

Amigos de Casa Marianella

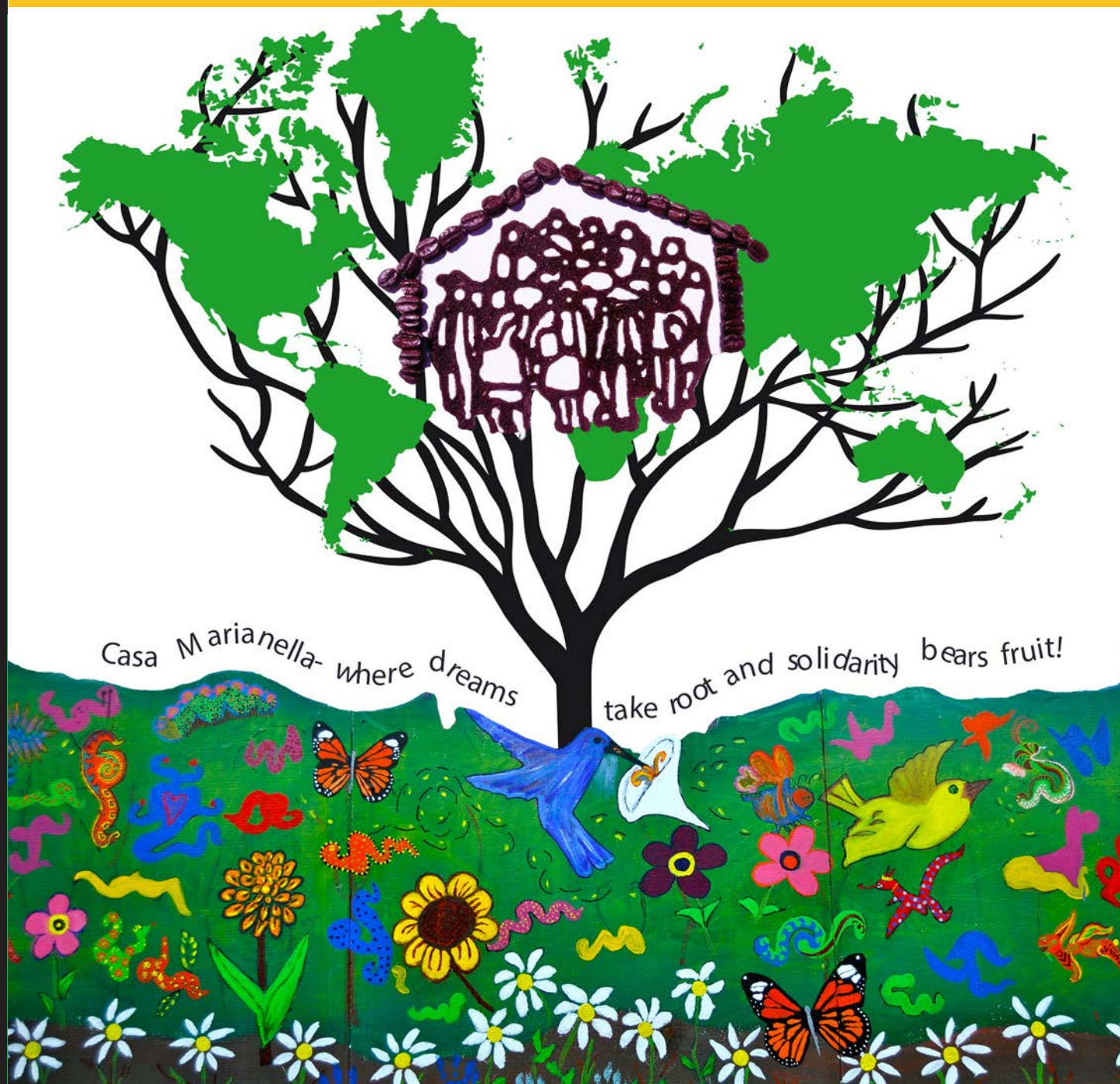


Annual Newsletter 2013-2014

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Casa Marianella- where dreams

take root and solidarity bears fruit!

