

# 2024 IMPACT REPORT

## Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund





## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As the Executive Director of LALDEF, it is my distinct pleasure to present you with our 2024 Impact Report. In 2024, LALDEF celebrated its 20th anniversary, marking a major milestone in our organization's history. This past year was one of great accomplishments and growth, both for our clients and our organization at large.

As our fight for the low-income immigrant community of Mercer County, NJ continues, we remain steadfast in our vision to uplift, educate, and empower all who come through our doors. It is an honor and a privilege to share this past year's accomplishments with you, and we thank you for joining us to reflect upon and celebrate LALDEF's most impactful year yet.

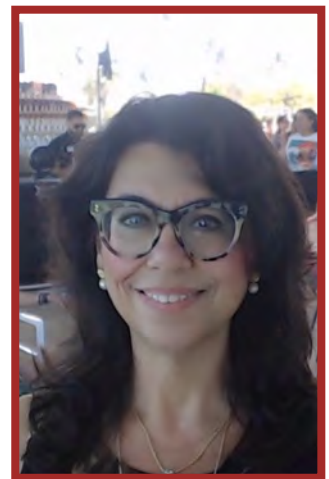
**Cecy Jimenez-Weeast, Executive Director**

## LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

In 2004, LALDEF opened its doors as a beacon of safety, hope, and healing for Mercer County's low-income, immigrant community. Now, 20 years later, our resolve and commitment to our mission have never been stronger. LALDEF's 2024 Impact Report is a testament to the impressive milestones we have achieved together with our community, and we could not be more proud to share a glimpse at this remarkable year with you.

Thank you to our supporters, volunteers, and the wider community for standing alongside us, from our earliest days to the present moment. As we look ahead to the next 20 years, we invite you to join us for every step of this very rewarding journey.

**Sasa Olessi Montaña, President**



# LEGAL SERVICES



LALDEF's Immigration Legal Services department is dedicated to supporting immigrants in Mercer County as they navigate the pathway to permanent status in the United States. As the climate surrounding immigration in the United States continues to evolve, LALDEF remains committed to ensuring that the most vulnerable members of our community can access low-cost legal services.

## We cover...

- Filing of applications for naturalization and citizenship
- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)
- Adjustment of status
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) provisions
- U Visas for victims of crimes
- T Visas for human trafficking victims
- Renewals of green cards and work permits
- Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
- Special Juvenile Status (SPJ)

In 2024, we worked on

**336**

immigration legal cases

In 2024, we provided

**321**

free legal consultations.

# LEGAL SERVICES

## CLIENT STORY



A LALDEF client who became a citizen on June 26, 2024, shared with us the following reflection on her experience with our Legal Services Department in Summer 2024:

"The service was excellent, excellent, excellent.

Whenever I needed to talk to LALDEF Legal Services, excellent. Any doubt I had, she answered me as soon as I asked...sometimes when you are applying for something, you do not know what to expect, but everything was explained to me, and I was able to be very calm.

It is a great organization because they know how to help with exactly what you are looking for."

# MERCER COUNTY AREA COMMUNITY ID CARDS

The Mercer County Area Community ID program was launched in 2011 through the One Community Coalition after identifying the many obstacles members of our community without identification faced. LALDEF partners with community-based organizations such as the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK), the Rescue Mission of Trenton, and the Trenton Psychiatric Hospital to provide IDs to any underserved population in need of identification.

The Community ID program offers residents of Mercer County the opportunity to identify themselves, prove their address and have an emergency contact on file at all times.

The Community ID cards provide access to services at:

- Municipal and social service agencies
- Schools
- Clinics
- Food pantries
- Parks
- Post offices
- Libraries



In 2024, we issued

**3,028**

ID Cards

# FUTURO

## YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAM



LALDEF's FUTURO initiative is a high-impact youth mentoring program for first- and second-generation immigrant high school students. FUTURO provides students with academic support, SAT preparation, college application assistance, mentoring, social support, and community service opportunities.



FUTURO students visiting the University of Pennsylvania

### INTENDED MAJORS INCLUDE

- Political Science
- Mechanical Engineering
- Business
- Economics
- Psychology
- Computer Science
- Accounting
- Nursing
- Medical Imaging & Radiation Sciences
- Biology
- Chemistry

### COLLEGES INCLUDE



# FUTURO

## YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAM



FUTURO students visiting Rowan University

### STUDENT STORY...

When we asked a member of FUTURO Familia about the impact the program had on her and on her student, she reflected:

"I'm from Guatemala, I arrived in Trenton in 2011. I came to LALDEF through a friend, she told me about the program and I ran to get help for my girl. Thank goodness they accepted her and here I am receiving training on how to help my daughter with her studies. Thanks to these workshops I can get help that I did not imagine, everything is possible as long as one is willing to look for it. I think the most significant thing about this program is that it opened the doors for all of us to achieve the opportunities that this country offers."

