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00:00:00,750 --> 00:00:10,050

(Interviewer)

Immigrant and Refugee-Led Capacity Development Network of Illinois
IRLCDN CBO spotlight a

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00:00:10,050 --> 00:00:15,450

partnership with the University of Illinois at Chicago Institute on
Disability and Human Development,

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00:00:15,450 --> 00:00:26,130

and Illinois Department of Human Services IDHS. Spanish Community
Services.

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00:00:26,130 --> 00:00:29,410

(Interviewer)

Introductions

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00:00:29,410 --> 00:00:31,410

(Ana Campa Castillo)

My name is Ana Campa Castillo,

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00:00:31,410 --> 00:00:36,690

I am the welcoming center manager for the Spanish Community Center

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00:00:36,690 --> 00:00:43,050

(David Flores)

I'm David Flores and I work for the Illinois Welcoming Center as the
social service assistant.

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00:00:43,050 --> 00:00:48,960

(Veronica Gloria)

My name is Veronica Gloria and I'm the executive director of Spanish
Community Center.

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00:00:48,960 --> 00:00:54,480

(Interviewer)

What motivates you to serve your immigrant and refugee communities?

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00:00:54,480 --> 00:00:58,500

(Ana Campa Castillo)

So on a personal note, I am an undocumented immigrant,

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00:00:58,500 --> 00:01:04,050

so technically that experience motivates me and understanding the difficulty of

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00:01:04,050 --> 00:01:08,950

finding available assistance due to immigration status.

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00:01:05,950 --> 00:01:10,950

(David Flores)

Coming from an immigrant family,

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00:01:10,950 --> 00:01:17,100

I understand that not everyone is able to have help readily available.

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00:01:17,100 --> 00:01:27,150

I understand the frustration and I think I have the patience to be able to help the community with any type of assistance that they might need.

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00:01:27,150 --> 00:01:33,240

The community members also need someone to be able to listen to all sorts of problems,

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00:01:33,240 --> 00:01:41,130

being able to extend any type of help and listen to them and be there when they need it most.

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00:01:41,130 --> 00:01:45,510

(Veronica Gloria)

Like many of my colleagues, this is not just professional but personal.

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00:01:45,510 --> 00:01:51,720

I'm the daughter of Mexican immigrants and grew up in the Joliet area where there are many immigrants from.

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00:01:51,720 --> 00:01:58,460

(Interviewer)

What is the most rewarding part of your work?

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00:01:58,460 --> 00:02:06,950

(Ana Campa Castillo)

I think for me, its the genuine thank you and appreciation, once the client happens to have another nation comes back, right?

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00:02:06,950 --> 00:02:13,010

They know that they are in a safe space and that anything that they share stays here and we're ready,

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00:02:13,010 --> 00:02:16,880

readily available to assist and a variety of issues.

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00:02:16,880 --> 00:02:21,590

Just the most recent client experience was scheduling the vaccine appointment or a

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00:02:21,590 --> 00:02:27,200

client who wasn't able to schedule them for themselves once they got the second dose.

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00:02:27,200 --> 00:02:31,970

The couple, the elderly couple returned. Then it was a small token of appreciation.

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00:02:31,970 --> 00:02:35,420

By giving a gifting as a box of candy,

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00:02:35,420 --> 00:02:43,340

(David Flores)

The most rewarding part would be able to let the community know that we care and that we're here for any types of assistance.

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00:02:43,340 --> 00:02:52,340

Usually they don't always have someone to lean on. So being in the community organization, to be there for whatever type of need they need,

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00:02:52,340 --> 00:02:57,260

it's definitely a rewarding client who had her electricity shut off.

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00:02:57,260 --> 00:03:05,210

She was concerned all of the food she had just purchased go
fortunately with our rental assistance programs,

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00:03:05,210 --> 00:03:08,870

we were able to make a payment for her electricity bill.

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00:03:08,870 --> 00:03:14,810

And assist her with that, that way her family and herself could have
electricity.

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00:03:14,810 --> 00:03:21,840

They could keep their food. We were also able to help a client who had
recently been in a car crash.