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Look at the year in numbers...

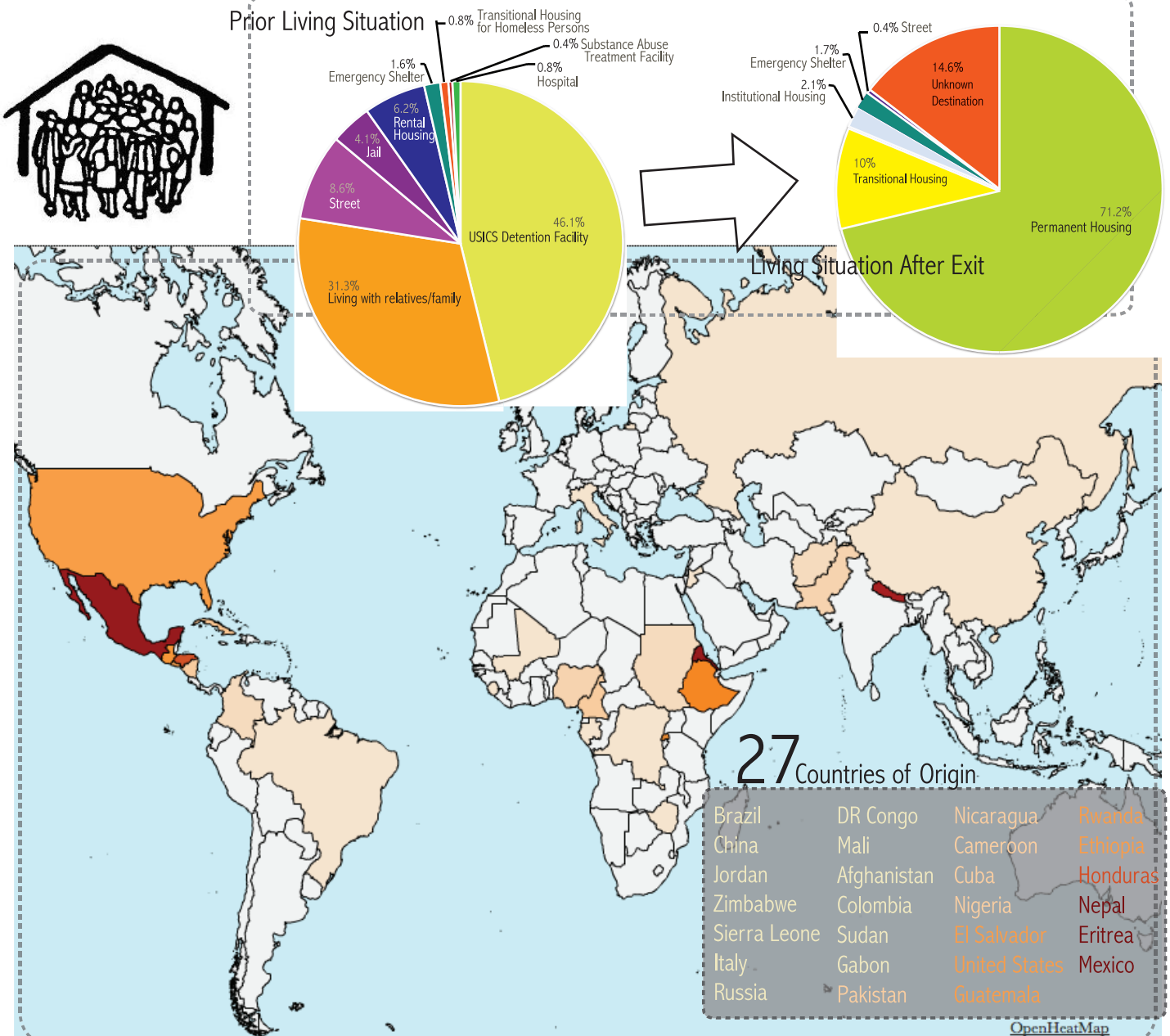
Casa Marianella - Adult Shelter

243 Entered 83% Successful exits 195 Men
48 Women

Posada Esperanza - Women & Children Shelter

92 Entered 88% Successful exits 37 Women
55 Children

Where do the residents at the Adult Shelter come from, and where do they go?