When asked about the most meaningful part of his experience as a FUTURO program participant, a graduating senior from the FUTURO Class of 2024 reflected:

"My experience with the program was great, there were multiple opportunities to get help with tutors and sessions about college like what to look forward to and what you need to know like aid and scholarships. My most meaningful part with LALDEF was the friendships I made with not only [the Program Coordinator] but with my peers being able to help one another and the friendly environment. [FUTURO] helped with my public speaking, [and] the multiple sessions and activities we did helped me gain [skills and confidence for] speaking in front of a crowd."

### PARENT TESTIMONIAL

# PROMOTING EQUITABLE HEALTHCARE

LALDEF is dedicated to providing the low-income immigrant community of Mercer County, NJ with equitable, accessible, and culturally-appropriate healthcare resources. Through our free healthcare initiatives, we have been able to combat the linguistic barriers, fear, and misinformation which have historically led to poorer health outcomes for the Latino community, including higher mortality rates. In 2024, LALDEF hosted our annual Health Fair, as well as 186 vision screenings, 50 mammograms, and 199 vaccinations.



In 2024, we facilitated

**50**  
MAMMOGRAMS

**186**  
VISION SCREENINGS

**199**  
VACCINATIONS

# PROMOTING EQUITABLE HEALTHCARE

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## HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH HEALTH FAIR



LALDEF Staff at the Hispanic Heritage Month Health Fair on October 12, 2024

LALDEF hosted its third annual Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration and Health Fair on October 12th, 2024. At the event, dozens of community members had the opportunity to connect with **23 participating partner organizations** to learn more about the many available resources in our area. Featured elements of the Health Fair included health screenings, on-site vaccinations, clothing giveaways, resource referrals, and more.

# PROMOTING EQUITABLE HEALTHCARE

## MAMMOGRAM EXTRAVAGANZA EVENT



Mammogram Van at LALDEF's  
Mammogram Extravaganza

On October 31st, 2024, LALDEF teamed up with the Trenton Health Team's NJCEED program to present our Mammogram Extravaganza. This event provided free mammograms to 25 women who reported a family history of breast cancer or who were ages 40 years and older. At the event, clients also had the opportunity to connect with healthcare providers to schedule other types of cancer screenings.

LALDEF offers periodic mammogram screenings throughout the calendar year.

## FREE EYE SCREENINGS

LALDEF, in collaboration with **Project BEST**, continued its free eye screening program throughout 2024. This program provides community members with free eye exams; we have also been able to provide referrals to free glasses for those in need of financial assistance. This year, **186** community members participated in free eye screenings at LALDEF's headquarters, and **59** individuals were referred for free eyeglasses. **This program is offered on the last Monday of each month.**

# CLIENT ADVOCACY



LALDEF's Client Advocates provide our community with hands-on assistance to navigate a variety of concerns, including identification, unemployment, food stamps, housing, and other vital social services.

Cases in which Client Advocates answered questions about driver's licenses, taxes, healthcare, child support, and more:

353

Translations of birth certificates, identification documents, and more:

338

Notarizations of documents to facilitate access to driver's licenses in our community:

147

# ADULT EDUCATION

LALDEF's Adult Education program enhances client quality of life by providing empowerment through education. Our expansive catalogue of course offerings equips our clients with greater knowledge of the English language, leading to improved outcomes in education, employment, and more. Our GED courses play a key role in advancing and furthering client education, while our citizenship courses equip future citizens with the knowledge and skills needed to pass the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) citizenship exam.

## COURSE OFFERINGS

- English as a Second Language (ESL) courses
- General Educational Development (GED) preparation
- Citizenship exam preparation

In 2024, we served

**448**

clients through our  
Adult Education  
Program



"I am from Venezuela. I moved to the United States in 2020 and lived in Miami for 2 years. In 2022 I moved to New Jersey. My family lives in Venezuela and I live with my brother. I did not know English at all. What brings me to LALDEF is to learn English. I have been studying English for 1 year, starting with Level 2L, Level 2R and I am currently studying Level 3L. My experience at LALDEF has been very positive, I felt very welcome from the beginning, my English has advanced, I can express myself better and people can understand me. I would like to tell people that would like to donate to LALDEF to do it because their donation will be very well invested because LALDEF works for a cause and for their mission. I am proof of that."

