

SER AMERICA

SPRING 2024

60

YEARS 1964-2024



SER NATIONAL



Running a small business takes big insights

There are a lot of moving parts to running a successful small business — optimizing cash flow, increasing efficiency, and growing revenue. Find strategies and solutions that may help run your business at smallbusinessresources.wf.com.

Table of Contents

- 3 Message from the Chairman of the Board
- 5 Message from the President and CEO
- 7 The Time to Build Comunidad is Now!
- 9 We Hold the Reins to Our Futures
- 11 Perseverance Pays Off for a Latino Neighborhood
- 16 The Power of Many is Voice and Choice
- 19 Diversity is the Source of Our Strength
- 21 ¡60 Años de SER!
- 28 SER Welcomes New Leadership
- 30 SER Board of Directors
- 31 Frank Casillas: Leader, Board Member and Friend
- 33 SER Network Directory



SER America is a publication of SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc. (SER National) Direct all editorial and advertising inquiries and correspondence to:

**SER America
c/o Raúl Santa
100 E. Royal Lane, Suite 130,
Irving, TX 75039**

Tel: 469-549-3600, Fax: 469-549-3687

RSanta@SER-National.org

Website: www.ser-national.org

Reproduction of articles is permitted only if reprinted in its entirety with credit given to SER and/or author. It is requested that a copy of the reprinted materials be sent to SER National.

SER National acknowledges the support of the U.S. Department of Labor and the advertisement support of corporations who made this publication possible.

**Publisher
SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc.
100 E. Royal Lane, Suite 130,
Irving, TX 75039**

Tel: 469-549-3600, Fax: 469-549-3687

Website: www.ser-national.org

**SER National President & CEO
Ignacio Salazar**

**SER America Managing Team
Raúl Santa, Ileana Martinez**

**SER America Designer
Ileana Martinez**

**SER America Writer
David Cruz**

Message from the Chairman of the Board

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Board of Directors for SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc., I am pleased to extend heartfelt congratulations as we celebrate 60 remarkable years of dedicated service. This milestone is not only a testament to the enduring commitment of SER to its mission but also a tribute to the visionary leadership and unwavering support of countless individuals who have contributed to our organization's legacy.

As we reflect on this journey, we are reminded of the remarkable individuals who paved the way for SER's success. Their tireless dedication, innovative spirit, and steadfast resolve have laid the foundation upon which we continue to build and grow.

I want to express our deepest gratitude to the leadership of SER National, whose guidance and vision have propelled our organization forward. Additionally, I extend heartfelt appreciation to our dedicated staff, whose passion and commitment to our mission are genuinely inspiring. We are also immensely grateful to our sponsors, whose generosity and support enable us to make a meaningful impact in the lives of those we serve.

At SER, we are proud to administer very successful transformative programs. One of them is the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). This experience is an invaluable opportunity that benefits seniors and their communities. Through SCSEP, seniors can utilize their skills and wisdom to serve local nonprofits, enriching their lives while making meaningful contributions to society.

Furthermore, the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) is critical in facilitating the transition from agricultural work to various trades and professions. Through training, mentorship, and wrap-around assistance, NFJP empowers individuals to pursue new opportunities and build brighter futures for themselves and their families.

Additionally, SER MUJER and SER Negocios exemplify the power of partnerships in uplifting individuals and families economically. These programs and others in technology and new sciences provide vital support and assistance at the grassroots level, empowering participants to achieve their goals and fulfill their potential.

As we celebrate this significant milestone, let us reaffirm our commitment to serving those in need and advancing our mission of empowerment and opportunity for all.

With warm regards,

Hector M. Flores
Chairman
Board of Directors
SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc.



Hector M. Flores
Chairman
Dallas ISD Retiree
LULAC Representative



Target is proud and humbled to support the 60th SER National Annual Conference.

Learn more by visiting [Target.com/FutureAtHeart](https://www.target.com/FutureAtHeart)



Message from the President and CEO

Dear SER Family and Esteemed Guests,

As we gather for the 60th Annual SER Conference, it is with great pleasure and pride that I extend a heartfelt welcome to each of you on behalf of SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc. Our journey spanning six decades stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment to serving Latinos, minorities and the underserved across the United States and Puerto Rico through comprehensive workforce development and training initiatives.

Since our inception, SER National has dedicated itself to supporting education and training for all, recognizing that education is the cornerstone of economic self-sufficiency and upward mobility. For example, our collaboration with Cisco Systems to offer Cisco Networking Certifications through the SER Network of Affiliates exemplifies our dedication to providing cutting-edge skills development and career advancement opportunities.

Moreover, the launch of the SER STEM Program underscores our proactive response to address the underrepresentation of female, Latino, and other minority high school students in STEM fields, paving the way for a more diverse and inclusive workforce of the future.

Additionally, our Early Head Start (SER-EHS) program child care Partnerships further exemplify our commitment to holistic community development by collaborating with childcare partners to provide essential early childhood education and support services.



Programs like the aforementioned, combined with the vast array of services provided by the affiliate network meets the needs of more than one million people each year. They assist the hungry, needy, less fortunate, homeless, young, old, battered and emotionally drained. We provide love and hope. We are a listening ear, a path to success, providing reinforcement and comfort to many who are lost and forgotten.

Let us reflect on our collective achievements and rededicate ourselves to expanding opportunities and creating pathways to success for all. The dedication and tireless efforts of our affiliate network at over 200 sites nationwide drive our continued impact and success. To our corporate sponsors and stakeholders, we extend our special thank you for your support today.

We will continue to develop new programs and initiatives that meet the needs of an ever-changing workplace while addressing the needs of individuals with greater barriers to self-sufficiency. Much remains to be done, but one thing remains clear: after 60 years, the need for SER is greater than ever.

May we engage, collaborate, and celebrate as we embark on this milestone conference. Together, let us forge ahead, building upon the legacy of service, employment, and redevelopment that defines SER. Your presence and contributions are invaluable. I am confident that together, we will chart a course toward an even brighter and more prosperous future for all.

Warm regards,

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



Shattering expectations. And glass ceilings.

At Comerica Bank, inclusion and equity define who we are.

That's why **65%** of our workforce is female, including **one-third** of our executive team and board of directors. And that's why we've been named **Forbes America's Best Employers for Women**.


Comerica Bank®
Raise Your Expectations®



SER National Affiliates

The Time to Build Comunidad is Now!



