



SOME OF OUR NEW HEAD START PROGRAM CHILDREN WITH EARLY CHILDHOOD DIVISION DIRECTOR MARTHA VILLEGAS AND RAYMOND OCASIO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*From the desk of Raymond Ocasio, Executive Director*

Since our founding in 1972, early childhood care and education has been the cornerstone of La Casa de Don Pedro's mission to foster empowerment, self-sufficiency and neighborhood revitalization. We have remained committed advocates and impassioned educators of Newark's youngest learners, ensuring that they have the tools, support, and nurturing care in a culturally competent environment they need to thrive.

The beginning of the 2016-2017 school year represents an important milestone for La Casa de Don Pedro. We opened five new Head Start preschool centers and are now Newark's newest Head Start provider.

With our **five new Head Start preschool centers** located in all of Newark's Wards, coupled with our three existing NAEYC accredited preschool centers, and several Early Head Start centers to open in 2017, La Casa de Don Pedro will proudly educate **660 three to four year old children** and 144 infants, toddlers, and assist 24 pregnant women each year, serving as **Newark's second largest Head Start provider**, behind the Newark Public Schools district.

La Casa de Don Pedro's Head Start and Early Head Start Program is incorporated into our Early Childhood Education Division under the leadership of Ms. Martha Villegas, who guided our transition from day care to a fully accredited preschool two decades ago. Ms. Villegas, and our team of dedicated staff and specialists, are working tirelessly to create, support and monitor a more dynamic and enriching program for our children and families.

The Head Start opportunity builds upon our legacy of providing quality developmental and educational experiences to some of Newark's most vulnerable children, all while fostering greater parental engagement.

LA CASA DE  
DON PEDRO  
EMPOWER AND REVITALIZE

# La Casa Connection

Fall 2016

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**La Casa de Don Pedro**  
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## **Recent Grant Awards**

Thank you to the generous foundations, corporations, and government offices that provide La Casa de Don Pedro with the resources to serve the community. Below is a sampling of recent grants received. It is not an exhaustive list.

- Bank of America grant to support job placement services
- Capital One Foundation for foreclosure prevention counseling
- Citi Bank Foundation grant for affordable housing development
- Hispanic Federation to support for immigration services
- Hispanic Federation / Walmart Foundation grant for hunger relief program
- The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey to support community health
- JP Morgan Chase Foundation for financial education & foreclosure prevention counseling
- M&T Bank for financial education
- NeighborWorks America for community organizing & affordable housing development
- New Jersey Community Capital for foreclosure prevention counseling
- Newark Public Schools - for Early Childhood Education
- NJ Department of Children & Families Family & Community Partnerships - for family counseling programs
- NJ Department of Community Affairs for low income home energy assistance, weatherization, & pilot home lead remediation programs
- NJ Department of Labor & Community Workforce, Community Library Partnership Program for English as a Second Language program with Newark Public Library
- NJ Housing & Mortgage Finance Agency for housing counseling
- NJ Office of the Attorney General Victim Assistance Grant for domestic violence counseling & advocacy
- NJ Department of Education 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers for after school enrichment program, year III
- Newark Public Schools Opportunity Youth Network for alternative high school
- Programs for Parents for after school enrichment programs
- The Prudential Foundation for general operating support
- Synchrony Bank for job placement services program
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families for Head Start & Early Head Start Programs
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for U.S. citizenship education
- Victoria Foundation for general operating support
- Wells Fargo for job placement services program
- Wells Fargo Regional Foundation for neighborhood planning, organizing & development

## **Thank You for Serving!**

La Casa de Don Pedro recognizes the outstanding service of **Board Members Richard Thigpen and Margarita Muniz**, whose terms came to a close at the end of June.

Mr. Thigpen is Vice President - State Governmental Affairs at PSEG and served on our board from 2010 to 2016. He was instrumental in sustaining and broadening PSEG's investment in La Casa and will be chairing a new Corporate Advisory Board. Ms. Muniz, Newark Public Schools Executive Director of Family & Community Engagement, has been a longtime partner and served on our board from 2015-16.