-LALDEF Adult Education student, in his own words

# LATINAS UNIDAS PROGRAM

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LALDEF's Latinas Unidas program is a support group for Latina women in the Mercer County community. Latinas Unidas members have the opportunity to share and learn about a number of topics relevant to women today, including healthcare, education, financial literacy, and more. In addition to hands-on workshops and educational opportunities, the Latinas Unidas program provides participants with a forum to share resources, goals, and dreams with a community of supportive, like-minded women.



# 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

## 20TH ANNIVERSARY LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

In 2024, LALDEF commemorated its 20th year of service to the low-income immigrant community of Mercer County. This achievement marks a significant milestone in our organization's history, empowering us to reflect on our past, celebrate the present, and prepare for the future. To mark this memorable occasion, LALDEF hosted our 20th Anniversary Legislative Breakfast. This celebration was attended by a number of notable dignitaries, including Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo Onofri and Trenton Mayor Reed Gusciora.

LALDEF was founded in 2004 by a concerned group of citizens in Princeton, NJ in opposition to the growing marginalization of the immigrant community in the wake of 9/11. Now, twenty years later, our commitment to supporting and welcoming New Americans has never been stronger. As we look ahead with gratitude for the next twenty years to come, we thank you, the members of our community, for continuing to make this important work possible.



Marking LALDEF's 20th Anniversary milestone were Chairman of the Board, Pete Taft, Executive Director, Cecy Weeast, President, Sasa Montano, Mercer County Prosecutor, Angelo Onofri and Former Board Development Chair, Karen Ali



Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo Onofri receiving a "Team LALDEF" shirt from LALDEF's Executive Director, Cecy Jimenez-Weeast



Trenton Mayor Reed Gusciora and Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo Onofri



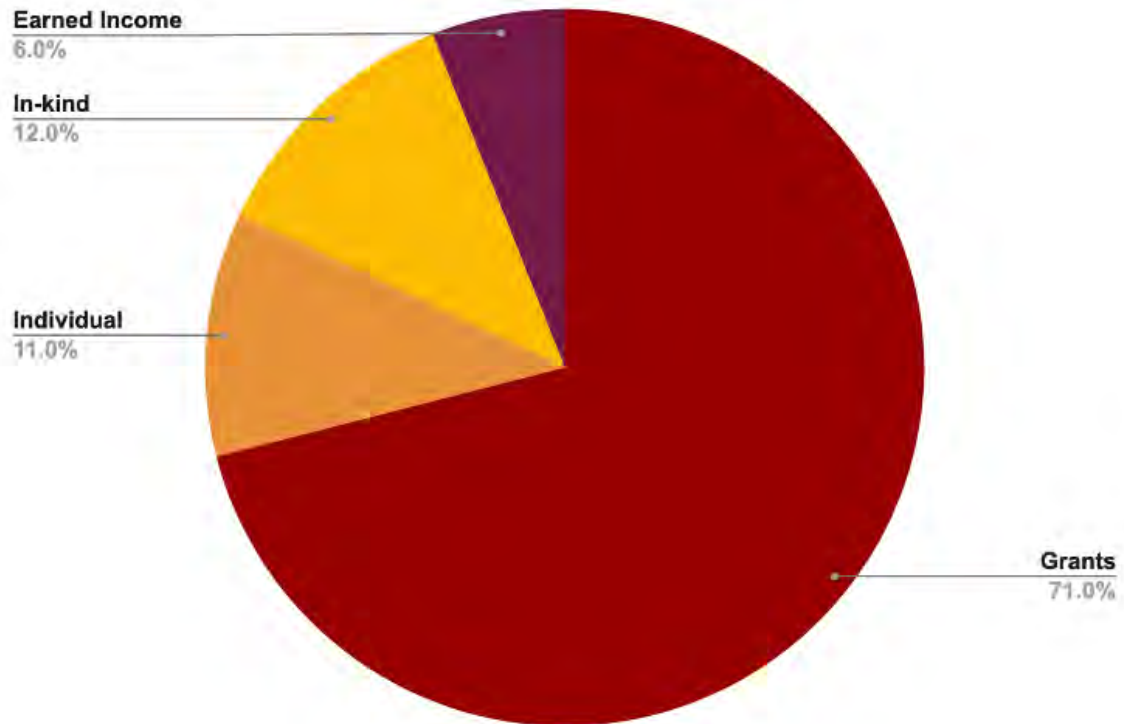
LALDEF was appreciative of its 20th Anniversary Event Sponsors, including the Law Offices of Jason Scott Camilo, LLC, representatives of whom are pictured here.