In Pittsburgh, a city steeped in the history of America's industrial boom and change, a new collective of voices is being heard. The sound is different, reflecting a tapestry of fresh cultural experiences, and its source is Casa San Jose. There, Latino families and individuals are coming together and creating an opportunity to infuse Pittsburgh with a new vitality for the future.

in the gaps for services that the community desperately needed but were unavailable. Monica's vision extended beyond immediate aid; she aimed to create bridges within institutions and processes that have seen little change in decades.

Monica laments, recounting the countless instances where community members were stranded because of a lack of linguistic support in crucial institutions. "Language access remains a significant barrier," Ruiz states. "Language access must be our greatest barrier at present. You go into a city or county office, and they have nothing in Spanish for residents. Even healthcare services lack language and cultural accessibility. For example, we only have two Spanish-speaking pediatricians," she says.



Established in 2013 by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden, Casa San Jose was born out of a deep-seated commitment to uplift and empower the region's burgeoning Latino population. The richly faceted social services agency embodies the resilience and empowerment that define the organization's mission.

The organization's staff reflects the community they serve. Ruiz notes, "We have a staff of 27, and out of these individuals, maybe six or seven were born here in the United States. Everyone else is from somewhere else or has received services from us. Their lived experience is invaluable as they now help others. We have a great mix of people," Monica beams, highlighting their shared experiences as immigrants and their dedication to the cause.



Monica Ruiz, Executive Director of Casa San Jose in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, readily acknowledges the challenges and growth of the Latino community. She states, "I think that for us here in Pittsburgh, PA, Latinos are less than 2% of the population, but we have grown more than 80% in the last ten years. Before, Latinos came for work and then left to return to their homes, returning seasonally. But then, they began to settle here and stayed to raise their families."

As the city witnessed an influx of newcomers, Casa San Jose emerged as a lifeline, filling



“Casa San Jose fills gaps in services for the community,” Ruiz emphasizes. “However, we want people to acquire the skills and knowledge to learn how to navigate the services themselves in this city. This is a very complex process, but we’re building resiliency within folks as they experience success,” she adds.

Casa San Jose is a resource hub for Latino immigrants seeking assistance and guidance from weekly clinics and food pantries to Know Your Rights sessions and summer camps. Its comprehensive programs encompass social services, emergency aid, community advocacy, English language classes, mental health support, housing assistance, and specialized programs for children with autism.

As importantly, Casa San Jose champions amplifying inclusion at every level within the larger community, ensuring that the voices of those they serve are heard and elevated. “Representation is essential,” emphasizes Monica. Particularly important is pushing for inclusivity in decision-making processes in programs and services that impact the Latino population. Ruiz explains, “Representation means having people with a voice and viewpoint authentic to the issue or need we are addressing in our city.”

One central area of focus of Casa San Jose is working with local youths through several of the organization’s programs: Jóvenes Con Propósito fosters a vibrant community of Latino youth, championing

immigrant rights and igniting social change. With a firm belief in the current leadership of today’s youth, the program meets weekly during the academic year, nurturing empowerment and activism.

Puentes Hacia el Futuro, tailored for ages 6-14, cultivates cultural identity and leadership skills through trust-building activities, discussions, and educational pursuits, preparing youth for a dynamic future blending Latino and American cultures.

Campamento Sonrisa offers an enriching summer experience for youths aged 7-14, blending education, outdoor adventures, and sports. Participants enjoy nutritious meals throughout the structured camp, including breakfast, lunch, and snacks. The elementary session runs from June to July, while the middle school session spans from mid-July to August, providing an inclusive opportunity for all applicants at no cost.

Casa San Jose serves multi-generational families in tangible, practical ways every day. For its stakeholders, it is both about the here and now and the future of the Latino comunidad. “We are learning from other larger cities with decades of experience working within significantly bigger Latino populations,” says Ruiz. “At the same time, I hope that we can offer smaller communities near and around us an example of how to build resilience and help our people not just survive but thrive for years to come,” she adds.



We Hold the Reins to Our Future

Centro CHA is in the heart of Long Beach, California, the second largest city in Los Angeles County. The organization serves a growing Latino population in a coastal community contrasted by multi-million-dollar homes with ocean views and nearby neighborhoods where families get by on minimum wage essential jobs. Yet, for both layers of the socio-economic strata, Centro CHA brings hope of change for a city with a storied history of opportunity in the Golden State.

“In Long Beach, there’s a misconception of prosperity,” says Jessica Quintana, Executive Director. “We’re addressing disparities through advocacy groups and coalitions, ensuring voices from historically neglected areas are heard. Our strong resident leadership, including women, men, and youths, advocates for justice and equality, making a tangible difference in City Council and beyond,” she adds.

Established in 1992 and officially incorporated in 1999, Centro CHA has remained steadfast in its mission to uplift the Latino/Hispanic community through social and economic development initiatives. At the core of Centro CHA’s ethos lies a commitment to fostering a thriving community where investments in low-income neighborhoods are prioritized and residents are empowered to lead sustainable lives. Their vision extends

beyond mere service provision; it encompasses a holistic approach to community development that addresses interconnected housing, education, employment, and civic engagement issues.

“We have weathered peaks and valleys, facing unique challenges as a Latino-led organization in Long Beach,” says Quintana. “Proudly, our leadership, vision, and team are focused on uplifting our community, especially during crises like the pandemic. When our Latino community was disproportionately hit by economic downturns and faced hardships, our resilient team ensured that essential services continued despite personal risks. Our dedication remains steadfast in providing economic development and immigration support to our seniors, parents, youths, and children,” says Quintana.

Centro CHA’s future is brighter because of a planned Latino Cultural Center. With \$4 million earmarked, the organization is making strides towards its realization, alongside a Mercado for economic empowerment and a hub space for workforce development, signaling a new era of ownership and impact.

Unlike other organizations, Centro CHA’s integrated approach ensures that individuals accessing their services are not limited to a single program. Instead, they are welcomed



Centro CHA, Inc.
LONG BEACH
Community
Hispanic
Association

into a supportive network offering a myriad of resources tailored to their needs. This commitment to holistic support has earned Centro CHA the trust and respect of its community members, fostering long-term relationships built on mutual understanding and collaboration.

Quintana says none of this progress has been by chance. “Our board’s diverse expertise fortifies Centro CHA’s mission. With a retired city manager offering institutional insights, a union leader bringing resources for advocacy and job creation, and an immigration lawyer ensuring compliance with legal obligations, our team is robust. As our organization evolves, we seek additional talents to bolster our efforts in economic development and immigration services. Together, we navigate challenges and envision a brighter future for our community.”

Economic inclusion serves as a cornerstone of Centro CHA’s work. Recognizing the Latino community’s systemic barriers, Centro CHA tirelessly advocates for equitable access to resources and opportunities. For them, creating a more just and equitable Long Beach is not just a goal—it’s a moral imperative ingrained in every aspect of their organization.

