

Sin Barreras/Without Barriers 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction

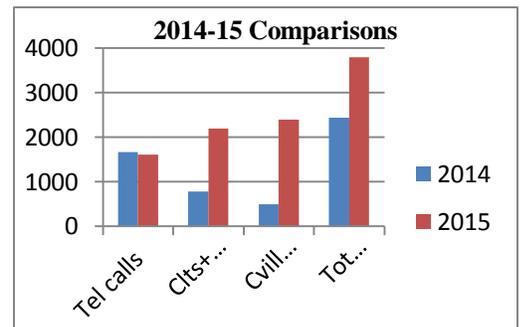
Sin Barreras is a small non-governmental organization offering outreach services to the Charlottesville Hispanic community. It was founded in 2012 by five like-minded Charlottesville residents concerned that Latino immigrants were not benefitting adequately from available social services because of lack of information and language obstacles, and that there was no organization adequately addressing Hispanic issues. It was awarded its 501(c) (3) status in July, 2014. For over three years, it was a completely volunteer organization – no paid staff and no remunerated Board. Only in 2016 will it begin paying a stipend to a part-time office staff. It is composed of a five-member Board, several long-term volunteers, and a dozen or so short-term or project-specific volunteers. This is its first-ever Annual Report.

I. Overview of 2015 Accomplishments

In early 2014, the Board spent four months developing its first Three-Year Strategic Plan to guide day-to-day operations. Three strategic objectives were formulated: 1) improved provision of services — workshops on topics of general interest to the Hispanic community, and one-on-one client services; 2) improved structure and functioning of the young organization; and 3) improved outreach to like-minded organizations and improved advocacy on immigration issues.

In 2014, Sin Barreras provided direct services to 2,437 people. Fourteen workshops were held, attended by 407 people. Direct services were provided to 127 clients in translation, notarizing, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and others. We hosted a Help Fair for Charlottesville social agencies, as well as the *Cville Sabroso* festival; and we responded to 1,652 telephone calls. Calendar Year 2015 showed substantial growth in many areas.

- Fourteen workshops or clinics were presented, a third of them assisting the Mexican Consulate to provide a thousand-plus Mexican citizens with official documents.
- One-on-one client services expanded dramatically, 296 people, an increase of 225%.
- A 2015 Help Fair was held for the third year in a row.
- Over 1,600 telephone calls were answered at all hours of the day and night, the heroic effort of our dedicated President.
- For the third year in a row, we co-hosted *Cville Sabroso*, a Hispanic cultural dance and music festival. This year our attendance was five times last year's event, over 2,400 people.
- Not counting *Cville Sabroso*, our total workshop attendees tripled from 658 to 1,898, giving us a total population served of 3,794, an increase of 155%.
- We were successful in achieving institutional recognition by the Board of Immigration Appeals to represent Hispanic clients' rights in U.S. immigration court, and at BIA suggestion we began tracking volunteer hours, and achieved 1,718 in six months.
- Also we won our first-ever grant from the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation.



I. Accomplishment Detail

Workshops

In 2015, workshops of Hispanic interest continued to be a significant activity for Sin Barreras. As last year, we offered a total of fourteen events, this year with 1,648 attendees. Five of these events were ones we facilitated for the Mexican Consulate – which offers the convenience of processing Mexican government papers without the need for hundreds of transportation-limited people to travel to the Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C. Over 1,200 people benefitted from this service in 2015. More “traditional” S.B. workshops on health, DACA, legal issues, etc. were fewer than last year: with limited personnel, we focused on topics of highest importance to our largest population.

Help Fair

The Help Fair is another way Sin Barreras serves the Charlottesville Hispanic population. Twenty-five organizations and health service providers participated in this year’s Fair. Approximately 250 people attended, about the same as in 2014. Based on evaluations submitted by the Fair’s service providers, the number of attendees who visited the tables or participated in the health screenings were:

- Ten agency tables had 15-25 visitors, including glaucoma screening;
- Twenty-nine cardiovascular and diabetes screenings took place;
- Thirty-four visitors to the Department of Justice, Emergency Communication Center, and Vision screenings took place;
- Fifty visitors to the Region Ten & LAJC tables;
- Sixty-five visitors to the Wells Fargo bank table;
- A hundred visitors to the ‘C’ville After Hours’ dental table.
- We will again offer this opportunity for increased Hispanic/social service contact in 2016.