* Data was collected and analyzed using ServicePoint and OpenHeatMap. Data represents a time period from 9/1/2012-9/30/2013

Our Mission:

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

Casa Marianella Update:

Jennifer Long, Executive Director

Casa Marianella's adult shelter at 821 Gunter is a beehive of activity. In addition to the activities of our 35 residents, you will find the Legal Clinic open on Thursday afternoons, the Oriental Medicine clinic seeing patients on Mondays and Fridays, the 3 levels of ESL classes meeting Monday through Thursday evenings, and the Women's Work Training class on Saturday mornings. You will see men and women from all over the world- principally Latin America, Africa, and Nepal, but also a few from Afghanistan, China, and India. You will meet the staff, most of whom belong to service programs through Keep Austin Housed, the Catholic Volunteer Network, and the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. In addition to those full time volunteers, you will find community volunteers from schools and churches as well as individuals who just like what we do: cooking, helping people write resumes, taking people to appointments, interpreting for legal appointments, and helping residents find jobs.

In 2013 we have kept up a constant pace. The most notable trend is that more and more of our residents come from immigration detention centers where they are detained and must prove that they came to the United States because of credible fear in their country. The persecution is varied: from a brutal dictatorship in Eritrea to domestic violence that the police can't control in Honduras. We also continue to receive residents with medical needs. These are immigrants who have become homeless due to injuries and illnesses. We have been following 3 people who are under hospice care in 2013, and we have admired the fabulous collaboration we have with Hospice Austin. Casa is a rich and varied place. We welcome you to come by for a visit!



Jennifer and Casa staff member at ex-resident's Norma's restaurant



Jennifer with residents at an Eritrean wedding

Posada Esperanza Update:

Patti McCabe, Director

Ten years ago Casa Marianella opened Posada Esperanza with its first house designed especially to serve immigrant mothers and their children. In the last 10 years we have gone from serving 30 women and children a year to serving over 100 women and children a year. Our one house has grown to three houses. We started this project with four bedrooms for families and now we are able to fill eleven bedrooms each night with 35 women and children in need of a safe home. Now on Posada Esperanza's cul de sac a bustling community of families finds refuge from crisis and difficulty.

A broad and beautiful community of support has helped Posada Esperanza to grow and today this dynamic and generous community helps care for the families and lift them up toward their goals. We started Posada Esperanza with a couple of dozen community volunteers and now nearly 200 community volunteers provide over 1,000 hours of service each year. We are able to serve the individual needs of our guests because the community has grown their efforts and generosity as we have grown our capacity for families. Every hour of effort and every dollar donated makes a difference in the lives of women and children who are striving to reach their dreams. Thank you to all of you for being a part of Posada Esperanza's 10 years of service to families.

Posada kids playing on the playground



Posada's Director Patti stands with 3 Somali ladies

Patti on Gables Day at Posada Esperanza



Casa Marianella: Resident and House Stories

Casa Hosts its First Wedding, Eritrean Style!

by Hannah Willingham, Casa Staff

Casa Marianella and Posada Esperanza celebrated the union of ex-residents Semre and Senait. The ceremony was a delight and the sunlight shined beautifully upon Gunter Street's friends and family. The bride and groom displayed their commitment to each other and their dreams for their new life together here in America in true Eritrean style. A feast of traditional food was served, and happy friends and family were all smiles when the Eritrean dance party started. Casa Marianella is extremely grateful to have hosted their first wedding, and wish Semre and Senait and their daughter Eldana a life full of health and happiness!



