

# VIDA

Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement



## 2013 ANNUAL REPORT

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

# A message from the **Chairman of the Board**

It has been a little over five years since we felt the impact of the economic recession that brought higher than usual unemployment, a slowdown in the housing market, and an increase in the use of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The Rio Grande Valley (RGV) and the communities throughout the region felt the impact. And like true Americans as a region we found the solutions by reaching out to each other, forging partnerships, collaborating on special initiatives and coupling resources whenever possible.

What is clear about the RGV is that it has an abundance of leaders committed to the region with the vision and foresight to recognize that the path to economic recovery is to invest in its citizens that are the engine that drives our economy. The Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement (VIDA) is fortunate to have developed strong partnerships since its inception in 1995 supported by appointed and elected public officials.

Over the last year we have seen the positive results of what can happen when we are willing to invest in human capital: people join the ranks of the employed, businesses get a better trained and educated workforce, not to mention the business recruitment and retention that is facilitated when a region places training and education as its utmost priority.

Over the last year, we observed the evolution of a regional effort to secure a regional medical university which now bears the name of "The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley" (UTRGV) that will focus on medical research and more importantly, spur industry activity and expand a growing sector for the region. More than ever, as a region, we at VIDA need to continue to invest in our workforce by providing training and education in order to be ready for the demand occupations that will be created by UTRGV.

Our mission has always been and will be continue "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 skills, high wage jobs identified in the region." The program provides job-training services to economically disadvantaged, unemployed, and underemployed adults with family responsibilities.

The VIDA board and staff will continue to support business and industry in a manner that will be flexible and adaptable to their quickly changing needs. We will always continue to support our students in a manner that assures high retention rates and constantly strive for success.

Tony Aguirre



Chairman of the Board

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Law Office of Eduardo Anaya-Pharr

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Joslin Diabetes Center at DHR

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St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

Ms. Rosalie Tristan  
Valley Interfaith -Willacy County

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Sister Mignonne Konecny-VIF



## 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 sufficient taxpayers who generate a clear return on investment of federal, state, local and private funding.

Our graduates not only helped the families they support and the businesses that now employ them, but their ability to successfully rise from the ranks of the 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 demand occupations that normally were jobs unfilled or filled at a very high cost by people outside of our community.

## History & 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.

Impacting Sustainable Economic Growth in the Region... One **VIDA** at a time.

## FY 2012 - 2013 AT A GLANCE

- > 66% Between the Ages of 25-50
- > 72% Female
- > 58% Public Assistance or Unemployed
- > 42% Single Parents
- > 24% Three Dependent Children or more in Household

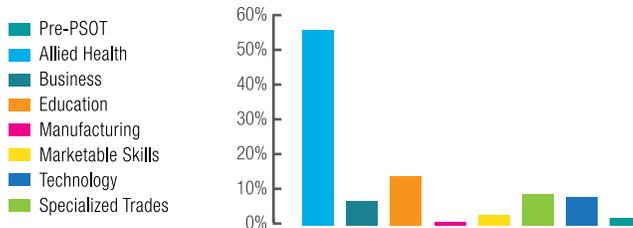
## 648 Economically Disadvantaged Adults Served

Average Salary Reported for 2012-2013 Graduates

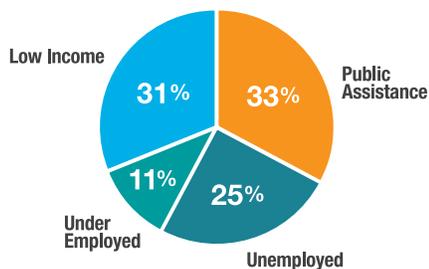
# \$33,092.00

<b>GRADUATES COMPLETERS</b>	ASSOCIATES 57%	BACHELORS 7%	CERTIFICATE 31%	MARKETABLE SKILLS 5%	
<b>ACTIVE STUDENTS</b>	ASSOCIATES 69%	BACHELORS 4%	CERTIFICATE 23%	MARKETABLE SKILLS 2%	ADULT BASIC ED 2%

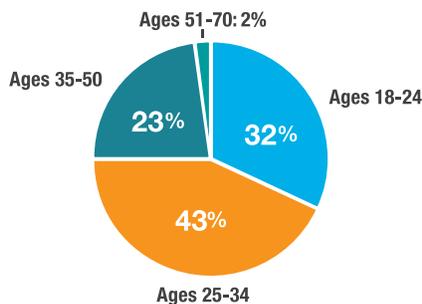
## INDUSTRY ANALYSIS



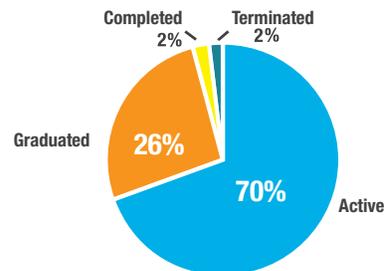
### FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY



### PARTICIPANT AGE



### PERSISTENCE RATE



We have an obligation and a responsibility to be investing in our students and our schools. We must make sure that people who have the grades, the desire and the will, but not the money, can still get the best education possible.