Telephone responses

Sin Barreras responded to over 1,600 telephone calls in 2015, an average of 130 a month, or four-and-a-half every day of the year. Some related to office business described in this report. The most frequent calls were for general SB information, 33%, followed by Mexican and Salvadoran Consulate calls, and legal and DACA appointments. Other calls were emergency requests and took place late in the evening. One was a Mexican mother calling in tears to say that her son had been taken from a Court appearance directly to jail, but she didn’t know where he had been taken. Using our frequent contacts with the police, SB was able to locate him, assure his mother he was well, and that he would be back with her in four days. Another late evening request was a Charlottesville

Guatemalan who told Sin Barreras her brother had been arrested by immigration authorities in Arlington, taken somewhere unknown, and could SB help find him. Sin Barreras was able to locate him – jailed in Maryland, clarify his immigration status, and offer to help the sister travel to Maryland to post bail. We also gave her the name of a legal aid organization working in that state which helped her work on his case.

One-on-One Clients served

One of Sin Barreras' most impact-filled activities is the services we provide one-on-one to clients. Three topics formed the bulk of our activities, representing 60% of total office visits. We had 71 people provided low-cost legal advice; 52 people were offered assistance in preparing paperwork for Consulate visits; and 54 people were assisted filling out their DACA applications. In this last category, it is remarkable but true that every one of these DACA candidates were eventually approved, 100% success. See Section III for real-life stories of the impact of DACA approval on the lives of these young people.



Though the seventy-plus legal consultations provided by SB's practicing attorney covered many topics, among the most important quality of life-changes have been the following. In 2015 several SB clients were spared jail time for second offenses of driving-without-a-license, thereby avoiding the vastly enhanced risk of deportation that comes with jail time. Several custody cases referred to Sin Barreras from Legal Aid Justice Center resulted in mothers being awarded near-exclusive custody of young children, protecting them against the non-care of wayward fathers. Numerous clients were assisted in preparing Powers of Attorney. This helped them create a "Plan B" for child care in case of Immigration raids leading to summary deportation. From time to time we assisted Workman's Compensation cases, providing advice and referral for Hispanics injured on the job who were not being treated fairly by their employer.

Cville Sabroso

This year's *Cville Sabroso* festival was a great success. Compared to 2014's approximately three hundred passers-by, this year we counted 2,400 attendees. The day was kicked off by a welcome speech from one of the City Councilmen, Bob Fenwick, and was a festive day. Attendees were a diverse audience: Latinos and non-Latino, families with young children, students, and people of varying ages.



Diverse nationalities performed their countries' music in a host of colorful costumes. The audience was



completely engaged, dancing to the music, clapping, and singing along. Abundant ethnic food was available from Hispanic-owned food providers. S.B. UVA volunteers sat under a large tent and offered kids' face-painting, wall writing and other diversions. We look forward to an even more entertaining event in 2016.

Board of Immigration Appeals Certification

From its inception, Sin Barreras recognized immigration is one of the most important issues facing its Hispanic clients. With our Board member attorney's pro-bono time limited by the demands of his own practice, Sin Barreras wanted to expand its capacity to offer immigration advice beyond the limitations of only one adviser. The United States Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA), the guiding authority of the U.S. immigration system, has a well-established mechanism to "certify" non-profit organizations such as Sin Barreras to offer such advice with non-attorney staff. Midway through the year, Sin Barreras applied for and received BIA recognition as an NGO authorized to engage in such activities in Charlottesville. The second step—now underway—is for several Sin Barreras volunteers, under the tutelage of our Board- lawyer, to become "accredited" with the BIA and thereby embark on this expanded service. We are hopeful the first of us will be accredited by mid-year.

CACF grant award

In mid-2015, it became clear a major constraint to Sin Barreras' growth was logistical: there are only so many hours one person on her own can answer the telephone. As we described in a grant proposal to the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation, if Sin Barreras was going to expand the number of our clients and to widen the scope of activities, we were in need of someone to share our President's work load. For 2016 we requested a small grant to fund a part-time, paid office worker. We are pleased this proposal was approved by CACF, and the new person will assume responsibilities in March—expanding Sin Barreras office hours by over four times.

Police Outreach

In September, the Charlottesville Chief of Police, Captain Tim Longo, re-started his "Know Your Rights" campaign, hosting a Town Hall meeting on the topic. He asked Sin Barreras to promote the event to the Hispanic community so that Hispanic needs would be heard. He requested that Sin Barreras provide translation, which SB did with pleasure. In that event, Chief Longo distributed a Know your Rights card on dealing with a police stop (in Spanish and English), and he included Sin Barreras' telephone number on that card as a resource (as potential interpreter.) The success of that Town Hall has Sin Barreras planning a follow-on event in February 2016.