From Nepal to Texas: Anju's Family Reunion

by Melissa Buhrt, Casa Staff

Anju arrived at Casa Marianella in 2009. I remember seeing her worried face as she entered our doors and I welcomed her to her new, temporary home. She sat in the office quiet, reserved. As now I have had the pleasure of knowing Anju for four years, I would never again describe her as quiet. Anju knows no stranger and will happily strike up a conversation with anyone. She has boundless energy and has a spirit of giving to others that is just as contagious as her smile. Through her time at Casa Marianella, Anju served as mentor to many Nepali residents and forged friendships with other residents from all over the world, helping them to navigate life in the United States. Now, we fast forward to 2013, Anju has made a new life in Houston and in September was happily reunited with her two sons, Prabin and Prashant after over four years. Both boys are now adjusting to life in Texas, very far Nepal, but close to home as they are again with their mother.



Norma's El Mana: A Business Owner's Path

Former resident Norma Flores was pregnant with her daughter Isela when she stayed at Casa for 3 months 18 years ago. Now she's a restaurant business owner of El Mana Taqueria y Fruteria and a proud mother! Go try Norma's tacos and raspados!

The Mulugeta Family

by Keith Elliston, Casa Volunteer

The Mulugeta Family has a lot to be thankful for in 2013, as they prepare to celebrate their 2nd Christmas in America. Mulugeta, Eden, and their three young boys arrived in South Texas in early 2012 after a long and difficult trip from their home country of Eritrea. Shortly after arriving to the US, they welcomed their fourth son into their family and spent a few months in shelters before arriving at Casa Marianella. God was at work in their lives and in the lives of local Austinites, including my own family who have the privilege to call Mulugeta, Eden and their boys our close friends.

Families around Austin helped this family with housing, transportation, food, and basic needs. As word spread of Eden's amazing gift as a cook, she began hosting Ethiopian cooking classes around Austin. This summer the Mulugeta family signed a lease on their very first apartment, have a car, and are celebrating the start of two new jobs here in Austin. In addition



© Sean Mathis

to Casa Marianella's staff, many organizations such as The For the City Network, Symantec, Factory Mattress of Texas, Austin Stone Community Church, and countless friends and neighbors all joined hands in welcoming and loving the Mulugeta Family to Austin, Texas, as their new home. Welcome Mulugeta, Eden, Simon, Sador, Senay, and Sirach!

Posada Esperanza: Resident and House Stories

Aisha and Safia's American Dream

by Patti McCabe, Posada Director

Five years ago Aisha and her 12 year old daughter, Safia, came to the United States from South Africa. They came to the U.S. to ask for political asylum for their own safety. They were put in the Hutto Family Detention Center for several months. Upon their release, they came to Posada Esperanza to work on their political asylum case and start a new life. One would think that the fear, instability, and time in detention that they had experienced would have shaken Safia terribly. But Safia came to us sweet, friendly, and determined. Aisha's strong, warm character guided the family. Aisha was clear on her family's goals. Safia would focus on school. Aisha would work hard and use her business skills to support the family. Safia fought for her right to enroll in the 8th grade even though she had missed several months of school due to being detained.

Aisha started working at an Ethiopian restaurant and taking classes to become a Certified Nurse Assistant. When Aisha and Safia moved out of Posada they were on their way to winning their political asylum. They rented an apartment with another African woman. Aisha was working in home health care and Safia was excelling in school. In the years since they moved out of Posada,

they have stayed focused on their goals and have made outstanding achievements. Aisha now works two jobs. In the mornings she works in home health care and in the evenings she works for the State mental health services. She has bought a car and a house. Safia's focus on her academics has paid off as well. Safia graduated high school with honors and was offered a full scholarship to the University of Houston. She is now in her first semester in the honor's program majoring in bio technology. Aisha shines with pride for her and her daughter's accomplishments. And at Posada we feel proud to have taken just one step with this family along their long and outstanding journey.



Resident Perla: A Portrait of Strength and Love

by Katie Scheidler, Posada Staff

Resident Perla lives at Posada with her seven-year-old son, Emiliano. As a single immigrant mother, the day-to-day tasks in Perla's life already present significant challenges, but she has also had to learn how to take care of a child with special needs in this environment. Every day Perla fights for her son, learns his rights, and where to press for more help. She reads aloud her books about children with disabilities, both to practice English and to learn more about how to raise her child. Her devotion to her son, no matter the difficulties placed in her path, illuminates her strength as a mother.



