

# El Encuentro

EDITION 9



WINTER 2023



TRANSITIONS AND GROWTH

Note from  
Dalia Medina Bustillos,  
Executive Director

## 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 and fuel educational and career opportunities for immigrant adults, or the purchase of a new home, **GIVE TODAY.**

Make your donation at  
[encuentronm.org](http://encuentronm.org)



## ¡Bienvenidos!

It is with great honor and excitement that I, Encuentro's new Executive Director, reach out to you, as we embark upon the journey together. I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to introduce myself and share the inspiring developments that lie ahead.

First and foremost, I'd like to recognize the incredible legacy of our founder and immediate past Executive

Director, Andrea Plaza. For 15 years, Andrea poured her heart and soul into Encuentro and championing social and economic justice for the Latinx immigrant community in Albuquerque. ¡Gracias Andrea!

This year marks a momentous change for Encuentro as a new Latina leader takes the helm. As someone who migrated from Mexico to the United States, I have a deep connection with the immigrant community and personally understand the challenges that come with migration such as language barriers, educational obstacles, and economic hardships. This position aligns with my personal mission to eliminate barriers for my fellow immigrant community.

At Encuentro, our commitment to the community is exemplified through the success of over 400 immigrant adults and working parents who engage annually in skill-building across our educational and career development programs. Our nationally recognized Home Health Aide (HHA) program has empowered 247 graduates, and promoted dignity, voice, and better wages.

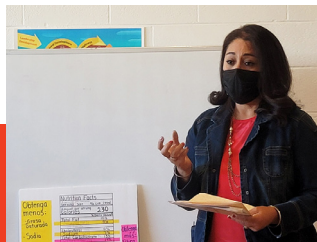
In this newsletter, ~~you will~~ find an overview of our growth, updates on ongoing programs, and the transformation of Encuentro through the eyes of one of our students. I am genuinely excited about the collective journey we are undertaking, and I look forward to the positive impact we will create together.

## Encuentro's impacts in and beyond New Mexico.

Encuentro launched in 2010 as a small community project and has since grown into a leading community-based organization. We take pride in owning our building and providing education to over 400 immigrant adults in New Mexico annually. In the past year, several positive transitions have contributed to remarkable growth:



Our community journalism program, **Tu Voz Digital**, has expanded to include **radio segments** in collaboration with Raices Collective from KUNM 89.9 FM. The new segments aim to highlight the stories and contributions of immigrants in New Mexico.



**Leaders create impactful community change.** A leadership development curriculum provides opportunities for inclusive grassroots decision-making and civic participation.

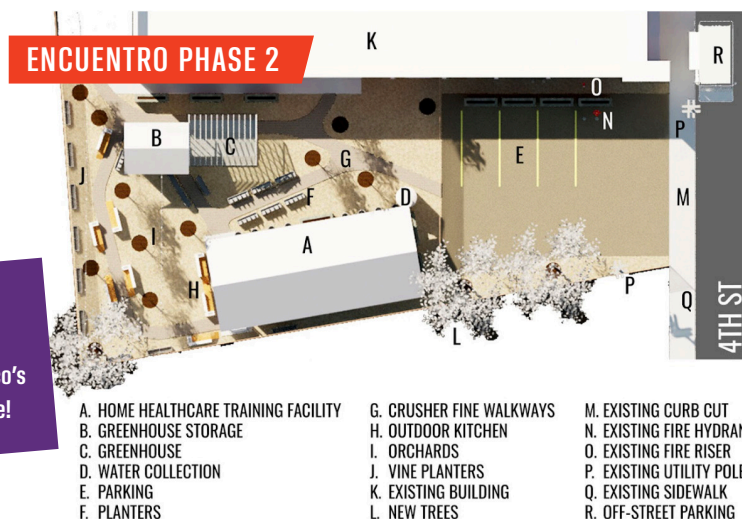


Crucial to employment, social integration and civic engagement, **access to technology and digital literacy has been integrated across educational programs** and is equipping our students with the foundational skills needed to compete and succeed in a 21st century economy.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The demand for direct care providers in New Mexico is rapidly increasing, and Encuentro and its partners are stepping up to the challenge. Through the construction of a Home Health Aide (HHA) training center, we are providing aspiring caregivers with the skills and certifications they need to make a real difference in seniors' lives. This innovative training facility will be located on our south lot, offering a supportive, home-based training setting. With over \$1,000,000 in capital funds secured for the construction of the center in 2024, Encuentro will expand training, support workforce development programming, and inspire other communities to replicate Encuentro's nationally recognized model.

