




VIDA

Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement

2011 ANNUAL REPORT

Impacting sustainable economic growth in the region...
one VIDA at a time



A message from the Chairman of the Board

Last fiscal year, VIDA served **721** economically disadvantaged adults committed to changing their quality of life who embarked on a journey of education. We are proud to report a 97% retention rate during 2011, a testament to the will of the participants, the quality of instruction provided by our partners at the five institutions of higher education, and the proven track record of VIDA's program model. VIDA participants graduating this year reported an average annual salary of **\$37,148.80** plus benefits.

Most of our participants were the first in their families to go to college. Others returned to school after many years of trials and tribulations. They were convinced that life without an education or skill would never take a different path. But as enormous as this milestone was, it is merely a beginning. To some, it is the beginning of a new career. To others, it is the beginning of the next phase of their educational aspirations. To all, it is a *"reset"* button on life. I came to the Valley in 2005 and have had the opportunity to witness its unprecedented growth. It is exciting to be in the middle of so much opportunity. But this opportunity comes with a challenge...*an obligation*...to ensure that the Rio Grande Valley experiences *sustainable growth*.

A skilled workforce is vital to our ability to recruit new industry and expand existing businesses both large and small. Education and training enriches lives and stimulates our economy. Impacting sustainable economic growth in the region requires assisting individuals get more than a job... *VIDA graduates start careers*. The Valley is uniquely poised to compete head to head with any community in the country if we do not waiver on our commitment to education and training. We have an abundant, young population while the rest of the country is facing a shrinking and aging labor force. We must continue to lock arms and transform our population into an abundant, young, *educated and skilled workforce*.

VIDA Staff and Board of Directors are honored to be part of this transformational process. We salute our participants whose hard work and tenacity is inspirational. And we thank all of our funding partners, and community allies without whom this work would not be possible.

Respectfully,



David Handley
Chairman of the Board



OUR MISSION

To formulate new institutional relationships in The Rio Grande Valley that simultaneously address employers' needs for skilled workers and link the area's unemployed and underemployed with high skilled, high wage demand jobs identified in the region. The program provides job training services to economically disadvantaged, unemployed and underemployed adults with family responsibilities.

VIDA 2011 annual report

ANNUAL SUMMARY FY 2010-2011

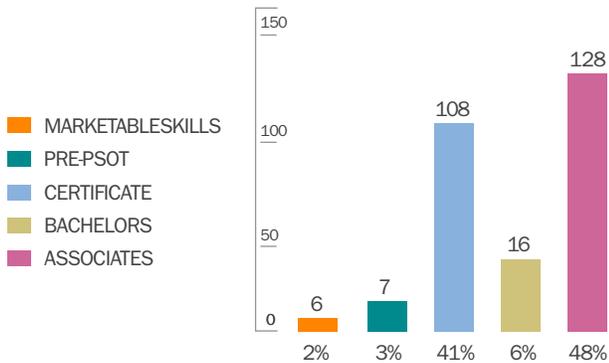
721 economically disadvantaged adults served

Average salary reported for FY 2010-2011 graduates

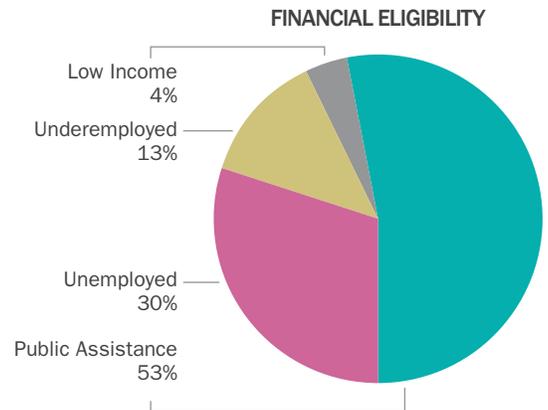
\$37,148.80

FY 2010-2011 AT A GLANCE

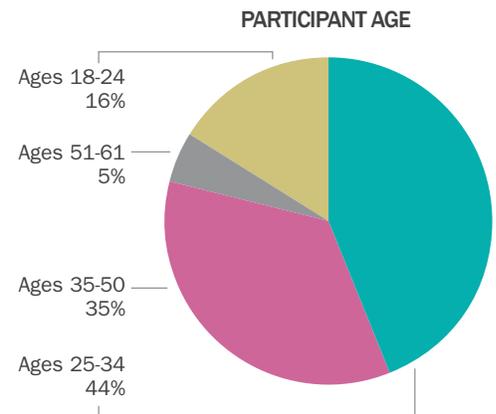
- > 79% Between the ages of 25-50
- > 68% Female
- > 88% Unemployed or on public assistance
- > 26% Single parents
- > 50% 3 dependents or more in household