Rosa and her family doing great 8 years after leaving Posada

Former Resident Karen: Superstar Mom

by Casey Quinlan, Posada Staff

Karen is a single mom of five children who lived at Posada for several months, and during that time she demonstrated her incredible ability to maintain positivity and determination through all obstacles. She is full of generosity, humor, and spunk, and her parenting skills are nothing short of impressive, as she is able not only to somehow manage the basic needs of five children on her own—an impressive feat in its own right—but also to attend to their higher-level needs by being actively involved in their academic and moral education. At Posada, she read with her kids every night before they went to sleep, and she modeled for them the life of an ethical, compassionate person with loads of integrity.



She is a beautiful person inside and out, and all of her children have taken after their mother in that regard. We miss her greatly at Posada, but we are so happy for her and wish her and her precious niños all the best in the future.



Ex-resident Cecilia's daughter graduates from elementary school!

We're very proud of this amazing family!

Casa Marianella and Posada Esperanza Staff 2013-2014



Casa Marianella Staff 2013-2014

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Front row- Omar Navarro, Eric Ashkenas, Erin Birney, Laurel Gray, Adarsh Bagrodia Back row- Joshua Collier, Mercedes Peña, Paula Blaha, Jackie Chiofalo, Jennifer Long, Hector Kuhn Naranjo, Hannah Willingham, Jennan Sliman, Lupita Dominguez, Kelly Mann (not pictured Melissa Buhr)



Posada Esperanza Staff 2013-2014

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Patti McCabe, Katie Scheidler, Ellen Jones, Marisa Joyce, Casey Quinlan



The Border Awareness Experience: New Staff visits El Paso

by Lupita Dominguez, Casa Staff member

The new staff members of Casa Marianella and Posada Esperanza journeyed to El Paso to partake in a Border Awareness Immersion program hosted by our sister shelter, Annunciation House. Staff members had the opportunity to attend a few sentencing Federal Court hearings, learn about the challenges and hurdles of navigating the path to legalization and citizenship at the Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services, meet Border Patrol agents by the border fence, listen to the stories of Mexican asylum seekers fleeing impunity and violence, and listen to Molly Malloy, an expert on Mexican media, the drug war, and border issues. Experiences such as this serve to add dimension and perspective to the work that is done at Casa and Posada. We would like to extend an enormous thank you to the A-House staff and residents for welcoming us into their home and the presenters for challenging and enriching our ideas and opinions.

Irenée: The Portrait of a Rwandan Artist

by Eric Ashkenas, Casa Staff Member

Irenée is an artist. Although, when he fled Rwanda he did not yet know it. He remembers drawing pictures on the chalk board in grade school, before he was drafted to the army at age 15. The next eighteen years of mandatory military service would leave no space for art.

Here at Casa Marianella, Irenée blossomed, transforming Casa with his colors. Wielding a paintbrush for the first time, Irenée went to work on Casa Marianella's new mural, a project conceived by long-time community member, Francisco Chavez. Inspired by Francisco's vision, Irenée painted a "Peace Tree" whose branches carry the faces of Cesar Chaves, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi. He also painted a panel depicting his homeland and his people.

But Irenée didn't stop there. He erected a monument to the Rwanda Genocide. Standing over six feet tall, and made entirely out of the materials at hand, the monument depicts the three tribes of Rwanda uniting to burn weapons of war, with a dove rising out of the flames.

Now, Irenée is teaming up with staff member Addy Bagrodia, and painting the undersides of skateboards for Addy's new company Hanuman Board Co. (visit www.facebook.com/hanumanboards).

Irenée is already well on his way to realizing his dream of becoming a professional artist. "I think something is inside me," says Irenée, "I have to take it out."



