

CASA MARIANELLA

POSADA ESPERANZA

AUSTIN, TEXAS



SINCE 1986

SHELTER AND SUPPORT FOR IMMIGRANTS

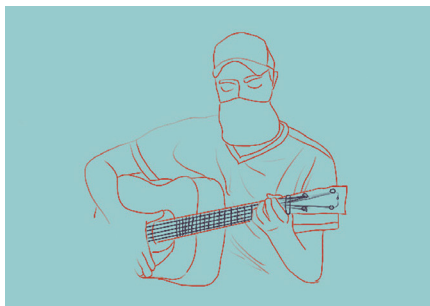
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Mission Statement

Casa Marianella welcomes displaced immigrants and promotes self-sufficiency by providing shelter and support services.



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 Patti McCabe, Posada Esperanza
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INTRODUCTION



Casa Marianella Jennifer Long

2020 has been a surprisingly successful year at Casa Marianella. We have stayed open despite the pandemic. The hard work and excellent planning of our staff have made this possible. The Austin community has been so generous that in addition to our usual services we have been able to provide food and rental assistance to many of our former residents who lost their jobs due to COVID. It's wonderful to know that our clients will not be homeless again when the eviction moratorium is lifted. They have all been through so much.

Last year we began planning the biggest expansion in Casa's thirty five year history. Those plans continue. We have been slowed by the virus, but we are still on track to build two nine bedroom houses. As one of the only shelters for asylum seekers in the US, we know we need to do more.

Thank you for your support. We have been carried through this difficult period by the generosity of this community. We are incredibly grateful.

ABOVE: After working together for 20 years, Jennifer Long and Patti McCabe are now Co-Executive Directors of Casa Marianella.



Posada Esperanza

Anna Clements and Stacey Eyman

When families leave Posada Esperanza, we create a folder for their mail. After moving out, families continue to return to get their mail. Some just pick it up and go, ask for translation, and sometimes end up needing assistance with whatever came in the mail. A few continue to receive legal services, help from our benefits clinic, and sometimes rental assistance for those first few months. Slowly as time goes on we see them less and less, and though we selfishly miss them, we know that this is a good thing.

Since March of this year, all of that has changed. Many of our clients work in hotels, and as soon as South by Southwest was canceled, people began losing their jobs. Then schools closed, and so even those who lost their jobs were losing childcare. From that point onwards, more people seemed to be losing jobs each day, and we began getting calls from families all over Austin who were suddenly out of work and with nowhere else to turn.

In response to huge numbers of unemployment, we have expanded our services beyond Rainbow Ridge Circle, and are now providing case management assistance to almost sixty families who previously lived at Posada Esperanza. We support them in their search for childcare, assist them in preparing job applications and connect them to rental assistance and emergency relief funds. Through the generous donations of community members and local programs, we've been able to help our families stay housed and minimize their rental and utilities debts. With the support of donors and volunteers, we've also been able to support our families who lost income with donations of food and diapers as well as virtual assistance with job applications and English practice.

In the midst of the pandemic, we are also facing the realities of gentrification. East Austin apartments that have housed many of our families after shelter are now on the verge of demolition or change of management. Affordable housing is limited. Our staff is working to find options for displaced families so they can stay housed and preserve their community. This is complicated by the fact that many of these families have lost their income because of the pandemic and won't have income verification to be able to enter a new apartment when their home is torn down.

A challenge it has been, and we are sure it will continue to be. But alongside these difficulties, our Austin community of support has been as strong as ever, enabling us to assist each family that contacts us.

Distance is hard, at a place where community is the source of our strength. We miss gathering at birthday showers and baby showers, having our salas full with afternoon homework help, and the smells of a blend of African and Latin American specialties wafting from our kitchen. But our community is showing us that it can come together even when it cannot physically, and we are so thankful for that.

We know that the hard times have not yet ended, and as families continue to lose their jobs and homes we will continue to need our greater community's support more than ever. Thank you for your ongoing support as we continue through this challenging time.