BARRACK OBAMA  
President of the United States.



***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)

# Funding Partners

## The Hearst Foundation

The Hearst Foundations are national philanthropic resources for organizations and institutions working in the fields of Education, Health, Culture and Social Service. Their goal is to ensure that people of all backgrounds have the opportunity to build healthy, productive and inspiring lives. The charitable goals of the Foundations reflect the philanthropic interests of William Randolph Hearst. The Hearst Foundations fund direct-service organizations that tackle the roots of chronic poverty by applying effective solutions to the most challenging social and economic problems. The Foundations prioritize supporting programs like VIDA that have proven successful in facilitating economic independence and in strengthening families. Preference is also given to programs with the potential to scale productive practices in order to reach more people in need.

## The Meadows Foundation

The Meadows Foundation awarded VIDA a grant to provide educational and job training opportunities as well as supportive services to motivated, low-income adults in the Rio Grande Valley.

The Meadows Foundation was established by Algur H. and Virginia S. Meadows from wealth accumulated through the creation of General American Oil Company, at one time among the largest private oil and gas companies in the United States. Meadows established the Foundation in perpetuity and stipulated that its charitable work be governed by his descendants and trusted advisors, so that they might carry on a legacy of giving in the family name. The Meadows Foundation exists to assist people and institutions of Texas improve the quality and circumstances of life for themselves and future generations. Through organizations like VIDA, the Meadows Foundation is making an investment in the character and strength of our communities, our state, and our nation for this and future generations.

## The Raul Tijerina Jr. Foundation

The Raul Tijerina Jr. Foundation is a private foundation which provides grant funding to nonprofit organizations and programs in Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy Counties, Texas. The mission of the Tijerina Foundation is to enrich life in South Texas by supporting and encouraging organizations that promote and advance education and youth programs, health and human service programs, community development programs and cultural, arts, and humanities programs. VIDA understands that true economic prosperity along the border is directly related to the area's ability to improve the educational and skill level of our residents. With VIDA's proven model of success of helping low-income individuals climb out of poverty, and with assistance from the Raul Tijerina Jr. Foundation, VIDA continues its mission to transform lives.

## JP Morgan Chase Bank

JPMorgan Chase Bank works with community organizations, governments, and businesses of all sizes to help create jobs and prepare workers for the employment opportunities available in today's economy. They support new businesses, help grow and sustain existing ones, and attract the investment needed to expand regional economies. JPMorgan Chase Bank funds regional, state, and local economic development planning and make grants that provide small business owners with specialized technical assistance, increased access to capital, and other assistance to help their businesses grow.

## The Trull Foundation

This past year, VIDA was awarded a grant by the Trull Foundation. For over sixty years The Trull Foundation has been actively interested in various educational, religious, cultural and social programs, the majority of which have been in the State of Texas. The Trull Foundation continues to be concerned with people, with improving the quality of life, especially for those living in poor or oppressed conditions.

## REVENUE & OTHER SUPPORT

SOURCE	FUND TYPE	AMOUNT
City of McAllen EDC	Local/Public	\$902,000
City of Harlingen EDC	Local/Public	\$150,000
City of Mercedes	Local/Public	\$45,000
City of Weslaco EDC	Local/Public	\$61,105
City of Brownsville EDC	Local/Public	\$281,875
City of La Feria	Local/Public	\$2,500
City of Edinburg EDC	Local/Public	\$272,855
City of Pharr EDC	Local/Public	\$46,250
Willacy County	Local/Public	\$50,000
Hidalgo County	Local/Public	\$250,000
The Greater Texas Foundation	Private Foundation	\$40,000
The Trull Foundation	Private Foundation	\$7,000
Open Society Foundations	Private Foundation	\$525,000
JPMorgan Chase Bank	Private Foundation	\$35,000
Abt Associates Inc.	Fee for Service	\$309,790
The Kresge Foundation	Private Foundation	\$175,000
The Raul Tijerina Jr. Foundation	Private Foundation	\$20,000
The Meadows Foundation	Private Foundation	\$97,000
InKind Contributions	Donations	\$42,205
Fundraising	Other	\$61,089
Other	Other	\$1,266
Total Revenue & other support		\$3,374,935



***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)

# Community Service

The cities and counties that support VIDA have been unwavering in their commitment to education and training and its effect on quality of life, breaking the cycle of poverty, and ultimately, as a solid investment in economic development in the region. VIDA participants are

to commit to community service.

VIDA teamed up with the City of McAllen, the City of Edinburg, the City of Pharr, the City of Harlingen and the City of Edinburg to partake in the *Great American Cleanup*. The *Don't mess with Texas Trash-Off* serves as Texas' signature

Texas Beautiful and the Texas Department of Transportation.