Quintana said leadership has been vital to the organization’s progress. “We were very strategic in organizing a board aligned with our mission and vision, tapping into the wealth of expertise within our community’s strong leaders, many of whom grew up in Long Beach and rose to executive positions. It’s crucial to have leadership deeply connected to the community’s needs and aspirations,” declares Quintana.

Centro CHA’s impact extends beyond its physical location; it reverberates throughout the city, shaping policies and attitudes toward economic and social justice. Through its team’s dedication and community leaders’ support, Centro CHA envisions a future where unemployment rates plummet, neighborhoods thrive, and every resident can reach their full potential.

“Taking control of our future is exhilarating yet demanding,” Quintana admits. “Yet, for the first time, there’s widespread investment in our community’s needs. Advocacy, backed by



data, is crucial. Our Latino Economic Impact Report revealed the overlooked contributions of our community, demanding overdue reinvestment,” she adds.

The economic report isn’t just a compilation of data; it’s the cornerstone upon which Centro CHA designs its strategic programming, filling crucial voids in community services. Similarly, the organization’s dedication extends beyond its walls, as local government agencies and partners eagerly await this vital information to inform their initiatives.

“Addressing youth poverty is one of my imperatives,” says Jessica, who grew up in Long Beach. “Schools lack the necessary pathways, and parental guidance is often limited. Leadership is vital in creating and engaging young minds in economic opportunities. Even above minimum wage, the current economy isn’t sufficient, exacerbating economic disparities among young people.”

Through one-on-one relationships with case managers, youths benefit from a roadmap to success and the keys to unlocking their full potential. Whether preparing paperwork for GED courses or navigating financial aid options, Centro CHA is a steadfast companion on every step of the journey.

Similarly, for over two decades, Centro CHA has stood as a stalwart advocate for immigrant rights in the Greater Long Beach community, with a steadfast commitment to empowering its residents. In a world where immigrant rights are often challenged, Centro CHA is a testament to the power of compassion and collaboration in creating a brighter future for all. “The key lies in vigilance, strategic connections, and clarity about our community’s needs,” vows Quintana.

“Promising relationships with local officials, educational institutions, and state entities signal progress. The pandemic exacerbated existing disparities, demanding innovation and intentional action. We must work together for positive change to prevent further marginalization of the Latino community in Long Beach. We can and must deliver the opportunity of a promising future for all.”



SER National Affiliates

Perseverance Pays Off for a Latino Neighborhood

In June 1972, in the urban landscape of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, New York, a small group of community residents embarked on a remarkable journey of determination and purpose. Faced with the daunting challenges of landlord abandonment, the withdrawal of vital city services, and the scourge of illegal evictions aimed at reshaping the neighborhood's ethnic fabric, these individuals rallied together under the banner of Los Sures.

“Much of our community’s resilience stems from a shared struggle to nurture what exists today,” says Juan Ramos, Executive Director. “Puerto Ricans, alongside other communities like Dominicans and Mexicans, opened doors and forged bonds. Despite our diverse origins, unity became our strength. When faced with challenges, we rallied together, fighting for our identity and representation. In time and through initiatives like our community art gallery, we have come to celebrate our heritage, ensuring our story endures and inspiring the present and future generations,” adds Ramos.

With only a handful of volunteers and minimal staff, they took on the monumental task of rebuilding their beloved Southside community. Their vision was clear: reclaiming control over their housing and future. It was a fight not just for physical buildings but for the very soul of their neighborhood.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are our foundations for innovation and drive our business forward.

Comcast NBCUniversal is proud to support SER National and its mission in empowering the Hispanic community.



[COMCASTCORPORATION.COM/DIVERSITY](https://comcastcorporation.com/diversity)

“Growing up in a struggling community, I witnessed firsthand the impact of gentrification and the challenges faced by seniors and victims of violence,” recalls Ramos. “Today, my personal experiences drive my commitment to this work. Our organization stands as a beacon of resistance against displacement. Despite our community’s transformation, we refuse to be priced out. We fight to preserve our presence and advocate for our right to remain in our neighborhood.”

Fast-forward 51 years, and the landscape of Williamsburg has undergone a profound transformation. What was once an affordable haven has become a magnet for a burgeoning artistic community, driving up rents and leaving longtime residents struggling to make ends meet. In the face of this gentrification tsunami, Los Sures is a bastion of hope and support for those in need. Ramos expresses gratitude for the vision and actions of earlier advocates. “History grounds us, anchoring our organization and me in this community’s journey,” he states. “Our predecessors’ resilience birthed our existence, providing a foundation of purpose. As torchbearers, we must advance their legacy, fostering resistance and guiding future leaders. We’re entrusted with empowering others and ensuring our community’s ongoing evolution. It’s a cycle of resilience and progress, a testament to our collective strength,” he adds.

The organization has evolved to meet the changing needs of its community, offering a diverse array of resources and services. From affordable housing and tenant organizing to senior residential and recreation centers, a hydroponic farm, and a local food pantry, Los Sures is a lifeline for countless individuals and families facing economic hardship. At the core of its mission, the Real Estate Development Department tirelessly acquires and develops low-income housing, breathing new life into neglected buildings. With over 5,000 units rehabilitated and constructed, they pave the way for affordable living, empowering local families to thrive. Their funding sources, from governmental entities to financial institutions, underscore their dedication to accessible housing.

“Los Sures faces unique challenges as a nonprofit management and development company. We lack the same opportunities as for-profit developers, and maintaining affordable housing becomes increasingly difficult with rising costs. Balancing affordability while covering expenses requires creativity and accessing subsidies for tenants. We’ve learned that offering affordable housing isn’t enough; wrap-around services are essential. Residents shouldn’t have to choose between basic needs and housing.”



Meanwhile, the Tenant and Community Organizing Departments form the backbone of grassroots advocacy, rallying residents around vital issues. From tenants' rights to civic engagement, these departments foster solidarity, ensuring that the voices of the South Side are heard. Through education and empowerment, they cultivate a sense of ownership and agency within the community.

In tandem, the Social Services Department offers a lifeline to those in need, employing a holistic, community-based approach. From individual case management to crisis intervention, they provide comprehensive support, guiding formerly homeless tenants toward stability. With its innovative Hydroponic Farm, the bustling Los Sures Food Pantry nourishes over 800 individuals monthly, addressing food insecurity at its root.

Amidst this tapestry of support, the Los Sures "David Santiago" Senior Center stands as a vibrant hub of companionship and care. Here, eighty seniors find nourishment for both body and soul daily, enjoying hearty lunches and engaging in social recreation.

