Our Mission
Casa Marianella creates community with Latin American immigrants and international asylees by providing hospitality and promoting self-sufficiency.

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Services of Casa Marianella:
In addition to providing shelter and support to recently arrived immigrants, Casa Marianella is also proud to offer:

ESL (English as a Second Language) Classes:
Monday-Thursday, 7:30 PM-9:00 PM; beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels
classes are FREE and open to all! No registration required!

Oriental Medicine Clinic:
The clinic is open every Monday and Friday with appointments upon request.

Legal Services Clinic:
The Casa Marianella legal clinic provides assistance with a wide variety of immigration
law matters for current and former Casa residents and, as time allows, for other
individuals who qualify for service.

Women’s Health and Job Preparedness Classes

The Staff of 2015
Casa Marianella Shelter Directors
Jennifer Long
Melissa Buhrt

Emergency Shelter Staff
Mercedes Peña
Adarsh Bagrodia
Kathleen P.
Hector Kuhn Naranjo
Paula Blaha
Gus Bova
Brooke Van Court
Rose Miller
Emily Hagerty
Diego Prada
Erin Edmonds
Julia Stone

Posada Esperanza Directors
Patti McCabe

Women’s And Children’s Shelter Staff
Shelby Bachelder
Julia White
Katie Smith
Stacey Eyman
Brittany Hirschkorn

Casa Legal Clinic
Elise Harriger
Sarah Woelk
Gracie Willis

Grants Manager
Karen Wolman

Benefits Coordinator
Samone Nigam

The Board of Directors
Hannah Bronsnick
Gabriel Ornelas
Lora Petty
Heather Dennis
Mitzi Eastman
Kate Lincoln-Goldfinch
Aster Kassaye
Joel Sherzer
Oscar Benavidez
Nacho Gallardo
Cindy Wiewel
Elizabeth Hastings
Abby Frank
Moriah Looten
Celebrating 30 Years at Casa Marianella
Jennifer Long, Executive Director

We will celebrate our 30th anniversary on January 6, 2016. We have been offering shelter every night for all these years to victims of war and persecution, victims of gang violence, people displaced by hurricanes and drought, and people who have become homeless due to medical conditions. Every day we see the miracle of community as residents from 28 different countries, a variety of language groups, and a number of religions all live and work together.

Our guests support each other in the very challenging job of adjusting to the US and figuring out how to make a life in Austin. It’s getting harder to live in Austin for newcomers. Rents are high and it’s hard to survive on a starting salary.

However, despite the challenges, almost everyone who leaves Casa moves into safe and secure housing and never becomes homeless again. We know that with the right support, even highly traumatized people can make a successful new start.

I’m happy to report that Austin, Texas is well prepared to do our part. However, we need the level of capacity that Casa Marianella provides in every major city in the United States. We want to do our part to promote the creation of a robust network of shelters for those who come to our borders seeking refuge. We are grateful to be part of a city that has always had a vision for welcoming the stranger, and we appreciate the tremendous support we get from so many people in this community.

Come on by! You’re always welcome.

Posada Esperanza Update:
Patti McCabe, Director

We have all been watching a world in crisis over how to deal with the masses of refugees escaping the horrors of war and oppression. We know that we need big solutions, but also that we must do the work every day here in our own backyards. The culture of Casa Marianella is to do the work that needs to be done, here and now and to the best of our abilities. This work can only happen with the support of a broad network of supporters who share a strong value of welcoming the foreigner and serving the person in need.

This spring the community of Casa Marianella supporters came together with courage and generosity to create more housing for immigrant families. A house went up for sale right next door to our existing Posada Esperanza houses, which provided a unique opportunity for growth. Having houses on the same cul-de-sac allows us to run the houses with a small team of staff to support all of the families, while providing the families with opportunities to support each other and build a sustaining community.

We had to move quickly in order to purchase the house, so we reached out to Casa Marianella’s support network to help. Hundreds of supporters contributed to make the purchase possible. Soon after purchasing the new house we received a flood of new families requesting shelter.

We not only filled the new house but also filled the living rooms of our other houses. Throughout the summer we were running at overflowing capacity, serving 55 people (19 women and 36 children) at a time in the four Posada Esperanza houses.