Additionally, this past summer, VIDA participants attended "Los Encinos Park Playscape Mulching Project". The City of McAllen requested 20-30 students but over 54 participants attended this

*“ For me, this event was family time. I was able to spend time with my kids while giving back to city that helps cover the cost of my studies. It is a day that I will always remember. ”*

required to commit. 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

event for the Great American Cleanup, the nation's largest community improvement program, held annually during spring. The *Don't mess with Texas Trash-Off* is part of the partnership between Keep

event. Volunteers helped with the placement of the splinter mulch by spreading the mulch with shovels, pitch forks and rakes to get the playscape ready for public use.



*“ Every time I drive by the park, I will remember when my daughter and I helped build the playscape. We see it as our park. ”*

# Success Stories



## San Juanita Vasquez

San Juanita, a married mother of three from Weslaco, was on public assistance and worked full-time in the delicatessen department at a major retail store.

As a young girl, San Juanita was always one to help others and she considered becoming a social worker but felt she was better suited to be a teacher. She married shortly after high school and before she knew it, she was the mother of three. San Juanita never gave up on her dream of becoming a teacher.

She began taking classes part-time as her work schedule allowed. She eventually earned an associate's degree in elementary education in 2010 from South Texas College and continued her educational trek at the University of Texas-Pan American for the remaining two years. To help make ends meet, on days that she didn't have class, San Juanita worked as a substitute teacher. Right before the end of her first year at UTPA, she received notice that she had exhausted all of her federal financial aid. She was worried on how to pay for her classes in the last two

semesters. She was even more concerned with her last semester since she would be doing her student-teaching which she is required to do every day of the week, thus not allowing her to substitute teach.

All those concerns went away when she received assistance from VIDA and with VIDA's help, San Juanita was able to see her dream come true as she graduated from UTPA with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. Today San Juanita is employed as an elementary teacher with Donna Independent School District earning \$42,598 a year with full benefits.

## Jose Cavazos

Jose Cavazos, a married father of four from Weslaco was on public assistance and struggled to maintain his household. He wanted a better life for his family. A former migrant worker, Jose, no stranger to hard work, knew the key to making a change in his life was through education. He enrolled at Texas State Technical College in Harlingen working towards earning a degree in Computer Systems Management Technology. After his first semester, Jose began to receive assistance from VIDA. He was a very dedicated student. Despite working part-time all throughout school, Jose was named to the President's list for each of the semesters he was in school and graduated with a perfect 4.0 GPA. Jose graduated with an associate's degree in Computer Systems Management Technology from TSTC and is currently working for Barcom Technology Solutions earning \$32,240 per year with full benefits.



## RISING STARS



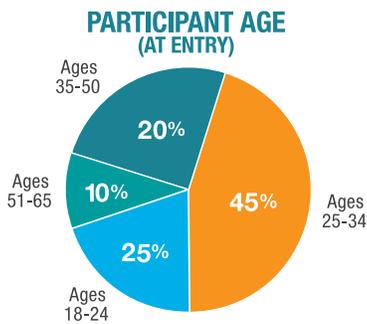
## GRACIANO GONZALEZ

For 20 years, Graciano Gonzalez, a widower from McAllen, worked for an architectural firm. He suddenly found out the firm was closing down. At the age of 45 and with no formal education, Graciano was now in an unfamiliar situation: unemployed.

Graciano found out quickly work can be hard to find. Since he had worked with a draftsman, he was very interested in computer drafting, but again, he lacked the formal education and it had been over 25 years since was in high school. Then one day, he came across a newspaper ad for VIDA's College Prep Academy and registered for it. Graciano passed all three sections of the college entrance exam and he enrolled at South Texas College working towards a degree in Computer Drafting Design Technology. Graciano will graduate in the spring of 2015.

## The Greater Texas Foundation

The Greater Texas Foundation (GTF) supports efforts to ensure all Texas students are prepared for, have access to, persist in, and complete postsecondary education. GTF puts particular focus on helping underserved and disadvantaged populations. They pursue their mission by forming partnerships, supporting research, sharing knowledge, and making grants. GTF knows that an educated workforce is essential for our dynamic economy, particularly as Texas businesses continue to expand and new companies relocate to our state. VIDA combines financial assistance with wrap around support services — including an intensive single-semester developmental education sequence in partnership with South Texas College — for the underserved adults who are motivated to attend college. With the funds received from the GTF, VIDA participants will receive need-based financial support including tuition, fees, books, childcare, transportation and emergency assistance as determined through an individual assessment of need.



### GTF Cohort (20 Individuals) 85% PERSISTENCE RATE

- 65% Between the Ages of 25-50
- 75% Female
- 84% Unemployed or on Public Assistance or Both
- 50% Single Parents
- 45% Two or More Dependents

### GTF - CPAcad (13 STUDENTS)

- 69% (9) Passed 3 of 3 Section
- 23% (3) Passed 2 of 3 Section
- 92% (12) College Ready\*

All College Ready Students have registered in college credit course work

- 4-Technology
- 2- Allied Health
- 1- Specialized Trades
- 1-Manufacturing
- 5- Education/Social Work

85% (11) 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 credit courses work

### GTF - PSOT (07 STUDENTS)

All seven had successfully completed the VIDA CPAcad immediately preceding GTF Funding

