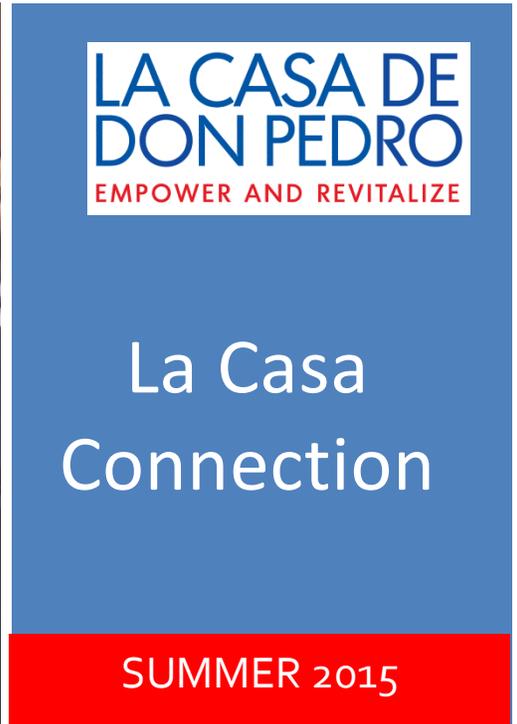




MAYOR BARAKA AND RAY OCASIO WITH AFTER SCHOOL STUDENTS AT LA CASA ES SU CASA.



IN THIS ISSUE

## From the Desk of Ray Ocasio

Newark Mayor Ras J. Baraka recently made an unprecedented announcement that will provide greater access to vital services and resources to Newark residents. Newark's new Municipal ID Program piloted July 1<sup>st</sup> and opens citywide August 1<sup>st</sup>.

A Municipal ID program is one way cities across the country such as New Haven, San Francisco, New York City, Trenton, and Asbury Park are responding to the delay in federal immigration reform. With a municipal ID, thousands of undocumented immigrants, as well as others who lack adequate identification such as seniors, people with disabilities, independent youth, formerly-incarcerated individuals, the homeless, and transgender people, will have proof of identity, residency, access to cultural institutions and schools within Newark, allowing them to interact with city agencies, local authorities, and open bank accounts.

La Casa de Don Pedro applauds Mayor Baraka's decision to keep our city's doors open, encourage civic engagement, and extend democracy to those often excluded from the process. We've been active on the immigration front for more than fifteen years and know well the challenges undocumented people face in accessing information and resources. Since we started our immigration services program we've helped close to 10,000 hopeful and eager immigrants realize

their dreams with our supportive immigration services.

We specialize in helping people complete their applications for naturalization, petition for family reunification, acquire green cards, and assist young people applying for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status. These legal services are coupled with a popular citizenship preparation course and English as a Second Language program. The program is supported by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, The IOLTA Fund of New Jersey, and the Hispanic Federation. But the demand for our services is tremendous and with limited resources, there is only so much impact we can have.

Our country is unique because we have a tradition of welcoming people from around the world. It has given us tremendous advantage and has allowed us to be more entrepreneurial than any other nation. It is through our openness, not closeness, and the fact that we embrace change that has allowed the United States to possess the character that life is full of possibilities. All of us committed to the City of Newark should do our part to arm our newest residents with tools to help guide them to opportunities that enhance their quality of life, and ultimately all of our lives, and ensure they are active and engaged citizens.



### Strengthening Our Families

La Casa hosted the regional Family Success Center event this spring. **Page #3.**



### Growing Vitality in Lower Broadway

Residents perform at a June Open Mic event in the neighborhood's newest open space – "My Front Porch." **Page #7.**

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## Board Member Committed to Giving Back

Lanny Kurzweil has been a Board Member since 2003. Lanny is a Partner at McCarter & English, LLP.

#### What do you enjoy most about being on our board?

I value the interaction with other board members and the knowledge that La Casa's work - on a daily basis - has a profound and lasting effect on the community members that we serve.

#### Sum up your life philosophy in one sentence?

Be engaged; stay engaged.

#### What are the three most surprising truths you've discovered in your lifetime?

Very little is black and white. Most issues include a lot of grey. Compromise (in business, in law, in relationships) is far better than confrontation and common sense is under rated; it's the best sense we have.