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00:03:21,840 --> 00:03:31,220

She lived in her vehicle. So not having any place to live and having
no transportation to work was an urgent need

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00:03:31,220 --> 00:03:36,750

So we worked at the welcoming center to ensure that she would have
somewhere to stay.

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00:03:36,750 --> 00:03:45,680

Meanwhile, her place to live in was repaired and definitely was
rewarding to see a positive outcome.

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00:03:45,680 --> 00:03:52,670

(Veronica Gloria)

One of the most rewarding parts of my work is having seen the center
grow to meet the changing needs of the community.

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00:03:52,670 --> 00:04:00,770

We went from having just one Department of Justice accredited
immigration representative to now having two attorneys,

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00:04:00,770 --> 00:04:07,550

three paralegals and having a DOJ rep, as well as another person

that's training to be a DOJ rep.,

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00:04:07,550 --> 00:04:11,450

being able to see that we were able to bring in the community health workers

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00:04:11,450 --> 00:04:16,850

to do outreach in the community and really seeing how as the center grows,

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00:04:16,850 --> 00:04:18,860

we're able to touch so many lives.

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00:04:18,860 --> 00:04:25,100

It's in the thousands every year, anywhere from five thousand to eight thousand people are reached through our programs.

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00:04:25,100 --> 00:04:32,810

And that's a very beautiful thing to be able to say. We're from the community and we're able to give back to the community.

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00:04:32,810 --> 00:04:42,860

And we then see clients who go on to be a part of the center through volunteering, through our board, through a variety of different means.

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00:04:42,860 --> 00:04:50,330

So it's definitely working for and with the community, which is a very remarkable thing.

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00:04:50,330 --> 00:04:56,610

(Interviewer)

What makes the work of your organization unique? Definitely the people I know that many places would say the same thing,

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00:04:56,610 --> 00:05:02,610

Definitely the people I know that many places would say the same thing,

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00:05:02,610 --> 00:05:09,720

but I would welcome people to come and meet us because you're going to

find a team that wants to see you succeed,

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00:05:09,720 --> 00:05:18,900

that wants to see you reach your best, and that really understands the the worth that everyone has as a human being.

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00:05:18,900 --> 00:05:27,920

And we really uplift the immigrant experience and we really want to be able to be a part of your story for the good.

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00:05:27,920 --> 00:05:32,340

(David Flores)

I would say the diversity of the Spanish community center is something that

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00:05:32,340 --> 00:05:38,040

stands out for building as individuals of all different types of backgrounds.

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00:05:38,040 --> 00:05:40,020

Not just LatinX

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00:05:40,020 --> 00:05:48,190

and I think this works perfectly since our community is also encompasses all different types of peoples from different backgrounds.

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00:05:48,190 --> 00:05:52,590

And I would say that is the best part of the Spanish community centers that we

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00:05:52,590 --> 00:05:58,820

can serve people who are coming from all different types or all walks of life,

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00:05:58,820 --> 00:06:05,850

(Ana Campa Castillo)

A holistic service approach, anything from legal to social, emotional support.

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00:06:05,850 --> 00:06:13,800

I feel this makes it easier for us to address the barriers that immigrant refugee families face.

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00:06:13,800 --> 00:06:22,100

And this is all possible in a safe and trusting environment that's credible as well.

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00:06:22,100 --> 00:06:26,690

(Interviewer)

With the challenges presented by covid-19 regarding service delivery,

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00:06:26,690 --> 00:06:34,210

how do you feel your organization has responded in terms of supporting its immigrant and refugee communities?

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00:06:34,210 --> 00:06:41,950

(Veronica Gloria)

We're one of the few agencies that focuses on Latino low income and immigrant people in Will

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00:06:41,950 --> 00:06:47,800

County and Kankakee County and so and being able to reach not just Spanish speakers,

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00:06:47,800 --> 00:06:51,040

but a variety of different people from different backgrounds,

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00:06:51,040 --> 00:06:57,160

we've been able to provide hundreds of thousands of dollars in emergency cash assistance,

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00:06:57,160 --> 00:07:01,960

especially to those who aren't able to access state benefits.