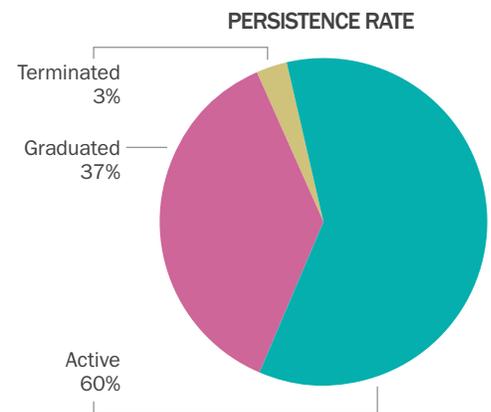
CREDENTIAL EARNED



FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY



PARTICIPANT AGE



PERSISTENCE RATE



For every one dollar invested in the program,
there is a return of \$6.89 to the communities we serve
(Economic Impact Study 2010 - University of Texas-Pan American, Data & Information Systems Center (DISC))

VIDA 2011 annual report

PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY

Philosophy

Our philosophy is very simple. Well trained, well educated people will not only be ready for tomorrow's jobs, but they will also be able to live more prosperous, healthy and happy lives. The ultimate goal is job retention, not just job placement. Long-term employment will develop strong citizens who can support their families and who are self-sufficient taxpayers who generate a clear return on investment of federal, state, local and private funding.

Our graduates not only help the families they support and the businesses that employ them, but their ability to successfully rise from the ranks of low-income helps us all. Their increased earnings enhances their contributions to our tax system and reduces their dependence on public assistance. VIDA has demonstrated a model for success by graduating participants into high demand jobs that normally were unfilled or filled at a very high cost by people from outside our community.



History and services

Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement (VIDA) is a community based, non-profit 501 (c)3 agency. Created in 1995, VIDA was the result of a local effort led by community leaders of Valley Interfaith and private industry business leaders. The impetus was the need to empower the underserved residents of our region with the tools, education and training to become self-sufficient while fueling the growth of the existing employers and increasing the recruitment of new investment to the area by developing a highly skilled workforce.

Since its inception, VIDA's mission remains constant, to formulate new institutional relationships in the Rio Grande Valley that simultaneously address employers' needs for skilled workers and link the area's unemployed and underemployed with high skilled, high wage jobs identified in the region.

VIDA works closely with the business sector, training providers, and community-based organizations to develop a skilled workforce that will meet the demands of employers in the Rio Grande Valley



DIRECT EFFECTS OF EDUCATION ON UNEMPLOYMENT

YEAR	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	NO HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	HS DIPLOMA/GED	% CHANGE	ASSOCIATES	% CHANGE	SPREAD
MARCH							
2000	4.1%	6.7%	3.4%	3.3%	2.7%	0.7%	4.0%
2005	5.2%	7.8%	4.7%	3.1%	3.9%	0.8%	3.9%
2011	9.4%	13.8%	9.5%	4.3%	7.4%	2.1%	6.4%

Source : US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics Monthly Labor Review February 2001, 2006
US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment & Earnings January 2012