My Time at Posada Esperanza

Will Crews

I remember the first few weeks training via Google Meet with my fellow AmeriCorps members, and logging off thinking “what the heck did I get myself into?” I’d been sitting in my room listening to Patti explain what felt like a whole different language, filled with acronyms and vocabulary of the immigration process that were brand new to me. How would I be effective in this job? Will my clients understand my French? Was I stupid for thinking that I would be able to serve and connect with the women at Posada?

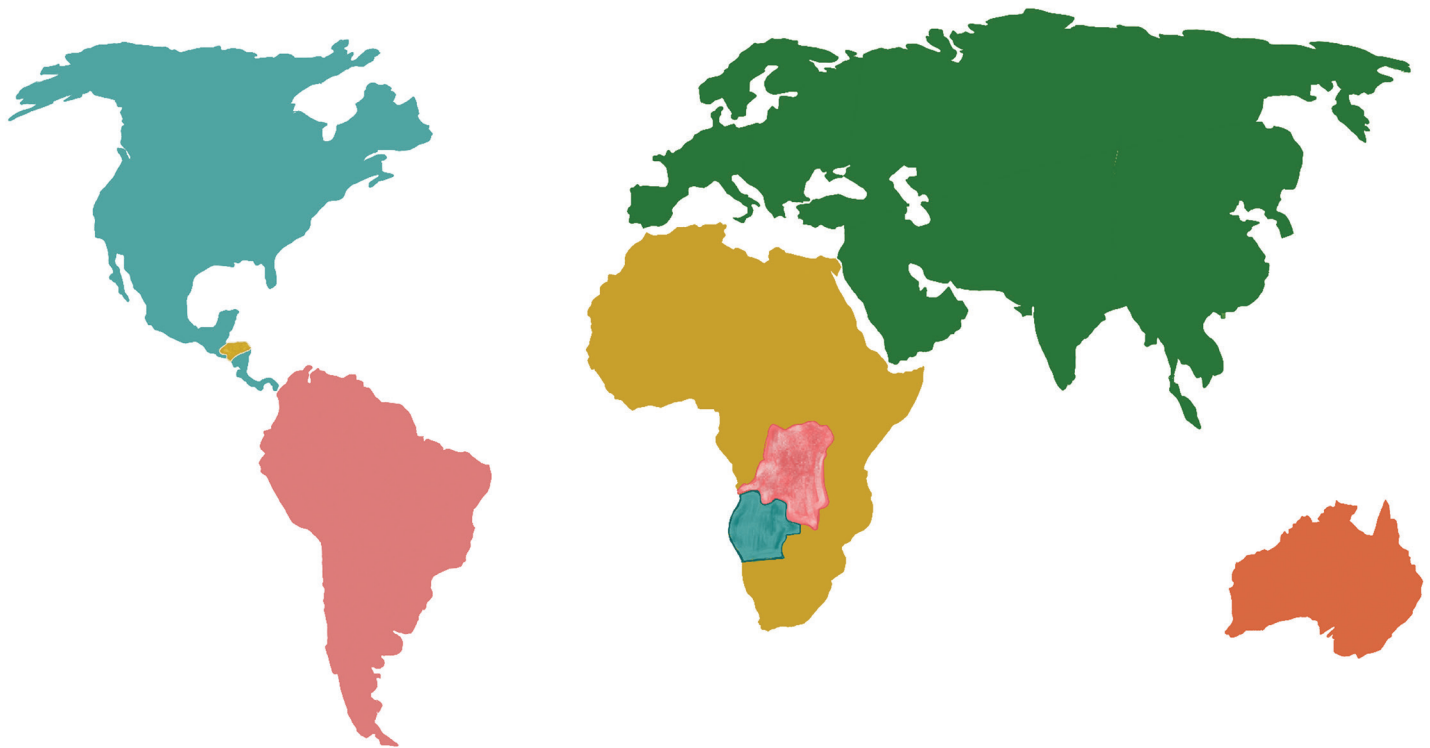
My two months working at Posada Esperanza have felt simultaneously like two weeks and two years. I’ve had the pleasure of being a case manager for three different women, all with unique situations, stories, and personalities. While I focus mainly on finding employment and accessing benefits for these women, I also get to walk alongside them as they face their own challenges as newcomers to the US. Not everyday is navigating through challenges, and I have gotten to make great memories with my clients as well. From playing the same DaVido song on repeat in the car, learning how to make different Congolese dishes, and attempting to speak Lingala, I’ve enjoyed learning more about their cultures, which gives them a sense of normalcy in a transient, fragile chapter of their lives.

