

Spring Report 2024
Spanish American Committee:
**For A Better
Community**





ABOUT US

Mission:

The Spanish American Committee's mission is to act as a gateway to socioeconomic success for Spanish-speaking individuals and families in Northeast Ohio while maintaining and celebrating a Latino perspective.

Vision:

Our vision is to be the keystone leader in providing and coordinating comprehensive social and economic services to the Latino community throughout Northeast Ohio by means of education, workforce development, and housing programs.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

01
LITTLE
FOOTSTEPS
CHILDCARE
PROGRAM

Page 5

02
FAMILIES FIRST
PROGRAM

Page 8

03
WORKFORCE
DEVELOPEMENT
PROGRAM

Page 11

04
MI CASA
HOUSING
PROGRAM

Page 14

05
WHAT'S
TO COME

Page 17

06
2023
FINANCIAL
STATEMENT

Page 20



LETTER FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Ramonita Vargas

In my work, I am privileged to witness the tremendous impact that is carried out day by day through the doors of the Spanish American Committee (SAC). I am immensely proud of our organization that not only acknowledges, understands, and responds to the unique needs of the Latino community of Northeast Ohio, but also delivers the needed services with cultural awareness and infuses advocacy for a community that still needs barriers broken down for them. This is our calling, and this is our opportunity to continue to lead and be a voice for Latinos.

As I enter my 13th year as CEO of this incredible organization, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our donors, partner agencies, board, and staff for their commitment and continued passion and support that has led SAC to enter its 58th year of serving the Latino community of Northeast Ohio. Put simply, you make what we do possible.

SAC is community-centered, trusted, and founded on our shared tradition of service in the community. Stepping into the gap where others cannot—or will not—go is what social service agencies do. Collectively, as a team, this is how we are able to reach over 2,500 community members and provide over 3,200 services to our clients. Programs: Families First, Workforce Development,

Mi Casa Housing, Little Footsteps Bilingual Child Enrichment Center, and our English as a Second Language classes that we see life altering impact day after day for our clients. This is proof that when we come together, good things happen—and those who are the most vulnerable in our communities get the critical support and access to opportunity that otherwise, they would not be able to access on their own. With over 82% of those served at SAC being Spanish-speaking only and or limited-English speakers, SAC plays a critical role in the ecosystem.

As we look into 2024 and beyond, SAC is seeking to continuously meet the evolving needs of the community and expand our programs to ensure we remain strong for another 58 years. We cannot wait to show you all we've accomplished in 2023 in more detail within this report, and further cannot wait to serve the community in 2024 and beyond.

Thank you,

Ramonita Vargas



ABOUT OUR BOARD CHAIRMAN

Angel R. Rodriguez



Angel R. Rodriguez is currently the Business Banking Sales Leader for Northeast Ohio at KeyBank, responsible for leading a team of Relationship managers, who provide trusted advisor financial and business guidance to growing businesses in Cleveland, Akron, Canton, Youngstown, Erie, PA., and surrounding communities.

Prior to joining KeyBank, Angel held numerous leadership roles in Banking and Financial Services in which he was responsible for leading regional and national teams of Bankers and Sales Professionals to provide access to capital to fast-growing Small Business and Middle Market companies. Most recently, he served as President and CEO of North Coast Insurance Group, an Allstate exclusive Insurance Agency.

In addition to his experience working in Insurance and Financial Services, Angel founded and served as President/CEO of Genesis Surgical Solutions, Inc, a medical implant and instrumentation sales, service, and education enterprise, specializing in spinal fusion and alternative spine health procedures. Mr. Rodriguez has more than 25 years experience in sales and workforce management, operations management, credit risk management, strategic planning, leadership development and business development.

Angel serves as the KeyBank Consumer Bank Champion for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, responsible for building and engaging a talented, diverse and inclusive team within the Consumer Bank. He is also a member of the Hispanic-Latinx Key Business Impact and Networking Group, a KeyBank employee resource group for professional growth and business development, which identifies opportunities for its Hispanic-Latinx employees to become involved in the workplace and its community. Outside of KeyBank, he serves as the Board Chair for the Spanish American Committee and as a board member for the Catholic Community Foundation and Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U.).



