

The United States/Canada Impact Report

North America: United States, Texas--323161--Proyecto Desarrollo Humano: Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

The clients at Proyecto Desarrollo Humano (PDH) are Hispanic immigrants from Mexico and Central America who have come to the US because they and their children had no future in their homelands. They fled lives of physical danger, hunger, and hopelessness in pursuit of a better life, especially for their children. They live below the poverty line, often housed in substandard dwellings, and doing their best to support their families by means of erratic day labor jobs. Isolated from society's mainstream by language, poverty, and their immigrant status, they nonetheless see that things can and will improve.

Proyecto Desarrollo Humano helps meet the unanswered needs of Hispanic immigrants in rural colonias in western Hidalgo County, Texas. The center requested funds to offer programs in health, education, and social services to the residents of the colonia who are unable to contribute to the programs.

Through the funding, PDH provided:

- Health programs providing a healthier lifestyle:
 - Medical/dental clinic for the uninsured, staffed by professionals who volunteer their services.
 - Women's wellness program, which includes daily Zumba exercise, individual and group counseling, arts, crafts, and sewing.
 - Community gardens producing organic vegetables to improve family diets and building community among members. Focus is on a communally farmed 2/3 acre plot, aided by hands-on input by professionals.

- Education programs which foster learning:
 - Evening ESL classes for adults
 - After-school tutorials with computer access for all students
 - Two summer programs for children

- Social Service programs which promote development:
 - Women's leadership training
 - Parenting classes including pre-natal and young mothers
 - Home improvement projects
 - Girl Scouts
 - Thrift store

The Sisters noted that an ongoing challenge remains the tendency for participants to drop out of programs and neglect commitments. The residents of the colonia are easy prey to outside distractions, and the Sisters believe that is due to their material poverty and vulnerability to empty promises. The women's sewing group was able to secure a production contract to produce cloth bags for various events. They have learned the importance of meeting deadlines and have experienced the encouraging results via the money they have earned.

IMPACT: The varied programs at PDH touched the lives of **5,600** residents of the colonias.

All of the programs have continued to contribute to the primary goal of helping the people develop their human and spiritual potential:

- The health programs have been serving the people on a daily basis, especially the Zumba exercise class for women, attendant health monitoring, and community gardens project.

- Ten ESL students have been faithful, and continue to exhibit progress in their English language ability.
- Among the social service programs, the thrift store has a daily impact in the lives of the colonia families, serving not only as a worthwhile shopping venue but also as a gathering spot for the women. Fourteen Girl Scouts have taken giant steps in self-improvement and are experiencing what it means to be part of a mainline US organization; also to be commended are the two colonia mothers who trained to be the troop leaders.



February 2018

**North America: California—448366—Nuevo Amanecer Mujer Integral—
Congregation of the Sisters of the Guardian Angel**

Nuevo Amanecer Mujer Integral is a non-profit support group for low income undocumented migrant Hispanic women in Los Angeles. The group supports more than 300 women and assists them in strengthening their self-esteem, using immigration resources in the community and availing themselves of opportunities for healthcare and housing services. The majority of the women who have participated in the program have improved their emotional and economic condition due to the therapy and resources offered.

The sisters requested funds to acquire an office space to serve the program participants, providing a stable and welcoming space to receive and serve the women. Additionally, the funding would allow them to strengthen counseling, immigration, and referral services.

IMPACT: 5000 individuals have benefiting

In the new offices, “we prepare materials, and we plan activities. Our coordinators meet there, and it also works as a center for community services offering different workshops including nutrition, arts and crafts, emotional support, and support for victims of domestic violence. We have also started a new group for men that serves as a support to share their struggles and learn ways to relate more effectively and peacefully with their families. We have increased our support for the youth to prevent the use of drugs, gangs, and premature paternity. We have initiated support groups for teenagers and young adults that are coordinated by male and female therapists.”