Casa Marianella Immigration Legal Services

Expands Its Services

So far this year, Casa Marianella Immigration Legal Services (CMILS) has already provided more than 300 free legal consultations to residents, ex-residents, and community members living under the poverty line. We have assisted many individuals with a variety of immigration matters – ranging from major cases for U visas, T visas, VAWA, Asylum, Withholding and Convention Against Torture, to other matters, including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), family petitions, applications for green cards, and applications for work permits.

This fall, CMILS expanded its capacity with the arrival of recent University of Texas Law School graduate, Megan Sheffield, who joined the legal team. Megan received a fellowship through UT Law, generously funded by Julius Glickman and members of the UT Law faculty, to work with CMILS for one year. Megan is housed primarily at the Posada Esperanza shelters for women and children, representing immigrant victims of violence and candidates for special immigrant juvenile status (SIJS). She will be supervised by CMILS attorneys Elise Harriger and Sarah Woelk.

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.

ALICE KLEBERG REYNOLDS MEYER FOUNDATION

Since its inception in 1965, the Texas Bar Foundation has awarded more than \$14 million in grants to law-related programs. Supported by members of the State Bar of Texas, the Texas Bar Foundation is the nation's largest charitably-funded bar foundation.



Casa Marianella Lawyers from the left: Megan Sheffield, Sarah Woelk, and Elise Harringer



Mujeres forjando comunidad y líderes

For over six years, Spanish speaking immigrant women from around Austin have attended the Job Preparedness course at Casa Marianella titled "Preparación Para Conseguir Trabajo." The six-week-long women's course, designed and implemented by Arely Sulvarán-Achenbach, has graduation expectations set at 5 out of 6 of the 2 hour, once a week classes. Drawing from the popular education model, the objective of the course is to increase self-esteem and empower women through information and preparation when looking for work. The course covers topics ranging from domestic worker rights and sexual harassment to salary negotiation and communication skills. At graduation, the women receive a certificate of completion and earn a 2-year CPR and First Aid certification, which gives them a competitive edge in the job market. The course now has about 200 "alumnae."

Mujeres líderes

"We began with the list of Job Readiness Course alumnae from the last six years. We started calling and inviting them to attend leadership and community building workshops" said Rockie Gonzalez. Gonzalez was recruited in October 2012 to help expand the already successful women's program. "So many of the women I spoke to were so excited to have a reason to get back together and expressed the utmost gratitude to Arely. Many said their lives were profoundly changed by taking the course."

From the list of alumnae, about 30 women attended the workshops. They invited the women from Domésticas Unidas in San Antonio to come and speak with them, they organized a community "Posada Navideña" that saw over 100 attendees, and they attended health classes hosted by Rockie Gonzalez and Arely Sulvaran-Achenbach and offered by Nicole Degregg, former Casa Marianella's staff. In April 2013, a group of alumnae, took the leadership training, organized health fairs, and decided to come together and formally organize their own group called MISMA.

MISMA stands for Mujeres Inspiradas en Sueños, Metas y Acciones (Women Inspired in



Dreams, Goals, and Actions). "Misma" also means "same" and sends a message of equality. The core organizers of MISMA are a handful of alumnae empowered by education to maintain the support they found in new friendships, community, and the discovery of their voices.

"Para mi en lo personal ser miembro de MISMA me llena de gran motivación para luchar contra tanta injusticia y maltrato que tenemos como inmigrantes. Como mujeres, es tiempo que se hagan valer nuestros derechos," dice miembro Magdalena Alvarez. Miembro Dulce Garcia dice: "El propósito de ésta organización es poder ayudar a otras personas a defender sus derechos como ser humano, de no ser humilladas en los trabajos domésticos ni en cualquier otro trabajo digno".

MISMA is in the process of becoming a member of the National Domestic Workers Alliance, planning fundraising events, organizing the 2nd annual community Posada Navideña, and training to become instructors of a Salary Negotiation and Communication workshop. Their workshop has already been requested in San Antonio and the women of MISMA are leaping forward to become leaders of the immigrant community, Rockie Gonzalez is honored to be working with these women and to be a supportive role in anything they want to accomplish. They are building the community they want, in a way they see fit, and most importantly, they are making new friends, and finding love and support in their organizing efforts.