	AGE	GENDER	MARITAL STATUS	DEPENDENTS	EDUCATION	MATH	READING	WRITING
1	55	F	Single Parent	1	HS	Y	Y	Y
2	51	F	Single Parent	1	HS	Y	Y	Y
3	45	M	Single	0	HS	Y	Y	Y
4	36	F	Single Parent	3	HS	Y	Y	Y
5	30	F	Single Parent	3	HS	Y	Y	Y
6	30	F	Married/Children	3	HS	--	Y	Y
7	28	F	Married/Children	4	HS	Y	Y	Y
8	27	F	Married	0	HS	Y	Y	Y
9	26	F	Single Parent	2	HS	Y	Y	Y
10	21	M	Single	0	GED	Y	Y	Y
11	20	M	Single Parent	2	GED	Y	Y	Y
12	18	F	Single	0	HS	Y	--	--
13	18	M	Single	0	HS	Y	--	Y

	AGE	GENDER	MARITAL STATUS	DEPENDENTS	EDUCATION	PROGRAM OF STUDY	GRADUATION
1	46	M	M	0	HS	PTA	Fall 2016
2	39	F	SP	2	GED	Accounting	Spring 2014
3	34	M	M	1	GED	IT	Fall 2014
4	31	F	SP	2	GED	ADN	Fall 2014
*5	30	F	SP	4	HS	Accounting	Spring 2016
**6	26	F	M	0	HS	EC-6th	Fall 2016
7	23	F	SP	1	HS	ADN	Fall 2014

\* GRADUATED  
\*\*GRADUATED & TRANSITIONED

[www.greatertexasfoundation.org](http://www.greatertexasfoundation.org)

## 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%, sixty-six percent 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 statewide group mentioned above that required remediation—only 15.1% passed the math section of the exam one year later.

17

Number of College Prep Academy Sessions

258

Cumulative Enrollment

94%

Complete College Prep Academy

69%

Met Math Standards on College Entrance Exam

82%

Satisfied College Entrance Requirements

73%

Satisfied College Entrance Requirements and Started College Courses

\*\*37%

Graduated College

\*84%

Persistence Rate Graduated or Continuing Training

\*84% Persistence rate in college (37% graduated and 47% still actively enrolled in college course work)

\*\*81% Earned an Associate's Degree & 23% earned a certificate

# Collaborative Partners

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**RGV FOCUS**

*a collaboration with Educate Texas*

*Communities united for educational success*

In 2012, the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Collective Impact initiative, now RGV FOCUS, was launched to transform college readiness, access, and success across the four county region. Initially founded by a group of district superintendents and higher education presidents, the collaborative has grown to include a powerful collective of educators, nonprofits such as VIDA, community groups, funders, and business and civic leaders dedicated to making major, systemic improvements to educational and career attainment in the RGV. The effort is guided by the following shared vision:

All RGV learners will achieve a degree or credential that leads to a meaningful career. RGV Focus will do this by strengthening each step of the educational pipeline; better connecting the pipeline; and aligning community resources to provide the supports learners need to succeed throughout high school and postsecondary in order to pursue a meaningful career in the RGV and beyond.

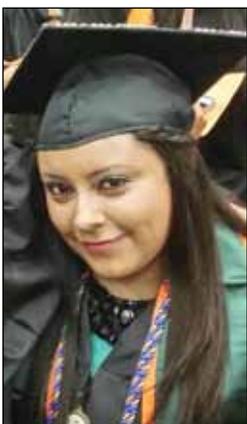
Since May 2012 this cross-sector group of leaders – the “Leadership Team” – has met regularly to identify assets and needs in the RGV, adopt a common vision, and identify shared goals, strategies, and metrics. The Leadership Team has also founded two “Action Groups” and “Data Support Council” that have led development of strategies and metrics and will spearhead implementation.

#### **THE GOALS OF RGV FOCUS ARE:**

- All RGV students graduate high school college ready
- All postsecondary students can achieve a degree or credential on time
- All high school graduates transition to postsecondary within a year
- All postsecondary graduates can be employed within 6 months

RGV Focus feels they will attain these goals because they are focused on students and their experiences, strengths challenges, and aspirations. The strategies they pursue are transformational both for individual institutions and the RGV at large. They collaborate across institutions and sectors, and invest the resources to ensure this collaboration will be sustained. Their work is community centered and depends on the voices of many organizations and individuals across the RGV and they are evidence driven in our approach and use shared data and metrics to drive constant improvement across the region.

