

# NEWSLETTER

## LOOKING BACK AT 2024

### CENTRO MULTICULTURAL LA FAMILIA

#### CELEBRATING 32 YEARS & A NEW HOME



2024 is a milestone year for Centro Multicultural La Familia, we **celebrate 32 years of service** and the beginning of an exciting new chapter!

For over three decades, we have been a trusted space for families, offering **support, empowerment, and advocacy**. This year, we take a significant step forward with a **new home at 91 N. Saginaw, Pontiac, Michigan**. More than just a new address, this move represents **growth, renewed dedication, and greater opportunities to serve** our community. As we look ahead, we remain committed to building **stronger connections, expanding resources**, and continuing to **support families** every step of the way. Thank you for being part of our journey, our doors are always open, and we can't wait to welcome you!



# LETTER FROM OUR CEO

As we step into the new year, the challenges we face remind us just how vital our collective work is. At Centro Multicultural La Familia, we feel the weight of leadership changes and policies that disproportionately harm Latine/x, immigrant, and other marginalized communities. The ongoing messages of racism and xenophobia, coupled with budget cuts, make it more important than ever to stand together, protect our rights, and support one another.

Despite these struggles, we find strength in our BIPOC and 2SLGBTQ+ communities, our greatest source of resilience and the path to positive change. At Centro, we are committed to ensuring that those most affected know they are not alone. If you are experiencing abuse at home, work, or in public spaces, we stand with you. Our doors are open to provide assistance, share resources, and foster a sense of safety.

We stand in solidarity with all who face hatred and discrimination, regardless of national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, religion, age, or language. We ask our allies to join us in resisting threats to human rights and fostering understanding in their communities.

We also invite community members to use our space to share concerns, be heard, and find hope. For over 30 years, Centro has been a place of connection, learning, and growth. Moving forward, we will continue to build strategies across movements to defend our communities and Mother Earth, knowing that our struggles are interconnected and our strength lies in unity.

Now, more than ever, we need to come together to support one another, believe survivors of abuse, and work toward a world that is caring, respectful, and welcoming to all, especially those most vulnerable. We ALL deserve a society where children grow up feeling safe, loved, and full of wonder.

Before the winter ends, we ask you to support Centro's efforts in providing a sense of belonging to families facing mental illness, abuse, intimidation, and fear. You can donate online at [www.centromulticultural.org](http://www.centromulticultural.org) or send a check to CMLF, 91 N Saginaw Street, Suite 200, Pontiac, MI 48342. We invite you to visit us to see firsthand the difference your donation makes in our families and children every day. Support comes in many forms: volunteering, sharing resources, sending messages of hope, or simply showing up. Together, we can build a future rooted in dignity, justice, and solidarity.

WITH LOVE AND HOPE,

*Sonia Acosta PhD*





# OUR PROGRAMS

At Centro Multicultural La Familia, we're dedicated to supporting families with culturally sensitive services to enhance their quality of life. Our committed team continues to provide assistance to residents across Oakland, Macomb, Genesee, and Wayne counties, offering help in Spanish, Portuguese, and English. No matter the need, we strive to be a place where families feel supported, understood, and empowered.

## Mental Health Program

At CMLF's Mental Health Program, we honor each client's unique story by providing culturally responsive care and holistic support.

In 2024, our mental health team, supported by five funders, served over **300 clients**, including children, youth, and adults. Led by Nancy Truly (Program Director), the team included clinicians Evangelina Palma Ramirez, Stephanie Sustaita, and Veronica Rosa Sandoval, along with interns Ally McCarty and Abigail Crawford. Together, they dedicated over **1,800 hours** to screenings, assessments, documentation, and mental health counseling, ensuring accessible care for **our community**.



