

Sin Barreras/Without Barriers 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction

Sin Barreras is a small NGO offering services to the immigrant, mostly Hispanic community. Founded in 2012 by five Charlottesville residents concerned that immigrants were not availing of social services because of language obstacles, and that there was no organization adequately addressing Hispanic immigrant issues, it was awarded its 501(c)(3) status in July, 2014. After four years as a completely volunteer organization, in 2016 it began paying its first part-time office person, now in 2017 up to three part-time staff. It consists of a five-member Board, three long-term volunteers, and two dozen short-term volunteers. This is its third Annual Report.

I. Executive Summary

Sin Barreras' second Three-Year Strategic Plan focuses on: 1) improved service provision — workshops on topics of interest to the Hispanic immigrant community and one-on-one client services; 2) improved functioning; and 3) improved advocacy with like-minded organizations.

In response to 2017's increasingly anti-immigrant environment, Sin Barreras provided direct services to 3,600 people and indirect services to another 4,400. Summarizing:

- Individual clients served in 2017 were 494, up by 66% from the previous year.
- Eighteen workshops were presented to over 1,400 attendees in 2017. Fifty percent of these were Mexican citizens renewing documents through SB's ongoing relationship with the Mexican Consulate.
- A 2017 Help Fair was carried out with 25 service providers assisting 105 attendees.
- We responded to almost 1,700 telephone calls and walk-ins, an increase of 60% from 2016.
- As in 2016 we co-hosted *Cville Sabroso*, Charlottesville's only Latin American dance and music festival. Approximately 4,000 people attended, an increase of over 60% from 2016.
- During the year, we assisted over 250 families preparing Power of Attorney papers so that if parents are suddenly deported, their children—many of them U.S. citizens—won't become legal orphans.
- We were successful in attracting the pro bono services of two immigration lawyers, and with them our two "accredited representatives" continued to assist client with immigration applications. Compared to 2016, immigration consultations almost tripled, and total legal/immigration consultations increased four-fold.
- Total clientele including indirect beneficiaries augmented by *Cville Sabroso* and outreach in colleague-hosted events summed to over 8,000 people.
- Volunteer time was up enormously: over 7,900 hours in 2018, an increase of 65%.
- We won a grant from the *Bama Works Foundation* to continue paying one part-time employee, and we received significant donations from three Charlottesville-area churches and two \$5,000 grants from generous private donors. We also prepared a proposal to the City and Albemarle County for an operational support grant—with a decision expected in February 2018.
- Organizational assets grew 25% during the year, from \$27,780 to \$34,900.



II. Accomplishment Detail

Workshops and Other Community Events

Workshops focused on the Hispanic immigrant community continued as a significant activity for Sin Barreras in 2017, our hosting eighteen such events for over 1,400 attendees, an increase of 25% from 2016. Four of these were facilitated for the Mexican Consulate – offering 700 people the opportunity to process their Mexican government documents without an all-day trip to Washington, D.C. Three events attended by 225 people explored “*Know Your Rights*” issues. Another seven were on other topics of interest to the community.



KYR Workshop

Another success was our co-hosting with the Legal Aid Justice Center four workshops to help people prepare for short-notice deportation by signing Powers of Attorney. These workshops benefitted 250 people who signed more than 500 documents to create a legally enforceable care plan for their children in case of such a terrifying eventuality.

This year’s Help Fair was less attended than last year’s, we think because of scheduling conflicts, with 25 service providers reaching 105 attendees. Among the services delivered were free eyeglasses, glaucoma and eye pressure screening, cardiovascular and diabetes screening, and audiology screening.

As in 2016, we also participated in events put on by partner entities: the Charlottesville Festival of Culture, the Southwood “Back to School Fair,” the Jefferson School “Day Soiree,” and others, providing Sin Barreras information to 500 people.

Services: Telephone Responses and Walk-ins

Sin Barreras responded to nearly 1,700 telephone calls in 2017, an increase of over 60% from 2016. It is our priority to respond to and address each call received, most often within 24-48 hours.

Services: One-on-One Clients

One of Sin Barreras' most impact-filled activities is the work we do with individual clients. Up from 2016’s 295 consultations, in 2017 we conducted over 500 appointments for more than 325 individual clients.

