

El Encuentrolero

EDITION 7 * WINTER 2022 * CULTIVATING LEADERS

Letter from our Home Health Aide (HHA) Program Director



As a new Director, I have had the privilege to collaborate and learn from talented staff and student leaders about the importance of confidence building to finding voice, recognizing personal power, and ultimately changing false narratives. Encuentro's leaders inspire me through their action and demonstrate that being a leader means taking a lifelong journey of personal growth, discovering that we all have a voice, and that we can find power and strength in community.

At Encuentro, we view transformative leadership as an essential aspect of creating and sustaining impactful

change in our community and beyond. We have always known that leadership emerges organically across Encuentro's educational programs, but in 2021, we intentionally sought to create opportunities for students to connect to and exercise their inherent leadership. Spearheaded by Fiore Bran Aragón, with the support of our students, we have deliberately established a learning curriculum and opportunities for inclusive grassroots leadership. Together we create safe spaces to learn, engage, advocate, share knowledge and coalesce their power as decision makers. Students build fundamental skills and collaborate to apply these new skills as tools for leadership development. They serve as Encuentro ambassadors and represent programs at important community forms.

They amplify their perspectives and represent the immigrant community as journalists, and are engaging in local and national advocacy work through partnerships with El Centro de Igualdad y Derechos and the National Domestic Workers Alliance. As student leaders hone their leadership skills, they support and inspire the next generation of community leaders as mentors.

In this edition, you will learn about Encuentro's newly established leadership program and the amazing leaders who are guiding program design, advocating for change, informing local and national policies informing local and national policies. Together, they are amplifying their voices to strengthen and create a more just, inclusive and representative community.

—Samantha M. Morales



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.

To support Encuentro's mission, fuel educational and career opportunities for immigrant adults, or the purchase of a new home, **GIVE TODAY.**

Make your donation at encuentronm.org



Fiore Bran Aragón

Leadership Program Manager

Our students use their new skills to organize projects, advocate for themselves and their community.

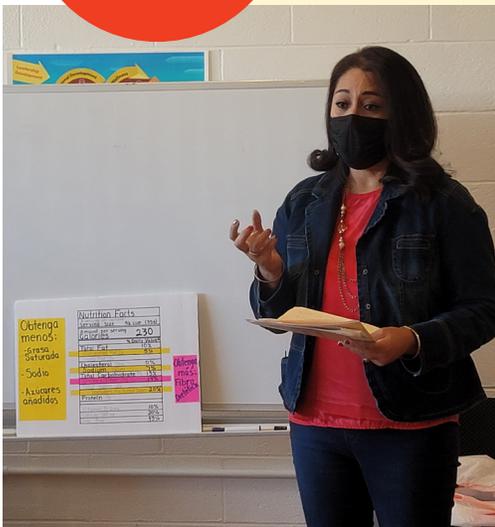
In the summer of 2021, I began my work supporting Encuentro's goal of creating spaces that are immigrant-led, honor the voices and lived experiences of our students, and deepen their influence across programs. I conducted focus groups to understand the training needs of our leaders, particularly our immigrant caregivers, and together we developed and piloted a 12-session Leadership Program that strengthens skills, improves teamwork, and builds ownership across Encuentro's programs. Current leadership projects include: education and professional development for graduates, advocacy for immigrant home care workers' rights, a peer-mentorship group, and a mutual support group focused on mental health, self and mutual care for caregivers.

I have seen the impact of this curriculum on our students, and how they have used their new skills to organize projects, advocate for themselves and their community. Participants have shared that the leadership program has helped them gain confidence in public speaking skills, self-advocacy, worker rights, contract negotiations, and even inspired their children to follow their mom's example as advocates for the Latine community.

Thanks to Encuentro's supporters, together we are building immigrant leaders and a STRONG community for all! ☀️



Meet Olga Santana...



Olga is an active member of Encuentro's Leadership Committee. She represents Encuentro's Home Health Aide (HHA) Program on a national level and was selected to serve on the National Domestic Workers Alliance's Home Care Worker Council.

"The HHA Leadership program has helped me discover my leadership skills and given me confidence to advocate for the good of the community. My daughters are proud to see me act at the national level and it fills me with pride to set that example for them. Thanks to Encuentro for the opportunity to share my knowledge at the local and national level, and for inspiring me to contribute my voice to strengthen my community."



Irma Ramos participates in the gardening project of the Harvest to Health class where students learn how to grow their own food. Grant funding for this important program ended in June 2022. Donor support will ensure it continues.



“Encuentro’s leadership program helped me find my true power as a leader! It has given me emotional supports to help me both professionally and personally.”

In 1997, Irma Ramos, a mother of three and accountant in Mexico, immigrated from Coahuila, Mexico to the United States, looking for better opportunities for her family. Upon arrival, she soon started working as a cashier at a fast-food restaurant. Her desire to find a better job, led her to obtain a GED. She found Encuentro in 2019, graduated from the HHA Program and was a member of the pilot Harvest to Health Senior Nutrition Course. Irma is an active member of Encuentro’s leadership program. The skills she obtained motivated her to open her own caregiver agency. She also is the founding member of Assisted Care en Comunidad, a worker-led home health cooperative that was launched by six HHA graduates. 🌟

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT | TU VOZ DIGITAL

Leaders Changing Narratives

There is a severe underrepresentation of Latine immigrants in community leadership as well as across the media. The less diverse the leadership is within the spaces of expression that exist today, the less likely communities are to have positive narratives around them.

Thus, Encuentro’s community journalism project, Tu Voz Digital (TVD), is a vital avenue for expanding Latine

immigrant leadership and representation to ensure that community narratives are inclusive, positive portrayals, and accurately reflect the many ways immigrants contribute in meaningful ways.

Launched in 2013 to amplify the voice and perspective of the immigrant community, change false narratives and expand community engagement through leadership, it is an essential vehicle for skill

building and leadership development at Encuentro. Under the leadership of Ilse Grijalva, TVD provides an experience-based forum for immigrant adults to become community journalists and serve as spokes people who raise awareness and address issues of importance to the Latine community.

The curriculum builds the hard and soft skills needed to serve as journalists while offering hands-on activities to learn news production by doing. Core content includes: digital literacy, multi-media production, social media tools, communications, networking, public speaking, storytelling, and interviewing. Senior members provide development. To date, TVD has graduated more than 50 journalists and has produced 256 interviews in different formats where the students themselves are put in front of the microphone to lead the conversation and question politicians and professionals. 🌟



Leadership in Action

TVD senior members are serving as the lead instructors in a new in-person community journalism training, sharing their experiences and mentoring new members.



TVD is an important avenue for Carmen to build her leadership.

Carmen Ruiz graduated from TVD's 2020 Community Journalist Training. Through her experience producing Facebook live interviews with her colleagues, she has learned about her personal leadership and also gained access to vital resources for her own family.

"When I produced the interview about Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) with the New Mexico Immigrant Law Center, I realized that my son could benefit from that program. I was able to help provide him with the necessary tools to obtain his work permit in this country."

Currently, Carmen participates as an instructor teaching a new group of community journalism students and shares first-hand knowledge with colleagues who are about to graduate in December of this year.

"Encuentro is the only space that has given me the power to exercise the role of leader as well as that of a student within its classrooms." ✨

Our Staff

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Administrative Assistant
- Brook Bernini**
Training and Employment Coordinator
- Fiore Bran Aragón**
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Pathways Navigator
- Julia Cusatis**
Development Director
- Fernando Flores**
Home Health Aide Assistant
- Felipe Duran**
Education Associate
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Communications
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Education Coordinator
- Mayte López**
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\$20 EACH

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