## Éxito Educativo Program

Through mentoring, logistical assistance, and outreach, we help students navigate the U.S. education system, complete financial aid forms, and connect with key community resources. In 2024, we served **316 clients**, conducted **849 direct client sessions**, and provided guidance on pre-enrollment steps. Our FAFSA assistance supported **167 students**, with **77.8%** being first-time FAFSA users. This included **356 sessions** covering ID creation, application completion, and processing. We also participated in **13 FAFSA-specific outreach events** to expand access to financial aid. We were able to offer these services thanks to funders such as the Michigan Hispanic Collaborative and the Pontiac Promise Zone.

# OUR PROGRAMS



## Health Literacy and Access:

**Reliable healthcare and education** are essential for a thriving community. In partnership with **Ventanilla de Salud**, we provide **bilingual health programs and workshops** on diabetes, hypertension, nutrition, vaccinations, and healthcare access through health fairs, clinics, and educational sessions, ensuring families receive the guidance they need. In 2024, we served **954 clients**, **led 724 group sessions**, and **provided 1,120 health referrals**, connecting individuals to vital care. Our Health Insurance Assistance program secured coverage for **560 people**, while our Vaccination Program in collaboration with the **Oakland County Health Division**, administered **529 vaccines** across **13 clinics**, helping families stay protected.



## Victims of Crimes Services

Our team provides **compassionate, culturally sensitive support** for survivors of trauma, abuse, and violence. In **2024**, we supported **236 survivors**, ensuring they receive the **resources, advocacy, and empowerment** needed to heal and rebuild their lives.

We offer **case management, emotional support, legal advocacy, court accompaniment, language interpretation, and resource connection**, tailoring each service to the unique needs of those we serve. Our after-hours support group provides a safe space where women can build life skills and focus on self-improvement.

Collaboration is key to our impact. We've strengthened relationships with **prosecutors' offices, legal advocates, law enforcement, and community organizations** to expand our support network. This year, our team was honored to speak at the **Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan Victim Services Training Unit** and the **MCDESV training**, reinforcing our commitment to advocacy and education. At the heart of our work is the resilience of survivors. We stand with them, every step of the way.



# OUR PROGRAMS

## OVW CSSP (LGBTQ+ and Immigrant Survivors Program)

We expanded outreach, education, and advocacy efforts by training five organizations, providing LGBTQ 101 workshops to **95 staff** in English and Spanish, and hosting **13 radio programs** on LGBTQ, immigrant, and social justice issues. Our team participated in at least **8 community outreach activities**, including being featured at **Ferndale PRIDE**. Additionally, we launched the **Lending Library and Book of the Week** initiative and strengthened partnerships by attending **Pontiac City Hall and Council Meetings**.

## Racial Equity

We hosted **14 workshops** focused on holistic health, well-being, and racial equity, with **291 participants**. A key highlight was the Tzompantli event, where **50 participants** took part in workshops, and nearly **200 guests** attended a gathering honoring grief, life, and heritage through art and tradition.



## SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Program)

We employed **12 youth of color** from Pontiac to work in **local farms and gardens**, took them on two camping trips, including an Up North Wildcraft Adventure Camp, and engaged them in **environmental work** across five state parks.

## LEO (Community Center)

Outdoor programming welcomed **132 new community members**, offering workshops on Native Pollinator Lawns, Seed Starting, Building Garden Beds, Soil Testing, and Community Herbalism. We also continued our partnership with Growing Pontiac to support **sustainable agriculture initiatives**.



# OUR PROGRAMS

## Small Business Program

We provide entrepreneurship training, financial education, and technical assistance to aspiring and current business owners. In 2024, we supported **107 clients**, conducted **238 visits**, and provided **758 hours** of assistance. As a result, **29 new businesses** were launched, and we continue working with **32 active clients**. Through entrepreneurship workshops, financial literacy classes, and one-on-one advising, we guide individuals in business registration, budgeting, credit management, and loan applications. We remain committed to fostering economic growth and empowering small business owners.



