense of camaraderie when confronting challenges and joy in celebrating victories, even incremental ones, as larger goals loom ahead. The key is perseverance and access to accurate, timely, relevant knowledge and the assurance that success is possible.

"I know that every day, SER NEGOCIOS is assisting the community," says Cooper. "We want to bring up people taking on the challenge to realize their dreams through entrepreneurship. We want to let them know that we are here to help them and assist them. Workshops, everything that we offer for them, are free, and we are here to provide it for them. To be able to assist our community and to come up. We want to see them come up, and we want to be a part of it," she concludes.



"It is part of our culture, and I am so proud to have SER NEGOCIOS with me on this journey."

Amanda Villarreal – Photographer; Owner of Blissful Photography

Amanda Villarreal recalls discovering her love of photography when she was a young girl growing up snapping pictures of family members and friends. She realized quickly there was something magical that happened. Now, thanks to SER NEGOCIOS, Amanda's childhood dream is a thriving business.

"I remember the first camera my family surprised me with as a Christmas gift. The lens was mounted on, so I couldn't change it, and before that, I think I even had a Polaroid. So, I went around taking pictures and printing them out, no editing, no Photoshop. The way I took them was the way they turned out. I have always loved taking pictures because I feel like I am actually taking memories that people can frame and hang on their walls," says Villarreal.

Amanda said once she decided to go into business as a professional portrait photographer, she knew that it would take work to establish it correctly. The first step was getting her company structured legally, and this is where SER NEGOCIOS came to her aid. "I always heard that I needed to form an LLC, but I didn't know what it meant or how to do it. I am so thankful to SER NEGOCIOS because they made it easy. I submitted the information they asked for and quickly received a letter saying my business was now an LLC! It was one of the happiest days of my life," adds Amanda.

Villarreal says she is confident her business will grow because Latinos love to display framed pictures in their homes. Her specialty is taking portrait images of individuals, children, or families. "When I visited my grandmother's house, she always had pictures everywhere of family and friends. With SER NEGOCIOS's continued help and guidance, my company will be here to take people back to that type of photography with portraits they can frame and display in their homes. It is part of our culture, and I am so proud to have SER NEGOCIOS with me on this journey," adds Villarreal.



Anny Castillo – Plano Studios

Anny Castillo is a photographer in Plano, Texas, with a unique view of the world, and thanks to SER Negocios, her dream is coming into clear focus.



"SER NEGOCIOS is making it possible for me to help my community while making my hopes and aspirations a reality," says Castillo, who, along with her husband, envisioned a creative space that would welcome and nurture other artists too. "Today, we can offer a location equipped with the resources needed to launch a collaborative in a setting that is inviting and supporting of a new generation of video bloggers, photographers, stylists, and many others. SER NEGOCIOS deserves all the credit for helping us to structure our company, understand what is required to be successful, and then encourage us along the way when we had questions," adds Castillo.

The studio's location is in one of Texas' most dynamic and rapidly growing communities on the north edge of Dallas, virtually adjacent to the I-75 north-south corridor. Location is everything for a small business emerging in a highly competitive environment. However, a premium, high-visibility spot's associated cost comes with the location. In this case, Anny's choice was a second-floor space that gives her customers easy access but helps make the cost per square foot slightly lower without sacrificing being seen from the busy street.

"We know that Plano is the right place for us," says Anny. "As we have gotten to know other creatives in the region, it is clear that we are at the center of a vibrant, progressive community that is very interested in collaboration to share our talents and skills. SER NEGOCIOS has been very instrumental in making me aware of the many aspects of running our company, so there's no doubt that we will continue to work very closely together. The SER NEGOCIOS team members are our pillars, and we truly treasure the feeling that they are our best allies. I recommend them to any entrepreneur seriously interested in growing a business," she added.



Glensy Alvarez – Autana Foods and Catering

When you meet Glensy Alvarez, you quickly realize she is a proud ambassador for the world of Venezuela's cultural cuisine, which she and her family are introducing to the United States.

"We arrived in this country with a suitcase filled with our dreams and a bucket list of things we wanted to achieve, which thanks to SER NEGOCIOS, we are now able to do. The program teaches us so much about the fundamentals and the many other details that starting a business involves. SER NEGOCIOS ensures that our future will be bright as a family-owned enterprise because I know we will count on their guidance and support. We never imagined that there would be such a program as SER NEGOCIOS that is here to help immigrants who have so much to offer and are eager to contribute to this country," says Alvarez.

Glensy adds the family includes two trained chefs for whom the kitchen is their world. They wanted to work together and share their culture and cuisine through food. So, they named their business, Autana. This name is significant because the word comes from the famous plateau-topped mountains in Venezuela. However, they knew that success is about more than just a name. Experienced entrepreneurs say longevity in business also requires paying attention to details and learning best practices.

According to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), there are more than 4.65 million Latino-owned companies across the country and Puerto Rico. Businesses like Autana are among the fastest-growing segment of U.S. small businesses, up 34% in the last ten years.

"SER NEGOCIOS reminded us about the importance of ensuring that Autana Foods has a strong foundation. Our plan right now is to diversify into more than one product. However, one certainty is that as we expand, we will do so following all the regulations we are learning through SER NEGOCIOS. The best part of their programs is that we can always ask questions and reach them to ask for help when we run into a new situation we have not encountered before. We are truly blessed to have SER NEGOCIOS in our lives," says Alvarez.