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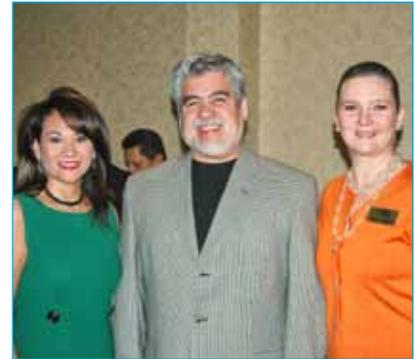
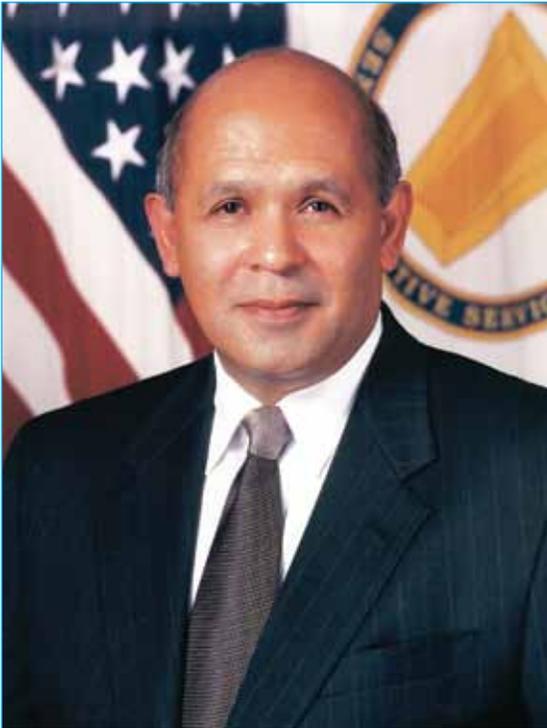


### **Priscilla Aguilar**

Priscilla, the oldest of three siblings saw firsthand the struggles a family faces when living below the poverty line. Her father worked at a restaurant supply company but that didn't provide enough income for a household of five.

As a full-time student, Priscilla worked during the summer between semesters to help with the household expenses, that was until she was accepted into the nursing program at the University of Texas-Pan American. The nursing program is a very demanding program and those in the program find it extremely difficult to work and attend class. Priscilla heard of VIDA and applied for assistance and was accepted. This gave her the ability to concentrate on her studies and be an example for her two younger sisters.

This past May, Priscilla walked across the stage and received her Bachelor's Degree in Nursing and she recently passed her state board exam. Today, she is employed at Doctor's Hospital at Renaissance earning \$46,800 per year with full benefits.



*“ I have the great fortune of joining a team that is clearly unified in its vision, purpose and mission. It is clear that community leaders throughout the Rio Grande Valley are committed to serving the citizens of the region. ”*

After six years at the helm of Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement (VIDA), Myra Caridad García stepped down as Executive Director of the community based non profit to attend to family medical issues. During those six years, García took over a struggling organization and turned it into the healthy community based program that it is today. Successful collaborations with national philanthropic organizations have brought millions of dollars to help the underserved adult population of the Rio Grande Valley. Most notable of García's successes was the selection of VIDa to be one of nine programs from across the nation – the only Texas based organization - to be a key partner for the nationwide Innovative Strategies for Increasing Self Sufficiency (ISIS) evaluation project. ISIS is an evaluation of promising program models with proven track records of success in assisting economically disadvantaged adults in the United States achieve self-sufficiency. VIDa's model has received national recognition and with that, nearly \$2 million dollars of additional training dollars for

the Rio Grande Valley. ISIS is administered through Abt Associates and is fully funded by the U.S. Health and Human Services Planning, Research and Evaluation Office of the Administration for Children and Families.

The VIDa board of directors hired Victor Vasquez to take over as Executive Director. Vasquez served in the administrations of President Clinton and President Obama. He first entered federal service under President Clinton as the Deputy Administrator for Rural Development, launching the Rural Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Communities and then as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Department of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy. Most recently, Vasquez served in President Obama's Administration as Deputy Under Secretary at the United States Department of Agriculture. Vasquez comes in on the heels of recent exciting announcements. VIDa was recently awarded \$500,000 from the Texas Innovative Adult Career Education (ACE) Grant Program to fund workforce and economic development efforts in Texas.

Additionally, VIDa secured a \$100,000 grant from Educate Texas, earmarked to move College Prep Academy completers forward through the educational pipeline and enroll in course work that ultimately will lead to an associate's degree or a college certification.

“It is an honor to have been offered the opportunity to serve as the Executive Director of VIDa, an organization that has built a reputation of success and strong leadership,” said Vasquez. “I have the great fortune of joining a team that is clearly unified in its vision, purpose and mission. It is clear that community leaders throughout the Rio Grande Valley are committed to serving the citizens of the region.”

The majority of his work has been in the area of education and community and economic development. Throughout his career, he has focused his interest in community empowerment, local decision-making, leadership, and developing economic development strategies in impoverished regions.

# Funding Partners

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## ISIS

INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR  
INCREASING SELF-SUFFICIENCY

The Innovative Strategies for Increasing Self Sufficiency (ISIS), is an evaluation that is a project of the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation Office of the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Abt Associates, a highly qualified national research firm, and its research partners, is conducting the evaluation. VIDA has been chosen as the only Texas-based organization to participate in this national study of promising programs designed to assist low-income individuals in career pathways. ISIS is a flagship evaluation of promising next generation strategies sponsored by the Administration for Children & Families. ISIS will provide highly credible information on the effectiveness of career pathway approaches that will be useful to practitioners and policymakers. One of ISIS' central principles is to identify a few key program interventions and test them thoroughly using random assignment study designs in nine sites. The ISIS evaluation will include an impact analysis measuring the effects of the program on individuals' completion of valuable degrees and certificates, earnings, and other outcomes. It will also include studies of program implementation and operations, and a cost-benefit analysis.