"Being recognized by a national organization of committed Latinos is an honor, acknowledging our agency's efforts to empower our community. It underscores our unity and the importance of sharing opportunities and camaraderie among Latino leaders and organizations. This exchange of information fosters collective progress and strengthens our bonds."

United in purpose, the departments of Los Sures exemplify the transformative power of community-driven initiatives. Together, they weave a safety net of support, empowering residents to build brighter futures in the heart of Brooklyn's South Side.

"Looking ahead, the next phase involves welcoming new community members and ensuring our developments cater to their needs," says Ramos. "Completing projects like housing 94 low-income senior units with adequate social services is just the beginning. Our efforts in the next years will shape the legacy of Southside United for the next 51 years. Inspiring young leaders ensures our organization's continued impact and relevance," he says.

FOCUS ON WHAT MATTERS

**DON'T LET THE WORLD CHANGE YOU.
CHANGE THE WORLD.**

MGM Resorts International is proud to sponsor
SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc.



PEPSICO PROUDLY SUPPORTS SER JOBS FOR PROGRESS



PepsiCo is committed to creating a more diverse, equitable and inclusive space for our people, in our business partnerships and our communities.

Together with our partners and leading organizations, we are dedicated to making positive change and contributing solutions to shared challenges.



pepsico.com



SER National Affiliates

The Power of Many is Voice and Choice

In the vibrant heart of Washington, DC, a dynamic spirit of learning and achievement ignites the Multicultural Career Intern Program (MCIP) corridors. More than just a family, MCIP has cultivated an entire community—a tapestry woven from its members' diverse voices, backgrounds, and experiences. In this bustling hub of ambition and collaboration, individuals unite in a shared pursuit of academic excellence and personal growth.

MCIP is where dreams take flight, barriers are shattered, and lives are transformed for the betterment of oneself and the uplifting of all touched by its profound influence. Welcome to MCIP, where the journey of discovery knows no bounds. "Our focus is on preparing young people to succeed in academics and to be leaders in their community," says Maria Tukeva, MCIP Founder. "This also means becoming

leaders in the quest for social justice, and we do this through providing them with educational experiences that help them become designers of their future," she adds.

The year was 1979 when a beacon of hope first emerged on the educational horizon – the inception of MCIP. Founded with a noble purpose, MCIP aimed to cater to the overlooked potentials of promising students, many of whom hailed from low-income backgrounds and belonged to linguistic minority groups. "From the beginning, we had a long-standing commitment to college and career success for not only Latino young people but all young people of color and that as a school and its associated foundation, they were and are today our number one priority," she says. Yet, Tukeva saw that these bright minds were slipping through the crevices of the



conventional public schooling system or had already been discarded from its confines. Maria identified many factors contributing to this educational exodus: an absence of cultural and linguistic sensitivity, systemic apathy, and a deficiency in teacher training and support. Moreover, low expectations existed for student achievement, inadequate curricular offerings, and a heavy reliance on punitive measures like suspensions and expulsions.

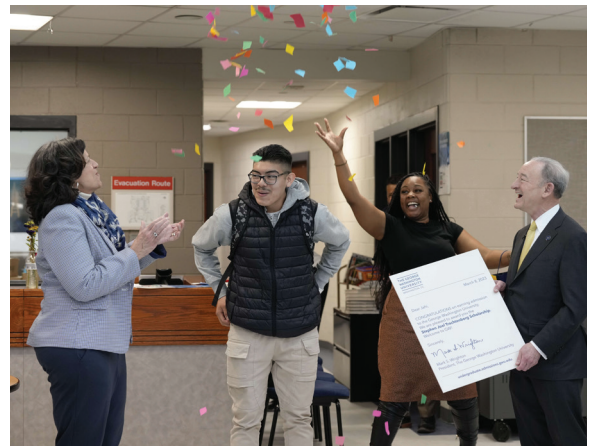
Maria saw a better way, and so did the community that joined her. To combat this educational injustice, they embarked on a journey over three decades ago, initially welcoming 40 students who had either been pushed out or had willingly dropped out of the District of Columbia public schools. By the close of a decade, in 1989, MCIP had blossomed into a full-fledged alternative school, serving a daily cohort of 600 students. This marked the genesis of BMHS – Bell Multicultural High School – born from the merger of MCIP’s core instructional program with the Bell Career Development Center.

Despite many challenges, MCIP surged forward, adapting its methodologies to meet the evolving needs of the BMHS student body. A significant milestone was reached in 2008 with the merger of BMHS and Lincoln Multicultural Middle School, giving rise to the Columbia Heights Educational Campus (CHEC), a groundbreaking institution spanning grades 6 through 12 – a first in Washington D.C. history.

Along the way, Kapindi Kroma joined MCIP and helped Maria and the leadership team expand services to fulfill the mission. Today, he serves as Executive Director of MCIP. “Our programs are run as an

efficient model where the school does instructional services during the day. MCIP does enhanced and extended instructional services after school through the evening. Our efficiency benefits every student because we have different grants that complement what the school does. It perfectly complements the instructional vision and the idea of 100% college attendance preparation and resilience. If college is not attainable, we endeavor 100% career viability, so no child is left behind.”

For Maria and Kapindi today, inclusiveness at MCIP is more than just a word. “One thing that we realized when students returned from the pandemic was that engagement was never what we wanted it to be,” says Maria. “After the pandemic, it was even more challenging, and students had decided to do other things. So, we realized we had to change how we were



doing things. We needed to know what they wanted, so we’ve focused on student voice and choice over the past two years. We are incorporating what students wish to do in everything from the cafeteria food to the curriculum to how we do the master schedule for the day.”

Kapindi echoes those sentiments and speaks of the strength that comes from a united effort. “Voice and choice are powerful, and the MCIP board has always had student representation. Our bylaws call for at least three student representatives. Now, the school is incorporating that voice and choice philosophy into its strategies and structures. We instill in all of our students that if they take the work seriously, there is nothing that they can’t do. This belief is why we have a delinquency intervention program plus targeted literacy intervention. During the school day, we ask struggling students to come to one-on-one sessions



where they can counsel and instruct so they know we care and we're here to help them succeed."

This union has broadened MCIP's outreach and diversified its efforts to encompass middle school education. Today, MCIP stands as a beacon of educational equity, offering myriad evidence-based instructional and support services to bridge the achievement gap for the 1400 students and families comprising CHEC. MCIP continues to pave the path toward a brighter future for all through unwavering dedication and innovative approaches.