#### Of all of the programs and services we offer, which speaks to you most?

Any program that involves our kids resonates with me. Anything we do to provide caring and instructive services gives these kids a much better chance to attain long term successes. When they succeed, we succeed.



Lanny Kurzweil

#### What do you enjoy doing in your spare time? Do you volunteer your time for any other organization?

I spend as much time as I can with my growing family. We are ardent NY Yankees and NY Giants fan, but we love all sports. When my own children were young, I coached youth sports. I enjoy teaching continuing education classes for lawyers, usually on professional ethics or environmental law. (I had a 20+ year involvement with professional ethics through NJ Supreme Court appointments.) I'm always active on community boards and organizations, as well as Dartmouth College alumni groups. Currently I'm the Vice Chair of the Montclair, NJ Planning Board, former President and current Director of the Dartmouth Lawyers Association, and current member of the Board of Overseers of the Dartmouth College Hillel. I also had a 16 year run on our synagogue's board of trustees.

To learn about how to get involved with La Casa's Board of Directors and other committees call 973.482.8312.

## Volunteers Give Some Love to Lower Broadway

Families and community groups have been helping beautify Lower Broadway!

On April 11th, members of The Newark Academy Parent Association - Garden Committee, Newark Science and Sustainability, the Greater Newark Conservancy, and La Casa rolled up their sleeves to clean up and create a garden on the grounds of 86 Garside Street.

Spearheaded by the parent association, the project was created to offer real world experiences, strengthen families, and develop stronger neighborhoods and teacher/student relationships outside of the classroom.

Jesus Mercado, La Casa de Don Pedro Board Secretary and Newark Academy parent association member, helped coordinate the project. Councilmen Carlos Gonzalez and Anibal Ramos also came out to show their support.

Just two weeks later, another consortium of volunteers from Newark Science and Sustainability, Lost Tribe Zulu Nation, and local residents came together to clean up debris along Stone Street and the playground on the corner of Crane Street. Residents have expressed how appreciative and happy they are to see folks pitching in.

To volunteer, contact **Krystyna Soljan**, Community Organizer at 973.485.0701 or [ksoljan@lacasanwk.org](mailto:ksoljan@lacasanwk.org).



Newark Academy students prepare garden beds at a vacant lot on Garside Street.

# La Casa Leads Strengthening Families Event

Over 200 families enjoyed a fun filled and informative day at the Annual Strengthening Families Celebration "Planting Seeds, Blooming Families," held on April 25th at New Community Corporation in Newark.

Conceived by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families and organized through the state's network of Family Success Centers, the annual event promotes community education and public awareness about positive child development, child wellness, parenting, safety, and the prevention of child maltreatment. This year, La Casa's **Family Success Center** team served as the **lead organizer** for Essex County, chairing the event and collaborating with the Essex County Network of Family Success Centers.

Keynote speaker Marilyn Elward, Director of Educational Services at Programs for Parents delivered a message about the importance of community and the vital role a strong

support system plays in each family.

The day was filled with entertainment, workshops, cooking demonstrations, prizes and giveaways. Families participated in activities like Music Together® creative play, nutrition and wellness. Presenters used the "Protective Factors" framework that seeks to strengthen families and reduce child abuse and neglect by focusing on parental resilience, social connections, support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social and emotional competence of children. More than a dozen community and health providers offered free activities, health screenings and information.

The Strengthening Families Celebration was made possible through support from The New Jersey Department of Children and Families and contributions from Programs for Parents, State Farm Chartered Financial Consultant, Glisel M. Jimene and Manny's



Parents and children engage in activities that strengthen family unity at the Strengthening Families event.

Deli & Restaurant.

Photos from the celebration can be viewed at: [flickr.com/photos/lacasadedonpedro](https://www.flickr.com/photos/lacasadedonpedro/).

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LA CASA'S FAMILY SUCCESS CENTER PROGRAMS CALL 973.483.2703.

# Recent Grant Awards Round-Up

- **Bank of America** to support workforce development and job training.
- **Citi Foundation** to support community economic development efforts.
- **Dollar General Literacy Foundation** to support High School Equivalency education program
- **Hispanic Federation** to support immigration services.
- **NeighborWorks America** to support Community Economic Development efforts.
- **Ryan White HIV/AIDS** grant to support HIV/AIDS intervention program.
- **NJ Department of Education 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center** year two renewal to support civic engagement after school program at McKinley Elementary School.
- HIV Prevention Services grant from the **NJ Department of Health**.