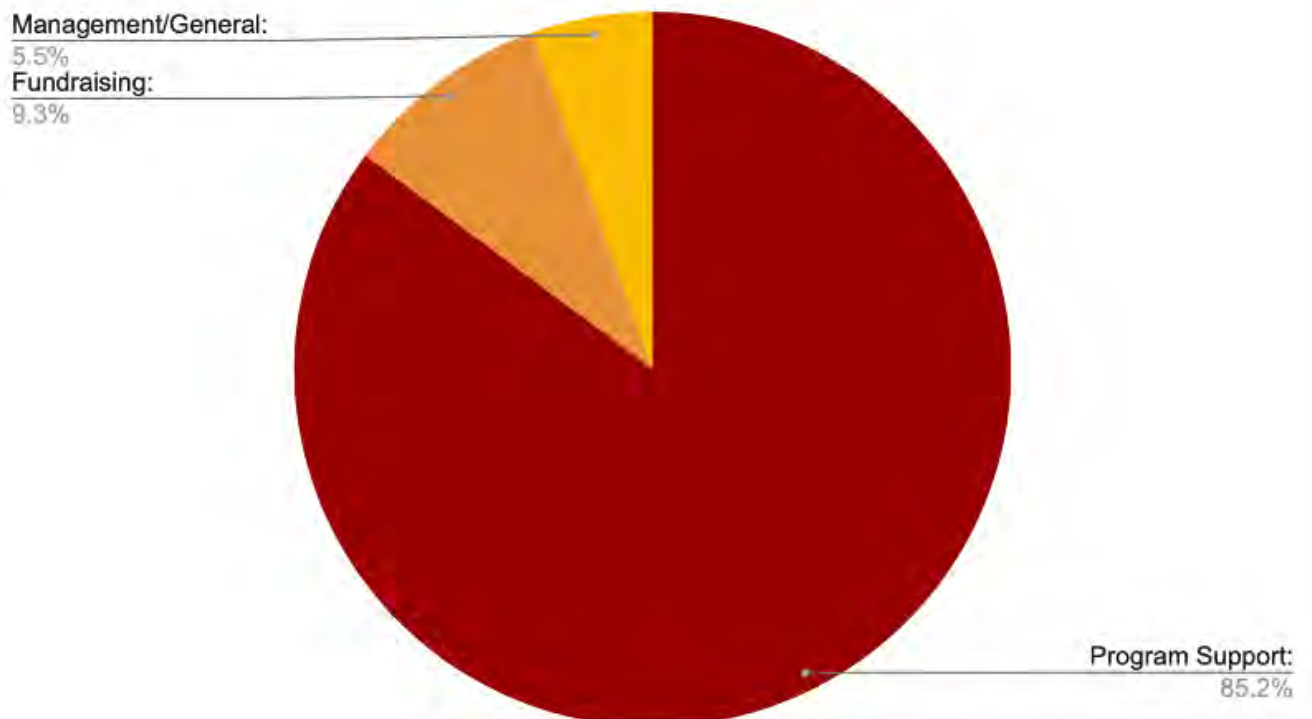
"Team LALDEF" at the 20th Anniversary Legislative Breakfast

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

## REVENUE AND SUPPORT:



## EXPENSES:



# OUR SUPPORTERS

## INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS

### \$5,000+

Cathy Schaefer Batterman & Eric Batterman  
Ellen & Thomas Petrone  
Robert Kuser  
Joyce & Michael Otto  
Christopher Eisgruber

### \$1,000 - \$4,999

Christopher Skinner & Kimberly Kracman  
Suzanne Gespass & David Dobkin  
Pete & Mara Connolly Taft  
BNY Mellon Trust of Delaware  
Donald Gilpin  
Alberto Vourvoulias & Jhumpa Lahiri  
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William & Aline Haynes  
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David Long & Alice St. Claire  
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Mary Bertino  
Barbara & Harry Purnell  
Andrew & Carol Golden  
Patricia Fernandez-Kelly & Alejandro Portes

### \$500 - \$999

Jason Scott Camilo  
Jonathan Reischl  
Thomas Baker & Suzanne  
McSorley  
Hope Anderson  
Dawn Day

Edward Deutsch  
Arturo & Lourdes Pizano  
Terri Riendeau & Shelley Krause  
Silvia Ascarelli  
Susan Fiske & Douglas Massey  
Dale Davis

David H. and Mary B. Blair  
Thomas & Archer Harvey  
Deborah J Yashar  
Paul & Anne Disdier  
Maureen O'Neill  
Sally Goldfarb & Joseph Straus