01

LITTLE FOOTSTEPS CHILDCARE PROGRAM



How The Little Footsteps Childcare Program Helps Our Latino Community

Little Footsteps Bilingual Child Enrichment Center is the longest standing bilingual child care program and preschool in the heart of Cleveland's West Side neighborhoods. It is deeply rooted in tradition, family, and educating our children to be lifelong learners. At the Little Footsteps Bilingual Childcare Enrichment Center, we are dedicated to providing a stimulating environment to all of our children.

The Spanish American Committee has deep roots in the West Side of Cleveland's Latino community. Our bilingual childcare center was originally established in 1974 to provide an affordable yet high-quality childcare option to accommodate the Spanish-speaking families and children in our community. Many of the families we serve have been returning to our childcare program for generations! Today, we offer the opportunity to children of all backgrounds and cultures to learn in English and Spanish.

We Provide

From infants to toddlers, and through preschool we are interested in the process of learning. At Little Footsteps we believe that children should be provided with a meaningful early childhood education that stimulates their inquisitive nature, and ultimately sets the stage for their future success. We provide a variety of modalities for children to learn:

- Language
- Reasoning
- Experience
- Math
- Science
- Alphabet and numbers
- Painting, crafts, and open ended art
- Dramatic play
- Provocations
- Active and quiet play

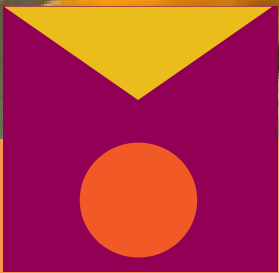
We Bring

Every child brings with them deep curiosity and potential. It is this innate curiosity that drives the child's interest to understand their world and their place in it. Our approach focuses on Preschool and Primary education. We provide a student-centered program that is developmentally appropriate to for children learning in an early childhood setting.

- Full-day educational instruction
- The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool
- Nutritious meals and snacks provided daily



SUCCESS STORY: Maria



In April 2024, I started a new adventure with my two daughters, thanks to the great recommendations from the Spanish Community. They helped me apply to Little Foot Steps.

When I toured the school, I loved that the teachers spoke both Spanish and English. It's very important for me to keep Spanish alive for my daughters. Because of this, I decided to enroll my older daughter in the 3K program.

The service at Little Foot Steps is very good, and we are very happy with our choice.

02

FAMILIES FIRST PROGRAM



How the Families First Program Helps Our Latino Community

The mission of the Families First Program by the Spanish American Committee is to provide ladders of opportunity that help low-income individuals and families break the cycle of poverty and become self-sufficient. The Families First Program takes a comprehensive approach to support families who are struggling to meet their basic needs. Our clients gain access to a wide range of culturally competent case management social services. Our Case Managers and Social Workers help our clients to navigate community resources.

Resources Include

Case Management

- Encouraging individuals to identify their primary barriers and seek guidance from Case Managers with prioritizing their needs

Referrals

- Connection to community resources

Public Assistance Programs

- Help applying for public assistance programs including (but not limited to): SNAP, Medicaid, PRC, Unemployment, Social Security, Childcare Vouchers, and Utility Assistance
- Donation Distribution
- Distribution of basic needs items including toiletries, baby products, school supplies, and boxes of produce
- Client advocacy
- Supporting Spanish-speaking clients with life services that are usually met with language barriers
- Spanish translation services for phone calls and documents related to accessing benefits or basic needs (excludes legal documents and tax forms)

Technology Assistance

- Including navigating online systems
- Creating email accounts and setup of online portals for public benefits etc.

