



**EL
HOGAR
DEL NIÑO**
The home of the child

ANNUAL REPORT 2014

LIGHTING THE PATH

LIGHTING THE PATH

Each year El Hogar del Niño lights a path so Chicago's families can reach their full potential. I immediately think of Pedro. When he came to us at sixteen months, he wasn't able to sit up, eat solid food or speak. The doctor advised Pedro's mother to wait, but our staff advised her to act. Working together with the family, they helped Pedro to walk within six months.

Pedro is unique but his story is not. Ask Marlene Pedroza, one of our teacher assistants. El Hogar staff helped clear the way so Marlene's daughter, Jezabel, could overcome significant delays. **"Jezabel is ready for kindergarten now because of the program," Marlene says. "I wish more parents would tell the stories of their children."**

In this year's annual report, you'll hear more of those stories, including one from Elena Elizondo, dedicated board member and proud mother of a former El Hogar student. You'll also hear the accounts of several El Hogar staff members who know firsthand the impact we have on our families: as children, they were students in our preschool or our school-age program. As Teacher Edgar Aviles' mother reminded him when she encouraged him to apply to El Hogar after college graduation: "It's good to give back to your community." El Hogar lit the path for a young Edgar and now he's showing the way to the students in his Little Giraffes school-age classroom.

Helping families reach their full potential in the future requires significant investment today. Staff member Marlene R Cruz recounts El Hogar's recent renovations, including a significant improvement to our reception area. Thanks to Cera Construction and The Right Livelihood Project, we collaborated with several corporate partners to make our families feel more welcome and safe.

We also received an \$855,000 Chicago Public Schools Early Childhood Construction Grant this year. With these funds and under the wise direction of our board of directors, we'll achieve several of our long-term goals: expand services to children as young as six weeks old, add new classrooms and improve the quality of the care we offer.

If you are passionate about helping light the path for our families, deepen your relationship with El Hogar – visit our website, sign up for our newsletter, follow us on Facebook, make a donation, volunteer your time, become a board or committee member. **We are shaping the future. Come and join us!**

Mil gracias for all your support,

Mario Perez
Executive Director



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MISSION STATEMENT

El Hogar del Niño lights the path for children and their families to reach their fullest potential in nurturing, culturally sensitive learning environments.

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BE PATIENT AND ACT



Three-year-old Pedro is hard to catch. He teases his physical therapist in the hallway, but you can tell she is delighted with his progress. When Pedro first came to El Hogar del Niño at sixteen months, he couldn't sit up, walk, vocalize or chew. He still drank milk from a bottle. Instead of getting off the cot on his own, he waited for someone to pick him up. While the doctor told Pedro's family to be patient and wait, staff advised them to be patient and act. They knew that early interventions were necessary and helpful.

The teachers in Pedro's class are dedicated. Two of them, Alex Harrold and Sandy Matos have been with him from the beginning. "We have a great team who care about what they do," Maria 'Charo' Heidkamp, El Hogar's Coordinator for the Toddlers and Twos program, said. "They have a large impact on our families." Every day, the teachers massaged Pedro's legs to stimulate his muscles. They supported him as he walked so he could gain his balance. They taught him how to hold a spoon, how to eat solid food, how to turn the pages of a book.

They advocated for early intervention. Therapists came each week to work on his speech and motor and social skills, and they left tips, activities and exercises for daily practice – **the whole team was committed to helping Pedro.** Now, a year and a half later, at age three, he can walk on his own. He's learning to speak and can say a few simple words. Before, Pedro would cry when other kids were around. Now he easily plays

TEACHERS

Alex and Sandy are passionate about their work. “We value [the children] parents are leaving behind,” Alex says. Sandy agrees: “A lot of people here have the heart – the passion to work with students. You can have the diplomas, but you also need the heart.”

Charo admires the teachers’ passion but credits their success to their combination of skills and heart. “Knowledge is what makes us professionals, but heart is what bonds us to the children.”