Bank of America representative Jossue Bonilla presents a check alongside staff and pre-k students.

IMMIGRATION SERVICES



**Preparation for U.S. Citizenship**

320 students completed the U.S. Citizenship course this year, supported by a Federal U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services grant.



**English Fluency**

La Casa has been educating English language learners for several decades. 575 students participated this year.

FAST FACTS

5,300

The number of people benefitting from our immigration legal and educational services since 2000.

93%

The percentage of U.S. citizenship students this year who became naturalized citizens.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LA CASA'S IMMIGRATION SERVICES PROGRAMS PLEASE CALL 973.481.4713.



*"For many weeks I was uncertain what to do. I considered staying in the country illegally and working under the table, but I knew that I didn't want to live that way. It seemed that returning to Peru was my best option."*

**Story of Impact: Katherine Ramos**

For almost 15 years, La Casa de Don Pedro's Immigration Services Program has helped ease the problem of *notario fraud* while satisfying the growing demand for immigration services and helping immigrants realize the hopes and dreams that lead them to come to the United States.

Launched by the Obama Administration in August 2012, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was developed as a way to address the state of insecurity and lack of permanent residency faced by thousands of young undocumented people living in the U.S., often through no fault of their own. DACA provides temporary relief for these young undocumented immigrants in danger of being deported. One example of La Casa's impact is the case of Katherine Ramos, a DACA beneficiary.

As a child, Katherine's parents stressed the importance of education and believed their daughter would have better opportunities if she completed high school and college in the United States. Wanting to be closer to her eldest sister who lived in New Jersey, Katherine was eager to go to the U.S. Armed with a temporary Visa, Katherine found her way from Lima, Peru to Belleville in 2003. After graduating Belleville High School in 2006, Katherine was uncertain what she would do next.

*"With my high school diploma in hand and an expired visa, there really was no way I could get that better education I dreamed of and my family expected from me. For many weeks I was uncertain of what to do. I considered staying in the country illegally and working under the table, but I knew I didn't want to live*

*that way. It seemed that returning to Peru was my best option."*

Just as Katherine prepared to return to Lima, the Obama Administration announced DACA. A friend referred her to La Casa de Don Pedro, and with support from La Casa's BIA Accredited Representative, she completed her application. Within five months she was granted temporary relief from deportation and the ability to advance her education.

After receiving her DACA card, Katherine immediately paid a visit to Essex County College's Admissions Office and enrolled in the engineering program. Her high grades resulted in a one year paid tuition through the College's Phi Theta Kappa Society.

Since she was a child Katherine enjoyed helping create solutions to environmental issues. "I remember standing beside my father helping install aqueducts in communities around Lima with no running water." Today, an eager young woman, Katherine has a Bachelor's of Science in Environmental Engineering from The City College of New York.

Thanks to DACA, Katherine, like so many young dreamers, is pursuing her dreams and aspires to greatness. Although DACA is not a permanent fix and does not grant permanent legal status or citizenship, it has offered thousands of young people the opportunity to temporarily stabilize their living situation and advance professionally.



Rosario Hernandez accepts warm wishes from Ray Ocasio.

**Rosario Hernandez**, La Casa’s Early Childhood Development Administrative Assistant recently reflected on her 33 years at La Casa. Rosario has been a quiet but consistent force behind La Casa’s Early Childhood programs, handling the daily paperwork – attendance forms, ordering supplies, and dealing with food service logistics. Her profound depth of knowledge and daily presence will be missed. Rosario officially retired June 30<sup>th</sup>.

## After 33 Years, a Quiet Force Retires

**What have you enjoyed most about working at La Casa?**

Being near our children and being involved with my community is what has given me joy. I also really appreciated the flexibility when I was a young mom and my children would attend our day care program. I could run to the school, pick them up, bring them home, and get to see them.

**What was it like at La Casa 33 years ago?**

Back in the 1980s we had just one early childhood center and operated on our own, not through the Newark Public School District. We had three classroom and 60 children. With no computers we did everything by hand. We also had a program for seniors in the same building here at 75 Park Avenue. The building has completely

changed. In fact, Mr. Ocasio’s office once was the cafeteria space for the seniors.

