



Wabank Witness

November 2020

A GROWING MINISTRY FOR A GROWING HISPANIC POPULATION

In his book *Hispanic Realities Impacting America: Implications for Evangelism & Missions* author Daniel R. Sanchez names 10 Hispanic realities in North America. The first one is: “The growth of the Hispanic American population has exceeded even the boldest projections of demographic experts.” And that is true!

According to the US Census Bureau, as of July 2013 the United States population was 318 million people. Of those, roughly 54 million were Hispanics, representing approximately 17 percent of the U.S. total population and making Latinos the nation’s largest ethnic minority. (That is to say that nearly one in five people in America is Latino.)



From 1970 to 2005 the Hispanic population in the United States increased by 32 million, and the Census Bureau projects that the Hispanic population will exceed 132 million by 2050.

Closer to home, the 2010 census indicated that 39.3% of the population of Lancaster was of Hispanic or Latino ancestry, a total of around 23,314 people in Lancaster who are Hispanic or have Latino ancestry. Wow!

Well, that’s exactly the reason that the Alpha & Omega Community Center exists and why I am so happy to be its Director.

The Alpha & Omega Community Center is a non-profit ministry of the Church of the Brethren whose purpose is to share God’s love by providing education and social services to assist the community of Lancaster, with primary focus on helping the Latino community of Lancaster to become more productive members of the society.

This mission is achieved as the Center positively impacts more than 500 people each month through our food bank, English and music classes, professional counseling, and computers for refugees.

Joel Peña, Director

MINISTRIES CONTINUE TO MEET NEEDS IN MIDST OF PANDEMIC



The ministries of the Alpha & Omega Community Center haven't stopped during the pandemic, and some are needed now more than ever.

The Food Bank serves the community the first and third Tuesday of each month. Food Bank Coordinator Petra Castro facilitates this ministry by managing food-ordering and pick-up, organizing volunteers, and registering recipients. In September 410 persons, including 57 new persons, received food. Petra says, "When we lift others up, we are lifted."

Many families are experiencing food insecurity, and this ministry is vital. Each person who passes through the line receives not only much-needed food, but also the message that they are loved and valued.

Computers for Refugees, administered by Danny Gingrich, continues to receive and refurbish donated tech items. In September, six desktops, eleven laptops, two

tablets, and one printer were distributed. Donations to this program continue, and a local accounting firm recently donated 21 laptops.

Since much communication and education now occur online, this ministry meets an essential need. Computers have been provided for many families in which children need the technology to participate in online instruction.



Danny also serves as the Center's **English teacher**. Much instruction has occurred remotely. In September, Danny served 27 students in 54 sessions (18 hours of which were face-to-face.) He also participates in an online

medical English class and provides two additional remote classes, for students in Colombia and Cuba, respectively. One of Danny's greatest joys is to see his students make progress in the workplace and elsewhere. One student was offered a medical assistant position, another was accepted into IU13 teacher assistant training, and a third is graduating from cosmetology school.

During the pandemic, many persons experience problems and emotional needs. **Counselor Angela Arce** has been utilizing both the phone and video-conferencing to connect to the Latino persons she serves.

Music classes and a Spanish radio program also serve and bless the Latino community of Alpha & Omega and beyond.

YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED!

Due to the pandemic, the yearly banquet, the Community Center's major fundraiser, was cancelled. Donations from individuals, churches, and businesses are essential to the continuation of the many ministries that serve the Latino community of Lancaster. Enclosed is a donation envelope., or give online at <https://alphayomega.us/>.

Please prayerfully consider contributing additional funds to this ministry. The Board and Staff greatly appreciate all donations as we see first-hand how those funds change lives.

SPOTLIGHT ON STAFF: DANNY GINGRICH

Danny Gingrich serves the Community Center as its English teacher and also as the coordinator of the Computers for Refugees program. His work for the Center is characterized by dedication, humility, and passion for Christ and His mission. Danny says he feels blessed to be involved in this ministry and appreciates the witness of each staff member and what God is doing here.

Danny's wife, Laurie, is a nurse. They have two married daughters and three young grandchildren. Danny and Laurie are members of Grace Baptist Church of Lancaster.

After graduating from Warwick High School and Lancaster Bible College, Danny took classes at Millersville University but put his studies aside when he and Laurie accepted a one-year mission opportunity in France. Upon return, he worked for a local water company for many years. When company structure changed, Danny felt God leading him back to his studies at Millersville, 28 years after his initial classes there. He earned a Masters of Education in English in 2008.

Danny met Joel Peña in a Saturday class at Millersville International House and began teaching English one day a week at the Center in January 2008. When he realized that semester-based classes and a one-month module did not fit the schedules of the persons he served, he changed his plan to provide individual tutoring to equip his students for the next step, calling this new approach "Bridging the Gap." His schedule expanded, as did the services he provides: teaching business English and medical English, networking with organizations like the Literacy Council, and connecting virtually with a Cuban pastoral couple in Colombia and a student in Mexico.

Danny says that he does not enjoy technical things, so it is rather ironic that he is in charge of Computers for Refugees. God does move in mysterious ways! When he realized that two students—a doctor and an architect in their countries of origin—had only phones and no computers, Danny connected with a member of the nearby Laurel Street Mennonite Church who "loves tinkering with technology."

The program began with 10 donated desktops that his friend upgraded and gave to Danny to distribute.

Computers for Refugees grew as Danny networked with IU13, Church World Service, and the Migrant Education Program. He is now able to equip his students with computers. The Community Center showed its support of this program by providing a special workroom for the computers as part of a recent renovation.

Many years ago when Danny came to Christ, he knew he wanted to do missions. God has enabled him to be in full-time Christian work as an English teacher. Through internet connections, he is in world-wide mission with opportunities to make the Gospel known right here in the Community Center and beyond.



Address Service Requested

STAFF

Joel Peña
Director
Marisor Diaz
Administrative Assistant
Danny Gingrich
ESL Teacher/Computers
Angela Arce
Professional Counselor
Alberto Hernandez
Radio Producer
Petra Castro
Food Bank Coordinator
Daniel Gonzalez
Music Coordinator

BOARD MEMBERS

Alan Miller, Chair
Sherry Eshleman, Secretary
Jill Nuñez, Treasurer
Mayra Calix
Carolyn Fitzkee
Maria Perez

708 Wabank St.
Lancaster, PA 17603
Phone: 717-394-3021
E-mail: fic@alphayomega.us
Website: alphayomega.us



Follow us on Facebook

REBUILD THAT WALL! COVER THAT FLOOR!

The AOCC Board has approved two major renovation projects with large financial impacts. We need your help to see them through.

First, a bulging block retaining wall on the west side of the building, where the food bank box truck unloads food, has shifted and is in danger of eventual collapse. B.R. Kreider Driveways will repair the wall and install a new driveway and parking place for the box truck. This project is extensive and



includes removal of the iron railing and the damaged portions of the wall, adding pipes for drainage, rebuilding the block wall, excavation for the new driveway, and paving. The approximate cost is \$23,650.

Secondly, the basement of the community center recently received some upgrades. A storage room and work area were added for the Computers for Refugees program. In addition, the food bank storage space and area for music lessons was expanded and improved. Walls were moved, removed, and added. A portion of the project was funded by a grant, but a total of approximately \$8,000 is needed to install vinyl flooring to complete the project.

Donations above and beyond regular giving from individuals, church groups, businesses, and others can be designated for either of these projects. Please send checks payable to Alpha & Omega Community Center and write either "Rebuild That Wall" or "Cover That Floor" in the memo line of the check.