Vital Document Replacement

- Assistance with applying for ID documents including birth certificates, passports, state id's and replacement social security cards
- We provide vouchers that cover the cost of ID documents for eligible clients in partnership with the Identification Crisis Collaborative

Weekly Walk-In Hours

- Addressing urgent needs of clients

Domestic Violence Support

- Referrals to community resources in cases of domestic violence
- In partnership with the Journey Center for Safety & Healing



SUCCESS STORY: Mercedes



Mercedes came to the Spanish American Committee in need of basic hygiene and clothing items. Mercedes is currently unhoused and experiences daily challenges while navigating her wellbeing. She was especially in need of feminine hygiene products. When we explained that we only had tampons in our donation space, Mercedes explained that tampons are not comfortable for her to wear all day while she is on her feet.

We began to explore additional resources in the community that could meet this need. We came across I Support The Girls. I Support the Girls (ISTG) collects and distributes essential items, including bras, underwear, and menstrual hygiene products, allowing women and folx

experiencing homelessness, impoverishment, or distress to stand tall with dignity. We immediately completed the online form on their website to request products and within a couple of days we received a donation of pads and bras.

To address Mercedes' clothing needs we accessed the Community Service Center at the 7th Day Adventist Church in Lakewood. We were able to pick out several clothing items for Mercedes to utilize as we transition from Winter to Spring. Our clients can access our donation space monthly, and now Mercedes knows she can return to our agency for ongoing support with accessing basic hygiene items.

03

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



How the Workforce Development Program Helps Our Latino Community

The Workforce Development Program provides bilingual adult education, job training, placement, and retention to support Latino individuals who are struggling with unemployment, a lack of education, or the English-language barrier. As a part of this unique program, our clients have access to a wide range of comprehensive services designed to foster a pathway to self-sufficiency and support on their journey to sustainable employment.



Upcoming Job Fairs 2024

Our job fairs feature a soft-skill class to prepare applicants for a successful interview. The class covers topics such as professional dress code, greetings, questions and answers for interviews, adaptability, and responsibility.

Future hires have the opportunity to get a brief introduction from each company: who they are, payment rates, hours, and positions available. The advantage of our job fairs is that interested applicants would always have the support of our workforce staff with any future guidance needed through the hiring process. Every job applicant has the opportunity to communicate directly with the recruiting team of each hiring company.

Program Services

- Bilingual job-readiness and soft skills training; provide leadership, communication, and adaptability for prospects
- Resume writing assistance
- Interview techniques and mock interview sessions
- Follow up on 30-, 60-, and 90-day placements
- Assistance with online job applications
- Individual career counseling
- Job fairs
- ESOL classes

The Latino Construction Program (LCP)

The Latino Construction Program (LCP) has helped many Spanish-speaking individuals from the Cleveland area to overcome language barriers and earn more money with better jobs in construction trades. Our free, bilingual 6-week training program teaches students the basics of construction so they can earn an OSHA certification for free and get a job with a union or private construction company after graduation.

SUCCESS STORY: Cesar



Cesar came to our office in March 2024, referred by a family member who had previously received assistance from our social services and employment programs. He expressed reluctance to make an appointment due to negative experiences with agencies and recruiting companies in other states. Cesar, a smart and experienced Dominican painter and maintenance worker, had never needed help finding a job since moving to Cleveland. However, he had been unemployed for over three months, only managing to do basic work to survive. When he arrived for his appointment, he appeared worried. When asked if there was anything else troubling him besides unemployment, he revealed that his wife and two children were arriving in the United States in a month, and he had no place for them to live or means to provide for them. This was deeply concerning. As we got to know Cesar better, we learned about his skill set, experience, and the reasons he believed he couldn't find employment.

We recognized his potential and knew we could help him improve his situation. He didn't have a resume, so we created one for him and sent it to two different maintenance companies. Within a week, he had an interview that went very well due to his fluency in English. The following day, he received an offer letter to work as a painter for Capital One Realty, earning \$21 per hour with full benefits. Additionally, we knew of someone renting a property on the East Side and were able to secure a place for Cesar and his family to live.