[www.projectisis.org](http://www.projectisis.org)

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## THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

VIDA enters its third year of a three-year grant from the Kresge Foundation, a \$3 billion private, national foundation headquartered in Metropolitan Detroit, in the suburb community of Troy. Kresge's broad fields of interest have become seven narrowly defined programs – Arts and Culture, Community Development, Detroit, Education, Environment, Health, and Human Services. Each has a particular point of view with long-term goals and strategies to guide our grant making and investing. Kresge partners with those committed to the needs of poor individuals and communities – small, mid-size and large nonprofit organizations, intermediaries, and the public and private sectors. VIDA received its award under Kresge's Human Services program which seeks to “expand access and opportunities for vulnerable, disadvantaged and low-income individuals and families by strengthening nonprofit organizations and generating new knowledge about efforts to ameliorate and, create pathways out of, poverty”. As a condition of the grant, VIDA agrees to host an annual Peer Learning conference. The purpose of the conference is to develop a structured referral and cross support system with organizations that serve the most vulnerable of our population (i.e., the homeless, the abused, the disabled, the misguided). Organizations with whom we intend to strengthen our alliance include but are not limited to ARCH, the Salvation Army, Loaves & Fishes, the Catholic Diocese, and local housing programs.

[www.kresge.org](http://www.kresge.org)

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The Meadows  
Foundation

THE RAUL TIJERINA JR. FOUNDATION

**TJX**  
THE TJX COMPANIES, INC.

BILL & MELINDA  
GATES foundation

The  
Trull Foundation

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***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)



## Clarissa Ayala

Clarissa Ayala, a single parent of two young children from McAllen, was on public assistance and unemployed. She donated plasma every week to help make ends meet. With little help from the father of her children, life had been a struggle since the birth of her first child. Clarissa was no stranger to struggles. As a child, her mother passed from cancer, leaving her the responsibility of helping to raise her deaf sister. Clarissa learned American Sign Language (ASL), a skill that proved to be beneficial not only to her sister, but to herself as well. Clarissa decided to enroll at South Texas College (STC) and work towards an associate's degree as an ASL Interpreter, but she needed help to cover the cost of a college education. That's when she heard about VIDA and she quickly applied for assistance and was accepted. Clarissa will graduate from STC at the end of July and already has a job offer with a salary of \$30,000 per year plus full benefits as an ASL Interpreter!

## Enrique Vasquez

Enrique Vasquez, a 37-year old Brownsville resident, struggled to make ends meet when he came to VIDA. He had recently separated from his wife, but was still supporting her and their three children. He had been laid off and was unemployed. With his unemployment benefits running out, he was overwhelmed trying to figure out how he was going to pay the mortgage on the house for his family. With the help of VIDA, Enrique was able to attend Texas State Technical College (TSTC) and earn a certificate in Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration (HVAC). Today, Enrique is working as a HVAC Technician making \$36,400 plus benefits a year in Brownsville.



## Maria Chavez

Maria Chavez, a married mother of five (all girls), was a homemaker raising her family in Sebastian when her husband lost his job. Unemployed and on public assistance, Maria and her husband struggled to make ends meet. Maria knew she needed to find a job but lacked the education to get a job that could pay a living wage. She knew she needed to go to college. With VIDA's help, Maria enrolled at Texas State Technical College (TSTC) in Harlingen and began working on an Associate's Degree in Business Management. Determined to be a role model for her daughters, Maria graduated from TSTC and is now an Assistant General Manager for Wal-Mart in Port Isabel with a base salary of \$40,000 per year plus bonuses and benefits.

"I am deeply grateful to VIDA for all the support and assistance I received while I attended TSTC," said Maria Chavez. "I strongly believe there was no way I could accomplish my goal without VIDA," added Chavez.

## Kevin Ayala

Kevin Ayala, a married father of one (and one on the way) from Mission, was on public assistance attending South Texas College in McAllen when he sought help from VIDA. Kevin was studying to be an Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) and was already in the OTA program. As part of his course requirements he needed to do 50 hours of observation but Kevin did over 300 hours. He truly wanted to succeed.

A few months before Kevin applied for assistance from VIDA, his daughter was diagnosed with cancer and required chemotherapy. Kevin had plenty on his mind, but knew he didn't have to worry about how he would have to pay for tuition and books thanks to the assistance from VIDA. Kevin, a man of faith, was very appreciative of the care his daughter received at the clinic. He organized a toy drive for the clinic to give to the children that received treatment there.

With VIDA's help, Kevin completed his OTA course work at STC and earned his associate's degree. Today, Kevin is working at Village Healthcare and Rehabilitation in McAllen, Texas earning \$72,800 a year plus benefits.



