The mission of El Centro Hispano is to assist, support, and strengthen the Hispanic community; to help them become self-sufficient; and to ease their transition into their new culture while maintaining and enriching their own.

El Centro Hispano has accomplished this from 1974 – 2018 by offering a variety of programs and by presenting bilingual and cross-cultural activities throughout the year.
HISTORY OF EL CENTRO HISPANO

Supporting and strengthening the Hispanic community for over 44 years

Since its inception in 1974, the guiding light behind El Centro Hispano has been Isabel Villar.

When asked to join members of the Community Action Program in founding an organization designed to assist newly arrived Hispanic immigrants, there was no way Isabel could refuse. Only eight years before, she and her mother and sister had come to the U.S. as political refugees seeking the freedom and opportunities denied them in their native Cuba. As Isabel loves to say, she arrived “with the clothes on her back and a suitcase full of dreams.”

Forced to leave behind her father and brother, Isabel’s early years in this country were not easy. Lonely, disoriented, and with limited English, she felt lost in a big American high school. Convinced, however, that education was the key to her future, she worked hard and eventually won a full scholarship to Manhattanville College. There she blossomed and upon graduation was offered a job as a bilingual teacher in Norwalk, CT. After earning three graduate degrees, Isabel spent many years as a guidance counselor in the Norwalk Public Schools inspiring young people to reach beyond their limits.

Filled with gratitude for all she had been able to achieve in her new life in the U.S., Isabel was eager to help others who found themselves in similar circumstances and so she created El Centro Hispano. Working evenings and weekends, she had to start from scratch. Her youth, inexperience and even her gender presented obstacles she had to overcome. But, overcome them she did. Starting small with ESL classes and a Girl Scout troop, Isabel learned the importance of developing partnerships with other organizations and institutions, and El Centro Hispano began to offer more and more programs to serve the community.

The addition of Judith Aúcar, a fellow Cuban-American with a very similar background, as Deputy Director in 1978 was a major milestone in El Centro’s early history. Enthusiastic and deeply committed, Judith’s gifts and expertise both complemented and reinforced those of Isabel. Together they accomplished so much more than either could have done alone, and in 2001 El Centro Hispano became an independent non-profit organization with its own Board of Directors.

El Centro Hispano is what it is today because two young Hispanic women wanted to give back to the community that had welcomed and nourished them. Their undying commitment has turned their dream and the dreams of thousands whom they serve into reality.
The most successful organizations, those that thrive and grow, are the ones that remain true to their initial vision while at the same time adapting to the ever-changing needs of the community they serve.

Under the sponsorship of the White Plains Community Action Program, El Centro Hispano first opened its doors at the Chapel Hall at St. Bernard’s Roman Catholic Church on a cold January day in 1974. This fledgling organization was created by a group of compassionate citizens who realized that the growing Hispanic community of White Plains was in urgent need of a variety of social services that no one was offering.

Those citizens were wise enough to understand that their first job, their most important job, was to listen. They undertook a needs assessment and asked the members of the community to tell them what they perceived their needs to be. Very early on El Centro established an Advisory Council drawn from members of the community. The Council was an invaluable guide in planning and implementing programs and services offered by El Centro.

Almost 44 years later El Centro Hispano is one of the most active social service agencies devoted to supporting and strengthening the Hispanic community in White Plains and Westchester County. We have grown and expanded along with the Hispanic population of the area.

In four and a half decades El Centro Hispano has undergone many changes, eliminating programs that were no longer needed or appropriate, instituting new ones, and expanding others. But we have never lost sight of our mission to strengthen and support Hispanics as they adapt to their new life in the United States. Right from the beginning our work has focused on six crucial areas of concern: housing, employment, health, education, empowerment, community outreach and legal services.

We hope long-time supporters of El Centro will find some wonderful old memories stirring and that those who have become involved more recently will gain a deeper appreciation of the path we have taken to get to where we are today.

The Early Years (1974 – 1985)

Determination and enthusiasm made up for limited resources and a small staff as El Centro Hispano first reached out to the Hispanic Community of White Plains. In addition to the housing and jobs center, clients of El Centro could take advantage of translation services for medical appointments and assistance filling out official forms and dealing with public and private agencies, a new mother’s program, classes in English as a Second Language, a bilingual Girl Scout Troop, a Senior Center, and instruction in sewing and embroidery - complete with a fashion show. Interns from Pace University began working with us and in 1980 El Centro Hispano’s Scholarship Program was established.

The Second Decade (1986-1997)

Our experiences during those first ten years convinced us that we were truly making a difference in the lives of our clients and the community as a whole. And we were aware that new needs were arising all the time. In collaboration with other organizations we
began co-sponsoring an Annual Health Fair and we also established an Emergency Food Bank for those in crisis. The Pace University/El Centro Hispano Outreach Program was organized to encourage Hispanic high school students to further their education. We served as a vital link for those applying for citizenship or permanent residency by assisting them with the preparation of their documents before they were forwarded to the Diocesan Immigration Center. We began offering conferences to help Hispanic parents better understand their children’s public schools. It was during this time that the Director and Assistant Director began hosting El Centro Hispano Informa – a TV program on Channel 14 designed to bring topics of immediate concern to the larger Hispanic community.