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Let's come together to accomplish more, together.

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of our diverse community.

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RAISE YOUR EXPECTATIONS.



Emilia Vasquez and Shaulah Sandoval – Magic Illusions Parties

Little girls are princesses straight out of fairytale stories to Emilia Vasquez and Shaulah Sandoval, co-founders and owners of Magic Illusions Parties. This duo is turning that magical experience into unique and unforgettable events.

“We wanted to create moments that would become unforgettable first memories for little girls,” says Vasquez. Sandoval adds, “our goal was to introduce them to self-care that teaches lifelong skills about hygiene and appearance while at the same time make it fun, and SER NEGOCIOS made that possible.”

National health experts agree that creating positive experiences around learning about hygiene is a winning combination. So is the need to start as early as possible teaching simple, clear steps like washing hands and keeping nails trimmed to help guard against germs. Add to that, creating a party occasion filled with the joy of being with friends and the learning deepens. SER NEGOCIOS saw that Magic Illusions Parties are about more than just fun and games. The business fills a critical need for an age group within Latino families that are younger and the fastest-growing



demographic in the United States.

Also, Vazquez and Sandoval said they knew their idea filled every little girl’s need to feel special, like a princess. “What we did not know was how to start the business, and this is where SER NEGOCIOS became our most trusted partner, answering our questions and guiding us at every turn. We are sure that SER NEGOCIO’s training is making the difference for us that ensures we will have a bright future,” says Vasquez. Today, Magic Illusions Parties include a wide array of child-safe beauty products, and every occasion invites moms and daughters alike to become a princess and be filled with magic.

Vasquez and Sandoval urge, “We tell every woman who wants to become a business owner to seek out SER NEGOCIOS and feel the empowerment to determine their tomorrow!”

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On April 2021, SER was awarded The National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP). NFJP is a nationally-directed, locally-administered program of services for migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFWs) that includes career and training grants and housing grants across the United States and Puerto Rico. NFJP provides funding to community-based organizations and public agencies to assist migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families to attain greater economic stability through career services, training services, housing assistance, youth services, and related assistance. NFJP also facilitates the coordination of services for MSFWs through the American Job Center (AJC) network, also known as one-stop centers so they may access other services in the public workforce system.

SER National is enrolling and serving 75 eligible participants in each of the four counties (Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, and Imperial), for a total of 300 participants. These four counties have significant populations of migrant and seasonal farmworkers. These populations have high rates of poverty and low educational attainment, and would benefit from training in skills that would lead to in-demand jobs. SER National is serving both adults and youth.

SER has subgranted a portion of the total grant amount to SER – San Joaquin Valley, a SER National affiliate, which is based in Fresno, CA. SER – San Joaquin Valley is operating NFJP in Imperial and Santa Barbara Counties; SER National is operating NFJP in Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties.

It is SER National's intention to not only meet the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration performance standards, but surpass them. The main goal is to transition participants into unsubsidized employment. This goal will be facilitated by appropriate training for high-demand jobs by qualified institutions in the participants' communities, such as community colleges and technical schools. In so doing, SER NFJP

participants can achieve enhanced incomes and a higher standard of living.

SER is identifying and recruiting employers in growth industries in the four counties. We are working on partnering with community organizations that are willing to support NFJP, with a focus on agencies that can provide supportive services and training opportunities. We will leverage relationships with national organizations to benefit the counties requested. These activities will result in timely skills training, and in turn, job placements to fulfill employers' needs.

SER NFJP focuses on assisting migrant/seasonal farmworkers (MSFWs) and their families to attain GREATER ECONOMIC STABILITY. The program helps farmworkers acquire the skills needed to retain agricultural jobs or start New careers. SER NFJP services include:

- **CAREER SERVICES** – including skills assessment, job search, placement assistance and counseling.
- **TRAINING SERVICES** – including occupational skills and job training, on-the-job training opportunities, skills upgrading and retraining, entrepreneurial training, and other training activities.
- **YOUTH SERVICES** – including tutoring, dropout prevention, paid and unpaid work experiences, occupational skills training, financial literacy training, and entrepreneurial skills training.
- **RELATED ASSISTANCE SERVICES** – including short-term direct assistance that helps farmworkers and their family members to retain jobs or participate in training services.
- **HOUSING ASSISTANCE** – helps with Housing assistance including direct payments for emergency and temporary housing and is designed to improve living conditions for underserved farmworker communities.
- **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS** – eligible farmworkers are those individuals who primarily depend on employment in agricultural labor that is characterized by chronic unemployment and underemployment individuals.



For young mothers like Mirena Corro, Priscilla Concepcion, and Celine Baca, the Early Head Start Program operated by SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc. for Progress in Grand Prairie, Texas, is not a luxury but an essential lifeline to their futures and the well-being of their children.

"Without it, I would never be able to realize my dream of becoming a top stylist and make-up artist one day operating my own salon business," says Mirena. She is a positive and energetic mom of three small boys, ages two, nine, and eleven, working, raising a family as a single parent, and seizing every educational opportunity she can to sharpen her skills.



"I get up every day, usually before 6 AM, to get the two older boys ready for a fast breakfast and school, then rush my youngest to the Early Head Start center," says Mirena. "After that, I promptly begin the workday of servicing a few clients at a nearby salon where I am honing my technique because this is what it takes in a very competitive profession. The people at SER's Early Head Start program are wonderful. I see that they care about my son and are genuinely interested in learning how we are doing. It's a day at a time, but well worth the long hours, rushing around and

wearing all the hats I have to get ahead. With SER's Early Head Start program, I know that I will succeed," she adds.