# Funding Partners

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## OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

Investor and philanthropist George Soros established the Open Society Foundations (OSF), starting in 1984, to help countries make the transition from communism. OSF activities have grown to encompass the United States and more than 70 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

OSF awarded an \$8 million grant to Abt Associates to support efforts to identify effective models for helping low-income, low-skilled people become economically self-sufficient. The funds will enhance the work on a major federal project, Innovative Strategies for Increasing Self-Sufficiency (ISIS), commissioned by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to evaluate exemplary career pathway programs across the nation. OSF was the first funder to invest in the 500 participants that VIDA enrolled in the ISIS project.

[www.opensocietyfoundations.org](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org)

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## Project GROW

*Growing Regional Opportunities for the Workforce*

Growing Regional Opportunities for the Workforce, or GROW, a three-year project will increase skills training and English literacy for eligible participants who live along the border. Project GROW was one of 26 grantees selected from more than 5,000 applicants nationwide for the Workforce Innovation Fund, a Labor Department grant pool created to test innovative approaches to workforce training. Made up of the Cameron, Lower Rio, Middle Rio, South Texas, and Upper Rio Workforce Investment Boards, Project GROW will partner with regional employers, one-stop operators, community colleges, training providers, and community-based organizations such as VIDA, and with national workforce intermediary Jobs for the Future, to align and strengthen workforce system components to accelerate credential attainment and career entry by lower-skilled adults to meet the workforce needs to area employers. Project GROW will assist participants from the start of the program until the end with everything from career counselors who guide their progress to support services, such as childcare and tuition assistance. The project is designed to take underprepared adults and segment them based on particular needs and career goals.

[www.wfsolutions.com/projectgrow](http://www.wfsolutions.com/projectgrow)

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### Luis Baños

Luis Baños, an 18 year Army veteran returned to his wife and children after serving 10 months in Iraq. Shortly thereafter, Luis was honorably discharged and began his civilian life working for an electric company, a job he held until he was laid off. At that point, Luis decided he needed to go to school to get an education to better the life of his family.

Luis had experience working as an electrician and decided to take that experience and apply it to an emerging field. That field, Wind, Energy & Turbine Technology, would enable him to provide for his family. With help from the GI Bill and VIDA, Luis enrolled at Texas Southmost College and earned a college certificate in Wind, Energy & Turbine Technology.

Luis is now employed with a well established electric company earning \$30,000 per year plus benefits. Luis is also an active member of the Army National Guard, a true testament of his dedication to his country.



## EDUCATE TEXAS

a public-private initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas

A leading catalyst for progress, Educate Texas is an innovative public-private partnership focused on a common goal: Improving the public education system so that every Texas student is prepared for success in school, in the workforce, and in life. Educate Texas has been nationally recognized for tapping into a bold and collaborative approach for creating transformational change for Texas students. Educate Texas is leveraging the power of collaboration, bringing together resources and expertise. Educate Texas' public-private partnership includes: the Texas Education Agency; Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board; Office of the Governor; Texas Legislature; Communities Foundation of Texas; Michael & Susan Dell Foundation; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Greater Texas Foundation; Houston Endowment; The Meadows Foundation; National Instruments and Texas Instruments Foundation.



## MDC/PPS

MDC's Partners for Postsecondary Success (PPS) program is a three-year demonstration to build community partnerships that significantly raise the number of low-income young adults completing postsecondary credentials relevant to living wage work. Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the initiative examines two related but different lines of inquiry: first, are high-capacity community partnerships effective vehicles for improving postsecondary completion rates for low-income young adults, and second, is MDC's methodology for helping communities develop such partnerships effective across cities of varying demographics and resources. Through a competitive process, Brownsville was one of four selected to receive a grant from the Gates Foundation. The Brownsville PPS team 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 (aged 16-26) who earn a postsecondary credential with labor market value by 2025.

## The National Council of La Raza

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR)—the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States—works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans. Through its network of nearly 300 affiliated community-based organizations, NCLR reaches millions of Hispanics each year in 41 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. To achieve its mission, NCLR conducts applied research, policy analysis, and advocacy, providing a Latino perspective in five key areas—assets/investments, civil rights/immigration, education, employment and economic status, and health. In addition, it provides capacity-building assistance to its Affiliates who work at the state and local level to advance opportunities for individuals and families.

Each year NCLR coordinates National Latino Advocacy Days. The event brought together hundreds of leaders from Latino nonprofit and civic organizations from 27 states and the District of Columbia. Participants received intensive training on policy and legislative advocacy, learned about federal policy issues affecting the Latino community, including immigration reform, and built relationships

with their members of Congress through congressional visits on Capitol Hill. Founded in 1968, NCLR is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan, tax-exempt organization headquartered in Washington, DC, serving all Hispanic subgroups in all regions of the country. It has state and regional offices in Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Phoenix, and San Antonio.



# Collaborative Partners

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## Valley Interfaith

Valley Interfaith (VIF) is a non-partisan, broad-based organization of 45 churches and public schools throughout the Rio Grande Valley. VIF was formed to give a voice to the people who are usually excluded from the major decisions that affect their lives. Through VIF, more than 60,000 families join together to develop community leaders who participate in the economic and political decision of public life and who hold public officials accountable to work with them for the common good. VIF will continue to work in partnership with VIDA to secure other funding for projects, recruit project participants, and recruit employers.