**Spreading Our Wings (1998-2007)**

These were exciting years at El Centro Hispano. After 26 years under the auspices of the Community Action Program, we became an independent, self-governing entity. The Advisory Board was replaced by our own Board of Directors. It was also a time of important changes. As it became apparent that in order to succeed in the modern world, more and more job-seekers would need to demonstrate familiarity with computers, El Centro took up the challenge: we began offering computer classes for adults at the Mercy College Annex in White Plains. In conjunction with the YMCA we also initiated a Culture through Technology Program for high school students. To support families as they struggle to adapt to their new lives we offered workshops in Parenting Development Strategies. The Family Excel Program provided structure and guidance for Hispanic middle school children and their parents in an after-school setting. The Pace Women’s Justice Center assisted clients of El Centro who had been victims of domestic violence or sexual assault.


So great was the demand for our computer classes that in 2008 El Centro Hispano built a state-of-the-art Technology Center in our facilities at St. Bernard’s Church. In addition to 3 levels of computer classes we also offer Introduction to Accounting and QuickBooks. Classes are always full. We are convinced that education is the key that will enable our clients to fulfill their potential and become productive members of the community. El Centro Hispano sponsored SAT/ACT preparation classes. We started a Summer Literacy Program for second and third graders who need extra help to get a good start in school and we also run an Early Literacy Program for kindergartners and first-graders. We sponsor three mentoring and tutorial programs for middle and high school students (The Lanza My Older Sister/Brother Programs, and the Lanza Saturday Academy). Clients of El Centro have been able to get assistance in applying for health insurance through the Affordable Care Act as well as legal assistance with a variety of issues. Almost 100 families take advantage of our free food distribution program on Thursday afternoons.

**Looking Ahead (2019-...)**

Demand for the kinds of services El Centro Hispano offers continues to grow. We have been offering English classes for adults for over 40 years. Thanks to our partnership with BOCES we offer two daytime classes for adults and a combined beginning and intermediate class on Thursday evenings. Last year a total of 212 students were enrolled in these classes, but we desperately need more space. We are now offering a new ESL class in donated space at the First Baptist Church in White Plains. On September 30 El Centro Hispano opened its first Extension Program at Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Elmsford, NY. Opportunities to serve abound.

**What does the future hold?**

In many ways, that depends on the support we receive from all our donors. El Centro Hispano has always operated on a very tight budget and we stretch our resources through partnerships with many public and private agencies and organizations. We have also been blessed to receive financial support in the form of grants from local, county and state governments, foundations and charitable institutions. However, it is
the generous financial support of all our donors who share in our commitment that enables us to carry out our mission to serve those in need of our services.

The 26 programs currently offered by El Centro Hispano are changing the lives of our clients through … Education, Technology, Support Services, Cultural Events, Outreach, Counseling and Empowerment, and through Special Activities. They include English as a Second Language, High School Equivalency Prep, and computer classes; tutorial and mentoring programs; scholarships to graduating high school seniors; literacy support for our youngest clients; Girl and Boy Scouts troops; educational and informational workshops; bi-monthly food distribution; free legal assistance and a Westchester County Affordable Care Program; sponsorship of cultural events; as well as translation services and assistance in finding housing and looking for a job.

Changing Lives Through…

Education

Scholarship Program

Since 1980, El Centro has awarded $445,550 in scholarship money to 524 deserving high school seniors. In 2018, 9 students benefited from the Scholarship Program. We are extremely proud of our unique program, which helps recipients with their post-secondary education. Students who are considered for scholarships must have both a Grade Point Average of 3.0 or higher and involvement in El Centro Hispano. They must complete an application form and write an essay. The essay and the student’s involvement at El Centro play an important role in determining how much money the Scholarship Committee allocates to each recipient.

In addition to the above scholarships, El Centro Hispano has also awarded scholarships to the 15 college students who volunteer in the Lanza My Older Sister/My Older Brother (Mi Hermana Mayor/Mi Hermano Mayor) Mentoring Tutorial Program and Saturday Academy during the 2017-2018 school year. This is the 8th year that the college mentors/tutors have benefitted from these scholarships. El Centro has awarded $227,000 in scholarship money to 145 mentors/tutors.

Previous scholarship recipients have “paid back” their scholarship to El Centro Hispano in many ways – by successfully completing their post-secondary education, by contributing to El Centro Hispano when they begin work after college, and by serving on our Board of Directors (two of our current Board members are former recipients).

Classes in English as a Second Language & High School Equivalency Prep

El Centro has offered English classes for adults for the last 44 years. Presently, thanks to a partnership with BOCES, we offer at El Centro Hispano’s Technology Center a daytime BOCES class for adults from 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon; two combined evening classes every Thursday and Saturday evening from 6:00-10:00 p.m., a morning class on Sundays from 8:00 a.m.-12 p.m. and a Citizenship class on Fridays from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. An Advanced daytime class is also being offered at the First Baptist Church of White Plains, Monday-Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

We also offer a HSE (High School Equivalency) class in Spanish, Monday – Thursday from 12:00 p.m. to 3 p.m. during the school year. Last year a total of 303 students were enrolled in the day and evening English, HSE, and Citizenship classes.
Manhattanville College/El Centro Hispano Tutorial Program

Last year Hispanic students at White Plains High School received academic support during the school year through this tutorial program, which was inaugurated in 1989. The program, which helps students successfully complete their studies at the high school, is in place this year also. The students are provided with tutoring, information on career opportunities, and with direct assistance regarding post-secondary educational options, college choices, application procedures, and financial aid. From January through June we had an enrollment of 111 students. From September through December and continuing this year, 95 students are currently enrolled. That number will increase as the school year progresses. In 2018 the program was funded by the White Plains Public Schools, Manhattanville College and the Westchester County Youth Bureau.