As a nonprofit organization, the work of our board members is incredibly valuable to our success. We thank Mr. Thigpen & Ms. Muniz for their commitment and are grateful for their service and dedication to our mission.



Margarita Muniz

Richard Thigpen

# Confronting Foreclosure from Every Angle

## *One Woman's Journey to Save Her Home*

Foreclosure is a difficult, confusing, and often emotionally taxing, process for homeowners. Under the looming threat of losing their home, many homeowners don't know where to turn for help or guidance.

New Jersey has the highest foreclosure rate in the country. Given the severity of the foreclosure crisis in our state, educating first time homebuyers, creating homeownership opportunities and preventing foreclosures is an important part of La Casa de Don Pedro's mission to revitalize and strengthen communities. Through our comprehensive **Housing Counseling Services and Foreclosure Prevention Program**, La Casa de Don Pedro helps homeowners navigate the foreclosure process, educating them of their rights as homeowners and advocating on their behalf to help families stay in their homes or achieve a dignified exit.

Funded by The U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development, NJ Community Capital Project Restart, JP Morgan Chase, Capital One Bank, NJ Housing & Mortgage Finance Agency, and NeighborWorks America, La Casa's Foreclosure Prevention Program has helped 23 families save their homes from foreclosure since 2015.

Lynn B.\* is one of the many success stories to come out of La Casa's Foreclosure Prevention program. Lynn purchased her first home in Newark in 2008, but found herself unable to make her mortgage payments after losing her job in 2013. By the time she came to La Casa in February of 2014, Lynn was already well into the foreclosure process. She had applied for a mortgage modification and twice been denied, despite having secured employment. Close to losing her home, Lynn found little support from her mortgage servicer whose inconsistent communication and carelessness with paperwork, she says, left her alone and uncertain about the future of her home.

"It was frightening, saddening, disappointing." Lynn says of the foreclosure process. "To be honest, it was also very life changing to be put in a situation like that. At points, I did not know what my fate was going to be."

When Lynn came to La Casa, she found an advocate and the support she needed to save her home in **Senior Housing Counselor Sofi Cordero**. Sofi and Lynn developed an action plan to apply for the Homesaver program, obtain a modification and stop the sheriff sale. Sofi pressed the mortgage servicers, holding them accountable for their mishaps and inconsistencies and filing a complaint with the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau so that Lynn's case would be elevated to the executive level. Finally in June of 2016, Lynn was approved for a modification and successfully saved her home from foreclosure.

**"I became confident that I had someone who was truly in support of me; you don't always feel like the bank is in your corner but I knew that Sofi and La Casa were here to help me."** said Lynn. **"I'm elated and blessed, I feel humble and appreciative."**

While Lynn's experience is an important story of success, her struggle to save her home reflects the severity of the foreclosure crisis in New Jersey. Foreclosures wreak havoc on families and communities and La Casa has made it a priority to prevent foreclosures every step of the way.

In addition to preventing foreclosures in process, La Casa's **HUD Certified First Time Homebuyer Education Program** provides prospective homebuyers with the requisite tools to navigate the home buying process and connects them to affordable mortgage products. Through one on one counselling and courses, prospective homebuyers become equipped with the knowledge and foresight to make smart home-buying decisions that can prevent foreclosure in the future.

Along with educating potential homebuyers, La Casa builds and sells quality, affordable homes that provide sustainable homeownership and rental income opportunities for our community. In September, we broke ground on the Eaton Place Townhomes in East Orange that will be available for sale later this year. La Casa's Housing Counseling program supports homeowners and buyers every step of the way to build and strengthen our community.

*\*Name has been changed at the request of the participant\**



## Festival de la Familia Celebrates Newark's Diversity and History

On Sunday, July 24th La Casa de Don Pedro, in partnership with the City of Newark and Newark Celebration 350, held the 9th annual Festival de la Familia. Hundreds of families, friends, local partner organizations and volunteers gathered on Broadway between Bloomfield Pl. & Broad St. for the musical and cultural street fair.