From attending more prenatal appointments than I ever thought I would as a 22-year-old man, to getting to share the exciting news with someone who qualified for a work

permit, there is something different and unexpected everyday at Posada. Even though I am by no means an expert case manager, I have learned so much about advocating for those stuck in our bureaucratic system. I have seen the persistence and grit that Posada clients carry with them as they start their new lives. I love working everyday with my coworkers, who have quickly become friends, and with an organization that is supported and well-integrated throughout Austin.

Whether at your favorite Ethiopian food truck, your local HEB, or hotels all around the city, hundreds of Casa and Posada clients have successfully integrated themselves into the Austin community.

YEAR IN NUMBERS



From 11/01/2019 – 10/31/2020 we served:

Total Residents Agency-wide: 362

Breakdown of residents by shelter:

Casa: 215

Salaam: 13

Posada: 134

Agency-wide Exits: 258 Successful/ 283 Total (91%)

Casa Exits: 140 Successful/152 Total (92%)

Salaam Exits: 13 Successful/13 Total (100%)

Posada Exits: 105 Successful/118 Total (89%)

Agency-wide we served residents from 40 distinct countries.

Countries with highest representation:

DRC: 103

Angola: 42

Honduras: 41



PROGRAM REPORTS



Casa Marianella Immigration Legal Services

Elise Harriger

Casa Marianella’s legal clinic, Casa Marianella Immigration Legal Services (CMILS), exists to provide free immigration legal services to residents, ex-residents, and community members living under the poverty line. We have assisted many individuals with a variety of matters, such as U visas, T visas, Special Immigrant Juvenile petitions, Asylum, Withholding and Convention Against Torture, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), family petitions, applications for green cards, naturalization, and applications for work permits.

This past year, CMILS has been busy putting on free citizenship clinics to help eligible individuals prepare their naturalization applications at no cost and representing individuals in their naturalization cases. Due to COVID-19, we have modified our clinics to virtual formats and individual representation. The City of Austin is providing funding for these clinics and representation, so we can continue to help our fellow Texans.

CMILS says thank you to all of our wonderful donors! We could not do our legal work on behalf of Casa residents and the immigrant community without you.



ABOVE: Legal Assistant Sofia Kimball sharing some smiles with a Guatemalan family our legal team helped resettle.



ALICE KLEBERG REYNOLDS FOUNDATION



Austin Community FOUNDATION

Support Letters

Hillary Sturgeon

Casa Marianella’s name is well-known throughout ICE detention centers across the United States. Somewhere between 50 and 100 detainees per week will reach out via mail, phone, fax, or email to the Support Letter team. The Support Letter team then sorts through these various inboxes and diligently reads each correspondence from detention, logging these life stories among those of the countless other migrants who have reached out to us for support in the last year.

This correspondence from detention opens a window into a world to which the majority of Americans do not have access. It allows us to serve as witnesses to the horrors from which many of our detained migrants are fleeing and to hear stories from the hidden world of the immigrant detention system here in the United States. Although our support letter is never a guarantee of freedom, they are sent with a sense of hopeful optimism.

As Casa was adjusting our own COVID-19 protocols, including limiting the amount of support letters we were able to send in a given week in order to allow space for

distancing within the shelter, we were also witnessing the ways that various detention centers around the country were, or were not, adjusting their own safety protocols. We streamlined support to folks with high-risk health conditions and were lucky enough to get to welcome many of these same people to Casa. In a year in which the scope of in-person and relational work flipped on its head, it felt momentous to be able to continue providing life-giving support to our residents — both current and future.