The Lanza My Older Sister - Mi Hermana Mayor Mentoring/Tutorial Program

This mentoring/tutorial program, which was inaugurated in the fall of 2010, pairs 20 sixth grade female Hispanic students at the White Plains Middle School – Eastview Campus with Hispanic “sisters” attending Manhattanville College, Lehman College, Mercy College, Iona College, Manhattan College, Brooklyn College, City College and Westchester Community College as well as White Plains and Scarsdale High Schools. These young women and volunteers encourage the academic success of their “sisters” and support their college aspirations as they tutor them in Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, English Language Arts, French and Spanish. Program participants have community/corporate role models. The program was designed around an environment that values the students’ Latino heritage, culture, and language and demands full parent participation and commitment. It operates three times a week (Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays) from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. during the school year.

It is a collaborative program between El Centro Hispano and the White Plains Public Schools. In 2018 it was funded by, the Lanza Family Foundation, the Patrina Foundation, Hitchcock Presbyterian Church, and the Westchester County Youth Bureau.

The Lanza My Older Brother - Mi Hermano Mayor Tutorial Program

Because of the success of The Lanza My Older Sister Program, a similar program was designed to support Hispanic sixth grade boys attending the White Plains Middle School. The program was inaugurated in September 2013 at the Middle School’s Eastview Campus. The program is offered three times a week (Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays) during the school year from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. In 2018 it was funded by, the Lanza Family Foundation, the Hitchcock Presbyterian Church and the Westchester County Youth Bureau.

The program pairs 15 sixth grade male Hispanic students with tutors from surrounding colleges, and White Plains High School. The older tutors encourage the success of their “brothers” and tutor them in Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, English Language Arts, French and Spanish.

The Lanza My Older Sister/Brother – Mi Hermana(o) Mayor Saturday Academy

The Academy, inaugurated in 2012 and redesigned in 2013, is an intensive Saturday tutorial program for middle and high school students from the White Plains Public Schools. It includes focused one-on-one tutoring in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Spanish, and French.
In 2018, **50** Hispanic seventh through twelfth grade students participated in the tutorial program from January - June. A total of **50** students were enrolled in the program from September – December.

In 2018 the program was funded by the Perkins Family.

**Summer Literacy Academy**

El Centro Hispano inaugurated a Summer Literacy Academy for Hispanic children in July of 2010. The program offers reading comprehension support and enrichment activities to second and third graders four days a week for two months during the summer. The Academy is divided into two sessions of two hours each: one session for **25** second graders Mondays and Wednesdays and another session for **25** third graders Tuesdays and Thursdays. Since 2014 this program has been housed at Post Road Elementary School, thanks to the generosity of the Post Road staff and the White Plains School System.

The children in the program were selected because their performance in school and on standardized tests demonstrated a need for support in reading. They came from families where the parents were not able to help them because of their own unfamiliarity with English, because they were working several jobs and did not have time to help their children, or because of lapses in their own education. In 2018 the Academy was funded by the Westchester County Youth Bureau and St. Faith’s House Foundation.

**El Centro Hispano Early Literacy Program**

This afterschool program began in January 2013 thanks to the generosity of Sr. St. John Delany, Associate Professor at Pace University’s School of Education and Director of the Center for Literacy Enrichment. It serves **10** kindergarteners and **15** first grade Hispanic students from September through May. The program offers pre-literacy and literacy support two days a week during the school year from 4:30-5:30 p.m. to kindergarten children and two days a week to first graders at Post Road Elementary School.

Several volunteers from El Centro Hispano help with the tutoring. In 2018 St. Faith’s Foundation funded it.

**Bilingual Girl Scouts Troop**

This troop, founded in 1974, is one of the oldest continually running programs of El Centro Hispano. In 2018, our Girl Scouts troop was composed of **65** actively participating girls: **8** Daisies, **20** Brownies, **6** Juniors, **12** Cadettes, **9** Seniors/Ambassadors, and a Mixed Group (**2** Daisies, **5** juniors and **3** Cadettes) that was created to accommodate the girls who could not meet on the dates their group was meeting. The girls met twice a month for one hour and a half on Mondays, except the Mixed Group that met four times a month on Fridays. The Girl Scouts participated in scouting activities and performed countless hours of community service while learning to become better citizens.

**Bilingual Scouts Pack and Troop**

For the first time in 13 years since its establishment, the former Boy Scouts troop has admitted girls into the program. This past year (2018) the former troop was divided into El Centro Hispano’s Pack and El Centro Hispano’s Scouts Troop. Under this new regulation, the following numbers reflect the integration of actively participating boys and girls: **6** Lions, **1** Tiger, **8** Bears, **3** Wolf, **15** Webelos and **14** Boy Scouts for a total of **47** children. The pack meets every other Tuesday for one hour and a half, and the scouts’ troop meets every Friday for the same length of time. They participated in scouting activities, cultural events, and educational programs. Like the Girl Scouts troop, they also performed countless hours of community service while learning to become better citizens.

**Educational Workshops**

Since the early 80’s, educational workshops have been offered to parents of children in the White Plains Public Schools. Planned together with staff from the White Plains Public Schools, the workshops were held on weekday evenings at the Chapel Hall at St. Bernard’s Church. This year parents attended sessions
on how to prepare their child for Regents’ exams, the importance of the exams, college planning and post-secondary school options, how to apply for financial aid, and the regulations and mandates of the Special Education Program. The workshops were led by school district staff.