"It is wonderful that SER National recognizes MCIP, but mostly because that's how we started," recalls Maria fondly. "We would not be here if it weren't for SER National. We go back to 1979 when I first worked on the proposal for the school with a team of people from SER National. Seeing how far this initiative has gone and can continue for many years is exciting and personally rewarding to experience," she adds.

Kapindi speaks of the ambitious opportunities beyond the horizon that MCIP is also working to realize. "We are on a journey to create the nation's first youth-run community development corporation, or CDC, where students come to school and learn the tools to solve problems within their community. Their education is no longer something that they must wait ten years to start applying. Now, reading makes sense, and math makes sense. So do negotiation debates and understanding contracts. All these types of things are relevant and important right now. When we create the CDC, it will be student-led and a component to really refining public education that rarely ever changes."

What does Maria see ahead? The path is promising for her and closely linked to those who will help shape it. "I see us becoming even more of a youth-oriented agency where we incorporate youth voices, not just like a little committee here and there, but everywhere because they are our future. I see us as an organization incorporating them into everything we do and create for tomorrow. What we can achieve is limitless and exciting."



Diversity is the Source of Our Strength

In the heart of Camden, New Jersey, where the streets echo the stories of resilience and hope, is Puerto Rican Unity for Progress (PRUP), a beacon of support and empowerment for the vibrant Hispanic community. For over four decades, PRUP has been the lifeline for low-income residents, providing bilingual services tailored to the evolving needs of Camden County.

Rick Camacho, the steadfast Executive Director since 2019, embodies the spirit of service ingrained in PRUP's mission. Reflecting on the journey of PRUP and its enduring commitment to the community, Camacho speaks with unwavering dedication. "This has always been an agency of service," he emphasizes. "We are here for the community of Camden, including those who are newly arriving, helping them adapt and adjust to being part of the United States."

Reflecting on his journey, Rick shared insights into his lifelong dedication to community service. "It chose me," he confessed, recounting his roots deeply intertwined with Camden's fabric. "This is who I am, and it is what I believe is my purpose—how I can best serve the people I know and care about."

Founded in 1976 with a mission to uplift the 14,231 Hispanic residents of Camden, PRUP has evolved into a cornerstone of support for the city's now 75,550-strong population, nearly half of whom identify as Hispanic or Latino. PRUP initially aimed to advocate for the Puerto Rican community and ensure access to entitled services.

However, with the surge in newcomers, their focus shifted to meeting everyday survival needs. Reflecting on the impact of the increasing influx of immigrants, Camacho acknowledged, "When it comes to the immigrants coming in, many from the Caribbean, mostly Haiti, the population that needs help, their needs are basic: food, clothing, shelter. Mothers have to provide food, and we need things like clothing for them," Camacho explained.

PRUP's commitment to serving the community is unwavering. From job readiness training to housing referrals, health initiatives to senior empowerment, and educational programs to youth services, PRUP's comprehensive approach addresses the multifaceted needs of its constituents.

Despite the growing demand for its services, PRUP remains steadfast in its dedication to expanding its reach. With the Hispanic population more than doubling since its inception, PRUP recognizes the role needed to adapt and evolve to meet the community's changing needs. As Camden's demographic landscape shifts, PRUP stands poised to remain at the forefront, driving progress and empowerment for future generations.

Navigating the challenges of meeting growing demands with limited resources, PRUP relies on the dedication of its staff and the support of volunteers and partner organizations. "We work with other nonprofits, leveraging every opportunity to meet the needs of our community," Camacho shares. "Collaboration is key to our survival. We work with Philabundance





Food Bank and Camden Cathedral Kitchen to address hunger, and Cradles to Crayons, a vital partner in providing essential needs such as clothing, hygiene kits, and back-to-school supplies for the children we serve,” he adds.

Amidst the relentless pace of serving the community, Camacho finds moments to reflect on the profound significance of PRUP’s work. “It is a testament to the ongoing need within our community,” he observes. “Our roots, heritage, our culture—essential to our identity, guiding us as we navigate the complexities of modern life.” In advocating for more significant support and resources, Camacho envisions a future where nonprofits like PRUP receive consistent funding to sustain their vital services. “We need a fixed amount of funds annually,” he asserts. “To truly serve our community, we must ensure stability and continuity in our efforts.”

Central to PRUP’s mission is the celebration of diversity and the promotion of unity. Camacho passionately underscores the importance of preserving cultural heritage. “Our diversity is our strength,” he asserts. “It is through understanding and embracing our differences that we find common ground, forging a path towards unity.”

At the center of PRUP’s programs are initiatives that empower the next generation and nourish the community. “Our youth program instills leadership skills and fosters cultural understanding,” Camacho shares proudly. “And our food distribution program ensures no family goes hungry, embodying our commitment to serving the most vulnerable.”

As PRUP continues to grow and adapt to the changing needs of Camden, Camacho remains grounded in the organization’s core values. “We are an organization for our community, by our community,” he emphasizes. “Our strength lies in our ability to come together, to support one another, across generations and backgrounds.” In the face of uncertainty and adversity, Camacho’s unwavering belief in the power of unity shines through. “Together, we can overcome any challenge,” he declares. “Our diversity is not a barrier; it is our greatest asset, propelling us towards a future where every individual, regardless of background, can thrive.”

As the doors of PRUP remain open, welcoming all who seek support and solidarity, Camacho looks ahead with optimism. “Our journey is far from over,” he reflects. “But as long as we stand together, united in purpose and passion, there is no limit to what we can achieve.”

¡60 Años de SER!

In Spanish, SER means “to be.” Yes, “to be,” but SER has meant so much more to millions of hardworking Hispanic Americans over the last 60 years. It has meant parents could be better providers for their families. Moreover, sons and daughters could be introduced to educational opportunities, giving them a fighting chance to succeed. Ironically, though, SER itself almost wasn’t afforded that same chance for success.

Change was in the air in 1964, a pivotal year in American History. Weeks earlier, the tragic loss of President John F. Kennedy propelled Lyndon B. Johnson into the world spotlight. It was the year of The Great Society program and the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, which cleared the way for the Vietnam War. It was also a year after the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the slayings of civil rights activists. It was against this tumultuous and rapidly changing backdrop that SER was born.






Newsletter

Vol. 3 No. 4 National Office September 1979

SER—SEARS HISPANIC WOMEN'S MANAGEMENT TRAINING SEMINAR



SER ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL IN D.C.

SER has recently received a grant from the Office of Youth Programs, U.S. Department of Labor to implement a Bilingual Career Intern Program for Hispanic youth in Washington, D.C.

