



HISPANIC AFFAIRS PROJECT

2019 Annual Report



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Our Mission and Vision

The Hispanic Affairs Project—HAP works to provide leadership development, community organizing, and the provision of key services for immigrant integration.

We are a grassroots organization serving Western Colorado communities, including Mesa, Delta, Montrose, San Miguel, Ouray and Gunnison counties.

We envision Western Colorado communities where cultural diversity is celebrated, and where immigrants actively contribute to change for a more just and equitable society.



Dear Friends,

Thank you for your continued commitment to the Hispanic Affairs Project—HAP! 2019 has marked 14 years of service to our local communities. Dedicated staff, our passionate board of directors, and unwavering community leaders have continued to expand our reach and fortify existing programs and services.

Throughout 2019, community members and allies came together to revisit the origins of our organization and review our mission: to improve the lives of the people in our communities, and beyond. In our conversations, themes of hope, humility, service, integrity and integration emerged. New leaders and founding members alike

recognize the unique character and values of HAP — we each are adamant that HAP remain and evolve as an instrument for social change, leadership development, and advocacy.

HAP has overcome many challenges over the years to make definitive contributions in civic engagement and organic democracy, agents of change that we desperately need today. None of this could have been possible without the support of committed individuals, youth and adults, immigrants, allies, and partners. Our community is the reason to keep up the fight in this uncertain time in our country.

I am pleased to share a few highlights of our work in 2019 that were made possible through your support, generosity, time, and talent.

With gratitude,

Ricardo Perez, Executive Director



HAP's Executive Director listens to a community member speak at a meeting.

New Americans Campaign

Last June HAP joined the New Americans Campaign, a national network of organizations promoting citizenship by helping lawful permanent residents with the naturalization process.

As a member of the campaign, HAP held monthly educational citizenship clinics in Montrose and Grand Junction. Over 100 individuals received assistance through these clinics, as well as individual consultations.

The importance of helping permanent residents take the next step to full citizenship cannot be understated. Of the many benefits that citizens enjoy, the right to vote may be the most critical. To encourage new citizens to take advantage of this right, HAP works to register new voters immediately following their naturalization at regional USCIS ceremonies in Grand Junction.

In addition to citizenship support, HAP also continues to provide immigration legal assistance. This program plays a critical role in rural communities where there remains a lack of legal services, and where available services are often out of reach for low-income residents. The lack of parity between demand for affordable immigration legal assistance and availability of these services is such that HAP often serves clients not just from Colorado, but from other neighboring western states as well.



New citizens are sworn in at the naturalization ceremony at the Colorado National Monument in September 2019.

Did you know?

Other benefits enjoyed by citizens include:

- The right to immigrate family members •
- Derivative citizenship for children •
- More employment and educational opportunities •
- Freedom of travel out of and into the country •
- Running for elected office •
- Increased civic engagement opportunities •

Jorge Núñez—DACA Recipient

Meet Jorge Núñez, an active member of HAP. Jorge has been involved in many community events advocating for issues impacting immigrants, including a trip to the state capitol to speak with legislators. Here is a little bit of Jorge's story:

My parents brought me to the U.S. when I was 9 months old. It was a hard decision for my family, but because of the poverty we were enduring in Mexico, we had no other option. When I was 5 years old I had the opportunity to return to my place of birth, but I don't remember much. The only home I know is here, in Montrose.

In high school I learned what it meant not to have immigration status. My teachers started to ask me about college, and if I met requirements to apply for scholarships, such as having a social security number. I realized that this could prevent me from continuing my studies or getting a good job. But it was also the time that I heard the best news I have ever received in my life. I could apply for protection under the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program. Because my family and I have been involved with HAP for many years, I had their support and assistance in applying for DACA.

The situation in my family changed a lot when my mother couldn't work anymore, and I had to get a job to support my family. In high school I started a landscaping business in order to help out. I am currently working for an electrical services company. I am learning a lot and I'm saving money so that I can get certified as an electrician.

I'm very grateful to have DACA. It has opened the doors to a better job and has allowed me to help my family. I now have plans for my future. All of this is an opportunity that I would not have been afforded anywhere else, and I'm grateful for all of the people who have helped me and so many other young people to achieve their dreams. In this day and age, it is so important to have hope for the future.