In addition to these workshops, parents of all students in all our educational programs are required to attend an orientation training meeting during the year on what steps to take to ensure their children’s academic success.

**Workshops on Other Issues**

Since the 1980’s, El Centro has offered workshops on nutrition, major illnesses affecting Hispanics, domestic violence, rights of immigrants, abuse of women, the stock market, housing trends, safe communities, investments, and safe banking practices. These workshops have drawn hundreds of community members eager to learn.

Representatives from White Plains Hospital, Hon. David Buchwald, Hon. Andrea Stewart Cousins, The Cornell Cooperative Extension, Formé Urgent Care, Westchester Alzheimer’s Association and The Westchester Hispanic Coalition Victim Assistance Program made presentations about their services to the food recipients.

**Internship Program for High School and College Students**

The Internship Program, which began in 1985, has included college students majoring in Spanish from Pace University, Purchase College, Manhattanville College, and Berkeley College. High school students from White Plains High School and Scarsdale High School have also been involved. The program exposes interns to the Spanish language and culture of our clients while working in our social services-oriented environment. Students complete over 100 hours of volunteer service at El Centro and keep a detailed journal of their experience. In 2018 we had 3 interns from Scarsdale Alternative High School.

**Changing Lives Through... Technology**

**Technology Center**

Our state-of-the-art Technology Center has been in constant demand since the first class began there in May 2009. This has been made possible thanks to the support of our County Executive George Latimer and many other individuals and agencies.

The Technology Center is open for instruction seven days a week and serves adults, seniors and school-age children. It is equipped with:

- Seventeen computer stations
- One laptop
- One teacher work station
- Interactive whiteboard
- High speed internet access
- Connectivity to the White Plains Public Schools
**Computer Classes for Adults and Seniors**

Last year El Centro offered 14 computer classes: 4 Beginner, 1 Beginner/Intermediate, 3 Intermediate, 3 Advanced, 2 Accounting and 1 Review. The 178 students who completed the classes received a certificate at the end of each 64-hour long class that they took and were honored at a special “graduation” ceremony.

**Culture through Technology Program**

The Culture through Technology Program which began in 2001 met last year on Saturdays at the Technology Center and 20 fourth and fifth graders participated in the program from January - June. 20 students were enrolled in the program from September – December.

Half of the class time is devoted to developing students’ reading ability and to tutoring them and thus strengthening their academic skills. During the rest of the class time, students discuss topics such as: the importance of nutrition, responsibility, bullying, school environment, relationship with parents, manners and etiquette, and global warming. After each discussion, the students talk about how these themes differ across cultures. Every student develops a project as a culmination of their time in the program. The project demonstrates the students’ technological, academic, and cultural knowledge as a result of taking the class.

In September 2014, to continue helping the students who had participated in the program as 4th graders and were no longer eligible for the program, we added a new component with the purpose of improving their study skills. The 17 5th grade students meet every Saturday from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. at El Centro Hispano’s Technology Center throughout the school year. In this program, students are taught different study strategies and techniques that they can use to improve their academic progress. Some of the topics that are discussed include: how to be organized, the importance of setting short-term and long-term goals, how to improve reading comprehension, test-taking strategies, and many others. In 2018 the program was funded by the Westchester County Youth Bureau.

**El Centro Hispano Homework Center**

After meeting with the Superintendent of the White Plains School System to discuss the digital divide among the students in the school system, El Centro Hispano’s administrators decided to begin a new program where children from the school district can come and complete their homework with the help of college and high school tutors from 3:30 to 5:30 Monday – Thursday. The program began on October 1, 2018 and on a daily basis an average of 5-9 students are helped.

**Changing Lives through... Services**

**Community Service Program**

Every year since 2001, White Plains High School students give back to their community and earn community service hours through the Community Service Program at El Centro. They serve as tutors and translators, distribute flyers for special events, and help distribute food, recruit other students and parents to attend events at El Centro, and set up and organize various other activities throughout the year. 133 students registered to perform community service in 2018.
**Weekly Bulletin**

Since 1974 El Centro Hispano has published a bilingual page in St. Bernard Church’s weekly bulletin to inform the 700 to 850 Hispanic parishioners who attend Mass each Sunday about all the programs, events, and matters of concern relating to El Centro and the Hispanic community in general.

**Affordable Care Program Assistance**

Since October 2014, a bilingual representative of the Westchester County Department of Health has been on site at El Centro one full day a week to offer our clients free assistance in completing the application paperwork for the Affordable Care Program. 191 clients were assisted from January to December 2018. The representative answered clients’ questions, helped them to complete application forms, and screened them under the New York State Department of Health Marketplace.

**Legal Assistance**

Thanks to the generosity of some of our donors and the initiative of our Board of Directors, an attorney comes to El Centro Hispano every Friday for 4 hours from 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. to help our clients with house repair problems, rent overcharge harassment and general lease questions. She also provides our clients with legal advice about immigration issues. She educates them and informs them how to exercise their rights without fear or intimidation when dealing with wage theft and worker’s rights. In 2018, 211 clients were assisted.

**Food Distribution**

Last year El Centro distributed 1,750 pounds of bread and bakery products to its clients every Thursday afternoon. This program has been offered since 2011 thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor.

Since 2013, twice a month, El Centro has also been distributing fresh bread, fruits, dairy products, meat, frozen foods, and vegetables to an average of 95 families each time (averaging 363 individuals). Through a grant from the Giving Circle of Lower Westchester El Centro purchases food from the Food Bank for Westchester for our clients. Last year the Food Bank truck delivered a total of 115,721 pounds of food.