## Casa Bienvenida Legacy Society

Daniel Harris Estate

Sybill Stokes Estate

Ann & Mitsuru Yasuhara Estate

# OUR SUPPORTERS

## INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS

### Under \$500

Bradford & Gail Rodney	Noreen Goldman	Suzanne Levin & Leon	Betty Duggan & Paula
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Kristine Flynn	John & Mary Heilner	Ronnie Lowenstein	William Foster
Steven Gamboa	Holly & Bruce Weise	Megan Peterson	Barrett Young
Karen Hernández-Granzen	Corinna Zeltsman	Paula Sollami Covello	Michael Bailey
John Vadnais	Joyce Campbell	Samuel Estephen	Edward Fenwick
Tracy Thompson	Nina Melker	Karen Ali	Thelma Carrera
Lucia Vancleef	Andrew Feinstein	Nassau Presbyterian	Nelida Valentin
Rev. Louise Kingston &	Ann Lyons	Church of Princeton	Hal English
Michael Kingston	Erica Disch	Barbara Silberstein	John Santana
Steven Meskin	Susan & Jose Quiles	Rachael Evans	LTA Gamma Chapter
Zoe Brookes	Kristen Garufi	Samuel Frisby	Mary Louise Dahms
Caroline Anderson-Gray	Susan Moonan	John Cimino	Paul Harrison
Barbara Cuneo	Elba Barzelatto	Cathleen Lewis	Gail Goodman
Anastasia Mann & Eldar	Annette Martin	Kristin McLaughlin	Christine Misnik
Shafir	Melissa Lane	Terrance Stokes	Katie Bourgault
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Carol Ann Mason	Linda & John Gilmore	Deirdre Ryan	Manuela Ortiz Ajualip
Michelle and Chip Cash	Peter Lindenfeld &	Frances C McManus	Valerie Whittaker
Angelo Onofri	Mary Clurman	Jonathan & Joohyung	Dennys C. Sarmiento
Princeton Quaker Meeting	Molly & William Jones	Feuer	Martinez
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Nancy Faherty	Mary & Robert Pickens	Bloomenthal	Vignapiano
Julie Fox & Steve Gates	Dominic Dominguez	Jennifer Spieker	Vicky Flores
Sasa Olessi Montaña &	Lorri Ackerman	Robert Rosen	Jesse Lipson
Abelardo Montaña	Maureen Farina	Ellen Heath	Lauren Lalicon
Robert Karp & Linda	Mary G Love	Clara Haignere &	
Oppenheim	Wendy Matthews	Rex Potter	

*Donors for the last 13 months as of January 31st, 2025. If we have neglected to include your name or if we have inadvertently misspelled your name, please accept our sincerest apologies and contact our Director of Development and Communications, Angelica Stern, at [angelica.stern@laldef.org](mailto:angelica.stern@laldef.org) in order to have this corrected.*

*We greatly appreciate your support!*

# OUR SUPPORTERS



PRINCETON AREA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION  
The BUNBURY FUND



Mary Owen Borden Foundation



LALDEF relies on the generosity of our many individual and foundation donors to support our work. More than 90% of our operation budget comes from YOUR support. LALDEF currently accepts donations of donor-advised funds, IRA contributions, checks, cash, and more. To find out more, please visit [www.laldef.org/donate](http://www.laldef.org/donate).

# LALDEF TEAM

## OUR KEY STAFF

Cecy Jimenez-Weeast, Executive Director

Caty Dominguez, Community Engagement Coordinator

Annabelle Hinchliffe, Legal Services Coordinator

Lorena Morales, Adult Education Coordinator

Griselda Pachuca-Garcia, FUTURO Coordinator

Angelica Stern, Director of Development and Communications

## OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Pete Taft, Chair

Sasa Olessi Montaña, President

Steven Gamboa, Treasurer

Tracy M. Thompson, Esq., Secretary

Jason Scott Camilo, Esq., Trustee

Iris Hauser, Trustee

Rev. Karen Hernández-Granzen, Trustee

Jonathan Lear, Trustee

Cynthia Martinez, Trustee



Founded in 2004, the Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund (LALDEF) is a not-for-profit social impact organization headquartered in Trenton, NJ. Our mission is to promote the rights of all immigrants (with a focus on the Latin American community in the Mercer County area); facilitate access to health care, education and legal representation; advocate for the integration of immigrants; and foster intercultural communication to strengthen our communities.

The organization's programs fall into two key areas:

- (1) immigration legal services and
- (2) community outreach and education, which includes client advocacy, adult education, youth mentoring and development, and more.

## CONTACT US

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EDUCATION FUND

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Trenton, NJ 08611

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