Held in the heart of Newark's Lower Broadway Community, Festival de la Familia celebrates Newark's vibrant diversity and the strength of the community. Performances by DJ Francisco Morales, Peruvian Dancers, Plena Dulce, Ritmo Tropical and Yahaya Kamate African drummers offered a glimpse of Newark's cultural diversity. Councilman Anibal Ramos, Deputy Mayor Jacqueline Quiles and Councilman Luis Quintana joined the festivities to offer their support.

The street was lined with carnival games, a water slide, inflatable obstacle course, stilt walkers, karaoke and face-painting, among other family friendly activities provided by partner organizations like the Newark Public Library, FOCUS, the Newark Arts Council, and more. To encourage healthy living, La Casa's Chef Nelson Mejia and Essex County Freeholder President Britnee Timberlake offered healthy cooking demonstrations.



The City of Newark sponsored a Voter Registration Drive to encourage political participation. UnitedHealthCare, CarePoint Health, Jewish Renaissance Navigator Program, and Horizon NJ Health brought their mobile units to offer a variety of free health screenings and resources while La Casa de Don Pedro provided free HIV testing.

**Festival de la Familia was made possible by the support of its community partners, volunteers and sponsors. 2016 Sponsors were:** Gold: TD Bank, Diamond Sponsor: PSEG, Bronze Sponsor: M&T Bank, Newark Celebration 350, Valley National Bank, Friend Sponsor: JP Morgan Chase, Rutgers University- Newark, Salsa Supporter: Atlantic Federal Credit Union, Merengue Supporter: North Jersey Federal Credit Union, CarePoint Health, Horizon NJ Health, UnitedHealthcare and RWJBarnabas Health.

## Decreasing the Stigma, Decreasing New Infections

### HIV Prevention at La Casa de Don Pedro

As Essex County has highest rate of new HIV infections in the state, defeating HIV/AIDS in Newark is no easy feat. Given the severity of the HIV/AIDS crisis, La Casa de Don Pedro's HIV Prevention team takes a creative, culturally competent approach to educate the community, break down the stigma and defeat AIDS in Greater Newark.

Through community events and outreach, La Casa establishes trust within the community and creates an inviting environment to encourage testing and educate the community about HIV/AIDS. La Casa's community outreach approach is working; this year the HIV Prevention team tested a total of 750 people, exceeding their annual goal of 500.

"Our community is being faced with this reality and we need to be able to provide the resources and knowledge to empower them in making better decisions in their lives." says Rakelmis Montas, La Casa's Health Services Unit Manager, about the severity of HIV/AIDS in Newark and the need for community engagement.



On October 14<sup>th</sup>, La Casa held its annual National Latino AIDS Awareness Day at El Criollo Restaurant in Newark. With the theme "Viaja Gratis al tu País," [travel free to your country,] the event was an opportunity to celebrate Latin America's diverse cultures during Hispanic Heritage Month while raising awareness about the impact of HIV/AIDS in the Latino Community.

**NLAAD was made possible by a grant from The New Jersey Department of Health, HIV/AIDS, STD and TB Services, and sponsors Newark Celebration 350, Bronze; Horizon NJ Health, Heart Healthy Supporter; and UnitedHealthCare and Valley National Bank, Physically Fit Supporters.**

# La Casa Leads the Way with Immigration Advocacy

La Casa de Don Pedro, Telemundo 47 & Hispanic Federation hold Town Hall Forum to ease concerns about the future of DACA+/DAPA

In the wake of the Supreme Court's 4-4 vote that blocked the expansion of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and Deferred Action for Parents of Childhood Arrivals, La Casa partnered with **Hispanic Federation** and **Telemundo 47** for a Town Hall and Panel Discussion on June 30 on Rutgers University-Newark's campus to address the implications of the decision.