The SER Early Head Start program staff stay in touch with moms like Mirena regularly throughout the week. They relay any pertinent information, including academic, social interaction, or even early signs of a sniffle, so that parents can make informed decisions about their care. This attentiveness is the tried-and-true mark of the Early Head Start program's success. The cultural connection enables them to walk in the shoes of moms and families navigating complex and challenging life circumstances while championing their accomplishments, no matter how small, as positive steps forward.

"For me, success would be finishing nursing school," says Priscilla, a 23-year-old mom of two, ages five and one. She is raising her children alone after the deportation of their father. "He helps me financially the best he can from Mexico, but I have to pick up the rest of the slack myself, and there is no one else to do it if I don't. The SER Early Head Start program means everything to me. It means the world because I could not have gone to school to finish getting my high school diploma. I couldn't work or go to college if I didn't have the Early Head Start program right there with me," she said.

Araceli Paniagua is Early Head Start Director at SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc. and says stories like Mirena's and Priscilla's represent many other single-parent households. "These women are eager to learn and sacrifice a great deal as they strive to break an economic and social cycle," says Paniagua. "The challenges can be daunting, but they are not insurmountable. They need the right support systems, and this is what Early Head Start is here to provide; the childcare and education framework that frees a parent who might otherwise not be able to work, attend school, or both," she said.

Mention school and work, see the eyes of 25-year-old Celine light up and hear her voice become hopeful and determined. "I feel so fortunate to be able to do both of these things because of the SER Early Head Start program," she says. "The reason I can is that my two-year-old son Jeremiah is part of the program. He is developing a different learning experience and being well-taken care of while I focus on what I need to do to achieve my goal of getting into education. I want to work in an



elementary school setting because this is where my passion lies, and I hope to make a difference."

Celine adds that her observations of the Early Head Start program have convinced her of its benefits in teaching pre-k students classroom group etiquette and behavior. Children are slowly introduced to group play, learning, and other positive daily interactions. The program prepares them for entry into a more rigorous kinder or first-grade environment where teachers may not have the time to work with them as closely. She adds that these early formative years are very beneficial to Jeremiah's personality and character foundation for the rest of his life.

"I know moms struggle with the decision of whether to care full-time for their children

or to work and maybe advance their own goals," says Celine. "I know I worried until I saw how excited my son became arriving at Early Head Start or singing a different riddle or saying a new word that he had not before. Plus, the Early Head Start program teaches him about school structure and being around other kids. This method is why I would encourage other moms to try the SER Early Head Start program. They will miss 100-percent of the shots they never take in life, so why not try?" asks Celine.

The SER Early Head Start program is also proving to be an invaluable gateway pathway into other training and development opportunities for parents seeking to advance and improve their families' futures. "Early Head Start is not just about the children, although they are our primary focus," says Paniagua. "The program allows us to get to know a family up-close and observe their progress over time, often with several of their children. The trust created enables us to learn about their life goals to perhaps refer them into one of our other wrap-around programs. It could mean helping them start a business and acquire training for a trade or profession. You never know because if you only saw Mirena, Priscilla, or Celine as moms dropping off kids, all of us would be missing out on what may be possible. SER National's Early Head Start program is here to ensure that we are present, caring, and involved with their children, the parents, and our surrounding communities," says Paniagua.





Senior Community Service Employment Program

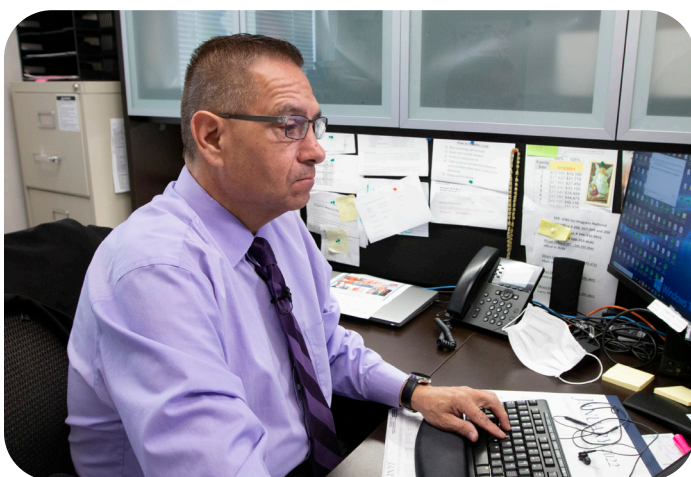
SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc. is tapping into one of the nation's most experienced and seasoned pools of labor talent through a program with a 67-year track record of success. In 2022, the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is as important as ever.

"SCSEP is providing a vital lifeline for skilled, willing-to-work, older Americans who qualify," says Hilario "Larry" Mercado, SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc. Texas SCSEP Program Coordinator. "We can achieve two important goals at the same time. First, provide comprehensive job training and workforce development services to a mature, stable population eager to remain or re-enter the labor force. Second, these qualified men and women then have the opportunity to earn a living while performing needed community services in positions with non-profit or public agencies. This is truly a win-win," adds Mercado.