**Dissemination Services**

Because of its closeness to and knowledge of the Hispanic community, El Centro Hispano has been called upon since its inception in 1974 by many agencies and organizations in the City of White Plains, including the local school system, the White Plains Public Library, White Plains Hospital and all the Spanish language newspapers, to communicate and disseminate important information or publications to the local Hispanic population.

**Cancer Support**

Since 2008, El Centro has supported 52 White Plains residents diagnosed with cancer with a range of services including referrals to cancer specialists, assistance in communicating with doctors and hospitals, and/or with modest monetary help.
Complying with the request of Pastor Robert Norris from Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Elmsford, El Centro Hispano opened its first extension on September 30th. At this new location, El Centro will provide employment and housing listings, translations of documents, and registration to all El Centro Hispano’s programs every Saturday from 9:00 – 11:30 a.m. The Office is supervised by a staff from El Centro Hispano and two volunteers from the church.

Changing Lives through...
Cultural Events

El Centro Hispano’s mission statement specifically calls for our agency to help our families to maintain and enrich their own culture. This is accomplished every year through events that bring families together around food, typical music and traditional clothing from their countries. The events help keep alive our families’ ties to their heritage. We participated in the following events that celebrated our clients’ Hispanic heritage: the Westchester County Hispanic Heritage Day at the Kensico Dam; the Three Wise men celebration and El Día del Niño at St. Bernard’s Church.

Changing Lives Through...
Outreach, Counseling and Empowerment

Thousands of individuals and families come to the center each year seeking assistance in finding housing, looking for a job, completing applications, composing letters, notarizing documents, or having a document translated. We are very grateful for the support we have received from White Plains Mayor Thomas M. Roach, the White Plains Common Council and the White Plains Planning Department, New York State Assembly Amy Paulin and New York State Assembly David Buchwald for El Centro Hispano’s Core Programs.

In 2018:

- **2,100 new clients** came to El Centro Hispano seeking some type of assistance. *
- **5,159 unduplicated clients** were served. *
- **4,404 job referrals** were made for jobs in White Plains and nearby communities. 781 to new clients and 3,623 to repeat clients. *
- **5,570 housing referrals** were made for available rooms, apartments, and studios in Westchester. 915 to new clients and 4,655 to repeat clients. *
- **881 additional services** were provided by our staff. Staff translated or notarized documents; filled out job/school applications; composed letters; and made phone calls on behalf of our clients to doctors, clinics, lawyers, schools, hospitals, employers, landlords, and social service agencies.
In 2018, El Centro Hispano provided a total of 14,145 services in the office or at other locations. **

2,200 clients received information and outreach about our services and programs.

*These numbers were calculated by counting individual client intake records which were completed by staff each time a service was provided. They include some clients who sought El Centro’s assistance on more than one occasion.

**This number was calculated by adding the individual clients for whom client intake records were completed, and the clients served at special activities at which individual client intake records were not completed.

Changing Lives through...
Special Activities

January

44th Celebration of the Three Wise Men. During this celebration, which took place on January 6, the Three Wise Men, represented by Dr. Joseph Ricca, Superintendent of the White Plains School System; George Gumina, Director of Philanthropy for the Town of Greenburgh and Anthony Lanza from the Lanza Family Foundation, distributed toys to more than 333 children donated by Cubs for Kids, Rye Presbyterian Church, Scarsdale High School (Spanish Club), The Westchester Reform Temple, Toys for Tots, Westchester Hispanic Law Enforcement Association, Debbie Augarten, Susan Le Cointe and Ybelize Pilarte from the White Plains School System Special Education Department. All the attendees were delighted with the joyful music from the musical group from the White Plains Police Department “Los Cuchifritos” directed by Sargent Luis Muñiz.

Special Education Workshop for Hispanic Parents. The White Plains School District Educational Department explained to more than 25 parents what they need to know in order to navigate the Special Education system so as to ensure that their children receive the proper services while in the Educational Department Programs. This informative program took place on January 24, 2018.

February

Visit of County Executive George Latimer to our Food Distribution on February 2. All the recipients of our Food Distribution enjoyed the visit of Mr. Latimer. They were able to share with him their concerns, needs and hopes. He stayed for most of the distribution and was very pleased with the warm welcome he received.

Special presentation at the White Plains Hebrew Institute. Isabel Villar, our Executive Director and Keyla Garcia, Director of Marketing/Branding and Adult Educational Programs spoke to a group of congregants from the synagogue who were interested in learning about the Hispanic community in White Plains; how El Centro Hispano started, and the various programs offered now. The presentation took place on February 10th.
Computer Class//Quick Books Graduation. 63 adult students who attended computer skill and QuickBooks classes at the Technology Center from October 2017 – February 2018 received diplomas and were congratulated for completing their course work by elected officials and guest dignitaries on February 15. The ceremony was followed by a delicious international dinner.

Informative Meetings for Parents of Children in The Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor, Mi Hermano Mayor and Saturday Academy Mentoring/ Tutorial Programs. From February 5th to February 9th, the Director of Children’s Educational Programs and the coordinators of these programs met with the parents of those students who had not worked up to their academic potential this quarter.