VIDA board of directors

David Handley, CEO
Chairman
CEO, Valley Regional Medical Center

Eduardo Anaya
Vice Chairman
Law Office of Eduardo Anaya

Linda Resendez
Secretary

Tony Aguirre
Owner, T. Aguirre Consulting

Msgr. Heberto M. Diaz, Jr.
Saint Luke's Catholic Church

Estela Soza Garza
Department of Social Work
The University of Texas Pan American

Rev. Ricardo Garcia Jr. †
Saint Mary's Catholic Church

Rev. Javier Leyva
El Divino Redentor United Methodist Church

David Oliveira
Law Offices of Roerig, Oliveria & Fisher

Jesse Salinas
CEO, TEDSI Infrastructure Group

Rosalie Tristan
Valley Interfaith Willacy County Area

Community liaison

Teri Brown †
Lead Organizer, Valley Interfaith

VIDA staff

Myra Caridad García
Executive Director

Irma García
Compliance Officer

Daniel Mena
Director of Finance

Priscilla Alvarez
Director of ISIS Operations

Bernie Saenz
Director of Information Services & Community Outreach

Elizabeth Gutiérrez
Director of Program Services

Jennifer Blanco
Career Counselor-Case Manager

Amanda Cantu
Career Counselor-Case Manager

Eliza Cavazos
Career Counselor-Case Manager

Joseph Flores
IT & Research Coordinator

Cruz Villarreal
Executive Secretary

Belinda Garcia
Accounting Support Specialist

Leevana Jilpas
Case Aide

Martha Morales
Receptionist

Pearl Ramirez
Case Aide

Ruben Garcia
Career Counselor-Case Manager

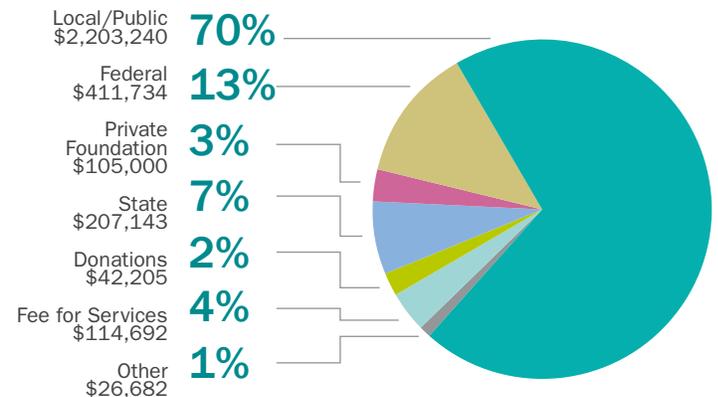
Prícila Rubio
Career Counselor-Case Manager

Christina Sedenó
Career Counselor-Case Manager

Joanna Delgado
Accounting Clerk

Nancy Sanchez
Case Aide

FUNDING PARTNERS



YEAR	FUND TYPE	AMOUNT
Donations in Kind	Donations	\$42,205
City of McAllen HPRP	Federal	\$164,577
Hidalgo County HPRP	Federal	\$227,359
STI (Stronger Together Initiative)	Federal	\$19,798
Fee for Services	Fee for Services	\$114,692
City of Edinburg EDC	Local/Public	\$220,000
City of Harlingen EDC	Local/Public	\$300,000
City of La Feria EDC	Local/Public	\$2,500
City of McAllen EDC	Local/Public	\$820,000
City of Mercedes	Local/Public	\$45,000
City of Mission EDA	Local/Public	\$125,000
City of Pharr EDC	Local/Public	\$30,000
City of Port Isabel EDC	Local/Public	\$22,500
City of Weslaco EDC	Local/Public	\$50,000
GBIC (Greater Brownsville Incentive Corp.)	Local/Public	\$250,000
Hidalgo County	Local/Public	\$279,323
Town of Combes	Local/Public	\$4,750
Willacy County	Local/Public	\$54,167
Fundraising	Other	\$26,682
The Greater Texas Foundation	Private Foundation	\$50,000
The Raul Tijerina, Jr. Foundation	Private Foundation	\$50,000
The TJX Foundation, Inc.	Private Foundation	\$5,000
Texas Comptroller JET Cameron	State	\$100,000
Texas Comptroller JET LRGV	State	\$107,143
Total		\$3,110,696

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TRUE HOMELESS PREVENTION (HPRP)

The Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and is funded through the Department of Housing and Urban Development. HPRP assists individuals who are either homeless or face the imminent threat of homelessness.

VIDA is a sub-grantee of both the City of McAllen CDBG, and as the Urban and County Office of Hidalgo County.

Committed to the notion that the only true, long-term prevention strategy to homelessness is to break the cycle of poverty, VIDA partnered with McAllen and Hidalgo County and leveraged training dollars to achieve that goal. By empowering individuals with the tools, education and training, to successfully compete for good paying, demand occupations, we are able to address and remove the threat of homelessness.

Individuals that meet the very stringent HPRP eligibility

criteria can receive rent and/or utilities for up to eighteen months. However, VIDA only assists individuals with HPRP funds if: they are faced with the threat of homelessness and they are willing to enter into a program of study and training; or they are currently in a program of study. VIDA leverages its resources to assist with the cost of training (tuition, books, uniforms, etc.) after an individual assessment of need.

The message is very clear. If an individual truly wants to make a quality of life change, VIDA, the City of McAllen, and Hidalgo County will make that investment and provide the financial assistance, career counseling, and support services. The other half of success depends on by the individual's desire and commitment.

We are very proud to report that this program had the success demonstrated below:

	DID NOT ENTER TRAINING	EXISTING VIDA	NEW VIDA	STUDENT NON-VIDA	TOTAL SERVED	GRADUATED	TRANSITION CONTINUING EDUCATION	AVERAGE WAGE				
McAllen CDBG	2	5%	20	48%	8	19%	12	29%	42	12	7	\$13.96
Hidalgo Co.	27	29%	27	29%	8	9%	38	40%	94	20	7	\$12.38
Total	29	21%	47	35%	16	12%	50	37%	136	32	14	\$12.91

79% of the individuals served with HPRP funds either entered or were able to continue with their education because of the HPRP assistance, 30% of these individuals GRADUATED from a program of study. 44% of the individuals that graduated, transitioned to the next level of education (i.e., graduated from a College Certificate Program and continued to an Associate's Degree) Average wage of the individuals that graduated and entered the workforce is **\$26,852.80**