**What advice would you give to someone starting out in this kind of work?**

Communication is critical, especially with your supervisor. It’s important to be focused, putting special attention on your work, and to be tolerate and respectful of others.

**Do you have any special plans upon your retirement?**

I plan to exercise! I’ll be going to the gym regularly with my husband. I will travel to my home country of El Salvador, and spend more time with my grandchildren. I also love going to museums, especially those that showcase the rich history of our world. Now I’ll have more time to explore them!

## Celebrating Immigration at La Casa es Su Casa

La Casa celebrated the immigrant experience and its supporters at its annual cocktail reception, **La Casa es Su Casa** held April 16th at The New Jersey Performing Arts Center.

With its theme “Celebrating Immigration,” the event honored American Friends Service Committee, Senator Robert Menendez, and the Hispanic Federation for fostering fair and humane treatment of immigrants through advocacy, direct service, and policy development. Also recognized at the event was Grizel Ubarry, President of G.Ubarry Inc. for her work helping transforming communities for the past 30 years. La Casa

has been benefiting from her expertise as our consultant since her start in the field.

In recognition of National Poetry Month, a poetry exhibition titled *Reflections of My Heritage* featured original poetry alongside striking photographs from youth of La Casa’s after school program and Family Success Centers.

Other event highlights were the event emcee Yaima Crespo, News Anchor of Telemundo 47 New York, a silent auction and raffle, heartfelt testimonials from two Deferred Action for childhood arrival recipients and La Casa clients, followed by powerful speeches in support of immigration reform from Mayor Ras Baraka, Senator Bob Menendez, Board President Richard Roper, and Raymond Ocasio.



American Friends Service Committee admires their award.

Sponsors were Gold: **PS&G, Bronze: Hispanic Federation, Prudential, The Fund for New Jersey, Verizon, Friend: Horizon NJ Health, Jonathan Rose Companies, McCarter & English, LLP, NeighborWorks America, North Jersey Federal Credit Union, PNC Bank, Popular Community Bank, Rutgers University – Newark, St. Michael’s Medical Center, and WithumSmith+Brown.**



Poetry students discuss a fellow classmate’s poem.

# Recent Highlights

25 Participants from **La Casa's After School Enrichment program** helped launch the New Jersey Performing Arts Center's Department of Community Engagement initiative Books on the Move. The program, that unites literacy with performing arts, exposed the children to Alvin Ailey Dance Theater through dramatic storytelling shared by longtime La Casa friend, Dr. Mercedes Del Valle.

On April 30th, Mayor Baraka signed the Executive Order to establish a **Civilian Complaint Review Board** to oversee the Newark Police Department. Comprised of nine people, the board will review complaints against police behavior and have the power to receive, investigate, hear, make findings and recommend action upon complaints by members of the public. La Casa, among other local organizations, will help identify community residents to be appointed to the Board.

**Alle Ries, Director, Community Economic Development**, made a television appearance on New Jersey Capitol Report in late April. She provided tips for first time homebuyers and information about La Casa's first time homebuyer counseling and foreclosure programs.

In late April, our **Youth, Family & Health Services Division** hosted two successful Health Fairs this spring. Both fairs had over 100 attendants and provided free healthy snacks and cooking demonstrations. Community partners and local non-profit agencies offered a variety of resources, information, activities and free health screenings.

**La Casa's Early Childhood Centers** recognized the National Association for Education of Young Children's Annual Week of the Young Child (WOYC) the week of April 13th. With a theme of "Celebrating Our Youngest Learner," staff organized activities and programs for children and families including: healthy food demonstrations, family physical fitness activities, arts & crafts, outdoor games and more. WOYC is celebrated to focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families and to recognize the early childhood programs and services that meet those

needs. Photos can be viewed at: [www.flickr.com/lacasadedonpedro](http://www.flickr.com/lacasadedonpedro).

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The **Lower Broadway Neighborhood Association (LBNA)**, resident leaders, and community partners celebrated a year of accomplishments at the the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual third anniversary of the Transforming Lower Broadway: Our Quality of Life Roadmap neighborhood plan in April. The event, called "**Celebration of Success**," recognizes progress on developments facilitated by La Casa to improve the quality of life in Newark's Lower Broadway neighborhood.