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00:07:01,960 --> 00:07:11,560

That's been a huge factor for many people in our community where they haven't been able to be eligible for unemployment or for the stimulus checks.

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00:07:11,560 --> 00:07:21,100

And so being able to be a resource in that way has been a very important safety net for many individuals and families.

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00:07:21,100 --> 00:07:30,670

And in addition to that, we have also introduced increased food pantry assistance, mental health, life coaching assistance, food deliveries.

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00:07:30,670 --> 00:07:35,920

And my colleagues can speak a bit more in terms of the details of our community health

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00:07:35,920 --> 00:07:42,290

workers who have really been on the ground doing outreach and service delivery.

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00:07:42,290 --> 00:07:46,210

(Ana Campa Castillo)

To be honest, I'm really, really proud of the work that we have been doing.

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00:07:46,210 --> 00:07:56,170

I feel really happy and excited to be a part of it. We've been able to address and adapt to changes that have been in short notice so rapidly.

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00:07:56,170 --> 00:08:04,960

We began actually assisting individuals with financial assistance since late March when the pandemic began.

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00:08:04,960 --> 00:08:08,940

So we were one of the few agencies that responded pretty quickly.

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00:08:08,940 --> 00:08:14,530

We've offered additional services such as covid-19 education.

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00:08:14,530 --> 00:08:23,650

But what does it mean to be isolated, isolate, quarantine, or how to assist multigenerational families be able to succeed within this virus?

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00:08:23,650 --> 00:08:28,000

Right. We've offered testing on site. Thankfully, we have a big parking lot.

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00:08:28,000 --> 00:08:33,670

Right. So our facilities have been utilized as best as they could to adapt to these changes.

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00:08:33,670 --> 00:08:38,410

Our food pantry had to expand, so our gym expanded with our food pantry.

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00:08:38,410 --> 00:08:43,840

So we've been able to address this very rapidly and adapt in an efficient manner to

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00:08:43,840 --> 00:08:51,580

be able to assist individuals as quickly as possible with the best direct support.

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00:08:51,580 --> 00:09:00,400

(David Flores)

I feel very fortunate to be part of the Spanish Community Center, given all of the growth that have been during the pandemic we've been able to grow,

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00:09:00,400 --> 00:09:06,010

which does mean we've been able to open our doors to many more community members.

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00:09:06,010 --> 00:09:12,100

That being said, we've been able to provide direct assistance to our Community Health Worker Project,

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00:09:12,100 --> 00:09:16,990

which has assisted infected covid-19 clients with the groups.

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00:09:16,990 --> 00:09:23,330

I would say we've been able to introduce the center to many more individuals who may have not heard of the center beforehand.

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00:09:23,330 --> 00:09:26,080

So with all of the outreach and expansion that we've been doing,

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00:09:26,080 --> 00:09:33,010

we've been able to share the diverse resources and the plentiful resources that we have to offer.

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00:09:33,010 --> 00:09:40,870

And getting the word out is the most important thing so that we can continue helping as many people as possible in the community.

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00:09:40,870 --> 00:09:48,850

(Veronica Gloria)

I do want to clarify that although we are called the Spanish Community Center, we have our doors open to everyone.

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00:09:48,850 --> 00:09:55,630

And we have seen folks from a variety of different backgrounds, whether they are from the US, from another country.

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00:09:55,630 --> 00:10:02,710

And our specialty is and being able to bridge that gap for Spanish speakers, that is where our strength lies.

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00:10:02,710 --> 00:10:12,010

But we're also part of a larger network of centers where if we have a language gap and being able to communicate with community member,

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00:10:12,010 --> 00:10:18,190

we can reach out to some of our partners to be able to facilitate and interpret or to be able to refer to them.

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00:10:18,190 --> 00:10:24,700

So if you're in the Will County area, Kankakee areas especially, do welcome you to reach out to us.

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00:10:24,700 --> 00:10:26,230

And again,

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00:10:26,230 --> 00:10:37,290

we want to make sure that folks feel welcome and at home at the center and we've been serving diverse community and we will continue to do so.