As the expansion of DAPA/DACA+ could have shielded millions of undocumented immigrants from deportation and authorized them to work in the United States, the Supreme Court's split decision came as a major shock and disappointment.

Much of the undocumented community who had rested their hopes on the President's Executive Order was left in a frustrating, legal limbo. With mounting concerns over the future of immigration reform and our nation's increasingly divisive political climate, **immigration advocacy is more critical now than ever.**



*Community members pose questions to the immigration experts following the panel discussion*

The DAPA/DACA+ Town Hall Meeting was an important opportunity for immigration lawyers and advocacy groups to share resources while mobilizing the community in the fight for immigration justice. The panel, moderated by Xiomara Guevara, Esq. of the Morris County Office of Hispanic Affairs, included **Gregory Hodne**, La Casa's Deputy Director of Personal Development, Senator Menendez' State Director Frank Schultz, Esq., Sara Cullinane, Esq. of Make the Road NJ, Nicole Miller, Esq. of American Friends Service Committee and Johanna Calle of NJ Immigrant Alliance, as well as an address by Newark Mayor Ras J. Baraka.

**Special thanks to Rutgers University- Newark  
for hosting the forum**

The discussion focused on the implications of the DAPA/DACA+ suspension for the immigrant community, what people can do to protect themselves from fraudulent immigration services and legal rights and resources available to undocumented immigrants. The panelists outlined city and state level pro-immigrant policy initiatives such as driver's licenses, city identification and labor rights.

Anthoni Noguiera, who received DACA through La Casa's Immigration Services, shared his experience to encourage advocacy, "**Being together, united or just having a voice within a city or in a state; that's important to show other people that we're not going to be scared that we're going to be deported, we're taking the chance that we're going to stand up, someone's going to hear us.**"

Addressing questions and uncertainties from the audience, the immigration experts emphasized the need to energize a strong, unified movement to push for comprehensive immigration reform. "**Sin papeles, sin miedo**" [without papers, without fear] was a common phrase heard throughout the evening, as the panelists urged the undocumented community to shed their fear, share their stories and raise their collective voice to fight for immigration justice.

La Casa de Don Pedro, Telemundo 47, El Diario and Hispanic Federation continued their advocacy efforts joined forces again on Saturday October 22<sup>nd</sup> for a **DACA Day of Action**. At La Casa's 39 Broadway Center, the organizations offered free DACA screenings and application assistance for those eligible.



*Immigration policies impact the entire family.  
Children of all ages joined their parents for the panel discussion.*

## Early Childhood

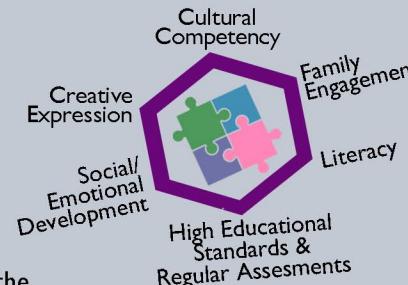
*where children blossom and families thrive*

### Supporting our Youngest Learners

La Casa has been providing early childhood education for 44 years



Newark's newest and 2nd largest provider of Head Start & Early Head Start



Our preschool program utilizes the evidenced based **Creative Curriculum**

## Your investment makes an impact.

La Casa de Don Pedro responds to the needs of our communities with comprehensive programs that **empower people and revitalize neighborhoods, every step of the way.**

**5,370** Children educated since 1972

**660** 3-4 year old children educated daily

**9** Preschool centers located in all of Newark's wards



Our **Multi-Language** program fosters cultural competency and serves the needs of our diverse community.

### La Olla Kitchen & Nutrition Program



Named a **model nutrition program** in a study by the Strong Healthy Communities Initiative

**26** different fruits & vegetables served during a 3 week meal period

## Youth, Family & Health

*fostering empowerment and engagement*

**255** Kids participate in our **after school enrichment** programs every day.



Garden projects, arts programs and service learning projects encourage **creativity and civic engagement**.