Housing Report

Laura Smith

When people come to Casa, they have often been living the experience of a status that would be labeled 'homeless' for many months or even years. They have journeyed thousands of miles to the perceived safety of US soil, from the dangers and exigencies of their countries of origin and former lives. They have traveled by plane, boat, train, bus, and foot. Their shelter along this risky route has been unreliable, meager or non-existent. They have then spent time incarcerated in a detention center in the USA –this year, we received a few people who had been in detention for over two years.

At Casa, they are still technically classified as homeless, but for the most part, they finally feel like they are at home. Many of them are able to reunite with buddies they met on the long path to the US, or in detention. They make new friends from around the world. They quickly go from feeling tentative and in transition to feeling much more safe and settled.

But their journey of becoming “housed” is just beginning. Casa is a place to land and regroup, yet the turnaround to living independently and self-sufficiently begins for most almost as soon as they arrive here. Intricately entwined with being housed and self-sufficient is the ability to source income; the intrinsic motivation to hustle and work even as you adapt to your new life and proceed through your legal process. In the past, Austin has been amenable to new immigrants, with plentiful opportunities to work in hospitality and construction, among other trades.

Covid-19 changed all of that overnight. Suddenly, our wider Casa family, even those who had been fully self-sufficient for months or years, lost their livelihood completely. Like most low-income earners with limited work history, these frugal, hardworking folks had nonetheless little safety net, and those who did have a small savings fund found it swiftly depleted in the face of months of no availability of work.

Finding suitable housing is a multifarious process. It involves meeting people where they are, with their skillset, previous work history, linguistic abilities or barriers.

It involves helping people see what is possible, and realistically budgeting for their priorities.

In addition, the growth of Austin has meant that truly affordable housing grows scarcer every day. Qualifying for rentals by providing requisite documentation like US-issued identification and proof of income can be tricky. Much of the housing that new immigrants are able to obtain can be under-maintained and crowded, with unpredictable management.

The support Casa residents receive both from the wider Austin Casa family and the services Austin provides are also essential and well-received. People who have lacked medical care can receive it, so they are in optimal condition to move forward in their lives. Last year, Casa Marianella became one of the recipients of the City of Austin's Rapid Rehousing rental assistance program.

The Rapid Rehousing grant helps people experiencing homelessness get into safe and sustainable housing, by covering the upfront costs of moving as well as occasionally spotting residents during the vagaries of employment or emergencies in their first year of being housed. Casa Marianella has a stellar record of 80% or more of our Rapid Rehousing recipients being consistently in stable housing for their first vulnerable year of transitioning out of Casa shelter.

Our Austin community came through with grants specifically designed to assist underhoused and underdocumented people as well during COVID-19, with various funding opportunities to help with rent, bills and food support. Our support from donors, as always, helped us to provide quality furniture and home goods, food, and rental support as well. We had an amazing team of volunteers assisting our work-authorized residents to procure jobs remotely in the limited employment market of COVID.

We are grateful for the opportunity to be part of the crucial and tender step in people's lives of getting and staying housed in Austin, and grateful for all of the collaboration from the local government on down to dedicated individuals who make our civic neighborhood a safety net and welcoming place for immigrants.







ESL Teachers Embrace One-to-One Video Classes

Kathleen P

Teaching ESL at Casa Marianella has always required flexibility, creativity, enthusiasm, empathy, & positivity as we face challenges of multi-level classes with fluid attendance, new students in class each night, a diversity of backgrounds and experiences, and more. This year stretched our dedicated teaching team in new ways as they responded to the pandemic by offering one-to-one WhatsApp phone video classes.

As most of our residents have smartphones, offering these one-to-one classes has been a way to offer custom remote sessions in a way that is accessible to our residents.

Many of our residents have also participated in remote classes with iACT.

We'll continue to look for creative ways to respond to the needs of our residents and the community — we are so grateful for the dedication of our volunteer teachers.



Food Access Through Casa Marianella

Carson Borbely

Casa Marianella partners with two food pantries, Manos de Cristo and Faith Food Pantry, to feed our former residents. Local food redistribution group Save the Food also contributes. At the height of the food program, 243 individuals received food biweekly.