The renter even agreed to wait until Cesar received his first paycheck to collect the deposit. During our follow-up calls, we spoke with Cesar's employer, who expressed satisfaction with his performance. Cesar was grateful to have a full-time job with good pay and benefits and to be living with his family. He deeply valued the assistance and services provided by our agency and staff.

04

MI CASA HOUSING PROGRAM



How the Mi Casa Housing Program Helps Our Latino Community

The Mi Casa Housing Program is HUD-Certified and an affiliate of UnidosUS (Formerly NCLR). Mi Casa Housing provides both English- and Spanish-speaking individuals with comprehensive, bilingual housing and financial literacy services, including:

First-Time Homebuyer Classes

Low-income clients who are looking to buy a house for the first time are referred to our bilingual First-Time Homebuyer Workshops. These workshops are 6-8 hours, as per HUD guidelines, and take place once per month. During the workshops, clients learn about the process of buying a home, including topics such as:

- The pros and cons of becoming a homeowner
- Understanding credit and managing money
- Lenders and mortgages - how to avoid predatory lending
- Realtors - shopping for a home
- Home inspections
- Homeowner's insurance and protecting your investment
- Lead safety
- Home maintenance

Program Services

- First-Time Homebuyer's Education
- Pre-Purchase Counseling
- Tenant/Rental Counseling
- Mortgage Delinquency/Foreclosure Prevention Counseling
- Individual Financial Counseling
- Credit Score Improvement Counseling
- Budgeting and Saving Counseling
- Consumer Protection Information



SUCCESS STORY: Rosa



Rosa, a Cuban immigrant with a dream of home-ownership, attended our first-time home buying class. With the support of the Mi Casa Housing Program, she completed the course and received guidance throughout the process. Rosa had wonderful experiences with our bilingual staff and banking partners. Initially, Rosa thought that the economy and her circumstances would make this

journey too difficult. However, she was pleasantly surprised when she successfully obtained a home. Rosa is deeply grateful and thanks God for the blessings that made her dream come true. She would highly recommend the program to others and was a light of joy when she shared her story with us.



05 WHAT'S TO COME



As we look ahead, our focus is set on a dynamic range of initiatives designed to drive our mission forward. Our first priority is to expand our programs, ensuring that they reach more individuals and communities in need. Alongside this, we are committed to ensuring consistent data collection, which will enable us to measure our impact accurately and make data-driven decisions.

A key component of our strategy is to build a culture of inclusion and belonging. This means fostering an environment where everyone feels valued and respected, reflecting our core values in every aspect of our work. Maintaining and growing our relationships with foundations and funders is also crucial.

These partnerships are the backbone of our efforts, providing the resources needed to implement and sustain our programs. Additionally, we aim to expand our child enrichment center, offering more comprehensive services that support the holistic development of children in our community.

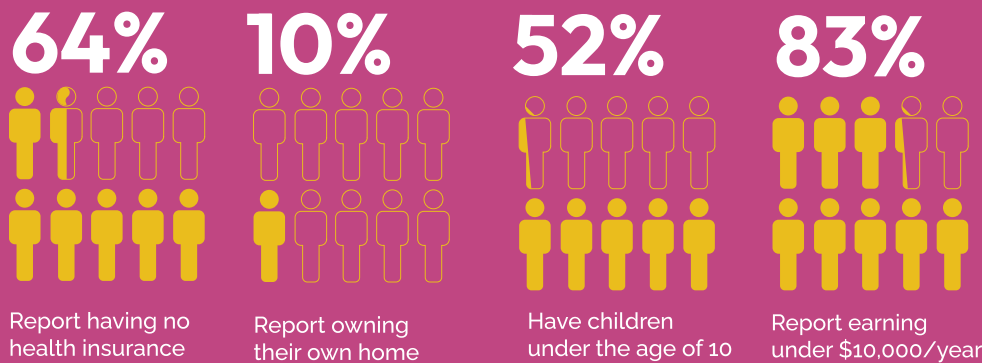
Enhancing public awareness is another essential goal. We want to ensure that our message reaches a broader audience, educating them about the importance of our work and the positive impact it has. This includes a robust advocacy effort for our Latino community, addressing critical issues and amplifying their voices in the public sphere.