Volunteer Spotlights

Casa and Posada are so grateful for the hundreds of volunteers who donate their time and talent to keep our houses running! Thank you everyone for your time and efforts and endless support. To volunteer, email us at volunteer@casamarianella.org.



John Prudhomme: Handyman Extraordinaire

by Casey Quinlan, Posada Staff

John Prudhomme has been volunteering his time and talent at Posada Esperanza since April, and in that time he has done everything from repairing toilets and washing machines to tackling water damage to making our office more secure with a new kind of locking system. He was looking for a way to give back to the community for the good life he feels he has, eventually finding Posada Esperanza's posting online saying we were looking for a handyman volunteer. He came in for a volunteer orientation, and since then, we have been able to call on him for all of our maintenance needs, and he always comes through. Any home needs regular maintenance, but a home with so many energetic niños living in it is even more in need of some TLC. Our staff does not have much expertise in maintaining a home, and to hire someone every time we have an issue would be impossibly expensive. John is an invaluable addition to our Posada family and one of the kindest, humblest people alive, and the families and staff at Posada love and appreciate him very much!



Armed with plants, seeds, tools, and a passion for a more sustainable Austin, the Green Corn Project completely renovated our grounds by planting fall seasonable vegetables and herbs. They will be harvested to help feed the residents of Casa Marianella as well as beautify our home!



The Sigma Lambda Gamma National Sorority at UT baked and decorated cupcakes for our residents!

Gables Day at Posada Esperanza!

by Patti McCabe, Posada Director

Can you imagine 100 volunteers from Gables Residential squeezing into the three houses of Posada Esperanza ready to work all day long to fix up and beautify our homes for families? With precise coordination and planning, 100 hard working volunteers, and a huge array of talents, the employees of Gables Residential made it happen. They painted, repaired, landscaped, and beautified every inch of our houses. When the children came back to the houses at the end of the day they squealed in delight at the sight of the new sandbox and play house. When the women came back to the houses they said that it looked like a fancy hotel. Thank you Gables for treating us so well, for dedicating your time, talents, and resources to the families of Posada Esperanza.



Students by day, S.E.R.V.ing by late afternoon

by Eleanor Allain, S.E.R.V.E. Austin Leader

S.E.R.V.E. Austin is a campus ministry organization based in St. Edward's University that has volunteers at sites all over the Austin area serving communities and participating in projects that range from tutoring elementary aged children to working with rehabilitation of the elderly. As St. Edward's students, we are constantly challenged to reach out and become educated about social justice issues in a community and global sense. Here at Casa, we have learned a great deal about the process of immigration and the barriers the residents are faced with every day. Every Monday, through our weekly 3 hour visits, we have gotten to hear the stories of several residents and we have learned of their struggles prior to, during, and after their immigration to the United States. We have grown not only in our knowledge of these issues but also in our ability to step outside our comfort zones and forge relationships with people that we may not otherwise have had the opportunity to get to know. We are very appreciative for the opportunity to serve those at Casa and to work with the great staff here. We will always cherish the memories we have made working at Casa over the course of this semester.



ESL Classes on Gunter Street

by Jennan Sliman, Casa Staff

Casa's ESL program continues to create a space for our residents as well as the members of our community to learn English and gain confidence in their language abilities. For immigrants, whether already settled or newly arrived, quality language education can be an important part of establishing themselves in their new homes. Our goal is to provide immigrants with the language skills necessary to navigate in the U.S., which ultimately allows for a greater potential in advocating for themselves.

In order to be as widely accessible as possible, our program does not require registration or ask for fees. In fact, it is completely run by a devoted team of volunteers that develop their own unique lesson plan in collaboration with their fellow instructors. Casa is extremely fortunate to have such a dedicated corps of intelligent and capable teachers!