Evidence of this is people like Sarah Henderson in Houston, Texas, who retired following a 25-year career in retail management and was not ready to sit back and let life pass her by. "I knew there

was a lot I could still contribute, but I didn't quite know where or how," says Henderson. "So, I went back to school and earned my associate degree in Business Management. This was when I connected with Destined for Empowerment, a faith-based organization that challenged me to reach beyond my comfort zone in service to others. I'm thrilled I did because this job has forced me to make phone calls, create schedules, take inventory, and work with staff; all the things that I wanted to bury, I am bringing the sum of my skills back to do something I truly enjoy, thanks to SCSEP," says Henderson. Sarah's broad smile reflects her newly rediscovered joy.

Another SCSEP success story is David Zamora, a food bank team member at East End Social Services. He helps manage and distribute a storehouse of food staples to a daily stream of neighborhood residents in the shadow of downtown Houston. He immigrated to the United States and worked unloading ships in the Houston ship channel until he suffered an injury that ended his career on the waterfront. "This is when I found out about SCSEP," Zamora says in Spanish. "It saved my life because I was able to work still, save a little



money and get my wife and me a small house. Sadly, she passed away recently, so this job is very important to me because it makes me feel that others still need me and can do something good for them. If I didn't have SCSEP, I don't know where I would be right now. Probably not in a healthy place," adds Zamora, before getting back to work amid aisles of food he is dispensing to East End clients.

"These stories are two of many among the lives we touch through SCSEP," says Mercado. "Our SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc. SCSEP presence is vast, including offices in Houston, Beaumont, and Ft. Worth, in addition to locations in five other states. We serve numerous surrounding counties in each of these sites, so the talent pool we can attract is significant, and every person brings their own unique background, experience, and skill set. Those who qualify are enrolled in a program lasting up to four years and provides a stipend while they are being trained to facilitate their participation and incentivize their opportunity for success long-term," adds Mercado.

Across America, SCSEP program participants provide more than 40-million hours of community service annually in public jobs. Participants work an average of 20 hours a week, allowing a healthy balance between work and personal life, an essential feature for men and women 55 years of age or older. Mercado says the transformational impact of SCSEP on its participants is one of the program's most important benefits. "Many of the people in SCSEP are only receiving social security, and that is usually very minimal," says Mercado. "This program allows them to earn some money to cover necessary daily living expenses. However, the real payoff is SCSEP enables productive, talented men and women to regain or maintain their sense of purpose and usefulness in service to their community. For many, this is their first taste of doing a job that is helping someone else in a non-profit or public agency. The experience changes them for the rest of their lives. This is the power of SCSEP," says Mercado.



SER's Cisco Networking Academy

The language of the future is already here, and its users are growing exponentially. At the core of this new world of interaction are numbers and symbols that comprise the universal communications of technology. This exciting new frontier is now being taught through the SER Cisco Networking Academy, one of the latest program additions to SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc. (SER National). This leading-edge training focuses on developing skills essential to global IT and cybersecurity. Another valuable advantage is that the Cisco Networking Academy partners with learning institutions worldwide, creating unprecedented career opportunities for students, including men and women from non-technical backgrounds.

As stated by Cisco, the Cisco Networking Academy transforms the lives of learners, educators, and communities through the power of technology, education, and career opportunities. Available to anyone, anywhere. With that philosophy, SER partnered with Cisco to bring access to the Cisco certifications to our communities.

Yetzabeth "Yesi" Rodas is a Certified Cisco Instructor with SER National. She is a technology expert who says the Cisco Academy program is a pathway into a limitless new world filled with advancement for people passionate about learning. Rodas is a training professional who immigrated from Venezuela and is among a select group of female Cisco instructors in the nation. She is a role model for other Latinas and proof that in IT, gender is not a barrier to talented individuals willing to work hard to attain their highest potential.

"Our Cisco Certified Network Associate or CCNA training is for everybody," says Rodas, who acknowledges that her interest in the science of computer engineering began early in her life. "I wanted to explore a field that was innovative, and I knew computer knowledge is always changing and growing, so this is where I decided to go."

The Cisco Networking Academy offers participants an opportunity to earn the certification as a CCNA. This designation is an entry-level networking achievement that prepares students for information technology

(IT) networking roles. SER National is now among top-tier organizations teaching the certification course as an official Cisco Networking Academy. CCNA graduates understand the fundamental networking concepts required in networking roles within IT positions. Also, the CCNA exams test a network professional's knowledge and skills to install, configure, and troubleshoot networks.

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, the rate of career growth in IT is 13% annually, higher than many other top employment opportunities. The forecast is for an even stronger surge in IT as cloud-based data increases. The highest demand for employees is predicted to be for individuals with training in math, science, and technology. IT is estimated to continue accelerated expansion through 2030, on average 5% to 6% annually or faster.

The SER Cisco Networking Academy offers a self-paced, year-long program composed of three courses. Each course is three to four months long, with online testing every two weeks to measure learning progress and attain educational milestones. Yesi says she is always accessible to students in the virtual classroom who may have questions or need additional assistance to ensure success in their learning. The curriculum is divided into three courses: Introduction to Networks; Switching, Routing, and Wireless Essentials; and Enterprise Networking, Security, and Automation.

"SER is partnering with Cisco Systems, the largest IT networking corporation, to change lives, to change generations," says Ignacio Salazar, SER National's President and CEO. We are training students nationwide to get their CCNA and advance their careers in networking, in IT," he adds.