Jorge Núñez with his mother at their home.

Working Together for Stronger Communities



A community leader speaks at a Spanish-language meeting in one of the comprehensive planning workshops.

"HAP's participation in these city planning processes has been another part of our effort to promote inclusivity and equity at the community-wide level."

~ Ricardo Perez, HAP Executive Director

Throughout 2019, HAP played an important role in bringing Hispanic community members to the table for resident-driven discussions with local governments about the future of their communities. Discussions took place in Montrose, Grand Junction, and Gunnison through comprehensive planning workshops.

Thanks to HAP's efforts to mobilize the community, local policymakers learned about specific issues affecting immigrants in their own neighborhoods, including safety, housing, healthcare, and infrastructure.

One of the traditional barriers to this kind of participation is the lack of inclusion of Spanish-only speakers. Promoting language justice, several workshops were conducted in Spanish, enabling more people to make their voices heard and advocate for positive change.



Participants discuss issues affecting their community.

Latinas Night - Encouraging Participation Among Latina Women

With the goal of promoting leadership among a traditionally underrepresented demographic, HAP launched the Latinas Night program at the beginning of 2019. Latinas Night seeks to cultivate leadership among Latina women and encourage their participation in the many facets of civic engagement in our communities. The group meets monthly to participate in group activities, from visits to the Black Canyon to learning how to make traditional Mexican recipes.

In order to develop leadership, the group starts from a place of interpersonal connection. Trust is an essential component of the group's dynamic. Building on this trust, Latinas Night has become a space where women can not only feel comfortable sharing their own stories, but can listen to and learn from each other, and ultimately empower one another to become more active leaders in their communities.

"All women have something to contribute and we hope to cultivate the leadership qualities that exists within every individual."

~ Elisa Rodriguez, Latinas Night coordinator



Winners of the Dancing With the Stars fundraiser in 2019!



HAP members at a leadership retreat.

Promoting Active Civic Engagement



Local leaders participate in the 2019 Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition's member assembly.

Throughout 2019, HAP facilitated leadership retreats aimed at empowering community members to recognize their potential for leadership in their communities.

Community members learned about our political institutions and how power dynamics work within them. They learned how collective action can be used to affect change in a community. Helping people understand the potential of civic engagement, HAP hopes to create more spaces in which people can make their voices heard on issues affecting their communities and demonstrate that everyone can be agents for change.

Advocating in Mobile Home Communities

Owners of homes in mobile home parks face unique challenges. Often they are subject to abuses and the degradation of living conditions in their neighborhoods. Homeowners may or may not have recourse available, leaving them vulnerable to further abuses.

In 2019, HAP worked to establish a group of mobile home park residents to form the Hispanic Housing Committee in Montrose. This committee will advocate for improved conditions, as well as fair regulation of mobile home parks on the local level. This work is made even more important by the fact that mobile housing is one of the few affordable housing solutions remaining in a state where the median home price continues to rise.



HAP board member facilitates a community work plan.

Tortilla Flats Photovoice Project

Tortilla Flats is a historic neighborhood in Montrose with a history of Hispanic presence dating back many generations. Today it is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the city, but continues to be underrepresented in community affairs.

Seeking to bring this neighborhood into the larger community-wide conversation, HAP led the Photovoice project, in which residents photographed their neighborhood. They documented what is important to their families as well as identified areas for possible improvements. The photographs were exhibited at the Montrose Regional Library and will continue to be displayed at various venues around Montrose throughout 2020.

During the next phase of the project, community members have started conversations with the city government and other local institutions, with the goal of fostering relationships and creating opportunities for enhancing the neighborhood. This project has been realized in partnership with the City of Montrose.

"I grew up in this neighborhood and am now raising my children here. We still need many of the same improvements today as we did 30+ years ago, but now we are taking action to try to build a safer and better neighborhood for all."

- Sally-Marie Martinez, Photovoice Participant



A resident talks to a community member at the opening of the Photovoice exhibition at the Montrose Library.



Project participants and coordinators pose for a photo during a meeting at Anciano Tower in Montrose.

Supporting Agricultural Labor Rights



Shepherders remain excluded from critical workplace protections.