March

The Jewish Community of Westchester honored Isabel E. Villar at the “WE ARE ALL IMMIGRANTS PASSOVER SEDER”. Isabel received the 2018 AJC “Woman of Valor” Award at the Passover Seder organized to support those who have immigrated from Latin American, African, Muslim and Caribbean countries, the event took place on March 12 at the Beth El Synagogue Center in New Rochelle. The event was attended by more than 140 immigrants representing all the above mentioned countries.

College Planning Night. Hispanic parents and their children in eleventh grade participated in this special presentation by the White Plains High School Guidance Department on March 15 at El Centro Hispano. The 55 Hispanic families who attended the meeting learned about the opportunities available for their children to attend college or other post-secondary institutions.

St. Patrick’s Day Parade in White Plains. On March 17th, El Centro Hispano’s Boy and Girl Scouts troops participated in the parade. Accompanied by their leaders and parents, the boys and girls, dressed in beautiful and colorful uniforms, marched through the streets of White Plains.

April

Informative Meeting for Parents of Children in The Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor, Mi Hermano Mayor and Saturday Academy Mentoring/Tutorial Programs. From April 23 to April 27, the Director of Children’s Educational Programs and the coordinators of these programs met with the parents of those students who had not worked up to their academic potential this quarter.

El Centro Hispano Early Literacy Program Graduation. On April 20 and 22 all participating students and their parents attended this special celebration during which students were presented with Achievement Certificates. Parents were delighted with their child’s academic progress, and at the end of the presentation, everyone enjoyed a variety of appetizers provided by the families.

Third Annual Celebration of El Día del Niño. This event, held on Saturday, April 21 was sponsored by El Centro Hispano and MVP Health Care with the collaboration of Danny’s Cycles, Girl Scouts, Heart of the Hudson, Boy Scouts of America Westchester – Putnam Council, and the White Plains Department of Public Safety. The 430 participants of whom 230 were children enjoyed 10 brand new bicycle raffles, a bicycle obstacle course, toys, and demonstrations from the White Plains Department of Public Safety. The participants were entertained by a folkloric dance group from El Ecuador and Peru. As in years past, the highlights of the event for the children were the clown and the bouncing house.

Annual Health Fair. White Plains Hospital, in collaboration with El Centro Hispano, Slater Center, and Calvary Church, sponsors this health fair every year in order to provide members of the community with a complete check-up at no cost. Informational materials were available in English, Spanish, and Haitian
Creole. 237 African Americans and Hispanics registered to benefit from the many medical exams offered at the fair which took place this year at the Calvary Baptist Church on Saturday, April 28th.

May

**Hitchcock’s Triple Crown Event 2018.** Hitchcock Presbyterian Church recognized EL CENTRO HISPANO along with AFYA and WESTHAB for the work they do in our community. More than 200 people attended the Scarsdale Golf Club for this fundraising event on Friday, May 2.

**Informative Meetings for Parents of Children in The Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor, Mi Hermano Mayor and Saturday Academy Mentoring/ Tutorial Programs.** The purpose of the meetings, which took place on May 21st and 25th, was to discuss individually the academic progress of their child with each of the parents in attendance.

**Mentor Evening at El Centro Hispano.** Twelve Hispanic families were invited to El Centro to meet with four professionals representing different fields. The guest speakers shared their experiences, accomplishments and challenges with the participants. The parents and the students had the opportunity to ask them many important questions and to obtain advice. They not only enjoyed a very informative evening but also a delicious meal. The meeting took place on May 24.

**A well-deserved honor for Isabel E. Villar.** The White Plains City Democratic Committee presented Isabel E. Villar with the 2018 Ted Benjamin Community Service Award at their Annual Dinner on Sunday, May 29th at the Westchester Hills Golf Club.

June

**Computer Class Graduation.** 62 adult students who attended computer classes at the Technology Center from February 2018 – May 2018 received diplomas from elected officials and guest dignitaries on June 8 and were congratulated for completing their course work. The ceremony was followed by a delicious international dinner.

**Presentation of El Centro Hispano’s Scholarships at the White Plains High School Awards Ceremony.** This ceremony took place on June 14 at the high school and 9 Hispanic seniors received a total of $17,200 in El Centro Hispano scholarships in recognition of their academic achievement and involvement with El Centro Hispano.

**El Centro Hispano’s Scholarship Presentation.** On Thursday, June 14th, Cabanillas & Associates, P.C. and El Centro Hispano honored twenty-four students and graduates from the White Plains area for high academic achievement and strong community leadership. Nine of the recipients were graduates from White Plains High School and fifteen were college students who have served as tutors/mentors in El Centro’s Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor/Mi Hermano Mayor (My Older Sister/Older Brother) Tutorial Mentoring Program and Saturday Academy.

In addition to the outstanding students and their families, attendees of the event included El Centro Hispano Board members, staff, volunteers and supporters, and the White Plains School District Director of the World Language and ELL Programs Lisa Panaro. A special appearance was made by La Mega 97.9’s DJ Tony Sanchez a.k.a. “El Tiburon”.

All the attendees enjoyed an unforgettable evening at the Cabanillas & Associates, P.C. Penthouse. This is the fourth year that Cabanillas & Associates, P.C. have generously donated to El Centro Hispano’s Scholarship fund and hosted this magnificent event.
Closing Ceremony of The Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor, Mi Hermano Mayor and Saturday Academy
On June 9, El Centro recognized with certificates the students who participated in The Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor, Mi Hermano Mayor and Saturday Academy Tutorial/Mentoring Programs. Tutors and volunteers were recognized for their service, dedication, and commitment. After the ceremony 250 people enjoyed a delicious international luncheon prepared by all the parents in appreciation for the academic help their children received during the school year.