### Holistic Approach

Therapeutic counseling programs support the growth and needs of the whole family.

psycho-social development | adolescent and youth counseling  
domestic violence counseling | homelessness prevention counseling

### 2015-2016

**597** people received immigration services

**397** immigration applications were completed

**152** people participated in citizenship classes

### 5,000

people have learned English through our English as a Second Language and Civics Programs since 2000.



### We are Immigration Advocates

Since 2001, La Casa has provided immigration support and assistance in obtaining legal standing in the US to **more than 6,000 people**.



New townhomes under construction in East Orange will create first-time homeownership opportunities for **4 families**.

### We stabilize communities

Homeownership Preservation

Resident Leadership Development

Homeownership Opportunities

New Homebuyer Education

Community Building & Planning

Civic Engagement & Political Participation

**23** Homes saved from foreclosure since 2015

**150** Homes built & sold since 1988

**240** Families educated about first time homeownership since 2015. 51 purchased homes.

### Improving Community Health

We connect residents to health education, medical screenings, nutrition workshops and health insurance enrollment.



**100** people living with HIV/AIDS benefit from case management, medical nutritional therapy, housing and meal assistance each year.

### Re-opening the door to education

Our **Youth in Motion Alternative High School Education** program gives 16-20 year old out of school youth a second chance at academic success.

College Preparation

Career Counseling

Mentoring

Youth in Motion is part of the **Opportunity Youth Network**, a citywide collaborative of community based organizations and Newark Public Schools to build educational opportunities and close the achievement gap.

Our **Job Placement Services Project** prepares **300+** low income adults for the workforce each year with education, job training and case management.

**80%** made educational improvements

**30%** gained employment



Financial coaching & economic empowerment

## Neighborhood Development

*building community from the ground up*

### Home Energy Assistance & Conservation

Over the past 5 years...

**125,000** Essex County families have received home energy assistance through LIHEAP & USF programs

**746** Senior Citizens have received emergency fuel, heating and cooling units

**2,331** homes are more energy efficient with new heating systems, ventilation and insulation, totalling \$12.6M in home improvements



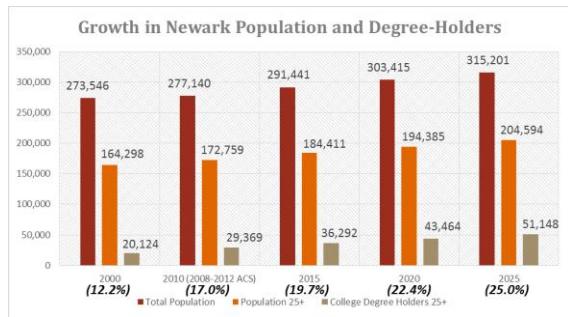
# Youth in Motion Program Gives Out of School Youth a Second Chance

*As part of Newark's City of Learning Collaborative, La Casa revamped its High School Equivalency program*

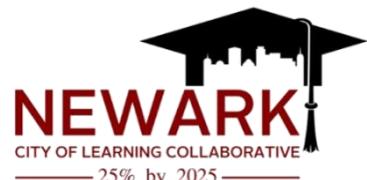
**How do you get out of school youth back into the classroom?** Given the challenges teens in Newark face and varied reasons why they might choose to drop out of high school, the question proves difficult to answer. Discussions about out of school youth and dropout rates often focus on what schools can do to prevent students from dropping out while little attention is paid to the students who have already left the school system.

There are nearly 4,000 out of school youth between the ages of 16-20 in Newark. Creating alternative education options that might better address the challenges they face and reasons for leaving traditional schools is a critical step on Newark's path to becoming a **City of Learning**. La Casa de Don Pedro has joined a group of community based organizations (CBOs) that offer high school equivalency programs and Newark Public Schools to create the Opportunity Youth Network, a citywide collaborative that provides increased funding for out of school youth programs and aims to get kids back in the classroom and on the path toward personal and academic development. The initiative is part of the **Newark City of Learning Collaborative**, a citywide postsecondary network, committed to increasing the percentage of residents with postsecondary degrees, certificates and quality credentials to 25% by 2025.