Lorena Bocanegra

As a single parent of three children from McAllen, whose only source of income was unemployment benefits. She had been struggling to make ends meet after she was laid off from her job. Her situation became worse when she received an eviction notice. Bocanegra heard about the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP) from her landlord. She contacted VIDA and learned she could receive assistance to resolve her housing problem and assistance to get an education if she enrolled in school. Bocanegra quickly enrolled at Southern Careers Institute (SCI) to obtain a certificate in business accounting. Although enrolled at SCI, her real goal was to attend South Texas College (STC) and earn an associate's degree in Business Administration, but she felt she wasn't college ready. Bocanegra enrolled in the College Prep Academy at STC while she was attending SCI. She earned her certificate in business accounting. Through the College Prep Academy; she has already passed the reading

and writing portions of the college entrance exam. If not for the assistance she received from VIDA through HPRP, she and her family would be homeless. Today Bocanegra is working as an office manager at Alaniz Counseling and Behavioral Center earning \$28,000 a year with full benefits.



Rafael Galan

Rafael was living the American Dream. Working at Doctor's Hospital at Renaissance as a Certified First Assistant, Galan was able to provide well for his family. Suddenly, Galan, a married man with three daughters, found himself without a job. In order to make ends meet, Galan began selling his personal possessions including household items and quickly maxed out his credit cards. Before he knew it, he was three months behind on his rent and was served with an eviction notice. Galan had no family to help him and he felt hopeless. Then Galan became aware of assistance available through the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP). HPRP was able to assist Galan with his rent and utilities for up to 18 months since he was enrolled in classes. Almost 12 months to the day after Galan applied for assistance, he called his case worker and proudly informed her that he would no longer need assistance for HPRP. Galan was re-hired at Doctor's Hospital at Renaissance earning \$58,136 a year plus benefits.

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VIDA'S COLLEGE PREP ACADEMY

VIDA's College Prep Academy was created in partnership with South Texas College and has proven to be highly successful. Many new VIDA participants are academically unprepared for college. A statewide study in 2007 showed only 25% of those who took Texas' required college entrance exam passed the math section on the first attempt and enrolled in college-level classes. Community colleges enroll those who cannot pass the exam in remedial classes, but this model is not working well.

After VIDA participants attend our intensive 16 week, five days per week, six hours per day College Prep Academy, 83% of participants are college ready as they passed at least two of three sections of the college exams. Of that 83%, 66% passed all three of the sections with no further developmental education required. Additionally, 72% of the total served passed the math section of the college entrance exams in just one semester. This compares with the same 2007 group statewide mentioned above that required remediation—only 15.1% passed the math section of the exam one year later.

14

Number of College Prep Academy Sessions

224

Cumulative Enrollment

96%

Completed College Prep Academy

72%

Met Math Standards on College Entrance Exam

83%

Satisfied College Entrance Requirements

72%

Satisfied College Entrance Requirements and Started College Courses

41%**

Graduated College

77%*

Persistence Rate Graduated or Continuing Training

*77% Persistence rate in college (41% graduated and 36% still actively enrolled in college coursework)

** 79% Earned an Associate's Degree & 21% earned a certificate



Carmen Gurolla

Carmen is a perfect example of how the VIDA model works. When Gurrola first sought help from VIDA, she lived with her elderly mother, her six month old baby and a brother who is intellectually challenged. In order to better the life of her family, she knew she needed her GED. English was not her primary language, but through perseverance, she earned her GED, successfully completed the THEA Academy (an intense 16 week program, designed to prepare students for college without the need of taking remedial courses while in college) and earned her associate's degree in education. Gurrola continued her education and earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics. Gurrola is currently a math teacher and she is working on her master's degree. She plans on earning a doctorate in mathematics.

SAVE THE DATE
November 10th
Graduation Celebration & Alumni Recognition



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JOBS AND EDUCATION FOR TEXANS (JET) CLOSING REPORT



THE JOBS AND EDUCATION FOR TEXANS (JET) FUND
www.everychanceeverytexan.org

	CAMERON	LRGV
BENCHMARK	80	105
TOTAL SERVED (YTD)		113 147
GRADUATED	59	94
AVG. SALARY	\$35,942.40	\$39,644.80

In December 2008, Texas State Comptroller Susan Combs released Texas Works, a report detailing the widening gap between the skills required in today's job market and the number of graduates trained with those skills coming out of our education system. The report indicated that many Texas businesses have a hard time finding skilled technical workers, and that numerous employers indicated that dwindling enrollment in vocational training programs negatively affects their businesses. The 2009 Texas Legislature subsequently approved funding for the Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) program in response.

