

**With our Board focus on immigration this year and in anticipation of the presentation at our upcoming December meeting by Patrice Picard, CEO of Cornerstone Family Programs, and Ayo Sanderson Wilson, COO and EVP, we felt it appropriate and quite timely to examine two grantees serving immigrant populations in Northern New Jersey, which have grown significantly in recent years. The first is Cornerstone Family Programs, a combined entity of the Morristown Neighborhood House Association and Morris County Family Service, both of which have served low-income and immigrant populations in the Greater Morristown Area since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The second is the Morris County Organization for Hispanic Affairs which hosts the only low-cost legal service center specializing in immigration and citizenship in Morris County.**

**Grantee:** Cornerstone Family Programs  
(previously Morristown Neighborhood House  
Association, Inc.)

**Program Area:** Human Services

**Headquarters:** Morristown, NJ

**Total Funding:** \$2,366,300 since  
1967

**Most Recent Grant:** \$150,000 in 2020

The Morristown Neighborhood House was founded in 1898 as a settlement house that aimed to support the Morristown community's growing diversity and population of Italian immigrants. Today, it continues to serve recent immigrants, the demographics of which have changed since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and other vulnerable populations in a mission to enable self-sufficiency and a successful transition into new communities. Programs are designed around affordable child care, academic assistance, afterschool and summer programs, career services, recreational enrichment, and gang prevention services though cultural and historical education programming.

Particular programs of note include partnerships with the Morris School District through NJ Preschool Expansion to offer free preschool education and before-school childcare services for Morristown and Morris Township residents. Another programmatic highlight is the Neighborhood House's Arts & Recreation Enrichment Program, which is designed to help youth build and improve athletic, artistic and social skills and to help parents ensure that their children's time is spent in a constructive manner. The Basketball Program, in particular, is known as the "Morristown Magic" Travel team, participates in the Jersey Basketball Association League, and is targeted towards 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> graders to build confidence, cultivate leadership and teamwork, and promote fitness. Programs for older teens include the Teen Tutoring and Mentoring Program, which not only allows younger students to receive academic tutoring and bond with an older student as a positive example in their community, but also gives high school teens the opportunity to connect with younger students, lead workshops, and be matched with

mentors of their own. Mentoring at the Neighborhood House has become an essential facet of a number of programs. It creates a space for high school students to connect with an older role model and confidant who understands their cultural background as they balance “growing responsibilities and growing up” in the Morristown community. Mentorships also provide pathways into the professional and career service programs through the Neighborhood House, as both teens and mentors are connected to professionals in Morris County who offer lessons in navigating the workforce and building confidence in networking and interviewing. Finally, other programs such as the Rites of Passage program are designed to provide instructional learning experiences through exposure to African American and Latino culture and history. This encourages multicultural youth to learn the importance of embracing their heritage in an effort to build their confidence, leadership, and problem-solving skills that improve their social, educational and vocational outcomes.

In a wider context, the Neighborhood House acts as a pillar of diversity and cross-cultural positivity in the Greater Morristown area. In particular, this has meant that the press, politicians, funders, and citizens turn to the Neighborhood House to serve as a leader in determining solutions during times of unrest or charged race and ethnicity-based tensions. However, this crisis-driven marketing has meant that there was largely low visibility for the organization when immediate solutions were not demanded. Despite previous efforts to streamline, the consistent presence of cash flow issues coupled with a growing need in populations served led the Neighborhood House to merge with Family Service of Morris County in 2013. (The Family Service of Morris County was another long-standing community service provider for families and children in Morristown founded to service the poor in the wake of the War of 1812.) The combined entity became Cornerstone Family Programs, with the Morristown Neighborhood House remaining a subsidiary and retaining its building and programming. Family Service of Morris County brought with it its programming which provides counseling for children, families and military servicemen and women, as well as their families; addiction services and mandatory education programs for convicted intoxicated drivers; and case management for senior citizens who need supervision to live on their own. Together, Cornerstone serves a wide spread of vulnerable individuals throughout Morris and other North Jersey counties in virtually all age ranges and stages of life, reaching ultimately approximately 10,000 people annually. Recent years have shown that this merger has increased the number of people served, the quality of programming, and the sustainability of both organizations.

**Grantee:** Morris County Organization for Hispanic Affairs, Inc.

**Program Area:** Human Services

**Headquarters:** Dover, NJ

**Total Funding:** \$150,000 since 2015

**Most Recent Grant:** \$35,000 in 2020

A second organization essential to serving the immigrant population in Morris County is the Morris County Organization for Hispanic Affairs (MCOHA), which was founded in 1976 by a group of seven individuals who saw a need for Dover's rapidly growing Hispanic population to receive support in becoming self-sufficient and engaged in the community. Serving nearly 8,000 low-income residents annually, MCOHA has evolved into the now trusted resource it is today with a vision of uniting communities across northern New Jersey that promote cultural heritage and where everyone is respected, self-sufficient, and engaged in making a difference. To achieve this, MCHOA offers services spanning community outreach, transportation, education, home energy assistance, and weatherization. More specifically, education and outreach programs focus on teaching participants about mental and physical health indicators, how to participate in American culture, and how to most effectively interact with healthcare providers.

MCOHA's newest program is their Center for Citizenship and Legal Immigration, which assists MCOHA clients in achieving legal status and economic self-sufficiency on their journey to becoming fully active participants in the social and civic lives of their communities. Opened in 2014, the Center's team works under the supervision of a licensed attorney and alongside paralegals and administrative assistants to provide low-cost legal services surrounding immigration consultations, citizenship/naturalization applications, and support for refugees, unaccompanied minors, victims of domestic violence, and DACA children. For immigrant families with limited resources or education, the citizenship process can represent an insurmountable hurdle towards becoming fully functioning, contributing members of local communities. Before this Center was formed, Morris County residents had to either seek expensive private legal services or travel to nonprofit centers in Essex or Hudson County. Both of these options placed significant burdens on immigrants who don't have financial means (with 95% of MCOHA's clients being low-income) or who often rely on public transportation, which, in Morris County, is significantly limited.

Developing a stable and steady stream of funds for the privately-funded programs at MCOHA remains one of the organization's largest challenges, with 68% of revenue originating from government contracts (down from a high of 90% 15 years ago). That said, when asked on a recent site visit by JoAnn Tiefau and Justin Kiczek where she sees the organization going in five years, MCOHA's Executive Director, Xiomara Guevara, responded that she would like to see

continued growth in the Center for Citizenship and Legal Immigration, as well as doing more in family law. She sees great opportunity for MCOHA's forthcoming Hispanic Women's Resource Center to become a hub for working women, who can use the Center's services to help develop their own businesses and receive small scholarships for continued professional development.

Prepared by Erin Clifford  
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