Immigrant children at Children’s Village enjoy a Day at the Zoo. Thanks to the generosity of members of El Centro Hispano 30 girls enjoyed an unforgettable day at the Bronx Zoo.

July

Hispanic Heritage Day at the Kensico Dam. El Centro Hispano co-sponsored this event on July 15 with Neighbors Link of Mt. Kisco, the United Community Center of New Rochelle and the Community Resource Center of Mamaroneck and Larchmont. This festival gives non-profit organizations an opportunity to make themselves and their services known to the large number of Hispanics who come to enjoy a day of typical music, food, and international crafts. Police estimated that approximately 9,000 individuals were in attendance.

Bronx Zoo Trip. On July 28, 38 children and 5 adults visited the Bronx Zoo. The children enjoyed a day full of excitement and unforgettable educational experiences. The trip was made possible by funds received from St. Faith’s Foundation and by the generosity of the Zoo, which gave the children a substantial discount.

August

Gift Card Distribution to Purchase School Supplies for Children in El Centro Hispano’s Summer Literacy Program for Second and Third Graders. Thanks to the generosity of Lucille and Richard Fontana, El Centro Hispano was able to distribute 42 Target gift cards with a value of $36 each to the children in the program. The distribution took place the last day of the program on Thursday, August 17.

Meeting with Greenburgh schools Superintendent Tahira Dupree Chase and her cabinet. Isabel and Judith, as per Dr. Dupree Chase’s request, met on August 28th with school administrators from Greenburg to explain the various services provided by El Centro Hispano and the educational model followed by El Centro when implementing tutorial programs. There will be future meetings to discuss the possibility of beginning a partnership with their school system and El Centro Hispano to provide very needed services to the Hispanic children in that town.

September

Training and Introductory Meeting for the Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor, Mi Hermano Mayor and Saturday Academy Mentoring/Tutorial Programs. On September 15 mentors, tutors, and volunteers in these programs received a half day of training. That same day, students and parents were informed about the regulations of the program along with the required commitment and responsibilities.

Training and Introductory Meeting for the Culture through Technology and Study Skills Program. On Saturday, September 22 all students of the Culture through Technology and Study Skills Program and their parents attended a special meeting in which they were trained and informed about the objectives and expectations of the programs.
The Early Literacy Program at Post Road Elementary School and The Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor and Mi Hermano Mayor Mentoring/Tutorial Programs at Eastview Middle School Opening. The official opening of these programs for Kindergarten, first and sixth grade students took place on Monday, September 17. All parents and students were informed about the rules and regulations of the program.

Grand Opening of El Centro Hispano Extension at Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Elmsford. El Centro will provide, at this new location, employment and housing listings, translations of documents, and registration to all Centro Hispano’s programs every Saturday from 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon. This memorable occasion took place on Sunday, September 30th, and it was attended by more than 300 people.

October

White Plains High School Financial Aid Workshop. The White Plains High School Guidance Department sponsored this event in cooperation with El Centro Hispano. It took place on October 16. 42 parents and students benefitted from this presentation.

Computer Class Graduation 50 adult students who attended computer classes at the Technology Center from June 2018 – October 2018 received diplomas and were congratulated for completing their course work by elected officials and guest dignitaries on October 25. The ceremony was followed by a delicious international dinner.

Participation of El Centro Hispano’s Scouts and Students in the Ted E. Bear Hospital on Saturday, October 27. Children were invited by the hospital to dress in Halloween costumes and bring their teddy bears, stuffed animals, and dolls to be “treated” for a variety of “conditions” by the expert medical team at White Plains Hospital.

November

White Plains Hospital gave free flu shots to participants of El Centro Hispano’s food distribution. Representatives from White Plains Hospital gave free flu shots to 49 of the many adults benefitting from the bi-monthly food distribution at El Centro Hispano on November 1.

Special Presentation to the Elmsford schools Superintendent Marc Baiocco, all school principals, representatives of the PTA and a group of interested parents. Isabel and Judith made this presentation to explain the services provided by El Centro Hispano and the educational model followed by El Centro Hispano when implementing tutorial programs. There will be future meetings to discuss the possibility of beginning a partnership with their school system and El Centro Hispano to provide very needed services to the Hispanic children in that town.

The Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor, Mi Hermano Mayor and Saturday Academy Programs’ Student Progress Meeting. From November 21 – December 10th, the Director of Children’s Educational Programs and the coordinators of these programs met with the parents of those students who had not worked up to their academic potential this quarter.

December

Distribution of Knitted Hats to Students in our Early Literacy Class, the Lanza Mi Hermana Mayor and Hermano Mayor Tutorial/Mentoring Program and Culture through Technology and Study Skills programs. 97 students received a hat knitted by the Gladhatters Knitters at Our Lady of Sorrows Church. We are very grateful to them for making our children’s holiday celebration so special all these years.
King’s Capital Event to benefit 50 children from El Centro Hispano. On December 2, 50 of the children enrolled in our Early Literacy Program and our Culture through Technology Program were invited by King’s Capital Construction Company to an unforgettable Christmas celebration at the Coliseum Restaurant where they not only enjoyed a delicious lunch but were entertained by an amazing magician, music of the season, and the arrival of Santa Claus who gave every child brand new designer boots and coats in the spirit of the holidays. This celebration was made possible thanks to the generosity of the following sponsors: Kings Capital Construction Group, Coliseum Restaurant, Mike Cinicolo, JR Caravalla, Mezza Luna Pizzeria from Scarsdale, Trattoria 632 from Purchase, Paula L. Summa, Bridge Pointe Group, Cermele & Wood and Billy Battiglieri.