As we embark on these initiatives, we remain steadfast in our dedication to making a tangible difference. Together, we can build a brighter future, enriched with opportunities and inclusivity for all.



FAST FACTS

SAC's effective multi-service model ensures that all our client's needs are met in one place, making the socio-economic success and self-sufficiency they seek more accessible than ever.



48,699

*According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 48,699 people identifying as Hispanic live in Cleveland



25%

of Hispanic families in Ohio live in poverty

SAC provides over 6,000 services to community members each year!

"Serving as the gateway to **socioeconomic success** for the entire Hispanic community."

The Little Footsteps Program

- Preschool
- Before & After- School Care
- Summer Program
- Children 2.5-12
- Bilingual Curriculum
- County Vouchers Accepted and more

The Workforce Program

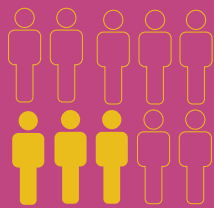
- Bilingual job-readiness
- Resume writing assistance
- Interview techniques and mock interview sessions
- Follow up on 30-, 60-, and 90-day placements
- Job fairs and more

900



Over **900** clients served in **2023**

300



Over **300** clients served for **2023**

700



Over **700** clients served in **2023**

75



Over **75** families served in **2023**

The Mi Casa Program

- Housing and Financial Literacy Counseling
- First-time homebuyer Workshops
- Mortgage Delinquency and Foreclosure Prevention
- Financial Literacy Workshops and more

The Social Services Program

- Help applying for public assistance programs
- Spanish translation services for phone calls and documents related to accessing benefits or basic needs (excludes legal documents and tax forms)
- Assistance with applying for ID documents including birth certificates, passports, licenses and replacement social security cards

2,429

Families First services provided to clients up **600** from 2022

2023 Financial Statements

Revenue

Government	\$540,538
Contributions	\$848,683
Program	\$94,783
Investment	\$38,616
Miscellaneous	\$165,173

Total Revenue \$1,687,793

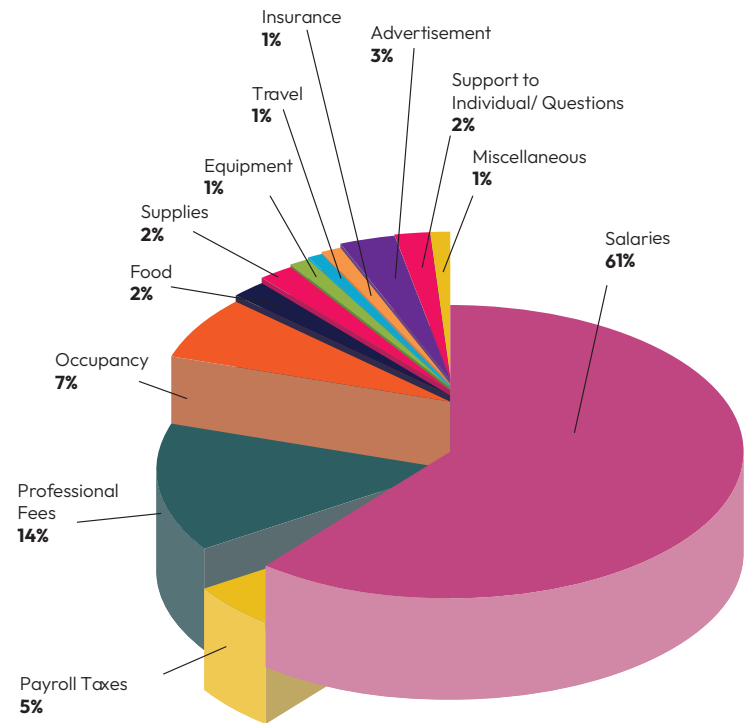
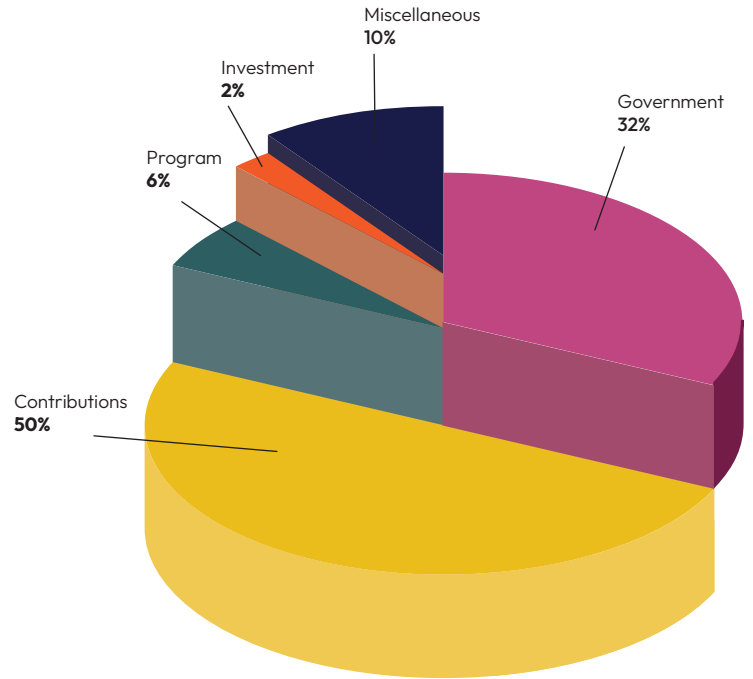
Expenses