The extra capacity provided by the new house has made a huge difference and has allowed us to say “Yes” to more families in need. Meanwhile, families have had the time to find good housing to move into. Thanks to all of you who make our shared work possible!
THE 2015 ED WENDLER AWARD: KARNES PRO-BONO PROJECT

By Lupita Dominguez

In August 2014, the Department of Homeland Security responded to the Central American refugee crisis by detaining families at the Karnes County Residential Center and later, at the South Texas Family Detention Center in Dilley, Texas. As an organization born from the Latin American Human Rights Movement and founded upon principles of universal freedom, the community at Casa Marianella was deeply struck by the opening of these facilities. For their excellent service to the immigrant community, Casa Marianella awarded this year’s Ed Wendler Award to the Karnes Pro-Bono Project. The Karnes Pro-Bono project assisted women and children refugees in navigating the immigration system, prevented deportations, and ensured that the families had asylum hearings and were released on bond. The monumental time and effort dedicated to defending the dignity of the detained families extended far beyond the cases of the women and children they helped.

The Pro-Bono Project effectively shined light on the injustices that occur in detention centers and proved that there is no humane way to detain human beings. Casa Marianella would like to extend a big thank you to all of the individuals who were part of the Karnes Pro-Bono project.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT:

Enriqueta Gonzalez
By Gus Bova

Enriqueta “Queta” Gonzalez was a resident at Casa for three years, working in Round Rock during the week and staying at Casa on the weekends during much of that time. Throughout her stay, Queta would pitch in by cleaning and cooking for other residents, especially those who needed extra support. But Queta didn’t stop there. In the 13 years since she moved out of Casa (during which time she has become a permanent US resident and bought a house for her son in Mexico), she has never stopped coming, often three times a week, to clean, care for, and make sure every resident has their comida calientita. For Queta, unselfish giving, regardless of her circumstances, seems to be second nature. And while she often mentions how proud she is to be a part of Casa, the rest of us suspect we might be even more proud, lucky, and grateful to have her with us.

DALIT ACTIVISTS STOP ON NATIONAL TOUR

Erin Edmonds

This October, the Dalit Women’s Self-Respect Yatra volunteered an afternoon to cook for Casa residents.

For the past year, the Yatra has been touring the United States in an effort to expose the nature of caste-based sexual violence, successfully garnering international support that’s helped bolster activist projects on the Indian Homefront.

We at Casa were thrilled to have these women share their stories and create dialogue with our residents.

For more information on the Dalit Women’s Self-Respect Yatra, checkout #DalitWomenFight.
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, and applications for work permits.

This year, due to the long wait for hearings in the immigration court, CMILS has started doing free group clinics to help asylum seekers lodge their asylum applications. CMILS along with volunteers from American Gateways, Justice for Our Neighbors, and the University of Texas School of Law help asylum seekers make use of the new lodging process, which allows them to obtain work authorization more quickly than they would otherwise. This is very important so that individuals can work and support themselves while they await their hearings in immigration court. No matter what challenges lie ahead for our residents and local immigrant community, CMILS is here ready to help.

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.

Volunteers Make Community Possible!

By Kathleen P.

Our volunteers rock! They are a huge and indispensable part of the work and community of Casa and Posada as we labor together in fulfilling our mission. In 2015, over 800 volunteers contributed over 8,000 hours to Casa Marianella, not including our current Casa staff of AmeriCorps, Jesuit Volunteer Corps, and Episcopal Service Corps volunteers.

Our volunteers do yard work, gardening, painting, house repairs, office work, cooking, cleaning, organizing, tutoring, Convivio music performances, yoga classes, bike maintenance and repairs, among many other activities. They help our residents with letters, resumes, job applications, personal stories, apartment searches, appointments, and moving. Both individuals and organizations volunteer, including university organizations, churches, local companies, and more.

Our biggest ongoing group of volunteers is our ESL teachers, who creatively respond to the challenges of professional expectations and constantly changing classes as they help students develop their English skills and practical knowledge about living in Austin, along with creating community and camaraderie.