Thanks to a three-year Ounce of Prevention professional development pilot project, which ended in 2013, teachers learned valuable classroom skills through peer evaluation and self-reflection. El Hogar has also been a host site for the Ounce’s trainings.

with them. **The staff’s teamwork is rubbing off on the kids. His fellow students support Pedro. They talk with him, sit with him, and interpret for him.**

“Pedro has really thrived in that program,” according to Brenda Spears, one of the therapists who worked with Pedro for the last year-and-a-half. “He trusts those adults and the teachers are instrumental to his progress. They are like his family.” El Hogar staff may be like Pedro’s family, but the teachers consider his family part of their team. “Working with mom [Mrs. Juarez] has been great,” according to Brenda Romo, a Family Support Specialist at El Hogar. “She is very humble and shy. She is not aware of a lot of services she would qualify for. My goal is to empower her to advocate for herself.” Charo agrees that self-advocacy is important for parents: “We told her [Ms. Juarez] we will be behind you, but you need to be in front of us.”



Pedro, it seems, has no trouble being out front as he moves on to preschool this fall. He will be leaving his old teachers and therapists behind. Charo is convinced that the transition will be a great experience for him. His therapist agrees. **“Each child needs a good foundation to succeed in life,” Ms. Spears said. “Pedro has a good foundation.”** Pedro’s new teachers will build on that foundation, if they can catch him.



LIFE SKILLS



Our family has been part of El Hogar since my daughter, Annamaria, attended preschool at the agency.

El Hogar has had a tremendous impact on her, preparing her to begin kindergarten with skills and courage.

Although Annamaria was still learning her letters, as a preschooler she would “read” stories to her entire class by flipping through each page, verbally expressing what she thought the book was about as the other children sat attentively listening to her. The experience gave her a sense of pride, fearlessness and pure enjoyment.

I watched her as the reader one day. She didn’t see me because I came in through the other classroom, but as I sat there, listening to her, and watching as the children paid attention to her every word, I couldn’t help but cry. Though it was a simple exercise, I realized the importance of what was happening in that El Hogar classroom. She was practicing public speaking,

something that I have struggled with for years. She was gaining confidence and expressiveness. The children were learning to be patient and respectful of their classmate by quietly listening. They were learning so many important life skills at that very moment.

After she finished the book, the children sang “Thank You for the Story,” the teacher told Annamaria what a great job she did, and then thanked the children for listening. When Annamaria finally noticed I was there, she asked if I heard her. I said “Yes.” Even before I could tell her how proud I was of her, I could see how proud she was of herself. I will never forget the smile on her face.

I would like to thank the teachers at El Hogar not just for encouraging my daughter, but also showing me how important it is to speak to my daughter at eye level, and to ask her thought provoking questions.

Most importantly, I'm grateful for the impact they've had on my daughter's early education.

We are truly blessed to be a part of the El Hogar family.

—*Maria Elena Elizondo*
Vice President
El Hogar Board of Directors



what do you taste?



will you share your fruit?



can we trade?



may i borrow your cup?

LIKE FAMILY

When Vanessa Martinez was nine years old, El Hogar's school age program felt like home. After all, her grandmother delivered the daily meals. Vanessa has since taken her grandmother's place in El Hogar's kitchen, but the feeling hasn't changed. "It felt good to be here," she says. "It felt like family. To this day, it's still the same. Family."

That positive feeling of family made a lasting impact. Vanessa still has the plaque she won as the queen of El Hogar's 1988 talent show where she, her brother, and her cousin imitated Chubby Checker for the show's 1950s theme. **Vanessa credits the supportive environment of the school age program for boosting her confidence and fostering her independence.**

Vanessa is not unique. She is one of several staff members nurtured at El Hogar as children. Teacher Elizabeth Vega graduated from El Hogar's preschool and then went to the after school program until grade five. She admits it's incredible working alongside her former teachers. "I loved Teacher Margarita," Elizabeth says. "I remember she taught me how to draw Barbie and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. She did our hair for us."



Her former teachers are pleased with Elizabeth's life: "I see it in their eyes. They are proud of me and they often tell me they are."