The program will serve 200 youth, who are either high school dropouts or at risk of dropping out of school. The "interns" will be referred to the program through mechanisms developed by the program operators and the counselors of the participating schools.

Once enrolled in the Career Intern Program (CIP), the interns will undertake the coursework necessary to complete required credits for graduation from District of Columbia Public High Schools. At the same time, the program is designed to meet the personal needs of the interns and to facilitate the development of their career goals and plans.

Program components include systematically planned academic and

career experiences, in-depth counseling and family involvement activities. Upon completion of all program requirements, interns will receive their high school diplomas, and will have the option to participate in on-the-job training, advanced skill training, college, technical school, or employment to pursue the careers of their choice.

The overall educational philosophy of the Career Intern Program is to develop curricula, methodologies, and environments which address the cognitive, affective, and career needs of Hispanic youth in a culturally and linguistically sensitive approach.

The Program will be housed in a wing of a newly built public school located in the Adams Morgan/Mt. Pleasant area of the nation's capital. Once this demonstration program is fully developed, SER plans to implement similar projects in other cities throughout the nation.



Maria Tukeva, Coordinator, Career Intern Program for Hispanic Youth.

Back then, in 1964, the two oldest Hispanic grassroots organizations, the American GI Forum (AGIF) and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), started SER. Both organizations were founded in Corpus Christi, Texas: LULAC in 1929 and the AGIF in 1948. Access to education and employment were at the top of their agendas. At that initial meeting between LULAC and AGIF officials, it quickly became apparent that SER needed to be a national organization.

For over six decades, SER has undergone a transformation, including name changes and logo updates. But there's one constant that has remained unchanged throughout its journey – SER means “to be.” The name was carefully chosen to motivate Hispanic people to be the best version of themselves. Additionally, SER is an abbreviation for service, employment, and redevelopment.



Ignacio Salazar, the President & CEO of SER National, has been leading the organization for over two decades now. During this time, he has witnessed countless success stories that have left a lasting impact on him. Despite having too many favorite success stories to pick just one, he is always inspired by the stories of individuals whose lives have been positively transformed by the organization's initiatives. Whenever he travels, he meets people who have been served directly or indirectly touched by the organization, which is a testament to SER National's unwavering commitment to inspire and motivate people to strive for their best selves.

From its humble beginnings with a pencil-and-paper job bank in Corpus Christi, SER has come a long way. The organization started by providing jobs in the 60s, which gave people employment, hope, and a future. The impact of these early initiatives changed generations of people. Today, thanks to the support of generous corporations, foundations, donors, and government contracts, SER National and the SER Network of Affiliates offer a wide range of employment and training services, as well as programs and services related to early childhood education, housing, entrepreneurship, and Cisco Certifications online as an example. These wide range of services reflects the organization's continued commitment to serving communities in every way possible, and to empowering individuals to reach their full potential. Together, SER National and the SER Network of Affiliates proudly serve over one million people annually from 200 locations in 26 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

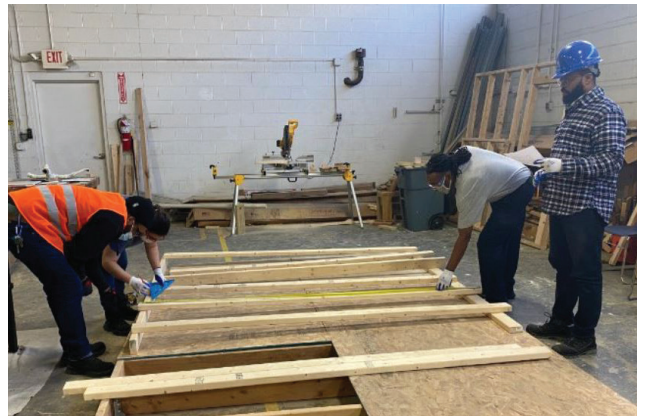
Salazar said SER had enjoyed the support of many corporations over the last six decades. IBM, Coca-Cola, Comcast NBCUniversal, T-Mobile, Ford, Wells Fargo, PepsiCo, GM, and Cisco are some examples of the corporations that believe in our mission.





While things have indeed improved for Latinos in this country, “one thing that hasn’t changed is that this population is immensely important to the nation as a whole,” said Salazar, who has led the organization for one-third of its existence. “About 20 percent live in poverty today. If you look at children, one-third of Latino children are living in poverty, and that needs to be addressed. People in those lower sectors of economics have a much harder time getting out if not for nonprofit organizations like SER,” he added.







Those pioneers who led the push to start SER and collaborated with the US Department of Labor and the US Department of the Navy were proud of their culture and people. They were passionate about doing their best for the most in need. They spoke with conviction because they believed in creating SER as a nationwide organization representing the underserved.

“We will continue to develop new programs and initiatives that meet the needs of an ever-changing workplace while addressing the needs of individuals with greater barriers to self-sufficiency. Much remains to be done—but one thing remains clear—after 60 years, the need for SER is greater than ever before,” added Salazar.



From its inception, SER has transformed the lives of many people - from young students to seniors and all ages in between - freed them from the possibility of poverty and helped them achieve their dreams of a better tomorrow. Yet despite decades of achievements, it may be impossible to accurately measure the number of lives SER has positively impacted. SER’s story is not yet complete; it is only the first 60-year milestone in an ongoing journey of enhancing people’s lives, as well as that of our communities and country.

SER’s motto stands true today as it did decades ago, “Cultivating America’s Greatest Resource: People.”





**No one is born
a rocket scientist.**

We're committed to supporting those who support you. That's why General Motors is a proud sponsor of SER and STEM Community Day. Because we know the journey to the top requires those who believe in you.

everybody in.



Welcome to the SER National Board of Directors!