The **Opportunity Youth Network** and partnership with **Newark Public Schools** can streamline and leverage academic services through a unified system of intake. Before a student drops out and is officially stamped out of school, they will pass through the NPS Advocacy Office where they will be directed toward the CBOs alternative options, like La Casa's Youth in Motion program that might better support their needs. If they enroll in one of the CBO's academic programs, they will take credit bearing courses and ultimately graduate with a Newark Public Schools diploma, rather than high school equivalency.



*Chart courtesy of Newark City of Learning Collaborative*



La Casa's Youth in Motion finds its niche as a robust, comprehensive educational program that focuses on a student's long term academic and professional trajectory beyond their high school diploma to prepare students for postsecondary education, vocational training and entrance into the workforce.

La Casa has been offering High School Equivalency and Adult Education programs for years and traditionally, such programs only run for 16 weeks with 240 hours of instruction, leaving a narrow window for academic and personal development. However, with the \$200,000 contract with Newark Public Schools, La Casa's Youth In Motion program runs for 10 months and offers 720 hours of instruction utilizing New Jersey's Common Core Standards. La Casa will be able to add more seats to the classroom, accommodating 25 students this fall, and offer them a more supportive educational environment tailored to the needs of its students.

Roughly 35% of Newark's out of school youth dropped out of Barringer High School in the North Ward, La Casa's primary area of service. As Barringer sits just blocks away from our centers, La Casa is uniquely positioned to intervene and provide alternative academic options to some of Newark's most vulnerable teenagers. Our students face a complex reality, often marked by violence, instability and socioeconomic barriers that can impede on their academic success and lead them astray from traditional schooling.

Youth in Motion takes a holistic approach to education, offering a more individualized, supportive educational environment that extends far past the classroom to offer not only academic support but mentoring, career counseling and leadership skills. Teachers and Counselors can help students navigate the college application and financial aid process, prepare them for job interviews, tailor their resumes and provide emotional support with action plans that assess their strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats.

The creation of the Opportunity Youth Network and partnership with Newark Public Schools represents an important shift in discussions about out of school youth and school reform. As Newark continues to become a City of Learning, it is our responsibility to bring youth back on a path toward academic and personal development. By providing academic and emotional support to out of school youth, La Casa is investing in the potential of our community. With the unveiling of Youth in Motion program, La Casa will become a leading force on Newark's path to become a City of Learning.

## In Memoriam | Descansa en Paz

### **Rev. Alfonso Roman**

Founding Organizer and Board Member of La Casa de Don Pedro

Rev. Alfonso Roman passed away the morning of June 4 in Puerto Rico. La Casa de Don Pedro remembers him as a key force in the organization's foundings. In the wake of the 1967 Newark rebellion and the period of unrest that followed, Roman was among Newark's leaders who organized and united the city's growing Puerto Rican community towards strategic goals, coalitions between religious and non-religious communities, and political alliances between African Americans and Puerto Rican residents to support social change. Rev. Roman will be remembered for his fierce commitment to social justice, educational equality, and community empowerment.

"El reverend Alfonso Roman Morales simboliza la lucha, la fe y el compromiso de una generación de puertorriqueños que dio la milla extra por conseguir derechos civiles, políticos, sociales, y económicos." - Felix Crus, Ahoranews.net.

### **Angel Luis Juarbe**

Former Board Member & Newark Public Schools Principal

Angel Juarbe, lifelong educator of Newark students, passed away on August 2nd. He served on La Casa de Don Pedro's board of directors from 2000 to 2010. His 35 year career in education began when he served as a Spanish Teacher at Weequahic and Science High Schools and then as positions as teacher, school counselor, vice principal, principal, and executive assistant to two superintendents. La Casa de Don Pedro always appreciated the thoughtful community education perspective that he brought to the board.