LBNA presented awards to area individuals and businesses for their community engagement. **Aida Iris Crespo** received the "Family Empowerment" award, **The Newark Student Union** received the education award, **Center Stage Cuts**, was recognized with an "economic development" award, **Yendor Production & The Gates Project Artists** increased "Community Safety" through their expressive and unique community murals on business' roll down gates, and the **La Casa/McKinley 21st Century Community Learning Center After School Enrichment Program and its participants**, led by **Michael Peralta**, School Age Services Unit Manager received the "Community Engagement" award for their student-organized supplies drive for people experiencing homelessness.

Generous funding from the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation and capacity from NeighborWorks America and Greater Newark LISC have supported La Casa to plan and deliver, side by side with community partners, a comprehensive and inspiring neighborhood plan.



## La Casa is tapped by Mayor Baraka

Fund Development Associate Tenisha Malcolm (in red) participates at the signing of the Civilian Complaint Review Board.



## Health Fairs encourage children to eat healthy

Family Success Center Partnership Coordinator Esteban Rodriguez as a healthy fruit at a recent Health Fair.



## Student Union recognized for their advocacy

Newark Student Union awardees at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Celebration of Success with LBNA President Sam August and former Sustainable Communities Manager Roberto Frugone.

# Growing Vitality in Lower Broadway

This summer, with support from La Casa, NeighborWorks America, and the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, the Lower Broadway Neighborhood Association (LBNA) launched **My Front Porch**, a multi-functional outdoor community space. With goals to foster community engagement, cultural awareness and pride, LBNA and other community partners are transforming a vacant lot on Crane Street into a multi-functional community gathering space offering activities such as karate & yoga, block club meetings, poetry readings, domino competitions, movie nights, art activities, and youth activities.

After more than 30 cleanup and building events both on the site and in workshops at Barringer High School, June 6<sup>th</sup> marked the kickoff for **My Front Porch** at 57 Crane Street. The launch party also celebrated NeighborWorks week, a week for NeighborWorks affiliates like La Casa to mobilize residents, businesses, government in activities that promote neighborhood change and awareness.



"Our goal is to activate otherwise unused spaces and create opportunities for residents, property owners and city officials to see their endless possibilities. *My Front Porch* will bring greater visibility and activity in the neighborhood this summer," reported Alle Ries, Director of Community & Economic Development.

Planning for *My Front Porch* is ongoing. To share your ideas and volunteer, please contact [lowerbroadwaynewark@gmail.com](mailto:lowerbroadwaynewark@gmail.com).

Find the latest updates about the *My Front Porch* summer schedule of events and activities on Facebook at [facebook.com/BroadwayNewark](https://facebook.com/BroadwayNewark).



Youth Court volunteers have completed community service hours at *My Front Porch*, such as this young man, alongside his mother.

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# CALLING ALL

artists activists performers speakers

fitness & dance instructors teachers

musicians entrepreneurs...

Are you looking for a space to share or showcase your gifts, passions and talents?

***My Front Porch is your space.***

Once a vacant lot, My Front Porch is now an open and vibrant outdoor recreation area to host a workshop, performance, meeting, or social event. Our goal is to engage our neighborhood in experiences that educate, unite, and inspire. My Front Porch is located at 57 Crane St. in the heart of Lower Broadway.

Please contact the Lower Broadway Neighborhood Association at [lowerbroadwaynewark@gmail.com](mailto:lowerbroadwaynewark@gmail.com) to host an activity.



SAVE THE DATE FOR

# BURGERS & BREW

BECAUSE THE SUMMER WILL BE OVER BEFORE WE KNOW

## 09/16/15

Burgers and Brew returns to McLoone's Boathouse on Wednesday, September 16<sup>th</sup> at 6pm. Purchase your tickets at <http://burgersandbrew2015.bpt.me>.

Editors: Carrie Puglisi, Director of Program & Fund Development and Tenisha Malcolm, Fund Development Associate.

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A QUARTERLY  
NEWSLETTER FOR  
FRIENDS OF LA CASA  
DE DON PEDRO