JET (Combined) AT A GLANCE

- > 79% Between the ages of 25-50
- > 65% Female
- > 82% Unemployed or on public assistance or both
- > 31% Single parents
- > 97% Persistence Rate

A portion of the funding supports and expands existing nonprofit programs with a proven track record of good performance such as VIDA. The money from this fund was allocated to develop, support or expand programs of nonprofit organizations that prepare low-income students for careers in high-demand occupations. These innovative and successful organizations also assist students in applying and enrolling in a public community college or technical school.



JET SUCCESS STORY: Carlos Vega

Carlos had worked hard all of his life but was still not able to provide for his wife and three kids without public assistance. Carlos' tenacity and VIDA's assistance ensured his place at the STC Spring 2011 Graduation Ceremony. Carlos earned his associate's degree in Radiologic Technology and is employed by DHR earning nearly \$39,000 plus benefits.



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PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT



GREATER TEXAS FOUNDATION



Graciela & Erika Gonzalez

Graciela & Erika, a mother/daughter team from the Mid-Valley. Both participants are sponsored by GTF and enrolled in the College Prep Academy, an intensive 16 week, five days per week, six hours per day program. Graciela, is a single parent on public assistance, who is raising her eight

year old grandson. She was cleaning

houses and baby-sitting to help make ends meet. Graciela knew she needed a better life for her grandson and herself. She needed to get an education, but it had been over 20 years since she was in school and she wasn't sure if she could handle college. After seeing an advertisement in the newspaper, Graciela contacted VIDA and was accepted into the College Prep Academy. Graciela attended class everyday. "Hard work does pay off," noted Graciela who received a perfect score on the writing portion of the college entrance exam.

She passed all three sections of the college entrance exam and has enrolled in South Texas College and has started working on her associate's degree as a computer support specialist.

Erika, Graciela's daughter, is a young single parent raising twin daughters. She also relied on public assistance with no help from the father of her children. Like her mother, Erika knew she needed to make a change in her life. She needed to get an education. It had been a while since Erika obtained her GED and she wasn't sure if she could succeed in college. Her mother told her about VIDA's College Prep Academy and asked her to apply. Attending college was demanding. It was made even more difficult by the hospitalization of one of her daughter's and the fact that Erika traveled over 3,200 miles to and from school! But Erika was determined and this mother/daughter team had a built in support system in one another so they both did well. Erika passed all three sections of the college entrance exam and has enrolled in STC and has also started work on earning an associate's degree as a computer support specialist.

GTF-CPAcad (13 STUDENTS)

- > **92% (12) Passed 3 of 3 sections**
- > **8% (1) Passed 2 of 3 sections**
- > **100% (13) College ready***
All College ready students will have registered in College credit course work this summer.
4 Technology 1 Manufacturing
3 Allied Health 4 Education/Social Work
1 Specialized Trades
- > **100% (13) Passed the Math section**

*College ready is defined as successful completion of 2 of the 3 sections of the college entrance exam which allows enrollment in college course work.



Aurora Gonzalez

Aurora, a single parent of three on public assistance, who was looking to better the lives of her children. She grew tired of dead end jobs with no future to maintain her family. She wanted to find a good paying job but she lacked the training to get one. Aurora knew she needed an education but it had been 18 years

since she was in school and she didn't think she could pass the college entrance exam. Aurora had always dreamed of being a social worker and decided it was time to make a change. She heard about VIDA's College Prep Academy, quickly applied and was accepted into the program. Through determination and hard work, Aurora passed all three sections of the college entrance exam, scored the highest test grade in the class on the math section of the exam with a 287 out of a possible 300 and is enrolled at South Texas College. She will begin college credit course work this summer working towards an associate's degree in social work.

GTF COHORT (20 INDIVIDUALS) 100% PERSISTENCE RATE

- > **65% Between the ages of 25-50**
- > **70% Female**
- > **84% Unemployed or in public assistance or both**
- > **30% Single parents**
- > **55% Two or more dependents**

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SUCCESS STORIES



Fabian Hernandez

Fabian received a medical discharge from the United States Marine Corp after being injured during a tour of duty in Iraq. During his long rehabilitation including physical therapy he decided what he wanted to do with the rest of his life. VIDA helped with expenses that his VA benefits did not cover. Fabian graduated from STC with an associate's degree in Physical Therapy and is now employed as a Physical Therapy Assistant earning \$69,000 per year

with full benefits. But that is not all that Fabian earned while in the program. He earned the heart of a fellow student and VIDA participant, Mireya Perez (employed now making \$63,500 per year). They graduated and were married. They have just welcomed a new baby to join the family alongside Mireya's older son!