Teacher Edgar Aviles grew up in Pilsen, came to El Hogar's school age program from grade two to grade five, and still remembers the significance of his time

El Hogar staff alumni: Back row, l. to r., Elizabeth Vega, Leslie Bowie, Vanessa Martinez, Marlene Cruz, Sandra Matos, and Cassandra Brown; Front row, l. to r., Charity Medrano, Susana Campos, Terri Mazakis, Edgar Aviles, and Amelia Campos

here. **At age seven, Edgar went on his first camping trip and his first time away from home. “I don’t remember being homesick – it was a great time –**

I made a lot of friends – we slept in cabins. Later, we pitched a tent – it was the scariest thing I’ve ever done. It felt like we were in the middle of nowhere.” Edgar’s adventure in the woods was only possible because he felt loved and supported at El Hogar.

While the staff agrees that El Hogar still feels like family, they also recognize the agency has changed significantly since they were kids. Teacher Charity Medrano, a graduate of El Hogar’s preschool and a teacher for eleven years, admits that even families need to be challenged and stretched. “In the old days,” Charity says, “El Hogar was more like babysitting. Now teachers push the students. They want them to excel. I learn from the other teachers.”

Elizabeth Vega recognizes that the agency has rightfully increased the expectations for its students. There is more structure in the preschool classrooms. Teachers have more training and they use more teaching strategies to help get students ready for kindergarten. Elizabeth is proud El Hogar takes students on educational field trips to museums or the Shedd Aquarium. “Education was instilled into me from my family.” Elizabeth says, **“As a preschool teacher, I want to open up possibilities for my students.”**

Vanessa Martinez appreciates the possibilities El Hogar opened to her and, later, to her son, Jayden, who graduated from El Hogar’s preschool. When he first started, he would cry when she dropped him off in his classroom, but soon he gained confidence and he reassured her: “Mom, I’ll be okay,” he said. By the time kindergarten came, he was ready. On his first day, Jayden told Vanessa, “Mom, don’t worry. I’ll be fine.” And he was.

“Every day when I get here early in the morning,”
Vanessa says, **“the families are lined up at the door ready to come in. That makes me feel good. I believe in El Hogar.”**



Above left, Elizabeth Vega at her pre-school graduation, and today as an El Hogar teacher

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

First impressions are always the most important. They are the ones people remember. As El Hogar's head receptionist, I take pride in our new reception area because it not only says a lot about our agency but also welcomes more people to come and see what it is we are doing here.

Yet the reception wouldn't be as valuable and functional today without the help of our designer, Michael Talbot, from The RIGHT Livelihood Project, and

CERA Construction. Because of their work, we have been able to transform our front entrance and renovate other parts of our building, such as our Family Case Management office and our School Age classroom.

Staff and parents like the changes. When they first saw the vibrant and child-friendly colors of the main entrance, they were thrilled. The kids were amazed. With the new reception, many of our parents said they feel safer and more

welcome. One of our parents, Malissa Garcia, said she feels "safer because the receptionist can now see who is coming in and approach them right at the door."

She loves that there is more space available for a waiting area and that the old reception became a parent lounge.

El Hogar is a safe haven and the new reception area heightens that feeling of warmth and security.

At the reception, we account for everyone entering and leaving the building because parents and children are our most valuable customers. Although I might not know many of our parents' names, I do know their child's name. I try to brighten up students' day when they come in through the door in the morning, and I ask for a hug or a high five, assuring them that this is like a second home. The kindness and love we show to our children has a huge impact. Parents notice and they spread the word. We are here to serve our community.

Mario Perez, our executive director, agrees about the impact of the renovations: "Michael [and The RIGHT Livelihood Project have] created an overarching vision for El Hogar...to develop a design that reflects our long history and deep cultural roots in Chicago's Lower West Side. Michael's style is fresh, modern, clean and full of color while still being practical and always focused on the needs of the agency."

Providing a safe, welcoming environment to our students and their families is one of our greatest commitments. This year's renovations help us to turn first impressions into lasting ones.