After taking over the food program and stepping into my role as Community Outreach Coordinator in August of 2020, I joined forces with Anna Clements and Avery Little of Posada Esperanza in order to evaluate the program thus far and refocus our priorities going forward. We decided to prioritize the needs of single parents, families, and recently exited residents from Casa Marianella and Posada Esperanza.

Working with Manos de Cristo and Faith Food Pantry helps us provide fresh, high-quality, nutritional foods at no cost to individuals facing economic insecurity. We are so grateful for volunteers from the Austin community at large helping our smaller community. I am proud of the passion, consistency, commitment, and responsibility our volunteers embody. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the food program has addressed the urgent needs of our community, and will continue to do so for as long as is necessary.





Keep the Rubber Side Down!!

Julian Root

Bicycles have long been a symbol of freedom and mobility around the world. At Casa Marianella’s bike program, we’re happy to be able to connect the majority of residents interested in a bicycle with their own bicycle and lock to use while living at Casa.

We have a fleet of about twenty uniquely numbered OFO ‘yellow bikes,’ donated to us some years ago by the Austin Yellow Bike Project. While heavy and not particularly sporty, these bikes are bulletproof steeds which have really held up. Having solid rubber tires (in lieu of the traditional tube/tire combination) means these bikes can’t even get flats!

Seeing one of these ‘casa bikes’ locked up at a grocery store or being pedaled down the street by a smiling resident always warms the heart.

Furthermore, thanks to the boundless support of the AYBP and numerous area cyclists, we’ve been able to assemble and donate many used bicycles to former residents who want to continue utilizing a bicycle once they’re living on their own. We even have a former resident from Mexico who is working for us as a mechanic, helping us assemble these bikes.

Giving Residents the Keys

Blake Roscoe

A few miles north of our little oasis on Gunter Street lies a chaotic place where minutes feel like hours: The Department of Public Safety, not-so-affectionately known as DPS.

This summer, we began taking current and former residents there for first time driver’s license appointments. A driver’s license is an invaluable asset: a means of identification, a rite of passage, and a necessary document for life in Texas. The hours of work and subsequent bureaucratic confusion obtaining it are grueling, but incredibly rewarding. Moments of pure joy when a resident receives their long-awaited

If you are interested in donating any bicycle related equipment, please email our donations coordinator:

donations@casamarianella.org

or our bicycle program director:

jroot@casamarianella.org

driver’s license are some of the most treasured moments for staff and residents alike.

We are reminded that immigrants have to work hard—in a language they may hardly speak—to earn what many US-born teenagers are practically given. We are reminded that there are allies and advocates everywhere, even in the most unexpected places. It is an honor to walk through the little nuances of everyday life, and learn from the incredible residents at Casa Marianella, even in unexpected places, at unexpected times.



RESIDENT SPOTLIGHTS



Javier's Story

Jennifer Long

Javier stayed at Casa Marianella twenty years ago. He lived with us for three months and has been independent ever since. He, his wife, and three children live in South Austin. Two of the kids have DACA. Javier has recently opened his own landscaping business. In 2005 he started bringing donations of food and clothing to Casa. His friends give him things to bring to us as well.

Javier told me: "Casa Marianella es una bendicion. Cuando llega sin nada, sin conocer a nadie, encuentras ese lugar donde te dan todo que necesitas: un techo, comida, ropa, clases de ingles. Te ayudan a empezar una vida aqui." ("Casa Marianella is a blessing. When you arrive with nothing and without knowing anyone, you find this place where they give you everything you need: a roof over your head, food, clothing, and English classes. They help you to start a new life here.")

Thank you, Javier, for your faithful support of the people who have come after you!



Karen's Story

Clare Halloran

Karen is a 28-year-old single mother of four whose resilience and drive through her time in our program put her on a fast track to self-sufficiency. Despite difficulties finding work and childcare brought on by COVID-19, Karen did not give up.