Eddie Guerra

Eddie, a married father of three children returned to his home in Raymondville after a tour of duty with the United States Army in Operation Desert Storm. He was happy to be home, but he faced a huge challenge in obtaining and maintaining employment. After some time, Guerra landed a good job as a manager of a used car department of an auto agency, but the dealership was sold. Eventually Edwardo found a similar job, but

after an extended medical leave due to surgery, he lost his job. Determined to work and provide for his family, he started a landscaping business, but it provided neither the income nor the reliability to support his family. It was obvious to Edwardo that his only real solution to this recurring problem was to go to school...but how? VIDA! With funding from Willacy County, VIDA was able to help Edwardo obtain a college certificate from TSTC in Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC). Mr. Guerra is now the Maintenance and Transportation Supervisor for Santa Maria ISD earning \$38,400 per year plus benefits. Congratulations Edwardo...and thank you for serving our country!



Yvette Rivera

Yvette of McAllen entered VIDA as a single parent and unemployed looking for a better life for her and her son. Yvette earned her GED, graduated from STC with an associate's degree in Elementary Education and a bachelor's degree in Computer and Information Technology from South Texas College. She now works at her alma mater as an Open Lab Technician.

SAVE THE DATE
November 10th
Graduation Celebration & Alumni
Recognition



Elizabeth Cordero

Texas Southmost College – Brownsville; Associate's Degree in Nursing

"I was 39 years old, a wife and mother with only a high school diploma. My husband worked very hard in his own business to provide for us but the financial struggle was constant. I credit VIDA and my Career Counselor for my success throughout this journey. My counselor provided wisdom and direction and the financial support I needed to see it through to the finish line." Today Elizabeth is employed in Brownsville with a base salary of \$73,000 plus full benefits.



Emma Romero

UTPA – Bachelor's of Biology; Master's in Physicians' Assistance Studies

"I was 29 years old when I woke up and realized that I had three kids, had not finished high school, and my husband's work as a truck driver was both unreliable and dangerous. I searched and searched for help and all doors closed until I met a VIDA Counselor. I earned my GED and enrolled at UTPA. Today, I am a Physician's Assistant making \$100 per hour plus benefits. I will always be grateful to VIDA and will support the program and the new students that need VIDA as much as I did. It is an amazing program."

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SUCCESS STORIES



Juan Peña

Juan was 14 when he came to the United States and began mopping and waxing floors at a local restaurant. At 16, Peña enrolled in high school as a freshman but quickly had to quit. He lived with his aunt and uncle and he needed to work full time to help with the family expenses. Years passed and he found an opportunity in welding. With this skill he moved where the employment was and did well for ten years. After an extended lay-off,

now married and a father of three, Juan knew that Brownsville was where he wanted to raise his kids and that education was his only hope for stability. UTB-TSC offered Juan the perfect program with the HVAC certificate and EPA state certification. Today, Juan owns his own company, Ice Valley Air Conditioning in Brownsville.



Leonel Lopez

Leonel had full custody of his seven year old daughter and lived with his elderly parents. Employed part time at a hospital, Lopez worked arduously towards the completion of the LVN program. "No words can describe the feeling of gratitude. VIDA made a huge impact on my life and my family". Lopez works at a nursing home with a base salary of \$44,054 per year plus benefits.



Horacio Balli

Horacio lived in a house with his three siblings and mother, all first generation immigrants. They were supported by Horacio's mother with only \$500 per month. As the eldest child, school was not an option. Horacio had to work to help his mother support the family but part time, minimum wage was all that he could find. Balli attended an orientation at Sacred Heart in Brownsville and with VIDA's support, Horacio graduated from TSTC with an Associate's

Degree in Welding. Today, Horacio works for a compressor company and earns \$41,600 per year base salary plus benefits.



Jennifer Garcia

Jennifer, a single mother of two, shared a home in Harlingen with her mother and three siblings. With public assistance and part time minimum wage jobs, she and her mom were barely able to keep afloat. Jennifer was the oldest of seven in her family and she was driven to set the example. She was the first to graduate from high school and was the first to graduate from college. Jennifer is employed as a nurse in Harlingen earning

\$37,440 a year with benefits. "I am so grateful to VIDA and to the City of Harlingen for investing in my family's future. I am so proud to say that I am no longer on public assistance and can provide for my family on my own!"

"I have heard the testimonials and I have been moved every time I hear about these life changing stories."



"VIDA is one of these programs that truly works. I feel everybody should know about VIDA. The state of Texas, our counties, our cities, everyone should reach out and partner together to support a program like this that is truly working and making such a difference in our communities. It (VIDA) is changing the lives of these students. It is changing the lives of their families and it is bettering our community as a whole."