“One of the challenges has been working with families who are experiencing difficulties with their immigration status and processes in light of the recent government policies on immigration. The separation of families has generated the need for emotional support to alleviate depression, anxiety, and anguish that families are experiencing.”

“We have created connections with nonprofit organizations such as Mexican

Consulate and other groups who provide professional and legal assistance. In light of our successes, we have had to initiate fundraising to ensure (that) we can pay the rent each month.”



October 2019

North America: 552160—Immaculate Heart Center (IHC) for Literacy-- Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

The IHM Center for Literacy teaches English language skills to the adult, poor immigrant population of Philadelphia, enabling a comfortable and confident integration into American life and its work force. Seventeen IHM sisters are ministering at two sites located in northeast and southwest Philadelphia where the poverty levels have risen from 13% and 28% to 20% and 32% respectively since 1999. The students come from 39 different countries. Most (70%) are women, 91% live below the Federal poverty line and, of those, 76% are considered the "working poor". The center asked for funding to provide the rent, utilities and maintenance fees for the two learning centers.

IMPACT: 390 students meeting achievement standards of the center

The goal of the center is to enable each student to progress at least one level (of a four level program) of competency per year determined by the Ventures Program Unit Testing and his/her progress in the national CASAS test. In the past 12 months, 75% of the students scored in the "good to excellent" range on the CASAS test and 90% maintained an 80% or better average in their unit tests and thus moved to the next level of competency. Additionally, 46 students found better jobs and housing, 34 became citizens and 18 moved on to collegiate or vocational programs.

Post Script: A new reality is that being "legal" is no longer enough to keep immigrants safe. They must now have citizenship. The fees associated with attaining citizenship are however, cost prohibitive for those earning a minimum wage. To this end, IHM center enrolled in the "Giving Tuesday" endeavor and is using those proceeds to establish a "Path to Citizenship" Fund, providing scholarships to students who need assistance with the fees. We applaud the Sisters for truly working toward a permanent future for their students.



June 2019

North America: Virginia—495911—Beacon Center for Adult Literacy—Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

Beacon Center for Adult Literacy serves 375+ low-income adult students a year in Manassas Park and Manassas City, VA. These communities are home to the largest percentage of Hispanic residents in Virginia (33% and 31%, respectively). Almost 40% of City of Manassas residents and about 46% of Manassas Park residents speak a language other than English at home, compared to 31% in Prince William County overall. For many of the very low-income students, the program integrating English language acquisition, job development training, and cultural orientation is the first step that opens the doors to higher education and employment opportunities in the community.

The Benedictine Sisters opened the center in 1992, and continue there in active ministry. The sisters requested funding to purchase textbooks and workbooks for the

students, to provide internet access in the computer lab, and to create an identity package and promotional materials to share at community events and meetings.

The center listed the following outcomes:

- 375+ students will complete language assessments
- 310 learners will reach at least one language acquisition or personal/employment goal
- Provide three two-hour technology sessions per semester for all classes
- 210+ job-seeking students will participate in job readiness skills programming
- Initiate an expanded outreach campaign to increase visibility for donors and volunteers

Impact: 403 students served

The sisters write: “All of our students (all language levels) set language/employment goals. There are three one-hour computer sessions in all classes. One hundred twenty-six job-seeking students participated in job readiness skills programming (resume writing, job search strategies). We attended 17 outreach/networking events and published three e-newsletters.”

The sisters had many challenges during the year. Their advice to others engaged in similar ministries is ‘to involve as many stakeholders as possible to help in generating new ideas, approaches, and strategies to develop and grow your program.’ BEACON's students, volunteers, members of the community, the Benedictine Sisters, staff, and Board leadership all brought unique perspectives and were invaluable sources of inspiration and knowledge that greatly enhanced the program.



