Friends, colleagues, partners, and community,

_to educate, advocate and empower_, that is the mission of YOUR Hispanic Center of Western Michigan. We would like to thank you for the phenomenal support over the past year. 2019 was a year of change and transition, yet the Hispanic Center has experienced an outpouring of solidarity that has been extremely appreciated. We have seen the traffic into your center increase, our programming has been filled with eager and enthusiastic participants, our Cesar Chavez space has been utilized by our community weekly, and our events have been successfully attended. This momentum has reignited the team’s energy in away that can only propel us forward, and for that we thank you.

Our number one priority in 2019 was to listen to the community. As we embarked on our listening sessions, we knew that understanding our community would yield results. We have worked diligently on engaging with residents by listening to their needs and wants and are currently working on the actions plans we created as a result of the feedback we received.

Some of those plans include partnering up to create pathways for success that will make our programming and events more intentional and authentic. We knew there are many organizations, companies, and schools who already had programs and services that our community would greatly benefit from, all we needed to do was create connections.

In an effort to reengage community, we reconstructed the physical nature of the center by adding drop-in cubicles, we opened the building past regular hours and on weekends, provided childcare, translation and interpretation services, and took full advantage of our growing 8,000+ audience on our social media platforms to connect more intentionally with our community.

I can confidently say that our team has a clear perspective of what we as a Center can provide and we want to commit to you that we will continue to listen, to care, and to respond to the needs of our community.

Best,

Adnoris 'Bo' Torres
Executive Director
Through partnerships, education, programs, and community navigation, our basic needs specialists are able to support the most vulnerable members of the Hispanic/Latino community. They help break down barriers that limit accessibility to resources needed to become self-sufficient, independent, and active community members.

**Health and Wellness**

- Referrals to sexual/violence victim support
- Working with the Department of Human Services:
  - Assistance with Food Stamp paperwork
  - Assistance with Medicare/Medicaid paperwork
  - Assistance with other vital records & paperwork
- Referrals to:
  - Food Pantries
  - Affordable housing
  - Clothing
  - Medical/ Dental Care
  - Mental Health
  - Nutrition Education
  - Civil and Human Rights Advocacy

With a focus on health and wellness, the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan is able to offer programs and services like Comprando Rico y Sano and diabetes education thanks to our partnerships with UnidosUS and Mercy Health.

Under these programs, promotoras de salud (health promoters) conduct educational sessions, grocery store tours, and cooking demonstrations to promote health-conscious shopping, smart food choices, and cost-saving strategies.

Participants in cooking demonstration classes receive free Crock-Pots.

**376**
Enrolled in Health & Wellness Programs

**848**
Individuals supported through basic needs services
Supporters from Detroit, Kalamazoo, Lansing and Grand Rapids traveled to the State Capitol to share testimonies about immigration, the Flint water crisis, and wage discrimination.

Two in-house notaries
Offer power of attorney letters
Offer insight on the best local legal counsel
Offer bus trips to the Mexican Consulate in Detroit, MI
Host the Consulate of Mexico and Guatemala
Share client testimonials with state legislators and house representatives
Participate in local, state, and national rallies
Offer Voter and Census education
Host elected officials to come hear our community’s voice

"Aparte de conocer personas amables en el bus, pude renovar mi pasaporte después de 19 años. Recomiendo este servicio 100%"
-Dina Dime

Part of our mission is to advocate for equity and the improvement of Latino/Hispanic social determinants of health through civic engagement and immigration services.

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369 notarizations
231 individuals served through our bus trip services

Our Human and Civil Rights Advocate, Olga Martinez, with members of Michigan United in Washington, D.C. supporting the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

Hispanic Center staff at a downtown Grand Rapids rally showing solidarity for immigrant rights, advocacy for Latino/Hispanic asylum seekers, and urging to keep families together at the Mexican/U.S. border.
Basic Needs

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COMMUNITY

Free services, programs, & events hosted at the Hispanic Center through new 2019 community partnerships:

- Counseling Services – Family Outreach Center
- Domestic Violence Support – Safe Heaven Ministries
- Know Your Rights - Movimiento Cosecha GR
- Addiction Peer Support Groups - Auxilio!!!
- Adult & Children Services - State of Michigan Department of Human Services
- Home Ownership Classes - Inner City Christian Federation
- Intro to Coding Classes - Grand Circus GR
- Kent County Friends of the Court
- English Classes - West Michigan Literacy Center
- Distribution of female hygiene products & undergarments – Be a Rose & I Support the Girls
- Latino Health Fair - Michigan Center for Contextual Factors in Alzheimer's Disease
- Series of Alzheimer’s Educational Presentations - MSU College of Human Medicine
- Zumba Classes - Zumba con Yeli Romero

"Mental health is no longer a cultural taboo, it is a financial barrier. I am grateful I was able to get my son the help he needed at the Hispanic Center."

- YADIRA M.
La Escuelita (The Little School)

The Hispanic Center of Western Michigan (HCWM) is a partner site for the Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative Preschool Programs. Located at the San Juan Diego Academy, La Escuelita is a free bilingual classroom designed to increase the accessibility of early scholastic resources for vulnerable children and provide quality education to children in our neighborhoods.

Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative (ELNC) is an initiative of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation vested in changing the current reality many vulnerable children face.

Each school year, the HCWM is able to accommodate 16 students, in 2019 all sixteen students successfully graduated.

GED en Español

Also supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Hispanic Center is one of the only places in the region where GED classes are offered in Spanish. With a new updated curriculum and a new inclusive instructor we can deliver a non-traditional 10-12-week hybrid course.

These courses are offered several times a year and are designed for each student to grow at their own pace.

Of those enrolled in the GED program, 3 have already been able to graduate.
We are committed to the educational success of students and partner to stem summer learning loss.

The SLA program for middle school students in 2019 ran for 8 weeks with a focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics). It also covered financial literacy and exposure to college.

Of the 20 kids enrolled in the 2019 SLA program, 20 successfully completed the program.

2019 SLA Post Program Survey

Think about how true each of these statements is about this summer program. (Pct. Answering Mostly True & Totally True)

- If I had the chance, I would attend this program again. 84%
- This program makes me want to challenge myself more in the future. 83%
- In this program, we learn that hard work is important for reaching goals. 95%
- Because of this program, I have new ideas for what I could do after high school. 78%
- In this program, we learn that setting goals is important. 95%
Another program the Center is a member of is the Employment Services Collaborative (ESC). ESC is comprised of eight organizations working together to help individuals and families access employment services in West Michigan.

Following the ESC holistic approach, the Hispanic Center coordinates services across community organizations to provide individuals and families with tools to move toward sustained financial stability. These tools include barrier resolution, job preparedness skills, personalized career coaching, and ongoing retention support.

In 2019, we serviced on average 18-20 people per month and were able to connect individuals with over 200 work sites. ESC also provided 29 students with scholarships to relieve some if not all the costs associated with each program.

America's Promise Grant
As a partnering organization of Grand Rapids Community College, the Hispanic Center is able to enroll individuals in America's Promise Grant.

Participants receive a career coach, assistance with financial needs, training enrollment, comprehensive assessments to target their best career path, and job-placement and retention services.

In 2019, our Workforce Career Specialist oversaw 63 enrolled individuals.

310 Individuals Served
200 Potential employers connected with Latix talent
29 Scholarship Applications Approved
Workforce Development

WE HAVE FOCUSED EXTERNALLY TOWARDS THE CLIENT FOR A MORE COMMUNITY LEAD APPROACH

Youth Employment Initiative

Part of the Youth Department but operating as Workforce Development, the Youth Employment Initiative is a 6 to 8-week program that provides students between the ages of 14-24 with valuable work experiences and skills through paid internships. This allows them opportunities to explore various occupations and the ability to connect with local businesses and organizations.

This program is offered several times during the year and targets students living in the Grand Rapids area. Twenty students participated and completed the program in 2019.

Spring GR

SpringGR is a grassroots business training experience that uses the business model canvas to help entrepreneurs develop their business idea or business. Over the course of 12 weeks, the program brings people together in small groups, teaches the business process, and provides coaching.