Rev. Roman speaking on La Casa's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary History Panel in 2012.



Juarbe at La Casa's 2009 Annual Event.

## La Casa to Celebrate #GivingTuesday

#GivingTuesday is a global movement to celebrate the work of charitable organizations and activate change in underserved communities. Through your support, we can strengthen our programs and extend our reach to build a stronger Newark.

Between November 29<sup>th</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup>, our #GivingTuesday goal is to raise \$15,000 to support our programs, provide 500 families with holiday meals and fulfill the holiday toy wishes of the children we educate.

Join La Casa de Don Pedro to celebrate #GivingTuesday and help make meaningful change in the lives of families right here in Newark. Learn more, including how to donate at [www.lacasanwk.org/news-and-events/givingtuesday-2016/](http://www.lacasanwk.org/news-and-events/givingtuesday-2016/).

Your investment makes an impact. Last year, our contributors helped raise \$15,000 and provided families with \$11,000 worth of food and toy donations. This year, we want to ensure that each of the 600+ three and four year olds we now educate through Head Start has holiday presents to open and each of our families has a memorable, nourishing holiday meal.

GIVE JOY

LA CASA DE  
DON PEDRO  
EMPOWER AND REVITALIZE

#GIVINGTUESDAY™ 11.29 - 12.31

## Burgers & Brew Celebrates the Summer & the Arts

Nearly 200 people joined La Casa de Don Pedro and featured partner Newark Arts to celebrate the end of the summer and beginning of a beautiful fall at the 4<sup>th</sup> annual **Burgers & Brew** on September 22<sup>nd</sup> at McLoone's Boathouse in West Orange, NJ. At the event, La Casa made a special appeal to support the development of a photography program for teens in Newark.

Guests enjoyed hand-rolled cigars by Jimenez Tobacco, paired with Goslings rum & mojitos, Latin Jazz rhythms of AfroCuba Band and unlimited burgers & seasonal brew on tap, with a picturesque view of the Orange Reservoir.



*Guests bid farewell to the summer on a perfect September evening at Burgers & Brew.*

In addition to supporting La Casa de Don Pedro, targeted funds raised at this year's event will support the development of a **teen photography program** at La Casa. Art is a source of empowerment that provides them with creative freedom to express their emotions, perspectives and experiences. La Casa's vision is to create a positive environment where teenagers channel their creative energy to share their stories and identities through the lens of the camera.

*Direct Donations to the photography program can be made at: <https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/lacasadedonpedro>*

Burgers & Brew is made possible by the support of sponsors: Diamond: PSE&G, Gold: TD Bank, Bronze: Prudential, Wells Fargo, Friends: M&T Bank, Atlantic Federal Credit Union, JPMorgan Chase, WithumSmith + Brown, McCarter & English, Fall Equinox Supporters: Rutgers University - Newark, L. Ross Wealth Management, Sunset Supporters, EVCO Mechanical, RayZo Marketing, Security On Point, UnitedHealthcare, Valley National Bank, Dusk Supporters: JW Pierson, RWJBarnabas Health, Newark Teacher's Union, City National Bank, In-Kind Donations: Whole Foods of Morristown, Stobbs Printing

## Crane Street in Color

*A new mural on Crane Street celebrates Lower Broadway History and Heroes*

The brick wall that wraps around the furniture outlet on Crane Street, just across the street from the Liquor Zone, has become Newark artist Steve Green's canvas. The brick wall, once covered with graffiti and the fading signs of the furniture outlet, is now being filled with images, characters and figures that represent Lower Broadway's history and community.

"I want people to look at the mural and see themselves," says Steve as he gestures towards the half-finished image of the barber, hands covered in shades of blue and green paint. With images of steelworkers, a seamstress, butcher, barber, saxophone player and the Lower Broadway Corridor itself, the mural presents a nonlinear, visual history of Lower Broadway and the people who live and work here.