Posada worked on finding her a place to live before finding her a job, which is not our usual course of action. Despite this, finding a job and childcare became easier once she had a home of her own. It was not easy finding a home that would accept a mother with four children who had no income.

With the help of Posada Esperanza, Karen persevered, finding a job only five days after moving with her children and another former Posada resident. Karen's story is a reminder to us all to keep fighting, making plans, and finding hope even in the most challenging times.



Posada Entrepreneurs

Patti McCabe

Posada moms join together in friendship and in delicious business!

Rahel and Atsede both escaped persecution in Eritrea. Although they were forced to leave their country, they hold dear their love for their culture and food. Life has taken so much away from these women but nothing was able to take away their drive to provide for their children and their entrepreneurial spirit. They have just opened their own Ethiopian/Eritrean food truck at the corner of Cesar Chavez and Pleasant Valley!

You must come enjoy their food. The beréberes sauce is rich. The injera is tender. The meats and veggies are cooked to perfection. While you are waiting for your order to be prepared Atsede or Rahel might even pour you an authentic Ethiopian coffee.

Come and visit them! Your belly will thank you for the food and Atsede and Rahel will thank you for your support.

GET INVOLVED

Sponsor

*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free...*
- "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus

The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you...
- Hebrew Bible, Leviticus 19:34

Many wonder how to respond to the ongoing issue of immigration, yet there is ample guidance in our political and spiritual beliefs on how to care for the stranger among us. We are called by the words etched onto our Statue of Liberty and in our sacred scriptures to embrace the immigrant seeking safety and shelter in our home lands. One of the most empowering ways that such hospitality can be given is by building a community around them just as Casa has built community for so many immigrants over the years, and so I pray that you will prayerfully consider sponsoring an immigrant together with a faith community. Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a community to help an immigrant get on their feet in a new land after the trauma of exile and detention. If your community feels called to this humble service, please email us (info@casamarianella.org) for more information and support.

In solidarity,

Emily Orner

Operations Coordinator and Candidate for Word and Service (Deacon) in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Convivio

Due to COVID-19, Casa Marianella's monthly Convivio gatherings are indefinitely postponed. Please check our blog for updates!

Volunteer

Volunteer with us!

Volunteers are essential to the survival of Casa. We have a lot of different opportunities for all interests. Although COVID-19 has eliminated most on-site volunteer opportunities, it has also created some new ones—particularly for drivers willing to shuttle food to off-site members of the Casa community!

Please contact our volunteer coordinator: volunteer@casamarianella.org

Social Media

Follow us on social media!

We are on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (@CasaMarianella). We regularly post updates about what's going on, and how you can get involved. We also have a regularly updated blog, featuring writing about particular issues and events related to Casa. Give us a look!

www.casamarianella.org/blog-page

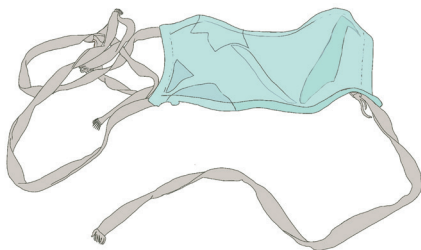


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Gratitude and thanks to our supporters and partners!