We are all so thankful for the work of our amazing volunteers who make such a tremendous impact in the lives of our residents, the fulfilling of our mission, and the creation of our beautiful, warm, wonderful, dynamic community.
A Year of Joy and Learning at Posada Esperanza
A Former Resident Pays a Visit

Gus Bova and Erin Edmonds

Twenty-three years have passed since Wilson Villarreal stayed at Casa Marianella. His memories of that time include losing a ring in the bathroom toilet, and giving himself a lifelong scar on his brow. He was five. His Casa story begins in the early 90’s, when he fled Guatemala with his parents. When they made it to Austin, Wilson remembers Terri English (Former Director) coming across them by chance and offering them a place at Casa. Later, she would help them get their own housing. Things were going alright for Wilson’s family, but his father was still drinking and fighting with his mom. These arguments, ultimately, would end in tragedy. About a year after arriving in Austin, Wilson’s father ended his mother’s life. Wilson remembers hearing the fight and then falling into a type of unconsciousness. The next thing he remembers is the sirens.

Its stories like these that encouraged current Casa Director Jennifer Long and current Posada Director Patti McCabe to open a shelter that could specifically accommodate the special needs of immigrant women and children. Through a collaborative effort, Jennifer and Patti opened Posada Esperanza in 2003 to serve homeless immigrant families.

Since it’s opening, Posada has played an integral part in creating community with the immigrant population; the emergen-

Volunteer Spotlight

Katie Smith

Since August, the lovely Sarah Bourestom has generously donated her time, patience, artistic talent and science acumen to Posada. A social work major at Saint Edward’s University, Sarah was drawn here, both to work with kids and to fulfill some service hours for her class, American Dilemmas. In addition to volunteering twice a week to help with homework, Sarah comes to Posada one day per weekend with fun and educational STEM activities. “I love doing science projects with the kids,” says Sarah, “because it’s the one subject where they can learn without even knowing it! Our activities can be interactive and fun, but also informative.” Recent topics have included: rockets and papier-mâché volcanoes.
The past few months, Posada Esperanza has been made more beautiful by the presence of a young woman, Maricela Reveles. When Maricela was 13 years old, she came with her mom to Posada. Spending a few months at Posada was what Maricela and her mom needed to get “back on their feet.” While at Posada, Maricela and her family were able to apply for public housing. Seven years later, they are still securely housed and employed. In fact, Maricela and her mom are both working at a childcare center together! Her current job is preparing for the upcoming school year and teaching her students about the importance of keeping our houses clean and running smoothly, yet also understanding that often this is no easy task.

During her past few visits, Maricela has inspired some of the staff to join her in some deep cleaning of our houses. Maricela is not afraid to dig into the less glamorous tasks knowing how important they are to maintaining a sense of peace, safety and community among the houses. A few times, these deep cleans have not only wrangled up staff to help out, but motivated our residents to join in the fun as well!

We are grateful for Maricela’s presence here at Posada. Her gentle, loving nature is well suited to become a teacher and we look forward to seeing her accomplish that goal. Maricela, her mom and her brothers still have dreams to one day have a house of their own, and we hope that when that day comes she will continue to grace us with her kindness and her smile!
## En Route To America: 2015 by the Numbers

28 Countries of Origin
Brazil, Burma, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Colombia, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Mexico, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Togo, Somalia, United States.

Casa Marianella Adult Shelter:
188 Entered | 92% Successfully Exited

Posada Esperanza Women’s Shelter:
101 Entered | 96% Successfully Exited

### A Vision of Radical Hospitality
*By Erin Edmonds*

I was on shift the other day when a young African girl tripped nervously into the office of Casa Marianella. She’d been sleeping on the streets of Dallas for a month, eventually crossing paths with a former Casa resident who directed her to our doorstep. As I offered her a seat in the office, my stomach churned uneasily. We simply did not have space to accommodate another person. We were full.

With tear-stained cheeks and trembling hands, she recounted the horrors she’d witnessed, the struggles she’d faced. The depth of her pain hung heavy with each word as the tremor in her voice grew stronger and stronger, the truth coming out in short, delayed gasps.

She was choking on her vulnerability, and here I was, telling her she couldn’t stay.