## Radio Centro Multicultural

In 2024, we achieved incredible milestones, connecting with over **18,000 listeners** both across Michigan and around the globe. Our diverse programming continues to reflect the rich cultural tapestry of our community, and we're especially proud of the success of our **children's program, Mochilas Abajo**, which introduced the beloved character **Margarita**. Thanks to our dedicated listeners, volunteers, and talented hosts, our audience has grown tremendously.

We want to express our heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your support and passion. Your engagement makes all of this possible, and we look forward to continuing this journey with you in the years ahead!



# VOLUNTEERS IMPACT

In 2024, **116 volunteers** dedicated their time and energy to supporting our mission. Their invaluable contributions were especially evident during key events such as **Mother's Day & Tea Party (May)**, **Centro's Move (June/July)**, and the **DV Walk (October)**.

In total, volunteers contributed **3,780 hours**, adding an incredible **\$119,428** in value to Centro Multicultural La Familia.

**To our amazing volunteers:** Your dedication, time, and effort make a **world of difference!** We deeply appreciate your hard work and the positive impact you've had in 2024. We look forward to **continuing this journey** together in 2025. Thank you for your **kindness, passion, and unwavering commitment**, we couldn't do it without you!



## HEALTH EVENTS RECAP



With a focus on **preventive healthcare**, we continue to offer **mammograms** through Karmanos Institute, **kidney screenings** through National Kidney Foundation, **vision exams** through medical students of Oakland University, and **dental health services** through Gary Burnstein Clinic to promote early detection and well-being. We also encourage **healthy lifestyles** through engaging activities like **Zumba, Kangoo Jumps, and nutrition workshops** through MSU-Extension. Additionally, our permanent programs provide critical resources, including health insurance enrollment assistance and smoking cessation counseling, ensuring long-term support for our community.

# OUTREACH & EVENTS RECAP

## Citizenship Classes

CMLF organized citizenship application classes with more than **25 participants**, many of whom have already confirmed that they passed their exam. This was a significant milestone in **helping community members** take the next step toward becoming U.S. citizens.



## Juneteenth Festival – Pontiac

We had the opportunity to participate in the Juneteenth Festival in Pontiac, an event that brings together youth, families, and organizations to celebrate and uplift the community. The festival was filled with vibrant activities, music, and workshops designed to inspire and empower young people. Our booth was bustling with enthusiastic visitors eager to learn more about our programs and services.



## Breastfeeding Fair

More than 50 people joined us for the second edition of our Breastfeeding Fair, a space filled with informative talks, expert guidance, and valuable resources to support mothers during this special stage. Parents connected, shared experiences, and strengthened their support network, fostering a sense of community and empowerment. Through education and shared knowledge, we continue to make this journey smoother and more fulfilling for families.



## Voter Registration and Election Protection

Throughout October, our team conducted door-to-door canvassing, reaching over 1,000 households in Oakland County with a team of 10 people to help the Latinx community register to vote. On Election Day, we deployed a team of 13 people across seven polling locations to support Election Protection, reinforcing our commitment to civic engagement.





# OUTREACH & EVENTS RECAP



## Press Conference on Latino Voter Engagement

CMLF participated in a press conference as part of the **MI Latinx Coalition**, alongside representatives from other member organizations. Together, we presented **data and insights** on Latino voter participation, highlighting our collective impact in Michigan and the elections overall. The discussion emphasized the importance of increasing voter turnout among Latino communities and the role of grassroots efforts in strengthening civic engagement.

## DV Walk – Raising Awareness on Domestic Violence

One of CMLF's largest events brought together a significant number of participants for a march to raise awareness about domestic violence. After the march, attendees gathered at a resource fair featuring multiple organizations distributing valuable information. The event fostered community engagement with refreshments, including donuts and cider, creating an inviting and supportive atmosphere.



## Día de Muertos Celebration

We honored our Latino heritage by celebrating with altars, music, and cultural activities, creating a heartfelt tribute to loved ones. Children joined the festivities by dressing up and asking for calaverita, adding to the joyful atmosphere. Events like this help us preserve our roots and celebrate our culture together.