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Episcopal Health Foundation – Still Water Foundation – Religious Coalition to Assist the Homeless – Impact Austin – Donald D. Hammill Foundation – Shield-Ayres Foundation – City of Austin – Travis County – Meadows Foundation – Consulate General of Mexico – Rachael and Ben Vaughan Foundation – Lola Wright Foundation – Lazarus Brewing Company – Lowe Foundation – Alice Kleberg Reynolds Foundation – Madroño Foundation – Flicht Coffee – Trull Foundation – American Immigration Lawyers Association – Immigration and Nationality Section of the State Bar of Texas – 4Girls Foundation – Travis County Women Lawyers' Foundation – Labor & Employment Section of the State Bar of Texas – Austin Community Foundation – Austin American-Statesman – HEB National Christian Foundation – Poorman Foundation – Rocket Science Realty – Crop Walk – Paul and Heather Dennison – Pan American Round Table -- Tom Adams Computer Rescue – Dell Employee Giving – Texas Coffee Traders – Bon Appetit – Fleet Coffee – Keep Austin Fed – Deats Durst & Owen, PLLC – Roach & Newton LLP – Meanwhile Brewing Company – Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati – Kindle Project – Wheatville Food Co-op – Trader Joe's – Treasure City Thrift – St. Edward's University – Zero Catering – Mi Madre's – Facebook – Juiceland – Kryptonite – Barracuda – ABP – Kinda Tropical – Sa-Ten – Custom Ink Fundraising – Indivisible Austin – Cine Las Americas – Solar Sno – Crux – Inti Raymi Fund – Bright Funds – Serena Marc Blu Foundation – A Glimmer of Hope Foundation Austin – All Together ATX – Better Together Fund – Foundation for Expanding Horizons – The Garber Family Foundation – Greater Houston Community Foundation – Travis County Serve – Dougherty Foundation – The Rosenthal Foundation – Silicon Valley Community Foundation – Greater Houston Community Foundation – Pan American Round Table – United Way for Greater Austin – UT Austin, Division of Diversity and Community – Woman's Fund of Central Texas – SBA – Recognize Good – St. David's Foundation – Baker Botts, LLP – SmileWell Dental –Salesforce

Faith Groups

Mosaic Church
Central Christian Church
University Christian Church
St. James Episcopal Church
St. George's Episcopal Church
St. Matthew's Episcopal Church
St. David's Episcopal Church
St. Hildegard's Church
First Baptist Church
Bethel Church
First United Methodist Church
University United Methodist Church
St. John's United Methodist Church
Friends Meeting of Austin
First Unitarian Universalist Church
Live Oak Unitarian Church
Wildflower Unitarian Church
Unity of Wimberley
Unity of the Hills Church
The Catholic Diocese of Austin
St. Austin Catholic Church

Santa Julia Catholic Church
Cristo Rey Catholic Church
University Catholic Center
St. John Newmann
St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church
Grace and Peace Presbyterian
Westminster Presbyterian Church
First Presbyterian Church
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
First English Lutheran Church
Gethesmane Lutheran Church
St. Catherine of Siena
Islamic Ahlul Bayt Association
Vox Veniae Church

Key Collaborators

American Gateways - RAICES, Inc.
UT Immigration Clinic - Caritas of Austin
Catholic Charities of Central Texas - Amplify Austin
Refugee Services of Texas - Equal Justice Center
Justice for our Neighbors - CommUnityCare Clinics
Workers Defense Project - Capital Area Counseling
Center for Survivors of Torture - Capital Area Metro Transit
Austin Yellow Bike Project - Ghisallo Cycling Initiative
Capital Area Food Bank - Keep Austin Housed
AmeriCorps/Front Steps - Grassroots Leadership
Literacy Coalition of Central Texas - Jesuit Volunteer Corps
Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
Posada Providencia: San Benito, TX
DASH: Ft Worth, TX
Casa Juan Diego: Houston, TX
Anunciation House: El Paso, TX
YMCA: Houston, TX
Interfaith Welcome Coalition: San Antonio, TX
Freedom House: Detroit, MI
Vive: Buffalo, NY
Dominican Sisters: St Catherine, KY

The Welcome Network: Owensboro, KY
Della Lamb: Kansas City, MO
Sisters of Charity: Cincinnati, OH
Clifton UMC: Cincinnati, OH
West Virginia Interfaith Ministry: Charleston, WV
Welcome Network: Chicagoland, IL
Su Casa Catholic Worker: Chicago, IL
Redeemer OPC: Atlanta, GA
Refugee Interest Group: Birmingham, AL
Adorers of the Blood of Christ: Wichita, KS
St Luke's UMC: Buffalo, NY
Rochester Refugee Resettlement: Rochester, NY
Ithaca Welcomes Refugees: Ithaca, NY
Interfaith Sanctuary Coalition: Syracuse, NY
Refugees and Asylum Seekers at
Catholic Community Services: Eugene, OR