**TOGETHER, we are building a brighter future for New Mexico's direct care workforce!**



## Meet the Staff

**Susana Aranda**  
Educational Programs Assistant

**Brook Bernini**  
HHA Economic Manager

**Fiore Gorvetzian**  
HHA Leadership Manager

**Norma Casas**  
Community Support Services Manager

**Keily Castro**  
Development Assistant

**Julia Cusatis**  
Development Director

**Felipe Durán**  
Educational Programs Assistant

**Ilse Grijalva-Lastiri**  
Communications Manager

**Teresa Guevara**  
Education Director

**Mayte López**  
HHA Education Manager

**Rosalina López**  
HHA Economic Coordinator

**Dalia Medina Bustillos**  
Executive Director

**Samanta Morales**  
HHA Director

**Verónica Salazar**  
Digital Literacy Manager

**April Smith**  
Educational Programs Manager

**Alma Torres**  
Office Coordinator

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



**SILVIA**, one of the many students who have grown and transformed alongside Encuentro, has engaged in the Home Health Aide program, Computer and English classes.

She recalls how classes have increased enrollment and has witnessed the impact learning has had in her life and in the lives of her colleagues.

*"It has been amazing to witness the transformation and expansion of Encuentro. We used to have to take classes at various locations due to the lack of space in the shared building... Now we have dedicated classrooms centralized in one building! We have transitioned from taking notes in notebooks to using computers. I am proud to be part of the Encuentro community!"*

—Silvia Cervantes, Encuentro student since 2017

## Meet the New Faces of Encuentro

Since its inception in 2010, Encuentro has grown from three staff members and six teachers into a thriving community of 17 full-time staff, nine teachers, six digital literacy assistants, and three consultants. Together, we are dedicated to developing and implementing innovative educational programs, centering the voice of the immigrant workers, and elevating the many ways the immigrant community contributes to the local economy. 🌟

*Welcome the new members of Encuentro's family.*



**Dalia Medina Bustillos**  
Executive Director



**Keily Castro**  
Development Assistant



**April Smith**  
Educational Programs Manager



**Joaquin Lopez**  
GED Math Instructor



**Alma Torres**  
Community Health Worker  
& Office Administrator

**Nell Burrus**  
ESL Instructor

**Ignacio Gallegos**  
Board Member

**Pauline Lucero**  
Board Member



# Andrea's Legacy

## PART 2

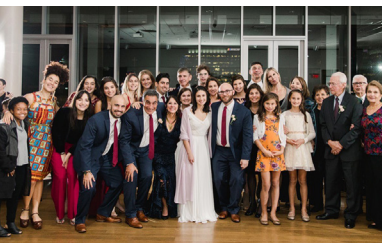
We are honored to recognize Andrea's extraordinary leadership and legacy including the influence that the Plaza family has had on shaping her career.



Mario and Amalia Plaza packed up their five children, left their life in Cali, Colombia, and embarked upon a new life in Rock Hill, South Carolina where hopes of prosperity and educational opportunities shaped their American Dream. They were a curious addition to the southern hamlet, which had encountered few if any Latinos and learning English was just one of the many challenges they faced raising what eventually became seven children in a new country.

Thanks to their example, struggles and migration journey, our beloved founding and immediate past Executive Director, Andrea Plaza, was inspired to establish Encuentro 15-years ago and dedicate her energy to advancing social and economic justice by uplifting the Latinx immigrant community in Albuquerque.

Join Encuentro in commemorating Andrea's leadership and impact by supporting a campaign to raise \$100,000 in her honor and name our largest community space, The Plaza Family Center of Educational Excellence, in recognition of Andrea and her family.



SCAN TO LEARN MORE >



*¡Gracias!*

Encuentro would like to express our gratitude and recognize the support of our funders, key partners in our continued growth.

Thanks to their support, we are able to make a significant impact in the lives of our immigrant community!

Albuquerque Women's Giving Circle  
Albuquerque Community Foundation\*  
Anderson Charitable Foundation  
Bank of America\*  
Bernalillo County\*  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Mexico  
CARE Fund  
Comcast Foundation  
Dollar General\*  
Family Caregiver Center of New Mexico  
Isora Foundation\*  
Jewish Community Foundation of New Mexico\*  
McCune Charitable Foundation\*  
National Domestic Workers Alliance \*  
New Mexico Foundation\*  
New Mexico Women.org\*  
Nusenda Foundation  
PNM\*  
Rio Grande Credit Union\*  
Sandia National Laboratories\*  
Token Ibis  
The Fund for Workforce Equity\*  
UNIDOSUS\*  
UNM Health Sciences Center  
W.K. Kellogg Foundation\*  
Wells Fargo Foundation  
Wes Mariam Assefa Fund\*