Legal consultations provided by SB pro bono attorneys to 161 individual clients covered many “big” topics: detention, bond hearings, landlord issues, job discrimination, custody cases, driving offenses, others. But we also brought about many “small” quality-of-life improvements too. One Saturday it was helping a desperate woman prepare her asylum application two days before her court date when she had been turned down by a dozen other lawyers, and her case being successfully accepted by the judge. Another were two women victims, one of whose cases had never been followed up by her previous lawyer and the other, the revival of her five-year ‘cold-case’ application. Over a holiday weekend, another was our pro-bono lawyer preparing an emergency request responding to a frantic mother’s appeal to get her son released from jail in a case of mistaken identity in a neighborhood shoot-out, and later getting the son’s

record cleared of all charges. Another was a new-to-the-area SB volunteer who had lost contact with her jailed nephew five years previously whom Sin Barreras was able to locate in Texas, allowing her to re-establish contact and find out how he was doing. Our call log is filled with such simple – but important! –stories.

Services: Enhanced Immigration

Meanwhile, immigration is perhaps *the* most important issues facing most of the Charlottesville-area immigrant community. In 2016 Sin Barreras received USG recognition to engage in such activities with two specially trained non-lawyer volunteers called “accredited representatives.” In 2017 with the arrival of a second immigration lawyer, Sin Barreras now has four pro bono volunteers capable of representing Hispanic immigrant clients to the US Customs and Immigration Service. This year, we tripled our immigrations consultations, 167 clients compared to last year’s 58. See Section III for description of notable successes in this area.



Citizenship!

Services: Language Tutoring and Advocacy Training

A new service this year was one-on-one language training for immigrants who want to integrate better into U.S. society. Topics included tutoring kids with homework assignments, general English fluency, and others. UVA student volunteers from Madison House and Latinx and Migrant Aid carried out this training which was evaluated by all as very useful and will continue in 2018. Another innovation was community advocacy training for a dozen or so: role playing how to engage in effective lobbying with legislators, as below.

Advocacy: the Virginia Legislature, the City, and Albemarle County

The Virginia legislature convenes in January each year. As in 2016, this year Sin Barreras organized a “Visit-Your-Legislator Day,” and over fifty people from Charlottesville accompanied Board members in presenting priorities that impact Hispanic immigrants to our lawmakers.

We were also involved throughout the year in behind-the-scenes interactions with the Charlottesville City Council and the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors regarding the publication of various immigrant-friendly statements of principles. As an outgrowth of the City’s response to the neo-Nazi demonstrations of the summer, we are engaging with the City Council in its plan to create Civilian Review Board to provide oversight to the Charlottesville Police Department.



Cville Sabroso

Cville Sabroso

The *Cville Sabroso* festival was another great success this year, with 4,000 attendees, an increase of 60% from last year. Inaugurated by two members of the Charlottesville City Council, it was a beautiful day for music and fun: for Latinos and non-Latinos, families with young children, students, and people of all ages. Different nationalities performed their countries’ music and



dance dressed in colorful national costumes. The large audience was captivated: dancing, clapping and singing along, particularly as the event wore on into the evening. Abundant ethnic food came from Hispanic-owned food providers. Meanwhile, UVA volunteers sat under a large tent and offered crafts and kids' face-painting. *Cville Sabroso* is the only Latin American festival of its kind in central Virginia and shows the richness of Hispanic culture to our wider community. It has also become an integral part of Charlottesville's cultural events calendar. We look forward to similar success in 2018.



Grants

In 2017, Sin Barreras received a grant from the *Bama Works* Foundation to defray part of the cost of Sin Barrera's second part-time employee, the first of whom had begun work in March 2016, allowing us to regularize office hours. During 2017, that grant was supplemented by two generous private donors and three Charlottesville churches such that we were able to hire a third part-timer to respond to the otherwise overwhelming increase in service demands in 2017. While we still operate on a shoe-string budget, we are hopeful that other donors—institutional and private—will come forward when this financing is exhausted in February 2018. We also applied to the Charlottesville City and Albemarle County, recognizing that competition for this grant funding is intense.