—Marlene R Cruz

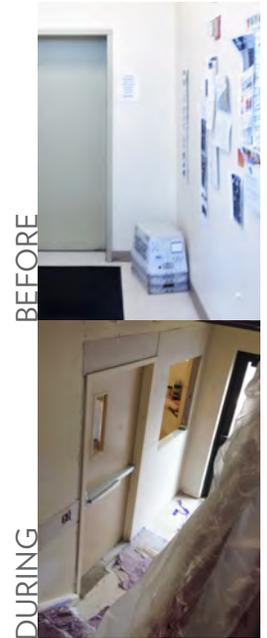


THANKS to **The RIGHT Livelihood Project** for over \$3,300 in pro bono services and for collaborating with the donors listed below who gave over \$80,000 in furniture and finishes to El Hogar Del Niño. Using a participatory design model, the RLP team gathered input from local community members and took design inspiration from murals in the Pilsen neighborhood. “With donations (desks, chairs, carpet tiles, etc.) acquired by RLP, [Lead Designer Michael Talbot] transformed a previously uninviting space into a joyful environment where the children now feel excited about learning and motivated to achieve their goals and dreams. Without Michael’s team, this renovation, while much needed, would not have been feasible.” —*Mario Perez*

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New waiting and reception areas



School Age classroom



Chicago Public Schools

EARLY CHILDHOOD CONSTRUCTION GRANT

El Hogar del Niño won a \$855,000 Chicago Public Schools Early Childhood Construction Grant in the 2013–2014 fiscal year. With this funding, El Hogar will undertake an agency-wide renovation to expand its services to children as young as six weeks old. El Hogar will also implement a continuity of care model that keeps children with the same teachers from six months to three years of age. Lastly, the preschool program will also grow with the addition of new classrooms. The youngest and most vulnerable children represent the greatest need and demand for services in our community. As brain research continues to confirm the long-term impact of these first years of life on long-term academic success, we know that this expansion will allow El Hogar to continue preparing our community's children for kindergarten and beyond.



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Statement of Activities For the Year ended June 30, 2014

PUBLIC SUPPORT

Fees & Grants	4,886,910
Corporate, Foundation, and Individual	23,623
Total Public Support	4,910,533

REVENUE

Program Service Fees	117,811
Other Income	8,299
Total Revenue	126,110
Total Public Support and Revenue	5,036,643

EXPENSES

Program Services	4,713,888
Management and General	225,111
Fundraising	40,553
Total Expenses	4,979,552

TOTAL NET ASSETS

Net Assets at the Beginning of Year	2,875,356
Net Assets at the End of Year	2,932,447

For full financials please refer to our website: elhogardelnino.org

Family Case Management: For twenty years, this program has been helping the local community reduce premature births and infant mortality through prenatal care, helping families access essential services, and empowering them to reach self-sufficiency.

Affordable Care Act: Our Affordable Care Act In-Person Counselor program seeks to assist local residents in navigating and understanding the new coverage options and affordability programs available through the federal Affordable Care Act.

Toddlers and Twos: This program offers high quality early childhood care, education and support for toddlers and their families. Using Creative Curriculum® our teachers engage their students with fun activities that focus on key areas such as social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development.

Center-based Preschool: Our preschool program combines Head Start and Child Care to offer full day, year long programming to at risk children three to five years old. With the Creative Curriculum for Preschool®, teachers develop their students' social/emotional, cognitive, physical and language skills through engaging activities and focused lesson plans.

Family Child Care Homes: We currently coordinate six homes located around Chicago's southwest side that provide services to children ranging from six weeks to five years of age. The setting promotes small group sizes of five to eight children within the home and offers opportunities for siblings to be cared for together.

Center-based School Age: We offer a School-Age program that serves children between the ages of five and twelve years. Most of the 120 students currently enrolled are part of a year-round program that offers homework assistance and report card tracking in half-day after school services and full-day summer services filled with club activities and field trips.

Home Visiting: Using the Parents as Teachers model, home visitors assist parents in learning about their child's growth and creating educational curriculum to maximize that development. Participants commit to weekly home visits, monthly socialization events, and development screenings.

The number of **children we serve** in our all of our programs: **400+**

The number of homes on Chicago's Southwest side we have in our **Family Child Care Homes** program: **6**

The percentage of our families who are designated low income: **100**

The year our **Toddlers and Twos** program became **a model instruction site** in partnership with the Ounce of Prevention Fund: **2014**

The age in weeks of the youngest members of our **Family Child Care Homes** program: **6**

The percentage of our graduating **Head Start** students who are **ready for kindergarten**: **100**

The number of key learning areas we measure in our **Head Start** program, in which all of our children showed gains: **5**

The number of clubs our **School Age** program offers, including Art, Drama and Cooking: **6**

The percentage of our children who receive **medical and dental exams**: **100**



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