Advocacy: the VACALAO event



Late in the year Sin Barreras hosted a presentation of a colleague organization called the Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations. VACALAO has a multi-year strategic plan focused on a “Driving Virginia Forward” campaign lobbying for driving licenses for Virginians regardless of immigration status -- as was the case prior to 9/11/2001. This is a goal Sin Barreras fully supports. Taking into account the pattern of other workshops, our expected attendance was about fifty. Instead, our attendance was **345!** We filled the hall seating and had over 125 people standing for

the hour-and-a-half presentation. This was our first major foray into Advocacy and it was clear the Hispanic community is eager to engage the Virginia legislature to move this issue forward. We will be working with VACALAO on this topic throughout 2016.

Volunteer service

Volunteers are the backbone of our organization. Total volunteer hours for the second six months of the year were 1,718. Using the Virginia standard of \$24.90 per hour¹, the in-kind value of volunteer time is \$47,500. Board members and others are able to offer 40 or 50 or 60 hours a month. We have a cadre of individuals who offer between ten and fifteen hours a month. And we have a dozen or so, many of them University of Virginia students, who because of their academic commitments are able to offer single digit time commitments per month. We are enriched by each of these contributors: Sin Barreras is able to offer the services we do only because of these people. And we are constantly on the look-out for more volunteers: each brings special skills we draw on to respond to many different needs. Visit us at Sinbarrerascville.com to learn more.



III. Three Human Stories of Sin Barreras

Danilo [not his real name] and his sister came from Mexico as little children. They grew up in Charlottesville and were attending Albemarle High School when the DACA law became effective in 2013. Excited by the possibility of becoming legally recognized, they came to Sin Barreras for assistance in filling out their DACA application—one of Sin Barreras’ first DACA clients as it turned out. Danilo was eventually awarded his Deferred Action status, giving him the right to work legally and to apply for a driver’s license. He applied to Piedmont Virginia Community College but had to pay out-of-state tuition his first semester – three times the cost of in-state tuition – regardless of the fact he had lived in Charlottesville all his life. When the Legal Aid Justice Center won a class action

¹ <http://www.vaservice.org/go/volunteer/statistics/2014>

suit challenging Virginia’s treatment of DACA students in this fashion, Danilo was able to pay his second semester at in-state tuition rates, easing a tremendous financial burden on his family. He was, in fact, one of the people present when Governor McAuliffe signed the bill that allowed DACA recipients in-state tuition. Danilo is now a junior at PVCC, continuing to do well in school, has gotten a better-paying job now that he has legal permission to work, and hopes to start his own business when he graduates from PVCC.

[Translated handwritten testimonial] *My name is Rosa I. I am from Mexico. I came to the United States when I was 13 and since then I have worked very hard to survive in this country. At 15, I met Mrs. Fanny at the church. She is like an angel to everyone. When the DACA law came out, she told me she could help me analyze my situation and find out if I could take advantage of it. For me, that was almost impossible to believe; I didn’t take her comments very seriously [but] she kept insisting for almost a year to the point that I decided to go and talk to her about my case. Sin Barreras helped me read the application and send the necessary documents at no charge, and in three months the approval came and I was so emotional—and I still am—unable to believe it. ... [I]f it hadn’t been for the insistence of Mrs. Fanny I wouldn’t be as well as I am today. Today my life has improved: I am about to finish my GED [high school equivalency certificate], [and] I am working in Belks, a store I couldn’t have imagined I would ever work in. I also have my driver’s license. Thanks to organizations like Sin Barreras and people like Fanny, they make a great difference in the lives of others. Many thanks!*

Keyri is a vivacious Salvadoran who came to the U.S. when she was eight. Though she left El Salvador as a third grader she had to be placed in third grade again in Charlottesville because of her lack of English; but her mother, a teacher herself— along with her elementary school teachers —worked hard to catch Keyri up. By the time Keyri entered Albemarle High School she was an “A” student. She was an early acceptor of the DACA opportunity and, assisted by Sin Barreras in her application, was awarded DACA status in 2014. In high school she volunteered regularly at a local food clinic as well as frequently taking time during her study hall breaks to tutor other Hispanic children like her who faced language obstacles. Driven by the dream of college and because of good grades and a sparkling personality, she was accepted by every college she applied to. An energetic self-starter, she was awarded a \$30,000 scholarship from the Emily Couric Leadership Forum and is attending a private in-state university. When she graduates in three years, she wants to become an English-as-a-Second Language teacher to help others in language acquisition and adapting to the U.S. as she has been able to. For a for a local press report of this dynamic young lady, also see <http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/20763-2015-couric-award/>



Credit: Andrew Shurtleff / The Daily Pro

IV. Conclusion

Sin Barreras has had gratifying success in 2015: substantially increasing its client served, growing in organization maturity, becoming a more articulate voice of Hispanic issues in central Virginia, and becoming better known and respected throughout the Charlottesville community, both Hispanic and Anglo. We are enormously grateful to our volunteers and to our new and on-going donors, and we look forward to 2016 with vibrant enthusiasm and dedication.