The SER Cisco Networking Academy is free of charge to qualified students. The application process is brief and straightforward, so students can quickly embark on their training path. The SER Cisco Networking Academy accepts student applications year-round, intending to select a small group of students into each cohort. The benefit to program participants is more intensive attention and assistance as needed for a higher-quality, personal, educational experience that ensures better understanding and retention. "I have taught these types of courses for years, both internationally and in the United States," says Yesi. "What I have seen is that the students who have the desire to learn and the passion for sticking with it and focusing on absorbing the knowledge do well. Our world is linked through routers, switches, and networks for every social

media platform that exists today. If people think about the many new doors IT can open and the exciting jobs they can qualify for with this certification, it is a tremendous motivator," she adds.

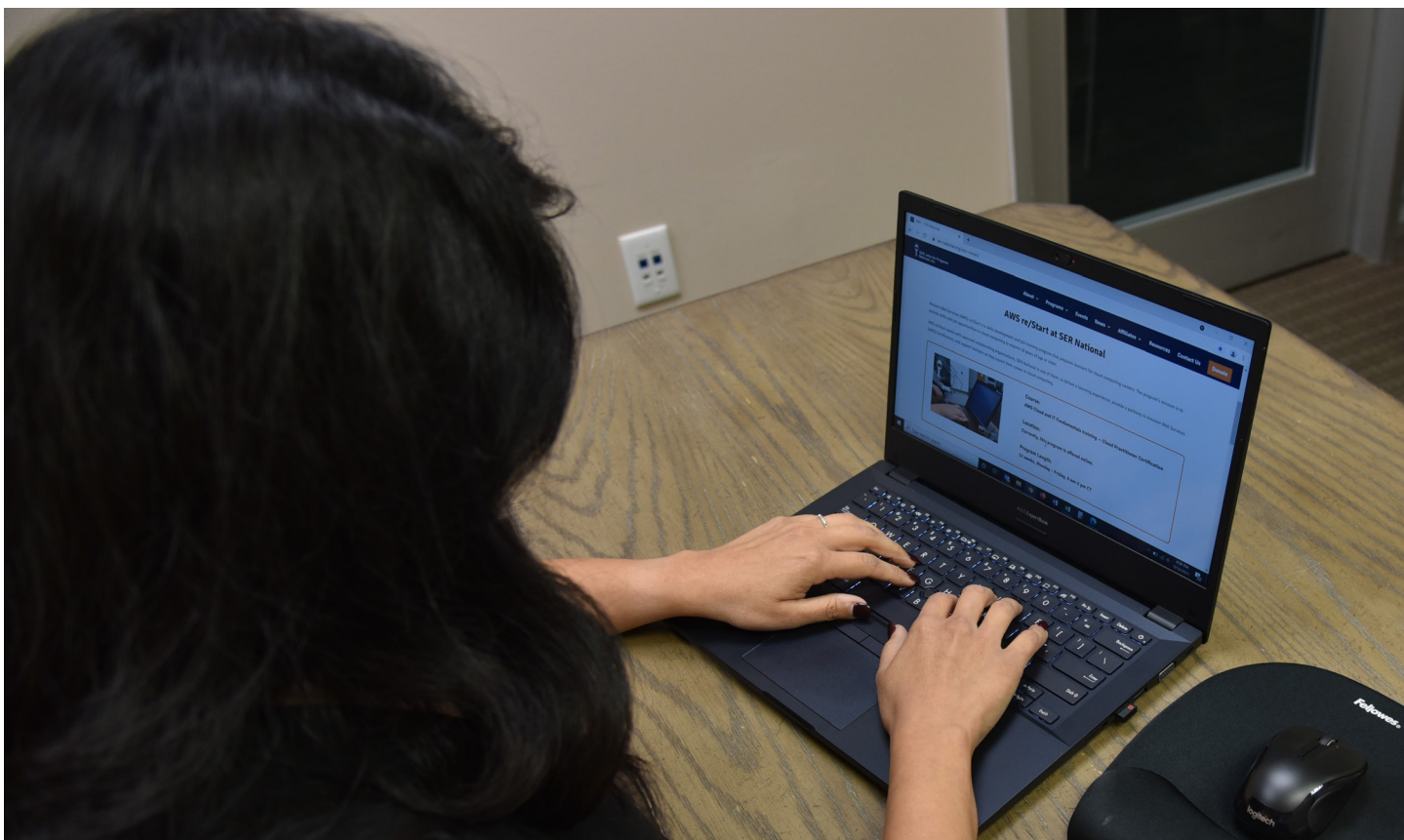
The career paths for the graduates include a range of opportunities, beginning in customer information centers helping users with solutions to their technology questions. Some graduates go on to network administration and more advanced roles that include IT network troubleshooting, infrastructure design, and security oversight. Today, an IT expert ranks among a company's top-tier executives in administration, operations, and strategic planning.

SER National launched the Cisco Academies in Fresno, California, Santa Fe, New Mexico, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas. The virtual classroom structure of the program is proving to be the right solution for our times when students' busy lives, different backgrounds, and daily responsibilities make flexible learning an essential requirement.