Volunteering

Volunteers are the backbone of our organization, and total volunteer hours for the year have surged beyond our wildest expectation. Total hours were 7,904, an increase of over 65% from last year: 650 hours per month! Board members and highly active volunteers offer 40 to 80 hours or more a month. Additionally we have almost thirty other volunteers, many of them UVA students who contribute fewer hours or only during certain periods during the year. Many of these volunteers have increased their volunteer time specifically in response to Trump anti-immigrant policies, for which we are very appreciative. Total



Sin Barreras Board

hours were split two-thirds for Board and high-contribution volunteers, 15% hours for UVA (and other) volunteers providing office-hour support, and 18% for one-off events such as *Cville Sabroso*, the Help Fair, and others. Using the established Virginia in-kind valuation of \$24.90 per hour to quantify this impact, the monetized value of this volunteer contribution was over \$195,000. Sin Barreras is able to offer our services only because of such people: each brings special skills we draw on to respond to many different needs.

Finances

At the start of 2016, Sin Barreras had \$27,800 in accumulated assets (some of it restricted donations.) The year's expenditures were \$56,000 while total service income, grants and donations summed to \$63,150. At the end of the year our assets are \$34,900, 25% more than last December.

III. Human Stories behind Sin Barreras

One of our most satisfying successes is achieving favorable immigration outcomes for our clients; sixteen becoming citizens in 2017, plus others. One was a strapping young groundskeeper with little formal education who needed ten months coaching (and his hard studying!) to pass the citizenship language requirement. Another was a housewife with seven years in the U.S. who never thought she could pass the test or afford the fees. A third was a hotel housekeeper who because of difficulties earlier in her life never thought she could become eligible. Another was a university professor and his professional wife. Additionally, seven minor children immediately became US citizens with their parents' swearing in. A different kind of case was a sixty-year-old grandmother with a complicated visa application to bring her husband to the US as a permanent resident after being separated from him for fifteen years. Yet another is a young violent-crime victim who now will be able to acquire her Green Card and renew her work permit, and five years from now can apply for citizenship. Some of these cases can take twenty hours or more of preparation in order to present letter-perfect applications; others require months of applicant follow-up. Each is an enormously enriching experience for us at Sin Barreras and one of the things that has kept us going during some of the darker days of 2017.

[Translated from Spanish] "After Migration mistakenly denied my husband's [visa] case but gave us an opportunity to appeal and we didn't know where to go [for help], we arrived to Sin Barreras, with the help of Fanny and Fran who gave us all their assistance, even though it wasn't easy to begin; and with their patience and dedication they knew how to carry out the case and it was a great satisfaction for us because, thanks be to God, my husband is now with us. We thank Sin Barreras with all our heart for offering us their help and we will continue recommending them to those who need legal help."

[Translated from Spanish] "I called Fanny Smedile at the Sin Barreras office to request help [with my citizenship application] and got to know Clay (Accredited Representative) who cordially helped me fill out my paperwork with all the requirements. ... During the interview the interviewer recognized that I speak English so he said taking the English test wasn't necessary. ... There were 47 people who obtained citizenship that day [of swearing in.] It was a happy time, and for that reason I thank Sin Barreras, especially Fanny and Clay, for their valuable help and I congratulate them for their excellent service. I also want to add that one of the reasons why I hadn't done this earlier was that I had heard that it was very expensive. But with Sin Barreras' help, I was able to do it. Thank you, Sin Barreras!"

[Translated from Spanish] "I am very thankful to God who put me in contact with Sin Barreras because they got me the lawyer whom I needed. I had a good experience with this lawyer, because he helped us and put me in contact with other people. I would count this as "10 out of 10" because he could resolve my case very quickly. I would recommend him and thanks to Fanny for everything. I've told many people this is a good lawyer. ... I recommend him 100%. It is my first experience but I would say to others [who] don't know what they are doing that they should contact Sin Barreras because Sin Barreras helps the community. With words [of thanks] to the Savior: I am very thankful for this lawyer because he helped me very quickly."

IV. Conclusion

Sin Barreras has had gratifying success in 2017: increasing nearly all of our directly-served clients by 60% in response to the darkening national anti-immigrant environment, while indirectly reaching thousands of others to help them appreciate the Hispanic immigrants' contribution to the US way of life. With the help of important donors, we are now able to

remunerate three part-time staff as we become an even more articulate voice of Hispanic concerns and better known and respected in Charlottesville and central Virginia. We are grateful to our volunteers and to our individual and foundation donors who make our work possible. As we brace ourselves for another difficult year in 2018, we commit to even further dedication to our cause, a better life for all Charlottesville-area immigrants.