## Mexicanas en Michigan Posada

CMLF participated in this event, providing information and referrals to those who were interested. Engaging in community-led events is a core part of our mission, and we value the opportunity to support and connect with community members. More than **400 people** attended this event.



# CLIENTS SUCCESS STORIES

## Victims of Crime Client

A client turned to Centro Multicultural La Familia after experiencing domestic violence. He needed **legal support, therapy, and immigration guidance.**

Our advocacy team stood by his side in every court session, ensuring he felt supported throughout the legal process. Therapy sessions helped him regain his strength and confidence, while entrepreneurial coaching empowered him to pursue his dreams. Today, he is building his own business and actively contributing to his community, proving that resilience and support can lead to new beginnings.

## Mental Health

One client shared how therapy transformed her life after nearly a year of sessions. When she first reached out, she hesitated, feeling that her struggles might not be significant enough. However, as the sessions progressed, she began to recognize the importance of her emotions and the impact of her experiences. Therapy helped her set boundaries, acknowledge her self-worth, and build the confidence to express herself freely. She emphasized how healing can be daunting but is ultimately an act of courage and a step toward rediscovering oneself.

## Mental Health

Another client described her experience with depression and anxiety as a constant battle, where self-doubt and negative thoughts overwhelmed her daily life. Through therapy, she found the tools to understand and process her emotions, allowing her to heal from past wounds. She reflected on how difficult it was to open up but acknowledged the value of professional guidance in regaining her self-esteem and inner peace. With time, she learned to let go of self-judgment, embrace self-compassion, and take life one day at a time.

## Health Team

Through nutrition and diabetes education classes, a client successfully lowered their fasting glucose levels from 290 mg/dl to 110 mg/dl in just four educational sessions. Small changes can lead to life-changing results.





# WELCOMING NEW TEAM MEMBERS

During 2024 and early 2025, Centro Multicultural La Familia has welcomed new and talented bilingual staff members who are committed to supporting our mission. Their dedication and expertise will help us continue providing essential services to our community.



**Makayla Perez**  
Student Success Coach



**Arely Olea**  
Client Advocate &  
Emotional Wellness Specialist



**Yamne Sanchez**  
Health & Tobacco  
Treatment Specialist



**Claudia Rubio**  
Health Educator &  
Social Media Specialist



**Virginia Luna**  
Client Advocate &  
Outreach Coordinator



**Diana Ramos**  
Health Educator



**Mayrel Narvaez**  
CSRUV Program Coordinator



**Mauricio Vazquez**  
Client Advocate



**Osvaldo Gonzalez**  
STOP Client Advocate



**Karina Linares**  
Receptionist &  
Client Navigator



**Berenice Chavez**  
Communication &  
Graphic Design Coordinator

## SRA. DEBRA EHLMANN'S CONTRIBUTIONS

In 2002, Debra Ehrmann started at Centro with a mission to serve the needs of our community after leaving her corporate insurance job and seeing firsthand how our communities get forgotten and overlooked when seeking help. She spearheaded our program for language interpretation at Trinity Health in the once known as Clinica Santa Teresa which is now the Women's Clinic. There, she provided critical language interpretation for pregnant women and was present for over a 300 births. These services continue to this day and we even have staff whose births Debra witnessed many years ago. Sra. Debra also instructed Citizenship Classes, led our Community Support program that assisted with connecting clients to essential needs, she worked as an advocate in our Survivor Services Programs, she helped Get Out the Vote within our Spanish-



speaking community, she supported our Pontiac youth on camping trips, and always lent a helping hand. There are truly not enough words that we can muster up to illustrate the profound and lasting impact that Debra has had on our organization and more importantly, the lives of our clients and community. Debra received the Wonder Woman Award for her dedication to helping communities in need. We say felicidades on her retirement after 25+ years of service, and hold close the many lessons and laughs we have had. Without a doubt, you are likely to see Sra Debra still helping Centro in any way she can between our Board of Directors, camping trips and baking fine pastries.

