

El Encuentrolero

EDITION 1 * DECEMBER 2020 * DISMANTLING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Letter from our Executive Director



Welcome to the launch of Encuentro's quarterly newsletter!

In this first issue, our talented news team highlights the many ways Encuentro is confronting the COVID-19 pandemic. For those of us who have long been committed to advancing opportunities with our immigrant community, we know that COVID is exacerbating the many challenges immigrants have confronted throughout history. Among these, and often

overlooked, is the digital divide that disproportionately prevents many immigrants from fully accessing important resources, including jobs, information, community services, and simply engaging in 21st century society.

As such, Encuentro has an important role to play in using this epidemic as an opportunity to begin addressing the challenge of the digital divide together with our students, teachers, staff and supporters. In this issue, you'll learn about the multiple strategies and the relentless commitment we've all made to stand united during these challenging times. Together, we will see this pandemic through and, as Encuentroleros, we will come out on the other side with new skills and stronger relationships.

Please know that your continued commitment and support are what gives us hope, and what helps our large and growing Encuentro family stay strong, healthy and united!

Un agradecimiento infinito a TOD@S!!!!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. Plaza".

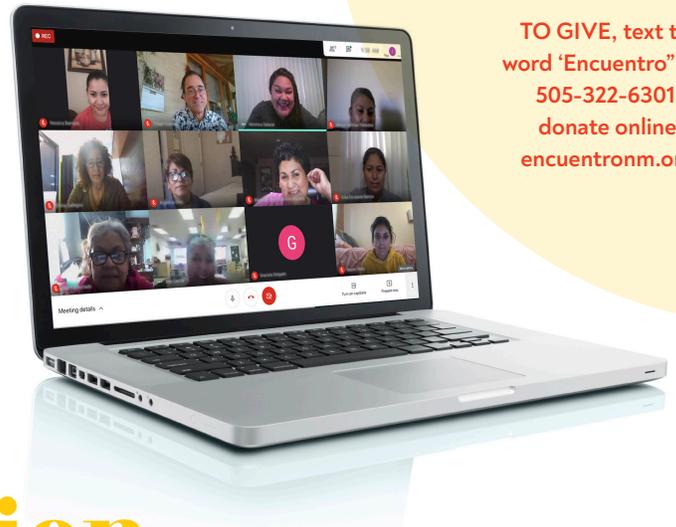
Andrea Plaza

Our Mission

Encuentro's mission is to transform New Mexico into a thriving community for all of its residents by engaging with Latino immigrant families in education and career development opportunities that build skills for economic and social justice.

Today, we bank, shop, learn and interact online.

The internet is a vital service. Access to technology is critical to success, engagement and basic civic inclusion. The COVID crisis has illuminated the growing digital divide that excludes our most vulnerable communities, the need for access to technology in an ever-increasing digital world, and the importance of skill building to compete and succeed in the 21st century. This first newsletter is dedicated to Encuentro's work to maintain safety within the Latinx immigrant community during COVID by investing in digital literacy and integration organization wide.



Your Support

With your continued financial support, Encuentro can address educational equity gaps to reduce the digital divide and improve Latinx immigrant family stability.

TO GIVE, text the word 'Encuentro' to 505-322-6301 or donate online at encuentronm.org.

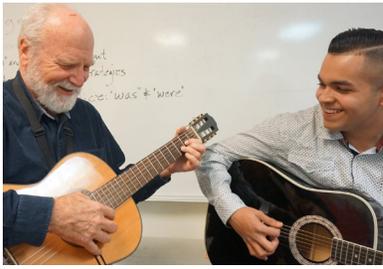
Distance Education

with Dr. Teresa Guevara, Director of Education



Distance Education is a new forum at Encuentro and building digital literacy and integration across educational programs has been an organization-wide effort. The collective learning process involved actively leveraging strategic partnerships, integrating new technologies, building essential support services, addressing skill gaps, and establishing the funding necessary to address organizational development needs in real time. Here is what Tere had to say:

"Many of us were nervous about the transition from a traditional classroom-based learning environment to online platforms. The implementation process has been a team effort that has challenged and stretched Encuentro's staff, teachers and students. We worked together with an amazing consultant, Montserrat Oyanedel from AltED, to provide essential professional development. Our incredible team of instructors shared their expertise, engaged in curriculum redesign, and partnered to pilot new methods for teaching and learning online this fall. Our partnership with South Valley Academy enabled recent graduates, first generation college students, to be hired to support class participants, teachers and classes. At the heart of the project is the invincible spirits, hard work and dedication of Encuentro's students. Their resilience, enthusiasm and efforts overshadowed any complications that arose as we developed and piloted new educational strategies and together we continue to adapt, learn and grow!"



TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Larry Moore

Larry is a veteran English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher with over 25 years of classroom experience and 7 years at Encuentro. He is loved by his students for using music and

song to make learning fun, engaging and interactive. When asked about transitioning his ESL classes to a distance-learning format, Larry acknowledged the wisdom and need but he also felt doubt, nervousness and skepticism. However, Larry credits Encuentro's proactive approach to providing support services for online instructions, teacher training and ongoing encouragement as key to the successful distance education pilot this fall. The pilot consists of five online classes team taught by educators working together to launch, redesign and deliver classes using new teaching and learning strategies. Although there were some snags along the way, Larry said that the progress, support and response from students has been great. Check out Larry's parody about his experiences transitioning to distance education "I Teach Online," on his YouTube channel along with other amazing tools he uses in teaching.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Elvira Gallegos

Elvira, has been a computer literacy student at Encuentro since 2018. She is the owner/operator of Healthy Life, an Herbal Life Business, located in Rio Rancho. Elvira tried programs at UNM and CNM before finding Encuentro's culturally and linguistically accessible computer literacy classes and teachers Veronica Salazar and Felipe Guevara. Her goals were to gain the computer skills needed to compete and succeed in the local economy along with

digital marketing tools to boost exposure and strengthen her business.

This is what Elvira said about learning at Encuentro: *"Encuentro's online classes are great and the teachers are amazing. I like that the classes are recorded so that I can see them again. Because of the pandemic, everything for my work and business has to be done through the computer. When I started, I didn't know how to turn on a computer so I was falling behind. Now, everything is about social media and the internet. These computer classes have helped me advance my business and thanks to what I know, I have more clients"*



Our Team

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Andrea Plaza
Executive Director

Veronica Salazar
Educational Programs
Assistant and Digital
Technologies Instructor



Encuentro's students are:

☀ Spanish-speaking adults and parents working part time, low-wage, front-line service-sector jobs.

☀ English language learners with 9 years of formal education on average, limited language and literacy skills, and have been out of an education systems for at least 15 years.

☀ Members of our community who have completely missed the digital revolution and now need basic computer literacy skills and access to technology to survive.



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