"I am very excited to be with SER National leading the Cisco Academy instruction and recognize this is a transformative opportunity for people to make lasting change in their lives," says Yesi. "I could have never dreamed as a young girl that one day I would be teaching others this wonderful field and seeing the excitement in their eyes as they learn and progress. My encouragement to anyone willing to study hard, focus, and put all their effort into IT is that the future is waiting for you and is limitless. Come and be a part of it to connect millions of people every day and know you are playing a part in making our world better through technology," says Rodas.



aws re/start **at SER National**



Free your imagination and picture the universe of technology five years from today, then map out the path to get there, using complex mathematical formulas, sophisticated computer programming language, and nearly indecipherable algorithms. Welcome to the world of Amazon Web Services (AWS) re/Start program, one of the newest workforce development initiatives of SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc. (SER National) in collaboration with Amazon.

“Cloud is where everything is going,” says Raquel Guajardo, Program Manager for AWS re/Start at SER National. “Tech is today, tech is tomorrow, and it is moving at lightning speed. It took us a while to understand how to reach the people we were attracting because this is so new. Even the name of the profession sounds futuristic, cloud practitioner. I mean, the first time that people hear that job title, they say, huh, what’s that? And yet, these are the very types of persons we want, with no experience in tech to learn it from the ground up,” says Guajardo.

What is easy for even the non-tekkies to appreciate is how lucrative the jobs are in this sector, with out-of-the-gate positions starting as high as \$80,000 for more advanced roles. Entry-level jobs often start earning an hourly wage. Eventually, those who continue to learn will hold senior positions, programming, designing, and ideating the future worlds of technology applications and processes.

This is why when word got out that SER National was approved as a collaborating organization with Amazon, more than a thousand online applications poured into the SER office alone. The global AWS program, named re/Start, aims to serve 29-million participants by 2025, comprised of qualified individuals interested in learning skills for some of the highest in-demand jobs in high-tech.

“As exciting for me is observing the lead instructors who teach AWS’ 12-week course,” says Raquel. “It’s intense, super high level informative and designed to walk you right through the entire

gamut of what is involved in working as a cloud practitioner, then moving on from there," she adds.

Students learn cloud computing skills to prepare for AWS Certified Cloud Practitioner certification with free access to practice and complete exams. Also, the course focuses on professional skills such as adaptive communication, time management, resume building, and interviewing to prepare for employer meetings and interviews. "We are being very intentional about making sure that we are reaching out to everyone from many different backgrounds," says Guajardo. "We are talking about people with zero IT experience who have worked in the oil fields, a hospital kitchen, a stay-at-home mom, a freshly-graduated student, and yes, even someone with fifteen different degrees! They recognize that this cloud will be needed. The benefit to the employers is that we are training people they can hire and then develop them into learning the processes or practices of their specific business, the way they want them to do so," adds Guajardo.

AWS' re/Start signifies a reboot for SER National, after having ventured into the IT sector with a workforce training and development program in the 1990s, ahead of its time for a then largely undeveloped industry. Today, the picture is far different. "Collaborating with AWS to build an

inclusive and diverse global pipeline of new cloud talent demonstrates our ability to advance into a new era of high tech and adapt to meet the constantly changing job needs," says Ignacio Salazar, SER National's President and CEO. The response which we are already seeing from applicants proves there's an enormous need and eager interest for precisely this type of program," he adds.

The AWS re/Start program at SER National has already seen two cohorts or classes complete the program and is now working on cohort number three. Guajardo, who confesses she is not inherently technically inclined, admits her role has an emotional side. "It's exciting to see how this opportunity is changing lives and, indeed, a family's entire future for years to come. The AWS re/Start program fits right in with what SER is about, teaching and training people to learn new jobs that will end up benefitting them and their children. I feel very fortunate to be here witnessing this moment and knowing that the students I am working with are going to help change the world," says Guajardo.



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future generations."**





Emma Treviño

Vice President of Program Operations

It takes a vision and make it a reality through sound strategy development. Emma Treviño intuitively sees the threads of opportunity that wind through an organization, brings them together into a coherent whole, helps others extend their thinking. She is an inspirational leader who tells stories that inspire action while being grounded—respected as a credible voice in decision making, finding strategic partners, and establishing governance boundaries.

Emma Treviño joined SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc. in 2008. Ms. Treviño has implemented numerous projects, programs, and initiatives and has become a leader with vast experience in programming and organizational operations.

As Vice President of Program Operations at SER National, Emma Treviño stands out as the highest ranking woman in the largest and oldest employment training and development agency for Latinos in the US. Ms. Treviño oversees the SER Early Head Start program, National Entrepreneurship programs (SER Negocios /SER MUJER), National Farmworker Jobs Program, and the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). She oversees the SCSEP program, a \$23 million national grant. She is the current National Director of SCSEP, implementing the day-to-day operation of all programming, ensuring all

performance measures are met, and that SER is in accordance with all Department of Labor regulations.

This responsibility includes overseeing 25 SCSEP field offices and staff in six states across the country. As the National Director of SCSEP, she executes the grant and ensures compliance with all contractual obligations. Under her leadership, SER SCSEP obtained a number one ranking out of 20 SCSEP grantees for the first time in SER's history.

However, getting this far meant for this unstoppable woman born in California, "overcoming many of the barriers that women and especially Latinas commonly face, to reach positions of responsibility." Despite this, Emma did not let herself be stopped and is committed to continuing "empowering our community".

Meanwhile, Emma works towards an important personal legacy: "There were people who believed in me and were my mentors. My responsibility is to do the same for other women, opening doors for them so they can find a path to follow or even create their own", she concludes.