Steve has become something of a fixture on Crane Street; people pass by, greeting him and noting his progress on the mural. A woman walks by pushing a stroller holding the hand of a young boy who points up at the image of the saxophone player at the corner of Crane Street and Broadway; "We're becoming the city of murals." She says, smiling, before turning the corner.

The mural is part of an ongoing collaboration between La Casa de Don Pedro, Yendor Productions and local artists that began last summer. Thanks to funding from the **Wells Fargo Regional Foundation** and the **Garfield Foundation**, Lower Broadway is being beautified and brightened with murals that illustrate the community's vibrancy and neighborhood's history.



*Artist Steve Green at work on the last few portraits.*



## Recent Highlights

On April 27th, we held our annual cocktail reception **La Casa es su Casa: The Early Childhood Education Journey** to celebrate the successes of our preschool program and honor leaders and advocates of preschool education. A retrospective photo exhibit chronicled La Casa's journey from a small dual-language daycare center founded in 1974 to the robust, fully accredited preschool program that it is today. A "pop-up" classroom, equipped with dual-language educational materials, gave guests an interactive experience with the preschool program.



*One of our four year old preschool students gives our guests a warm welcome in Spanish at La Casa es su Casa alongside teacher Maritza Barahona.*

More than 200 people came out for La Casa's Youth Family & Health Services division's first **Enriching Minds, Empowering Lives Health Fair** on June 11 at St. Lucy's Church. In an effort to improve community health and foster healthy living, residents participated in free health screenings, yoga classes, Zumba classes, and healthy cooking demonstrations.

In June, our **Weatherization Team** installed new windows, energy saving light bulbs and new faucets in the Cathedral Park Apartments in Newark, providing energy saving benefits to the 48 families living in the building. In Early October, the Weatherization Team and Sylvan Mechanical completed the overhaul of the heating system in the Concord Tower, an 8 floor, 38 unit high rise apartment building in East Orange.

In September, we broke ground on the four **Eaton Place Townhomes** in East Orange, NJ. The townhomes are single family and will each have 2 floors, 3 bedrooms, 2.5 bathrooms and a garage entrance. The townhomes, slated to be complete by early 2017, will open homeownership opportunities to four families.

As part of the Newark Community Development Network, La Casa worked with United Vailsburg Services Organization, Ironbound Community Corporation, Housing & Community Development Network of NJ, New Community Corporation, the City of Newark & Urban League of Essex County to coordinate the first **Newark Neighborhood Community Development Summit: Past, Present & Future** on September 10<sup>th</sup> 2016. La Casa's Director of Program & Fund Development Carrie Puglisi & Executive Director Ray Ocasio spoke on panels discussing La Casa's present impact and the future of community development corporations in Newark.



*La Casa staff take a stand against domestic violence and mobilize the community at Military Park on October 5.*

La Casa held our annual Domestic Violence Awareness Event on October 5<sup>th</sup> at Military Park. The City of Newark's Department of Health & Community Wellness, Newark Police Department, Partners for Women & Justice, Family Connections, University Hospital and other social service providers joined La Casa. Two survivors of domestic violence bravely shared their stories to mobilize the community and encourage victims to seek support. La Casa also offered free health and wellness resources, including blood pressure screenings and HIV testing.

Throughout August & September, La Casa's **Community & Economic Development Team** conducted 200+ Quality of Life Surveys in Lower Broadway for **NeighborWorks Community Measurement Impact Project**. As residents share their perceptions of personal safety, community change and satisfaction the results illustrate La Casa's impact in the Lower Broadway community and foster resident engagement.

La Casa's Community Improvement Director **Norma Sessa** was honored by the City of Newark and selected to speak at the annual Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration breakfast on October 14<sup>th</sup>. Norma was honored by the City of Newark for her professional achievements as well as her commitment to Newark's Latino community.



GIVE JOY #GivingTuesday

Save the date for **#GivingTuesday 2016**, the campaign to make your year-end investment in La Casa de Don Pedro.

**November 29 - December 31**

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