Distribution of Food Vouchers Thanks to the Generosity of Fidelis Care. 20 needy families benefitted from a $15 voucher distributed on December 7 to help them with their holiday food expenses. The vouchers were raffled to families participating in our Educational Programs and also to senior citizens who participate in El Centro Hispano’s food distribution.

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Claudia Málaga, Chief of Operations
Jennifer Abreu, Director of Children’s Educational Programs
Daisy Flores – Assistant to the Deputy Director/Grant Writer
Keyla García – Director of Marketing/Branding and Adult Educational Programs
Chelsea Mosquera – Assistant to the Director of Marketing/Branding and Adult Educational Programs
Henry Avendaño – Coordinator of El Centro Hispano Technology Center/Lead Instructor
Giselle Robles – Outreach Worker/Data Entry Operator
Yani Vilca – Legal Consultant
Cesar Castro – IT Consultant
El Centro Hispano’s Family Circle

Our most sincere gratitude to the following members of El Centro Hispano Family Circle. Their special contributions of $500 or more in 2018 has helped us tremendously to carry out our mission:

H. Judith Aucar  
Matthew D. Brenner  
Ana Bolivar  
Betsy and Steven Bush  
Christopher Cabanillas, Esq.  
Marcia and Richard Cohen  
Aguedo Camacho  
Millie and Elizardi Castro  
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Linda A. Ellis  
Lucille and Richard Fontana, Esq.  
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Jeffrey and Ronny Hersch  
Thomas and Elizabeth Hollahan  
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Ann Rockefeller Roberts  
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Joan and Ed Saslow  
Aaron J. Steinberg  
Betty M. Torrance, PhD  
Norberto Torres-Otero, MD  
Dorothy and Jonathan Schere  
Yani Vilca  
Isabel E. Villar  
Elaine Yellen
Above and Beyond in 2018

This year we give special recognition to several groups and individuals that in 2018 have especially helped us ensure the sustainability of our programs for years to come and the continuance of our mission to serve the Hispanic community.

We are grateful for these donors in 2018:

- Altice for providing free broadband internet service to El Centro Hispano, Inc.

- First Baptist Church of White Plains for providing El Centro Hispano and BOCES space to offer a daytime English class for adults Monday- Friday.

- Hitchcock Presbyterian Church for choosing El Centro Hispano to be one of the recipients of this year’s Triple Crown Event 2018.

- King’s Capital Construction for their generosity to our children in the Early Literacy Program and the Culture through Technology Program.

- Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Elmsford and Father Robert Norris for inviting El Centro Hispano to provide services at their site on Saturday mornings.

- The Congregants of Bet Am Shalom Synagogue who through their generous donations have helped us continue to provide the legal services desperately needed by many of our clients.
Acknowledgements

We give thanks to our wonderful volunteers and to all those who have helped us in the past 44 years to accomplish our mission to assist, support, and strengthen the Hispanic community.

Our sincere appreciation also goes out to the following special benefactors and collaborators - private, corporate, and governmental - for their help this past year.

Altice/Cablevision
Apple Bank for Savings
Alloy Printing
Bet Am Shalom Synagogue
Boy Scouts of Westchester and Putnam
Calvary Baptist Church
Cohen & Siegel
Feeding America
Fidelis Care
First Baptist Church of White Plains
Formé Medical Center and Urgent Care
Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson
Giving Circle of Westchester
Hitchcock Presbyterian Church
Honorable Ben Boykin, Chair of
Westchester County Board of Legislators
Honorable Amy R. Paulin
Honorable David Buchwald
Honorable George Latimer, Westchester County Executive
Honorable Thomas Roach, Mayor of the City of White Plains
Katherine and David Moore Foundation
Key Bank Foundation
Kings Capital Construction
LPL Financial
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Our Lady of Sorrows’ Gladhatters
Patrina Foundation
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Play Group Theatre
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Scarsdale High School Spanish Club
St. Bernard’s Catholic Church, White Plains
Thomas H. Slater Community Center
Wells Fargo Community Campaign
Westchester Community Foundation
Westchester County Office for Women
Westchester County Youth Bureau
White Plains Planning Department
White Plains Rotary Club
White Plains School System,
White Plains Middle School – Eastview Campus
White Plains High School
White Plains Hospital

We sincerely apologize to any individual or group of individuals whom we have inadvertently omitted from this list.

OUR MOST SINCERE GRATITUDE TO:

ST. BERNARD CHURCH FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT AND FOR HOUSING EL CENTRO HISPANO FOR 44 YEARS.

AND

ALLOY PRINTING FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT, GENEROSITY AND FRIENDSHIP.
El Centro Hispano, Inc.
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White Plains, New York 10606
914.289.0500
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OLMC EL CENTRO HISPANO INITIATIVE
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church
59 E. Main Street
Elmsford, NY 10523
Office Hours: Saturdays 9:00 -11:30 a.m.

Educational Programs at the Technology Center
Mondays and Wednesdays -- 6:30 -8:30 p.m.
Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays – 6:00 – 10:00 p.m.
Saturdays – 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Sundays – 8:00 a.m. – 12 p.m.
elcentrohispano1@gmail.com
www.elcentrohispano.org
and at
The First Baptist Church of White Plains
Mondays -Thursdays 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

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El Centro Hispano, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable organization.