Emma holds an MBA and BS in Psychology from the University of Phoenix. She is originally from Los Angeles, California, and enjoys traveling.

Welcome to the SER National Board of Directors!

Frank J. Archuleta *AGIF Representative*

Army Reserve Ambassador Frank J. Archuleta attended and graduated with a BS in Social Science from West Texas A&M University. He graduated with an MS in Human Services from St. Edwards University and an MA in Administration from Notre Dame. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in the US Army Reserve. He served in various units to include: An Army Security Agency, a Combat Electronic Warfare Intelligence Bn, and a Civil Affairs Bn. In the civilian arena, he has worked as an Adult Probation Officer, a Program Consultant for the Texas Commission on Drugs and Alcohol, a Management Auditor for the Community Justice Assistance Department, in private practice worked as a Consultant for the Federal Bureau of Prisons and other Criminal Justice Agencies. He later served as Director of the Austin-Travis County Advocate Program. He entered the US Army AGR Program and retired from active-duty service in 2010. ARA Archuleta is served two terms as an elected City Council Member for the City of Windcrest, serving on the Windcrest Investment Committee; he is a Legislator (3rd term) for the Texas Silver-Hair Legislature, serving on the Strategic Planning Committee and the Health Issues Committee. He is currently a trustee on the Miguel Hernandez Jr. Chapter of the American GI Forum (past 3-terms Commander). He is the 2022 the National Sergeant of Arms for the American GI Forum (Served 2 terms as National Parliamentarian). Finally, he has served as Chair on the 2020 Small-Town Advisory Board for the Texas Municipal League.



Maria Garcia-Cacique *AGIF Representative*

Maria Garcia-Cacique was born in Denver, Colorado but raised in a rural town called El Tepetate in the state of Zacatecas, Mexico. She moved to Santa Maria and attended El Camino Junior High, then Santa Maria High School, from where she graduated in 1989. After high school graduation, Maria attended UCSB, where she earned her Bachelor of Arts, Multiple Subject Teaching Credential, and Master's degree in Education. After completing her graduate education, Maria taught at La Patera Elementary School in Goleta for seven years. This led her to the Santa Barbara County Education Office, where she supported the needs of migrant students for over 15 years. Maria held several positions with the program, including Mini-Corps Tutor, Summer Teacher Liaison, Program Specialist, and Regional Director. She is currently with the Lompoc Unified School District as a K-3 Literacy Specialist. All her pre-professional and professional career has been in education, serving students preschool-age 21 and as an elementary school teacher. Currently, Maria also supports the community in a few nonprofit organizations. She is President of the Lompoc Cooperative Development Project, Secretary with Cahoots in Lompoc Project, Vice-President for the American GI Forum Education Foundation of Santa María, and Fund for Santa Barbara Board of Directors member. Over the years, she has supported other community groups in both formal roles and as a volunteer. Maria is passionate about being of service to others and about expanding educational opportunities, passions that she balances with her loving family's support.



Shameeka Marie Gonzalez-Gamboa

LULAC Representative

Shameeka Marie Gonzalez-Gamboa joined the Neighborhood Association for Inter-Cultural Affairs, Inc. (NAICA) in 2011. She held various positions within the fiscal department, and in January of 2019, she was appointed Chief Financial Officer. As the CFO, she oversees all aspects of the organization's finances, including; accounting and financial reporting, development and management of budgets, audits, financing, contracts, and grants administration, and reporting to NAICA's Board, funders, and regulatory agencies. She has recently ventured into real estate management as the organization has obtained full ownership of its first affordable housing project. She plays a crucial role in the organization's long-term strategic planning and the organization's ability to meet its mission. Shameeka brings to the organization more than 15 years of financial management experience in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors, with a focus on developing policies and procedures to improve performance and productivity. Before joining NAICA, she assisted several organizations define their strategic direction, prepared new business plans, streamlined financial and procedural policies, and created monitoring and accountability systems. Shameeka is a graduate of Long Island University, having achieved a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science, becoming the first in her family to graduate from college. She completed her Master's degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Finance at Mercy College. She was able to achieve this milestone within one year of registration while serving as the Director of Finance for NAICA. Shameeka graduated Summa Cum Laude and was inducted into the Delta Mu Delta International Honors Society for Business. While these are significant professional accomplishments, Shameeka considers her greatest achievement to be the mother of Hector, Jason, Evan, and Santiago, her four sons, and wife to her husband, Santiago.



Delma Gorostieta

LULAC Representative

Delma Janeth Gorostieta was born in Mexico and came to the United States at an early age. She was raised in Oak Cliff, a low-income Hispanic neighborhood in Dallas, Texas. She grew up with a single mother and two younger siblings. She became a first-generation college graduate when she obtained a full scholarship to Texas A&M University. She graduated Magna Cum Laude with a bachelor's degree in Environmental Engineering and minors in geography and Spanish. While at Texas A&M, she obtained an Undergraduate Student Research Publication Award, Association of American Geographers Annual Conference Scholarship Award, Gamma Theta Upsilon Honor Society Certificate, and Texas A&M Deans Distinguished Student Award, Liberal Arts. In 2019, she began law school at UNT Dallas College of Law and has remained at the top of her class. Since attending law school, she has continued to volunteer in her community. She volunteers with the Dallas YMCA and helps with the youth and government programs. In addition, ever since Delma started law school, she has donated her time and talents to a legal clinic in Dallas to provide legal services to the poor, the Dallas Community Lawyering Center. She has been a member of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) for eight years and is currently the president of LULAC chapter 102. Delma is empowered by her single mother, who has sacrificed her life to provide her with an education. She will continue to work to expand the promise of the American Dream to more people by working to create opportunities for others by empowering them through education.