## Hidalgo County, Willacy County, Starr County, and Cameron County

(public sector / employers) assist VIDA with public services announcements for recruiting and training participants and employers. The counties of Hidalgo, Cameron, Starr and Willacy will make reasonable efforts to make use of the various training services offered under grants that are appropriate for certain jobs within each county.

## The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Independent Electrical Contractors, National Association Plumbing, Heating and Cooling Contractors of American

(Labor organization / employers) will train area residents in the electrical and plumbing apprenticeship programs. Their memberships will provide the On the Job Training component, and will ultimately be a reliable and dependable source of employment for the graduates

## The North American Advanced Manufacturing Research & Education Initiative (NAAMREI)

The North American Advanced Manufacturing Research & Education Initiative is devoted to developing a world-class advanced manufacturing industry in the Rio South Texas Region. NAAMREI combines the innovation, talents and strategy of more than 100 partners in business, education, economic development, industry, finance and government to offer manufactures across North America, and the globe, access to proprietary, world-class advanced manufacturing and rapid response manufacturing

## Workforce Solutions - Hidalgo County, Workforce Solutions Cameron

(Public workforce investment systems) will assist with recruiting project participants, identifying demands in the workforce and employment support in emerging green industries and/or incremental training for incumbent workers. Whenever possible and with joint assessment, our respective teams will labor to leverage resources to best meet the needs of the participants served in this proposal. Recent examples for said collaborations include the GROW Grant.



## Marjorie Yates

Marjorie Yates, a 32 year old unemployed single parent of one, was born in the United States but moved to Mexico with her family. In 2006, Marjorie returned to the United States as an adult with no formal education. Finding work was difficult for Marjorie. This problem was compounded by the fact that she did not have a good grasp of the English language. Marjorie wanted a better life for her and for her daughter and decided she needed to go to school. Her first step was to take ESL classes that led to her completing her GED. Marjorie had an interest in technology and decided to enroll at South Texas College (STC) to study computer networking. The only thing uncertain for Marjorie was how to pay for college. VIDA stepped in and was able to help Marjorie and she was able to concentrate on her studies without worrying about how she was going to pay for her classes. Marjorie earned an Associate's Degree in Computer Networking and continued on to earn a second degree (Information Security Specialist). Today she is working at STC in the Information Technology Department earning \$25,000 a year. Her story doesn't end there; Marjorie is currently enrolled at STC pursuing her Bachelor's Degree in Science Organization Leadership and is scheduled to graduate the summer of 2015 .

## Executive Staff

Victor Vasquez  
Executive Director

Irma García  
Compliance Officer

Daniel Mena  
Director of Finance

Priscilla Dinn Alvarez  
Director of Program Services

Bernie Saenz  
Director of Information Services  
& Community Outreach

Sylvia Quinones  
Program Specialist

## Counseling Team

Alma Perez  
Career Counselor-Case Manager

Pricila Rubio  
Career Counselor-Case Manager

Ruben Garcia  
Career Counselor-Case Manager

Sarah Puente-Lara  
Career Counselor-Case Manager

Christina Sedeno  
Career Counselor-Case Manager

## Support Staff

Jessica Tristan  
Accounting Support Specialist

Nancy Sanchez  
Placement Coordinator/  
Retention Specialist

Cruz Villarreal  
Executive Secretary

Joanna Delgado  
Accounting Support Specialist

Martha Morales  
Receptionist

Iris Hernandez  
Case Aide

Cristina Yanes  
Case Aide

Elva Mirola  
Case Aide



## CENTER for PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

WORKING FOR A BETTER TEXAS™

The Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPPP) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit institute committed to improving public policies to make a better Texas. They pursue their mission through independent research, policy analysis and development, public education, advocacy, coalition-building, and technical assistance. The CPPPP evolved into a 501 (c)(3) policy institute working to address the challenges facing low- and moderate-income Texans. The center is a nonpartisan, nonprofit policy institute committed to improving public policies to make a better Texas. CPPPP's work is grounded by rigorous data analysis. CPPPP envisions a prosperous Texas where economic and social opportunity is available in fair measure to all.

The CPPPP holds various forums around the state and one such forum was held in Brownsville at the United Way of Southern Cameron County. The forum allowed the Center for Public Policy Priorities to showcase their new documentary, A Fighting Chance, and data from two web-based tools, Better Texas Family Budgets and Texas Regional Opportunity Index (TROI). These interactive tools provide a clear picture of the economic

hardships of working families in the Brownsville community and across the state. The forum also included a discussion panel and the opportunity to begin a dialogue for policy changes that we can all advocate for both locally and at the state level. Two VIDA graduates, Carla Urqueta and Charles Cuvillier from Brownsville, shared their stories of how they overcame adversity to become successful.





Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement

[www.VidaCareers.org](http://www.VidaCareers.org)