SpringGR acts as a bridge to connect graduates to other resources throughout Grand Rapids to further grow and develop their businesses. The Hispanic Center of Western Michigan is the only site where the program is done completely in Spanish. Offered in the Spring and Fall, each cohort has graduated an average of 13 inspiring entrepreneurs and or business owners.
One of our goals was to expand workforce development to the HCWM staff. After all, they too are members of our community; the more they learn and connect as a team, the better equipped they are to serve our community.

Some of the topics we have covered included LGBTQ+, Colorism in the Latinx Community, and a four-part educational training on Cultural Intelligence. At the end of the year, we also organized an interactive staff retreat at Camp Blodgett, with a focus on building the values of the organization and developing communication skills. Additionally, five staff members, including our Executive Director, successfully graduated from Urban Core Collective’s Transformational Leadership Program, a nine-month program designed to strengthen networks and support the professional development of emerging and established leaders of color in Grand Rapids.

Building an All-Star Team
Language Services

OUR USED LANGUAGES ARE KEY MARKERS OF OUR CULTURAL, SOCIAL, AND PERSONAL IDENTITY

The Hispanic Center of Western Michigan (HCWM) has a team of over 40 expert interpreters who use their cultural and industry experience to break communication barriers.

Language Services is one of the very few services with a fee associated for the service. The revenue generated is then reinvested in the Hispanic Center.

In order to bridge the gap in language accessibility, the Language Services Department partners with Grand Rapids Public Schools, Mercy Health St. Mary’s, Northern Initiatives, Grand River Endoscopy, Marvin Law Office, D.A. Blodgett St. John’s, Bromberg and Associates, and many more community organizations.

**Community Interpreter Program**
Offered at the HCWM, this is a ground-breaking 40-hour national certificate program in various language interpreting.

This training course targets the training needs of community interpreters and bilingual staff who work in Health Care, Education and Social/Human Services.

The course promotes national ethics and standards of practice for interpreters and prepares participants for national medical interpreter certification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oral Interpretations</th>
<th>Languages Covered</th>
<th>Certified Interpreters</th>
<th>Written Translations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5,565</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2,191</td>
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</tbody>
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Direction from community

One of the first initiatives of our new Executive Director was to invite community in to listen and gather information on what people value, their concerns, needs, interest areas, and to learn about assets and resources within the Latino/Hispanic community.

We want to develop programs based on the community's feedback and include them in our decision making. Four community conversations were conducted in 2019 with 88 participants in total.

Key Findings:
When we asked participants to share the strengths and weaknesses of the Hispanic Center, we found many of the same items listed under both categories. From this, we deduced several things:

- We need to work on consistency
  - Customer service
  - Quality of Services
  - High staff turnover
  - Delivering what we promise

- Improve communication with community
  - Increase community outreach, volunteer opportunities, and civic engagements
  - Transparency

Action Plans:

- Take accountability for our errors

- Create a Customer Experience Plan
  - Are we delivering outstanding value to our community?
  - Are we doing right by our community?
  - Are we making it easy for clients to access our services?

- Improve our communication
  - Increase our visibility in community
  - Coordinate community outreach activities through established and trusted organizations and people
  - Deliver a clear and consistent message
  - Continue to host community conversations
  - Provide annual reports
  - Diversify our marketing avenues

- Hire and build an all-star team
  - Prioritize staff's needs, flexibility, capacity
  - Create opportunities for development and growth

"My feeling when I walk in the center is, will I be able to accomplish what I've come here for. Uncertain of what to expect."

"It is so serious and professional. Before it was a place to smile, laugh, have fun."

"I come here often. I feel very comfortable. Every time I come they take very good care of me."

"Intimidating. Phone etiquette sometimes feels too cold, frigid."

"The Center is very friendly when you come in. There is openness to community meetings."

Direct quotes from the Community Conversations conducted in 2019
Community Outreach

Out in Community

Our presence in the community is incredibly important. Building relationships with our community through one-on-one interactions is one of our main values and as Latinos, we understand that doing so takes time, trust, listening, and understanding one another.