In 2019, HAP collaborated with state partners in support of changes in the coverage for the Minimum Wage Order that the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) had opened for comments.

Because HAP worked to get comments from shepherders who are rarely considered as Colorado workers, their perspectives were incorporated into the comments that the CDLE was required to respond to. Unfortunately, the agricultural industry's efforts resulted in the negation of minimum wage protections, including paid breaks and overtime pay, for small agricultural operations and for shepherders. Due to HAP's efforts, workers whose voices are rarely heard were part of this important conversation. HAP will continue to work for inclusion of agricultural workers in the minimum wage order.

Improving Access to Driver's Licences

Immigrant residents have been able to apply for a driver's license since 2013 thanks to Colorado's SB-251. However, the law excluded many residents and made it difficult to obtain a license with only three offices in the state. By working with state legislators, HAP gained support for expanding SB-251 as part of the I Drive Colorado campaign, which changed the eligibility requirements to include all individuals who need a license.

These improvements resulted in the creation of seven new offices that issue SB-251 licenses including Montrose, Durango and Glenwood Springs. HAP is working with the DMV to serve as an official support agency for residents who are interested in obtaining their first SB-251 license, or renewing their existing license.



Thanks to the changes to the law, many West Slope families were able to apply for a driver's license for the first time.

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention



Community members decorate jeans at Denim Day.

Prevention of domestic violence and sexual assault starts with creating awareness of these issues in our communities. In April, HAP collaborated with community partners to host Denim Day. Attendees wore jeans to remember a defining event in the sexual assault awareness and prevention movement. HAP also worked with high school students, to create awareness among youth in our communities.

In addition to ongoing community education and outreach, HAP continues to provide legal assistance for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault through VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) and U visas, which help victims gain permanent residency in the United States.

Training New Interpreters

The demand for bilingual Spanish-English interpreters is high throughout Colorado. This is true even more so on the Western Slope, where we face a significant shortage of competent interpreters. Availability of interpretation services is critical to ensuring that residents whose first language is not English have equal access to resources in legal, medical, and community contexts.

To help satisfy the increasing demand for interpretation, HAP sponsored interpretation trainings in Gunnison and Grand Junction aimed at teaching future interpreters about career prospects in this growing field. HAP will continue to promote language justice within institutions in West Slope communities.



Training for future interpreters.

Facilitating Mental Health Conversations



A mental health worker leads a community conversation with HAP.

Mental health awareness and access to mental health care is an issue that affects every community in Colorado. With the goal of spreading awareness and reducing stigmas that still surround these issues, HAP facilitated several discussions in Spanish.

These conversations were held after the community suffered the loss of several young adults due to suicide. Participants came together in a safe space to share their concerns, as well as to hear from others and learn about available mental health resources, especially for youth.

On a statewide level, HAP continued to advocate for mental health equity throughout networks in Colorado, with a focus on increasing the availability of services in underserved and minority communities.

Promoting Equity in the Community

In July, HAP was a partner in a political education series, which featured both English and Spanish language presentations on how a community can come together to affect change. Participants learned about the history of inequalities, how these inequalities are perpetuated both by societal institutions and ideas, and how communities can come together to work towards more equitable outcomes for everyone.

HAP also promoted conversations around equity as a partner in the Health Equity Learning Series, which focused on dialogues about disparities in health outcomes in our communities. In the Transcultural Bridge training, discussions focused on building skills for living and working with people from other cultures in order to dismantle structural biases that stand in the way of equitable outcomes. These activities contributed to the Montrose Health Equity Advocacy Team efforts focused on building capacity for advancing health equity.



HAP members learn about civic engagement and how to make change in their community.

By the Numbers

HAP assists individuals and families in a variety of ways, and often times it is hard to quantify our impact. Here is a brief snapshot of some of the ways we support our communities:

Immigration Legal Assistance

301

- citizenship •
- Deferral Action for Child Arrivals (DACA) •
- family-based petitions •
- adjustment of status •
- lawful permanent residency renewals •
- renewal of employment authorization •
- U-visas and VAWA visas •
- legal in-take consultations •
- legal service referrals •



Citizenship applicants receive legal consultation.