“I’m so sorry, there’s just no space,” I said for the third time.

She raised her sunken head and locked her deeply recessed eyes with mine, “Please, I have no one in this world. I have no where else to go. Please. You are the people of God.”

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In the 1980’s, local activist Ed Wendler proposed a motion to create a residential space in East Austin to serve the needs of Central American political refugees. With the help of like-minded organizations, Wendler opened Casa Marianella on January 6, 1986. For the past 30 years, Casa has operated to serve those marginalized by a global system that makes difference divisive, a system that invests in detention centers and borders as opposed to community development and relationship.

Like Casa’s namesake, Marianella Garcia Villas, Casa works to pursue justice by creating community with those on the political periphery. Here, we believe radical hospitality, expansive inclusivity, and the self-determining right of the individual are the pillars for a strong local community and a just social order.

In light of the recent attacks on Paris, it is a necessity that we recommit ourselves to this vision of social justice: a vision where difference is acknowledged, affirmed, and celebrated. This feat can only be accomplished through concerted human effort and a firm faith in the interconnected nature of our realities.

That day on shift, we made space at Casa Marianella. In little over an hour, the disposition of our new in-take changed dramatically as Casa came alive to welcome the stranger. There were introductions made, stories exchanged, and a blessing said over our new arrival. Here at Casa, we still hold strong to an uncompromised vision of radical hospitality.
Grassroots Solutions
By Gus Bova

In her day job, Zoe Schlag works to provide funding for social entrepreneurs who dream of establishing businesses that tackle social problems. Outside of work, Zoe carries over her “can-do” philosophy into grassroots efforts to deal with today’s global refugee crisis. She was inspired to do this work by the Refugees Welcome initiative in Germany, whereby Germans share their apartments with refugees.

Zoe, who has lived in various countries, felt inspired to both help refugees and continue the sort of cultural exchange that she relished during her travels. At this point, she, with help from our Board Member Heather Dennison, contacted Casa Marianella and offered half of her apartment as housing for two of our residents. After some discussion, we found two residents, from East and Central Africa respectively, who were interested in the opportunity.

About two months have passed since they moved in, and Zoe says it is one of the best decisions she’s made since moving back to the United States. Inspired to go further, Zoe is working with others to start a Refugees Welcome initiative in the US, and she is excited to speak with anyone interested in the grassroots effort to house refugees. Anyone interested may contact her by first contacting us at Casa Marianella.

Given the US government’s inadequate response to the global refugee crisis, we feel this work is especially important. We hope more will join Zoe and Casa in developing grassroots and not-for-profit solutions.
**Reflections of 2015**

*Remembering the Rwandan Genocide of 94’*

**By Erin Edmonds**

On April 12, 2015 members of the Austin Rwandan Community, along with friends and residents of Casa Marianella, gathered in memoriam to reflect on those lost in the Rwandan Genocide of 1994. Local Rwandan Community leaders emphasized the importance of unifying all peoples, calling for a celebration of diversity and a commitment to the dignity of the human being. The memorial was held on the corner of Gunter and Sellers in front of an installation that reads, “Genocide Never Again.”

The installation was created in 2013 by a former Rwandan Resident as a reminder of the various incidents that have sparked strong divisions and mass destruction within the human family. It stands as a promise to never allow such atrocities to take place again.

**Resident Insight:**

*By Maria Salas, Former Casa Resident*

Cuando llegué por primera vez a Casa Marianella fue en el año 2004. Llegué con muchas ilusiones y esperanza de que nos fuera muy bien. Vine con mi hijo, en ese tiempo él tenía 17 años. Yo quería que él estudiara, que fuera a la universidad. Pero lamentablemente él tomó otras decisiones muy equivocadas, empezó a tener malas amistades, a tomar y como dice Jennifer, “Agarró calle.” Esa “calle” duró por 11 años. Ahora nuevamente estoy aquí en Casa Marianella y sin absolutamente nada, y a tener que empezar de nuevo aunque ahora es casi imposible, pues estoy con 11 años más, ya no tengo las mismas fuerzas, sobre todo mi salud no es igual. Estoy sorprendida cómo fue que la vida me puso en el mismo lugar y a comenzar de nuevo la subida, y espero que esta vez pueda decir logré lo que yo quería. Tengo que seguir adelante, he perdido mucho pero ahora tengo una pequeña nieta que ilumina mi vida y tengo a mi hijo, que a pesar de todo, él también puede empezar de nuevo. Gracias a Casa Marianella por las 2 veces que me ayudó a iniciar con una nueva oportunidad de vida.