Casa Marianella's Collaborative Mural Project:

This spring Casa Marianella has been the site of many creative endeavors spearheaded by our favorite volunteers, artists, and friends! One of the most notable projects is a collaborative mural that features panels painted by some of our residents and artists from the community of Austin. We're so thankful for all of the volunteers who helped bring color and warmth to Gunter St!





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

Classes are FREE and open to all and three levels are offered

The Oriental Medicine Clinic:

The clinic is open every Monday and Friday with appointments upon request.

The 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



Don't forget to join us the last Sunday of every month for...

¡CONVIVIO!

From 5:30-7:30 PM

...A big, free, friendly community dinner and celebration at Casa.

Live music, good conversation, and delicious food for all.

¡Nos vemos en Casa Marianella!

The Casa/Posada Staff

Emergency Shelter Directors

Jennifer Long

Erin Birney

Eric Ashkenas

Emergency Shelter Staff

Hannah Willingham

Jennan Sliman

Omar Navarro

Jackie Chiofalo

Kelly Mann

Laurel Gray

Lupita Dominguez

Mercedes Peña

Paula Blaha

Hector Kuhn Naranjo

Joshua Collier

Melissa Buhrt

Adarsh Bagrodia

Arely Sulvarán-Achenbach

Rockie Gonzalez

Karen Wolman

Casa Legal Clinic

Elise Harriger

Sarah Woelk

Megan Sheffield

Posada Esperanza Directors

Patti McCabe

Casey Quinlan

Women and Children's Shelter Staff

Katie Scheidler

Marisa Joyce

Ellen Jones

The Casa/Posada Board of Directors

Wayne Krause Yang

Jenny Baldwin

Gabriel Ornelas

Lora Petty

Leti Bueno

Mitzi Eastman

Hannah Bronsnick

Joel Sherzer

Oscar Benavidez

Liz Hastings

Nacho Gallardo

Cindy Wiewel



WISH LIST

All items can be dropped off at Casa Marianella from 9am-7pm daily.
Thank you for taking care of our residents!

Casa Marianella:

Soap and Shampoo
Toothpaste, brushes, razors
Towels and bedding
Men's and Women's clothes
Undergarments and socks

Housewares
Beds and small furniture items
Fresh fruits, veggies, milk, and eggs
Kitchenware

Posada Esperanza:

Jackets (kids and women's sizes)
Diapers and Wipes
Shampoo and Laundry Detergent
Socks

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

Center for Survivors of Torture
 Capital Area Counseling
 CommUnity Care Clinics
 St. Lukes Episcopal Health Charities
 Catholic Charities
 Capital Metro Transit

Churches:

1st Unitarian Universalist Church	Prince of Peace Lutheran
Live Oak Unitarian	First Presbyterian Church
Wildflower Unitarian	Faith Presbyterian Church
Friends Meeting of Austin	St. John's United Methodist
St. Catherine of Siena	University United Methodist
St. Austin Catholic Church	Oak Hill United Methodist
Cristo Rey Catholic Church	Emmanuel United Methodist
St. Thomas More Catholic Church	Congregational Church of
Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic	Littleton
Church	Vox Veniae
St Julia Catholic Church	Austin Stone Community
St. John Neumann Catholic Church	Church
University Catholic Center	Central Christian Church
The Catholic Diocese of Austin	National Christian Foundation
St. Matthews Episcopal Church	
St. David's Episcopal Church	
St. James Episcopal Church	
St. George's Episcopal Church	

Groups:

Lola Wright Foundation
 Austin Community Foundation
 The City of Austin
 A Glimmer of Hope
 Travis County Women's Law Foundation
 Alice Kleburg Reynolds
 AILA
 Texas Bar Foundation
 Austin Bar Foundation
 Donald D. Hanmill Foundation
 Shield-Ayres Foundation
 Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services
 Albert and Marie-Helen Milhomme
 Still Water Foundation
 Trull Foundation
 Treasure City Thrift
 Texas Coffee Traders
 Farmhouse Delivery
 Boggy Creek Farm
 Religious Coalition to Assist the Homeless