Salaries	\$889,043
Payroll Taxes	\$76,890
Professional Fees	\$208,234
Occupancy	\$106,122

Operations

Food	\$23,007
Supplies	\$21,756
Equipment	\$19,758
Travel	\$10,532
Insurance	\$17,282
Advertisement	\$49,597
Support to Individuals/ Organizations	\$28,550
Miscellaneous	\$2,923

Total Expenses \$1,454,054



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Senior Vice President
Business Banking Sales
Leader, Key Bank Corp

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Director of Leadership
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University Relations
NPR Group

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Marcia Nolan
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Martin Rodriguez
Senior Vice President/
Head of Capital Markets and
Affiliate Banking First Mutual
Holding Company

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Gilbane Building Company

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AVP, Community
Development Relationship
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Cleveland Clinic Lerner
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The MetroHealth System

Julie Wisneski

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Relations & Development
United Way

Patricia Descamps

Consumer Insights
& Experience Lead
for Nestlé

TEAMS

Executive Team

Ramonita Vargas
Chief Executive Officer

Paul Alvarez

Chief Operations Officer

Leadership Team

Alexandra Moya,
Mi Casa Housing Program
Manager

Erica Chew

Executive Assistant

Haley De León

Families First Program
Manager

Juan Carlos Medina

Workforce Development
Program Manager

Kelsey Barretta

Little Footsteps Bilingual
Child Enrichment Center
Director

Mark Crenshaw

CPA/Accountant

Melaak Rashi,

Grant Writer

Jacyna Peña

Marketing Specialist

Client Services Team

Carmen Valentin
Bilingual Case Manager

Dalila Christian

BSW, Bilingual Licensed
Social Worker

Gilberto Cortes

Latino Construction Program
Career Coach

Raquel Albuez Paez

Financial Literacy Counselor

Rae Caruthers

Bilingual Case manager

Little Footsteps Bilingual Child Enrichment Center Team

Angela Feliciano
Preschool

Anelisse Garcia

Preschool

Deborah Resto

Toddlers 2

Jarilys Colon

Bilingual Case Worker

Karely Rivera

Support Meal Preparation

Mary Orozco Velez

Toddler 1

Tanya Rivera

Infant

Yessika Nunez

Infant





THE
GEORGE
GUND
FOUNDATION



CLEVELAND
Foundation