T Mobile[™]

Joanna Diaz Soffer
Government & External
Affairs
T-Mobile
Corporate Representative



Patricia Reyes
Assistant Plant Director,
GM
Corporate Representative



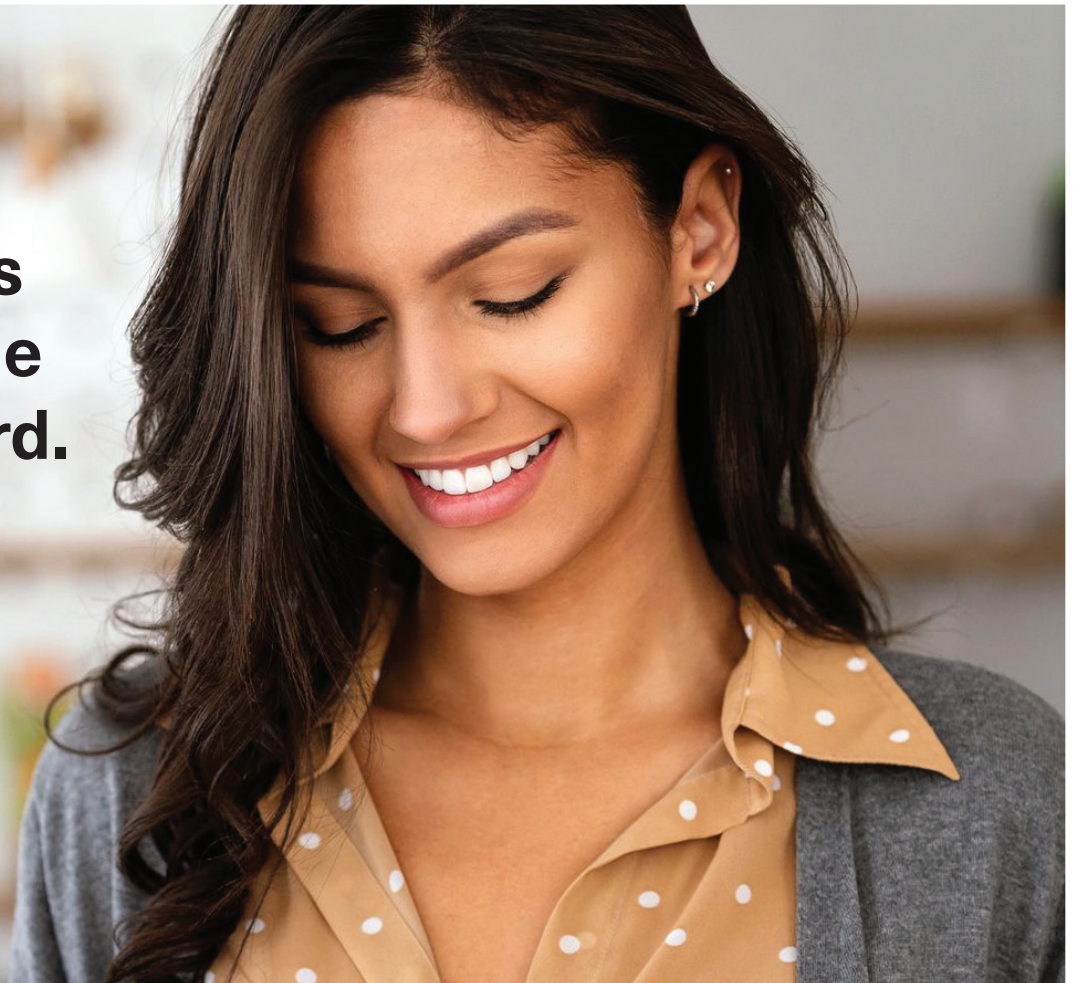
PEPSICO

Armando Saleh
Director, Government Affairs
PepsiCo
Corporate Representative

**We create
the networks
that move the
world forward.**

Verizon is proud of our
talented and diverse
team of people who
focus on our customers,
every day.

verizon[✓]



Proud to pitch in on the
projects that matter most.
Grateful for the opportunity
to serve the local community.

Charter is pleased to support the
60th Annual SER National Conference.

Charter[®]
COMMUNICATIONS



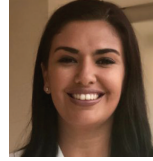
SER National Board of Directors



Hector M. Flores
Chairman
LULAC
Representative



Eva Garza Dewaelsche
Vice Chair
Affiliate
Representative



Jackie Puente
Treasurer
Comcast
Corporate
Representative



Jane C. Garcia
Secretary
AGIF Representative



Frank J. Archuleta
AGIF Representative



Ruben Barrales
Wells Fargo
Corporate
Representative



Joanna Diaz Soffer
T-Mobile
Corporate
Representative



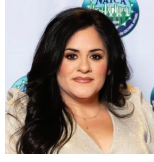
Manuel G. Escobar Jr.
LULAC
Representative



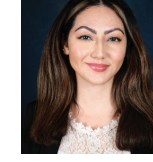
Maria Ferreira-Bedard
Affiliate
Representative



Maria Garcia-Cacique
AGIF Representative



Shameeka Marie Gonzalez-Gamboa
LULAC
Representative



Delma Gorostieta
LULAC
Representative



Juan Aurelio Lopez
LULAC Representative



Felicita Lugo
AGIF
Representative



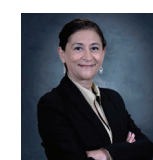
Oscar Moran
LULAC Representative



Jesús Padrón
Affiliate
Representative



Laura Quintana
Cisco Systems, Inc.
Corporate
Representative



Patricia Reyes
GM
Corporate
Representative



Brigadier General (R) Sylvia Rubalcaba Crockett
AGIF Representative



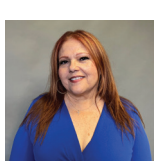
Armando Saleh
PepsiCo
Corporate
Representative



Mirtha Villarreal-Younger MAJ (Ret), COL (CA)
AGIF Representative



Frank Casillas
Board Member
Emeritus
AGIF Representative



Jessica Quintana
Board Member
Ex Officio
Affiliate Representative



Frank C. Casillas

Leader, Board Member and Friend

We are so lucky to have had Mr. Frank C. Casillas as a part of La Familia de SER for so many years. He first discovered our organization during a visit as the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Labor under President Ronald Reagan in the mid-1980s. Since then, he has become a true friend and supporter of SER, serving as a board member, mentor, advisor, and all-around champion to various SER organizations, including SER National, SER Metro-Detroit, Chicago's Central States SER, and SERCO, Inc.

Mr. Casillas holds a BS in Engineering from Purdue University and previously taught mathematics at the Purdue University Extension in Indiana. He was also a First Lieutenant in Korea for the US Army, where he received the Bronze Star. Before serving as the Assistant Secretary of Labor in the United States Government from 1984 to 1987, he worked at Standard Oil as an engineer and at the Rand Corporation as a computer systems analyst. He spent ten years in the computer division of General Electric Corporation before joining Bunker Ramo Corporation, where he spent sixteen years leading technology and new business development initiatives worldwide.

Mr. Casillas has been an inspiration to all of us at La Familia de SER. His wealth of knowledge, unwavering commitment, and dedication to the organization have made a profound impact and we are truly grateful for his many contributions and distinguished service to SER National.

As we celebrate 60 years, we are reminded that Mr. Casillas's contributions as a leader and champion of SER, will continue to positively impact the communities we serve for many years to come.