Outreach & Assistance

1,450

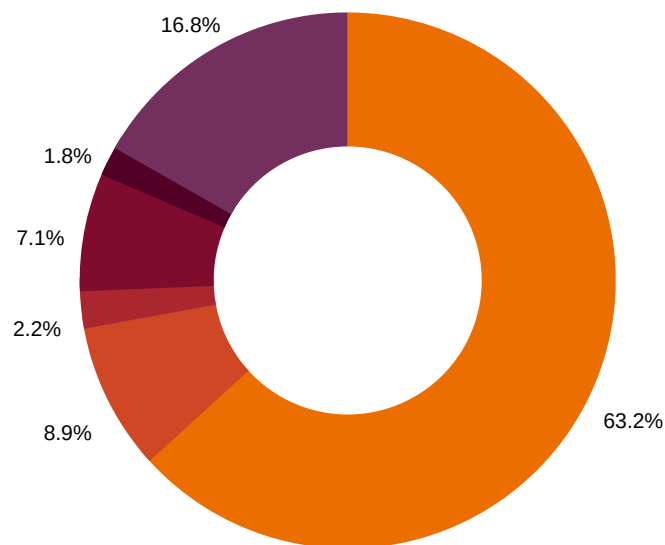
- wage theft •
- workplace discrimination •
- navigating the court system •
- community resources •
- housing discrimination •
- driver's licenses •
- domestic violence/sexual assault •
- community education •
- migrant outreach •



Community partners in the Health Equity Learning Series discuss issues affecting their communities.

INCOME - \$344,700

Grants	\$218,000	63.2%
Individual Donors	\$30,600	8.9%
Organization Members	\$7,700	2.2%
Program Service Fees	\$24,500	7.1%
Fundraising Events	\$6,100	1.8%
Restricted Fund for 2020	\$57,800	16.8%



EXPENSES - \$319,300

Immigration Legal

Assistance	\$84,000	26.3%
Community Resources.	\$51,200	16%

Sexual Assault/Domestic

Violence Awareness

& Prevention	\$45,000	14.1%
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Leadership Development	\$31,100	9.7%
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Welcoming Initiatives	\$24,800	7.8%
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Advocacy & Policy Education	\$20,700	6.5%
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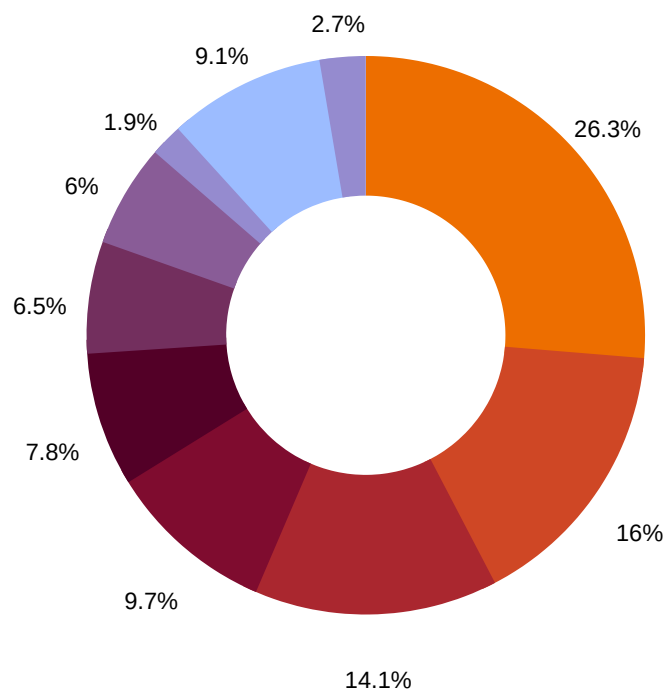
Migrant Outreach	\$19,000	6%
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Combatting Human Trafficking	\$6,000	1.9%
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General Operations &

Administration	\$29,000	9.1%
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Fundraising	\$8,500	2.7%
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Learn about our work, upcoming events, see photos and more.



HAP: Hispanic Affairs Project



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Make a financial contribution to support our work

Donate online at hapgj.org, or send your contribution to:

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P.O. Box 2024
Montrose, CO 81402

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Receive monthly updates about our work and the impact we're making in our West Slope communities.

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**Hispanic
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Engaging the Immigrant and
Refugee Communities in Western
Colorado

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