February 2020

North America: Texas—542441—Presentation Ministry Center—Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (\$10,000)

The Presentation Ministry Center began responding to an expressed need in the community for a safe place for Spanish-speaking immigrants to gather and learn. Fourteen years later, daytime classes offered have grown to currently include five levels of English as a Second Language, computer literacy, a needed Graduate Education Development (GED) program, citizenship preparation and other programs. Ninety-nine percent of the population served are Hispanic immigrants. The majority of the population lives in an area of high crime and gang violence. American FactFinder states that 39.8% of the population is below the poverty level in the center's zip code. The center offers services to all, but the majority of the participants are women. The sisters asked for funding to purchase materials for the program, provide internet service, a Zoom subscription, several tablets and laptop computers for the students, and funds to provide legal support for the students seeking citizenship status.

Impact: 65 students enrolled in classes, three passed GED, and two received US citizenship

The center achieved the goal of providing quality English as second language classes, citizenship and civics classes, and the GED to program participants. In addition, the funds were used to assist program participants impacted by COVID-19 to overcome homelessness, hunger, domestic violence, and isolation.

The center ensured gender equality by providing flexible class schedules that adjust to the women's work, school, and home schedules. In the past 12 months, classes were provided online. The female students often take the courses after completing household chores and having provided support to the school activities of their children. The grant had a positive impact on the people served, focusing on quality education and gender equality. These two sustainable development goals are crucial to the immigrant population achieving economic self-sufficiency and integrating into society.

The center collaborated with several key partners in the San Antonio area. These partners provided salaries for the teachers, food boxes for the students, and toys for the children at Christmas time.

The biggest challenge for the center was pivoting during the first months of the pandemic. The staff believes that they were successful.



October 2021

Texas: 574060 - Proyecto Desarrollo Humano (Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary \$9,500)

Proyecto Desarrollo Humano (PDH) provides services for Hispanic immigrants who live below the poverty level in an isolated, rural area in Hidalgo County, Texas. The base Colonia consists of 800 half-acre lots, many of which are home to two families. Fathers do their best to support their families through day labor jobs, and some mothers have occasional work cleaning homes in more affluent areas. The average family consists of five persons living in substandard housing. Through a holistic approach to health, education, and social services, PDH seeks to develop human and spiritual potential, strengthen family bonds, build communities of peace, love, justice, and satisfy the community's needs.

The immigrant families have completed only the first step in their pilgrimage by crossing the Rio Grande River and navigating the immigration system. Eventually, they must strike out on their own in a rented dwelling with no furniture, no utensils, no bedding, etc. PDH walks with them, supplying them with available items and offering them participation in a growing community where immigrants learn together to focus on what they can do.

PDH requested funding to offer programs to accompany and help the immigrants in their pilgrimage, including a medical/dental clinic for the uninsured, a women's wellness program, individual and group counseling, evening and morning ESL classes for adults, after-school tutorials with computer access for children of all ages, summer programs for children, ladies sewing group,

training in leadership and community-building, parenting classes, and home and community improvement activities. In providing these services, PDH partners with other local agencies.

Impact: 1,658 people served

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the sisters found creative ways to continue serving their people. They could provide all the services and programs outlined in the application. The sisters identified with the No Poverty Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). By helping their brothers and sisters develop their potential, they empowered them to qualify for better jobs while boosting their self-confidence.

The sisters offer this practical advice to others faced with the challenge of assisting others during a pandemic: “Be patient and compassionate. But also be challenging when necessary. There are times when one must prod the participants to continue, especially when they are in danger of giving up. It is essential to walk by faith, remembering that the mission we are in is God’s work, and God will not abandon our people or us. Keep moving forward; stop to evaluate when necessary, but never give up!”



February 2022

Pennsylvania: 560681 - Chester Community Coalition (Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia \$14,300)

The city of Chester is a city of 33,500, with more than 36% of the population living in poverty. The population is African-American (70%), White (16%), and Hispanic (12%). In 2018, the homicide rate was almost 15 times as high as in the rest of Delaware County. The severe assault rate was more than four times as high.