A FUTURE SO BRIGHT

YOU CAN ALMOST
TASTE IT

FROM YOUTH DEVELOPMENT TO SKILLS-BASED LEARNING, COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS AND MORE, WE ARE PROUD TO SUPPORT EDUCATION BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM. BECAUSE EVERYONE WITH A THIRST TO LEARN SHOULD HAVE THE CHANCE TO PURSUE THEIR DREAMS.

THE *Coca-Cola* COMPANY

SER Network Directory

SER NATIONAL

California

American GI Forum Education Foundation of Santa Maria Barrio Station
Santa Maria, CA
San Diego, CA (3)

Campesinos Unidos
Brawley, CA
San Diego, CA

Centro CHA Inc.
Long Beach, CA (2)

Centro Latino de San Francisco
San Francisco, CA

El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center
Riverside, CA
San Bernardino, CA

Latino Educational Fund
Pomona, CA
Project SOY
Inglewood, CA

Pueblo y Salud, Inc.
Palmdale, CA
San Fernando, CA

SER-Jobs for Progress - San Joaquin Valley
Bakersfield, CA
Brawley, CA
Calexico, CA
Chowchilla, CA
Chula Vista, CA
El Cajon, CA
El Centro, CA
Escondido, CA
Fresno, CA (6)
Guadalupe, CA
Hayward, CA
Inglewood, CA
Kerman, CA (2)
Lompoc, CA
Madera, CA (2)

Mendota, CA
Merced, CA
Modesto, CA
Moreno Valley, CA
Oceanside, CA (2)
Orange Cove, CA
Oxnard, CA
Parlier, CA
Pasadena, CA
Pomona, CA
Raisin City, CA
San Diego, CA
San Rafael, CA
Santa Ana, CA
Santa Maria, CA (2)
Santa Rosa, CA
Stockton, CA
Sun Valley, CA
Vallejo, CA
Visalia, CA

SER NFJP
Gilroy, CA
Watsonville, CA

Colorado

SER SCSEP
Lakewood
(Denver area), CO
Loveland, CO
Grand Junction, CO
Pueblo, CO
Trinidad, CO

Connecticut

Casa Otoñal
New Haven, CT (3)

District of Columbia

Multicultural Career Intern Program
Washington, DC

SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc.
Washington, DC

Florida

Bridge for Hope Inc.
Doral, FL

Georgia

LaAmistad, Inc.
Atlanta, GA (9)
Austell, GA
Decatur, GA
Doraville, GA
Marietta, GA
Sandy Springs, GA (2)

Illinois

Central States SER
Aurora, IL
Chicago, IL (7)

SERCO, Inc.
North Riverside, IL

Kansas

SER SCSEP
Dodge City, KS
Kansas City, KS
Pittsburg, KS
Topeka, KS
Wichita, KS

Maryland

Missions of Love Charities
Capitol Heights, MD

Massachusetts

La Alianza Hispana
Boston, MA

Southeastern Massachusetts SER-Jobs for Progress, Inc.

Fall River, MA
Taunton, MA
Spanish American Center
Leominster, MA

Michigan

SER Metro-Detroit, Jobs for Progress, Inc./ SERCO, Inc.
Dearborn, MI
Detroit, MI (6)



FORD MOTOR COMPANY FUND

FORD FUND IS PROUD TO SUPPORT SER NATIONAL

As the global philanthropic arm of Ford Motor Company, Ford Fund focuses on providing access to essential services, education for the future of work and entrepreneurship opportunities for under-resourced and underrepresented communities. Ford Fund's partnerships and programming are designed to be responsive to unique community needs, ensuring people have equitable opportunities to move forward. Harnessing Ford's scale, resources and mobility expertise, Ford Fund drives meaningful impact through grantmaking, Ford Community Centers and employee volunteerism.

FORDFUND.ORG

@fordfund



SER Network Directory

SER NATIONAL

Minnesota

La Oportunidad, Inc.
Minneapolis, MN

Missouri

SER SCSEP
Columbia, MO
Saint Joseph, MO

New Jersey

**Puerto Rican Unity
for Progress**
Camden, NJ

New Mexico

SER Robotics
Alamogordo, NM
Eunice, NM
Roswell, NM

New York

**Neighborhood
Association for
Inter Cultural
Affairs, Inc.**
Bronx, NY (12)
Brooklyn, NY
Elmhurst, NY

**Southside
United Housing
Development Fund
Corporation**

Brooklyn, NY (7)
**SER of Westchester,
Inc.**
White Plains, NY

North Carolina

Hispanic League
Winston-Salem, NC

Ohio

Esperanza Inc.
Cleveland, OH

Oklahoma

**Latino Community
Development
Agency**
Oklahoma City, OK (2)

Pennsylvania

Casa San Jose
Pittsburgh, PA (2)
Washington, PA

**Hispanic American
Organization**
Allentown, PA (3)

Puerto Rico

NAICA-PR
San Juan, PR

Rhode Island

**SER-Jobs for
Progress, Inc.**
Pawtucket, RI
Providence, RI
Warwick, RI

Texas

**Our Casas Resident
Council, Inc.**
San Antonio, TX

SER EHS
Grand Prairie, TX (2)

**SER Jobs for
Progress National,
Inc.**
Irving, TX

SER SCSEP
Beaumont, TX
Fort Worth, TX
Houston, TX
Texas City, TX

**SERCO of Texas/
Workforce Solutions**

Alice, TX
Bandera, TX
Beeville, TX
Boerne, TX
Brenham, TX
Bryan, TX
Caldwell, TX
Centerville, TX
Corpus Christi, TX (3)
Falfurrias, TX
Floresville, TX
Hearne, TX

Hebbronville, TX
Hondo, TX
Kennedy, TX
Kerrville, TX
Kingsville, TX
Laredo, TX
Madisonville, TX
Navasota, TX
New Braunfels, TX
Pearsall, TX
Pleasanton, TX
Seguin, TX
Sinton, TX
Zapata, TX

SERJobs
Houston, TX
Galveston, TX
Stafford, TX

**Tejano Center
for Community
Concerns**
Brownsville, TX
Houston, TX

Virginia

Kitchen of Purpose
Arlington, VA

**Virginia Hispanic
Foundation**
Richmond, VA
Tysons, VA
Virginia Beach, VA

Washington

Mi Centro
Tacoma, WA

Wisconsin

SER SCSEP
Fond du Lac, WI
Kenosha, WI
La Crosse, WI
Madison, WI
Milwaukee (West Allis), WI
Racine, WI
Rhineland, WI

Thank You to Our Sponsors!





PROJECT 10MILLION

WORKING TO CONNECT EVERY STUDENT