Veronica Gonzales

Texas State Representative-District 41

VIDA Graduate & Alumni Recognition
Celebration, October 15, 2011

SAVE THE DATE
November 10th
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Recognition

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COMMUNITY SERVICE

Cities and counties from across the Valley have supported VIDA since its inception in 1995. They have been unwavering in their commitment to education and training because it affects quality of life and, breaks the cycle of poverty, and ultimately, it is a solid investment in the economies of the region. Commitment is vital to VIDA's success. VIDA participants are required to: Commit to going to school full time; Commit to making the grade, attendance, and participation in the weekly counseling sessions with VIDA Career Counselors/ Case Managers; and Commit to community service.

"I really enjoyed getting out and cleaning up the city. I was able to help clean up where I live, and spend time with my daughter as we beautified neighborhoods," said VIDA participant Laura Aguayo when she was a student at STC pursuing an Associate's Degree in Nursing. Today Aguayo is working as a Licensed Vocational Nurse at a local hospital earning \$37,440 a year plus benefits.

"Recognizing that we are all part of the economic cycle of our community is as much a part of our education as the classroom instruction," commented a recent graduate. "Our individual success is the community's success. We have better jobs, buy homes, cars, patronize restaurants...and we must give back to our community."



"Participating in these types of events allows me to let other people know about VIDA. VIDA made a big difference in not only my life and it also had a huge impact on my family," a recent graduate said. "Today I am able to provide for my family without any public assistance."

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BACK ON TRACK A pilot program with promising results

In 2009, VIDA teamed up with the 92nd District Court Judge Ricardo Rodriguez to establish the Back on Track program. This program consists of judicially-led treatment programs for young, first time, non-violent offenders. Back on Track involves comprehensive, extensive supervision, intensive face to face interaction with a judicial authority, immediate treatment, swift reactions and sanctions to relapse and an environment focused intensively on marshaling community resources towards success. According to a 2002 study by the Criminal Justice Policy Council, defendants that completed the program have a 3.4% recidivism rate compared to 21.1% of those who did not complete and 26.6% of those who did not participate in the program.

VIDA approached Judge Rodriguez and juvenile probation authorities and asked to take the Back on

Track program in Hidalgo County a step further by offering VIDA's post secondary education component as part of the treatment program. Judge Rodriguez, a strong proponent of education as a deterrent to crime, invited VIDA to be a part of the counseling mandated by the judge. VIDA's initial role is to inform the defendants of post secondary education opportunities and the direct tie to demand occupations. Interested and eligible defendants enter a program of study and VIDA then leverages its training dollars to provide the program model services. Upon successful completion of the program, the participant's offense is stricken from their record resulting in a clean slate and allowing the participants a fresh start.



Juan Pablo Benavidez

Juan Pablo is a first generation immigrant to the United States. He, his parents, and his three siblings were migrant workers since his arrival in this country at the age of 3. His family worked long and hard and for years Juan Pablo knew that he did not want to be a laborer all of his life. Bad judgment landed him in the 92nd District Court where Judge Ricardo Rodriguez placed Benavidez in the Back on Track program. Judge Rodriguez's pilot program gives first time, non-violent offenders a chance to correct their mistakes and upon successful completion, their offenses will be stricken from their records. Juan Pablo entered VIDA's College Prep Academy at STC and has completed his second semester in pursuit of an associate's degree in Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning. Juan Pablo is an excellent student, an effective mentor, and is fully committed to a bright future.



Juan Carlos Montelongo

Juan Carlos emigrated from Mexico at the age of 14 with his grandparents. Montelongo, a child of parents that had their own interior design business, was used to the good life and money wasn't a problem for his family. He had aspirations of going to college and getting a degree, securing a good paying job and earning his own money. He completed high school and started college shortly thereafter. However, those dreams were shattered when the family business fell on hard times and eventually his parents had to file for bankruptcy. With no income, many of the things Montelongo was used to were no longer available. Unfortunately, he made decisions that resulted in his arrest. While in the judicial system, Montelongo learned about Back on Track, a program that gives first time non-violent offenders a chance to correct their mistakes. Montelongo wanted to straighten up his life and he knew the key was to earn his degree. Montelongo learned about VIDA from a session he attended as part of the Back on Track program, and he was encouraged to apply for assistance from VIDA to return to school. He was accepted and is currently enrolled at South Texas College and is working towards an associate's degree in Import/Export and is on track to graduate in the Fall of 2012. Montelongo is truly dedicated to making up for mistakes he made, and with the support Back on Track and VIDA, he will succeed.

- > Since 2006, VIDA has served 92 Valley residents with criminal backgrounds and proudly boasts an 88% persistence rate in their pursuit of a post secondary credential.
- > 58% graduated and earn an average annual salary of \$29,640 plus benefits.