The Chester Community Coalition (CCC) provides trauma-informed support services to families directly affected by violence. The coalition’s immediate goal is to provide two group therapy sessions to build resilience and reduce post-traumatic stress in the bereaved and assaulted families. The CCC also provides transportation for the families to attend the sessions and a meal shared with the social therapists and volunteers who conduct the sessions.

Impact: 163 participants in training events, conferences, or gatherings

COVID-19 shut down therapy groups in March 2020 and precluded the outreach community events for the next 18 months. CCC shifted focus to individual therapy and case management.

For one particular boy, six years old, the art therapy sessions were the first time the child was able to get focused attention from adults, addressing his experience with violence. His brother was shot at six years old by his adult cousin. At the time, this little brother, three, was in a world of confusion. Through various techniques, the child was able to discuss his feelings and begin the process of healing.

The CCC could leverage the HFS funding, obtaining assistance from two other community organizations in Chester.

CCC’s identified SDG was to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive

institutions.



June 2022

Ohio – 585160 – Esperanza Threads (Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland \$10,000)

The primary populations served by Esperanza Threads are low-income native Clevelanders and newly resettled refugees and immigrants. The trainees are 18 to 65 years old and often come from high-risk neighborhoods. By teaching the trainees skills in industrial sewing, alterations, and tailoring and helping them to manage workplace expectations, Esperanza Threads enables them to gain the confidence to attain sustainable employment, improving their quality of life for themselves and their families.

Impact: 13 persons participated in the training and acquired marketable skills.

Most of the people trained were recent arrivals to the United States from Congo, Nepal, Tanzania, Burundi, Uganda, Honduras, and Afghanistan. Besides the skills learned in industrial and entrepreneurial sewing, they were acclimating to the American way of doing things. Esperanza Threads is also a job preparedness program. No matter what position they acquire, they will better understand employer expectations. In pursuing the SDG calling for "decent work and economic growth," Esperanza partnered with US Together Microenterprise Development Programs, which helps refugees/asylum seekers develop microenterprises and assists with low-interest loans to begin their small businesses.



February 2023

California - 625922 - Casa de Misericordia (Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, \$20,000)

Casa de Misericordia is an intentional faith community in solidarity with migrant persons and responsive to their needs through direct service and systemic action. The Community Resource Center (CRC) is an initiative begun by Casa de Misericordia community members to provide programs and services in collaboration with other local agencies in an environment that offers persons safety and confidentiality.

CRC addresses the following needs:

- ESL (English as a Second Language) classes
- Food: El Jardin de Las Manos Sanadoras (Healing Hands Garden) is a community garden that teaches gardening techniques to plant and harvest family vegetables.
- Emotional-spiritual wellness: "Healing Hearts" program provides persons an invitation to share and probe personal pain to heal and grow.
- Social Service Resources: The CRC provides services by a San Diego County social worker. The CRC offers free food, clothing, shoes, and toys.
- Need for assistance with immigration needs. CRC and Casa de Misericordia collaborate with Catholic Charities and Casa Cornelia to offer information and practical help.

Impact: 2,096 migrants assisted by 45 volunteers

As the CRC became known, more people sought food/clothes/other resources. On the first Thursday of each month, volunteers arrive to create 150-300 bags of fresh and canned goods. The county social worker helps persons contact other agencies/personnel for help.

CRC shared this story with HFS: "Last year, the Casa de Misericordia doorbell rang one evening. At the door was a 37-year-old man who spoke no English. In Spanish, he said, "They said you would help me." He had walked 12 days from Jalisco, Mexico, then paid a "coyote" \$8,500 to cross the border safely. Once across at Mexicali-Calexico, the coyote stopped the car and threw the man out. He was told to go to Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. He walked 90 miles and arrived at the door of Casa de Misericordia. We got him shelter, and he soon had a paying job. This story continues to inspire and motivate us as a community."



June 2023