**Wish List**

Donations are accepted at Casa Marianella from 9am-7pm daily. Thank you for your contributions!

**Posada Esperanza**

* Spanish and English Children’s Books (First to Middle School Level)
* Coloring Books
* Crayons
* Markers
* Paint
* Other Craft Supplies
* Pots and Pans
* Dishes, Spoons, Forks, Sharp Knives
* Diapers (Sizes 4 or 5)
* Baby Wipes
* Sanitary Napkins
* Winter Jackets and Pants for Children and Mothers

**Casa Marianella**

* Soap, Shampoo, Toothpaste, Brushes, Razors, Towels and Bedding
* Men’s Clothes
* Undergarments and Socks
* Mattresses and Bed Frames
* Small Furniture Items
* Fresh Fruit, Veggies, Milk, and Eggs
* Kitchenware, Can Opener
* Projectors
* Wheelbarrow
* Accordion Folders
* Umbrellas
* Bike Locks/ Bike Lights (Front and Back)
Join us from 6 PM-8 PM every last Sunday of the month for Convivio: a celebration of community with live music, dancing, and a variety of cultural dishes!
OUR KEY COLLABORATORS

Keep Austin Housed AmeriCorps
Jesuit Volunteer Corps
Catholic Volunteer Network
American Gateways
Bernard Kohler Center
UT Immigration Clinic

RAICES, Inc.
Caritas of Austin
Refugee Services of Texas
Capital Area Food Bank
Workers Defense Project
Justice for our Neighbors
Equal Justice Center

Center for Survivors of Torture
Capital Area Counseling
CommUnity Care Clinics
Catholic Charities
Capital Metro Transit
Episcopal Service Corps

CHURCHES

1st Unitarian Universalist Church
Live Oak Unitarian
Wildflower Unitarian
Friends Meeting of Austin
St. Catherine of Siena
St. Austin Catholic Church
Cristo Rey Catholic Church
Gethsemane Lutheran
St. James Episcopal Church
Westminter Presbyterian Church

St. George’s Episcopal Church
Prince of Peace Lutheran
First Presbyterian Church
Faith Presbyterian Church
St. John’s United Methodist
University United Methodist
Oak Hill United Methodist
Emmanuel United Methodist
Austin Stone Community Church
Central Christian Church

St. Thomas More Catholic Church
Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church
St. Julia Catholic Church
St. John Neumann Catholic Church
University Catholic Center
The Catholic Diocese of Austin
St. Matthews Episcopal Church
St. David’s Episcopal Church
Unity of the Hills Church

GROUPS

Immigration & Nationality Section of the State Bar of Texas
Tikkun Austin
Shield-Ayres Foundation
Rachael and Ben Vaughan Foundation
Trull Foundation
Bon Appetit
The City of Austin
Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service
Still Water Foundation
Religious Coalition to Assist the Homeless
4Girls Foundation
American Immigration Lawyers Association

A Glimmer of Hope
Travis County Medical Alliance
Amplify Austin
Rocket Science Realty
Deats, Durst, & Owen PLLC
Roach & Newton LLP
Tom Adams Computer Rescue
Austin Free Net
Yellow Bike Project
Keep Austin Fed
Austin Bar Foundation
Alice Kleberg Reynolds Foundation
Texas Bar Foundation
Donald D. Hammill Foundation
Travis County Women Lawyers’ Foundation

Labor & Employment Section of the State Bar of Texas
Pan American Round Table
Treasure City Thrift
Texas Coffee Traders
National Christian Foundation
Episcopal Health Charities
Poorman Foundation
Mission & Ministry, Inc.
University of Texas School of Law
University of Michigan Law School
Women’s Fund of Central Texas
Lola Wright Foundation
Lowe Foundation