Juan Aurelio Lopez

LULAC Representative

Juan is the proud father of two daughters and three sons and grandfather to eight granddaughters, a Public Servant for over three decades, serving in both the executive and legislative branches of the Municipal Government of Boston. In the executive branch, he worked with Mayors White, Flynn, and Menino, as Field Representative and Service Coordinator for the Jamaica Plain and Mission Hill Neighborhoods of Boston, Senior Hearing Officer at the Rent Equity Board, and as the Mayor's Hispanic Liaison. In the legislative branch, he has served as Budget Analyst and Senior Liaison to Legislative Committees. He is currently serving as the Research and Policy Director for the Boston City Council. He is active in community and civic activities serving on various Boards that include: Boston Children's Hospital, ETHOS Boston Elder Services, Latinos Contra Lupus, Centro de Latinas MARIA, and Tu Hispanidad/ Latino Mentor Massachusetts and served on the National Board of (LULAC) as National Vice-President for the Northeast. He is the Executive Producer and Host of the award-winning "Política Entre Amigos" Television Show on WCEATV broadcasted throughout New England and the Founding President of TU Hispanidad/Latino Mentor and the Massachusetts Latino Democratic Caucus.



Jeff Rios

Director – Bodyshop Assembly & Stamping, General Motors

Corporate Representative

Jeff was born and raised in Northwest New Jersey, about 25 miles outside of New York City. His mother, Joan, is from New Jersey and his father, Victor, is from Cuba. His father's hard work ethic, knowledge, and passion to succeed despite many obstacles brought him much success personally and professionally in the Defense Industry. Jeff's mom also had many challenges, as she lost her mother at an early age; she too had to work hard to be successful. They instilled a great emphasis on education, hard work, and focus. After completing both his Bachelor's degree of Operations Research & Industrial Engineering and Master's degree of Engineering from Cornell University, Jeff began his professional career with General Motors as an Industrial Engineer, at the Bowling Green Assembly Plant in 1994. Jeff has over 27 Years of Management Manufacturing Experience. Throughout Jeff's career, he has put a high value on mentoring and coaching others – people, he believes, are the most valuable asset. Jeff has and continues to serve as a formal and informal mentor to numerous individuals. While his work assignments have at times limited his ability to be more formally involved in many external activities, it is his actions and success that have served as role model, not just for Hispanics, but to all who desire knowledge, are passionate, and have a strong work ethic.



Maria Ferreira-Bedard

Board Member Ex-Officio

Maria Ferreira-Bedard has successfully been running workforce development and educational programs for over 30 years. For 25 years, she served as the young Parents Program Director at Southeastern Massachusetts SER-Jobs for Progress, Inc, and became the Executive Director in 2016, a post she has held since then. She is active in her Fall River community, currently serving as the Chair of the Department of Transitional Assistance Fall River Office Advisory Board. She is also a member of the MassHire Bristol Workforce Board, the Bristol County Economic Development Consultants Board of Directors, and the Citizens for Citizens Board of Directors. She was appointed by Governor Charlie Baker to the Massachusetts State Workforce Board in 2018. Ms. Ferreira-Bedard received her Bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, and a Master's degree from Bridgewater State University.



Oscar Moran

Board Member Emeritus

Oscar Moran has served his community at the local, state, and national levels. He has served on various Boards and Commissions including the Alamo Area Council of Governments, the Community Action Board for the City of San Antonio, the UNITED SAN ANTONIO Economic Development Foundation, the Texas Rural Youth Training and Educational Program, The US President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, served as Co-Chair of the Reagan Administration Committee on Immigration Reform and Control, SER National Chairman of the Board, the US Senate Literacy Task Force on Hispanic Affairs, US Department of Labor 75th Anniversary Committee, the Commission of the Bicentennial of the US Constitution, US Census Advisory Committee, San Antonio Development Agency and the San Antonio Water System Advisory Committee. He was a founding member of HACR, the Hispanic Association for Corporate Responsibility. He served as a panelist on the FCC's Localism Task Force on Broadcast Localism during their meeting in San Antonio. Decades ago, Oscar Moran walked into the San Antonio, Texas SER office, which was located behind a church, which was scheduled for closure due to lack of funding. That path led him to this day. Decades have ensued around SER National as he has witnessed the evolution and the birth of programs and initiatives that have emanated. After 30 years of employment at USAA (United Services Automobile Association), he retired and formed Alta Vision International, a Strategic Communications company. He currently serves as a distinguished member of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), having served as National President in the early 80s. As an ongoing advocate for the communities we serve, he takes great pride to once again serve on the Board of Directors of SER National alongside a group of committed visionaries. Albeit at a slower pace, but never wavering. Time with family is a blessing. Especially his three grandchildren, two of whom attend college. His other grandchild attends middle school and plays sports. Margaret, his wife, is a Former LULAC National President and served on the SER National Board of Directors.





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Elmhurst, NY
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A smiling woman with curly hair, wearing a grey t-shirt and a blue apron with a red and white striped strap, stands behind a bar. She is holding a black metal frame. In the background, there are shelves with various bottles and a large green plant in a woven basket.

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