VIDA 2011 annual report

FUNDING PARTNERS

ISIS

**INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR
INCREASING SELF-SUFFICIENCY**

VIDA, one of nine programs from across the nation, was selected in 2011 as a key partner for the nationwide Innovative Strategies for Increasing Self Sufficiency (ISIS) evaluation project. ISIS is providing a rigorous evaluation of next-generation strategies for increasing the economic self-sufficiency of low-income individuals and families. The project is evaluating nine innovative workforce training approaches aimed at increasing access and completion of post secondary career pathways across the US. The ISIS grant was awarded to Abt & Associates, a leader in research based in Maryland and is fully funded by the U.S. Health and Human Services Planning, Research and Evaluation Office of the Administration for Children and Families.

VIDA was chosen because our innovative and comprehensive strategies have resulted in high graduation rates and in helping disadvantaged adults access college-level training. ISIS is particularly interested in VIDA because the program holds great promise for impacting policymakers and funders. An ISIS test of VIDA will contribute to understanding the extent to which providing strong educational, personal, and financial supports helps motivated low-income individuals attain high-wage jobs and supply skilled workers in areas of the economy with skill shortages. In addition, our sister organizations in Tucson, San Antonio, Austin, Dallas, Houston, El Paso, and Louisiana have similarly high success rates and share the program delivery model used at VIDA. Policy makers and practitioners have grown increasingly interested in these efforts, and as such, VIDA's participation in this project will provide highly credible findings which may be applied to other organizations and those interested in further replicating the model.

An exciting aspect of the ISIS evaluation is that national & local funders are stepping up and investing in the expansion of VIDA's program model in the Rio Grande Valley.



**OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS**

The Open Society Foundations (OSF) was the first funder to invest in the 250 participants who we are enrolling in VIDA and the ISIS Project. Their very generous grant over the next two years was made through Abt Associates, the coordinator of ISIS. OSF works to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. To achieve this mission, OSF seeks to shape public policies that assure greater

fairness in political, legal, and economic systems and safeguard fundamental rights. On a local level, the OSF implements a range of initiatives to advance justice, education, public health, and independent media. OSF places a high priority on protecting and improving the lives of people in marginalized communities.

Investor and philanthropist George Soros established the Open Society Foundations, starting in 1984, to build vibrant and tolerant societies whose governments are accountable and open to the participation of all people. OSF activities have grown to encompass the United States and more than 70 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America.



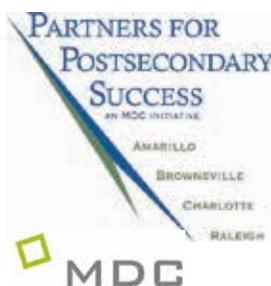
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FUNDING PARTNERS



South Texas College (STC), Workforce Solutions LRGV and VIDA partnered in 2009 on a pilot project funded by Jobs for the Future. This Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) Career Pathway has provided 24 individuals the opportunity to prepare concurrently for a GED and a Certified Nursing Assistant license. Participants then progress seamlessly into a concurrent curriculum for Patient Care Assistant Certificate and a hybrid of the College Prep Academy to prepare for the college entrance exam. Once completed, this accelerated program design leads participants directly into the LVN program.

The average age of the participants in this pilot is 36 years old and 75% are first generation immigrants from Mexico. This unique program allows individuals, who are not English proficient, the chance to start with a GED and propel forward toward an LVN career pathway. We are proud to report that nearly three years into the partnership, there is an 83% retention rate. Jobs for the Future identifies, develops and promotes new education and workforce strategies that help communities, states and the nation compete in a global economy. Jobs for the Future improves the pathways leading from high school to college to family-sustaining careers.



For generations of Americans, the high school diploma delivered on the value of an education. It gave you a ticket to the American Dream. That meant a steady job to support your family and a chance to launch a career. But now, high school is no longer enough. The median wage for workers with no college is now close to the poverty line for a family of four. That leaves only one path out of poverty: education—a college education. Whether it comes as a Certificate, an Associate's degree, or a Bachelor's degree, a postsecondary credential is the best bridge between poor students and good jobs.

The Partners for Postsecondary Success (PPS), an MDC Initiative, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation recognizes the seriousness of the fact that while college enrollment has grown nearly 35 percent since the 1970's, college completion rates have faltered dramatically during the same time period. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has allocated funds to various organizations including PPS to address the problem of young people enrolling in college but failing to get a certificate or degree. The PPS team is led by the United Way of Brownsville and includes the Brownsville Independent School District, University of Texas–Brownsville, Texas Southmost College, the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce, Brownsville Economic Development Corporation and VIDA. The PPS-Brownsville's plan was funded and the work has commenced to double the number of young adults (ages 16-26) who earn a postsecondary credential with labor market value by 2025.

The Meadows
Foundation

THE RAUL TIJERINA JR. FOUNDATION



The
Trull Foundation





Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement

2011 ANNUAL REPORT

Impacting sustainable economic growth in the region...
one VIDA at a time