Some of the events/groups we participate in include:

- Rock the Block -LincUp
- Latino Community Coalition
- Annual GRCC Latino Youth Conference
- Annual Community Health Fair - SECOM
- Dia del Niño -GRPS
- Trunk-o-Treat en El Barrio
- The West Michigan Latino and Latina Networks

As a response to our community’s feedback, we have assigned a dedicated staff member to manage and coordinate more volunteer opportunities.

Thanks to this initiative, we received an enormous amount of participation. We thank all of our volunteers for their time, talents and support we received in 2019.

308 VOLUNTEERS
1,683 VOLUNTEER HOURS

SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH

Between our main Facebook page and the Grand Rapids Hispanic Festival page, our Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn pages, the Hispanic Center has a following of more than 8,000 individuals. In 2019, there was a increase of roughly 23% followers, likes, page visits, and post shares. This amounts to an average reach of 1,500 individuals per week.
Community Outreach
COMMUNITY SUPPORT & APPRECIATION

SABOR LATINO
During the last weekend of May, the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan (HCWM) holds its Annual Sabor Latino Gala, a time to come together and honor the people and organizations that allow the Hispanic Center to further its mission. It is also an opportunity to celebrate Latin culture, award exceptional Latino Youth, & share with community our plans for the future.

HISPANIC FESTIVAL
Every August, the Hispanic Center of Western hosts its largest fundraiser, the Grand Rapids Hispanic Festival. The event is an expressive way to celebrate & share heritage, culture & traditions with community. The festival features & supports Latino/Hispanic owned businesses, artisan vendors, artists, & musicians. Thanks to the support from sponsors, all proceeds made from drink sales benefit the HCWM. An estimated 30,000 people were in attendance at the 2019 Festival, a 15% increase from 2018.

LA GRAN POSADA
In December, the HCWM brings community together to celebrate the holidays in a cultural and meaningful way. This is an opportunity to open the building up for tours and share one on one the work we do, our goals and our vision for the future. This event also oversees the distribution of 40-50 real Christmas trees to families in need of extra holiday cheer.
"My mother and I left Puerto Rico after our house was destroyed by Hurricane Maria, we were left homeless, without any food or water. My mother is blind & diabetic...the Hispanic Center was able to find a place for us & my mom was able to get full Medicare coverage...

Sometime later, I found myself in an abusive relationship, I got kicked out of my home and found myself spending the night at a bus station, then I remembered how the Hispanic Center had helped me, immediately they pitched in, after some calls were made they were able to find me temporary housing and a phone. They contacted my mom, & helped us get back on good terms.

Later, I enrolled in the GED classes & my mom and I are in family therapy, all thanks to the Hispanic Center."

- Ivelisse and Constanza Garcia

"I came to the United States as a way to flee my abusive husband. Leaving my two children was one the hardest things I have ever done. When I arrived here I didn't know where to go, someone referred me to the Hispanic Center and that's when I met Alejandra, she was able to connect me with places that were able to give me clothes, find a home, and a job.

She helped me navigate the community and I was able to get help with my immigration papers and eventually win custody of my two children and was able to bring them here with me.

I am currently working, my children are in school, and I was able to get my mother to come too from the Dominican Republic. The Hispanic Center not only impacted my life, but that of my children and my mother."

- Valeria Martinez

"That place! Yeah, that place right there (the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan) that is is where my whole life changed. The staff at this location change students, immigrants, and community lives everyday! I will forever be grateful for them for opening doors and letting me in when other doors closed on me because of my actions."

- Manuel Uribe
From our financial statements, you can see that a majority of our expenses are directly linked to our programs. Thanks to the continued support we receive through donations, sponsorship, and in-kind gifts, we are able to allocate the majority of our efforts into our programs and allow opportunities for growth and innovative center-based experiential learning initiatives.
GRAND RAPIDS HISPANIC FESTIVAL

AUGUST 7-9, 2020
CALDER PLAZA, GRAND RAPIDS, MI
Thank you to our sponsoring partner

Fifth Third Bank

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