



# Friends of Las Casas

Quarterly Newsletter

April 2022

## 20 YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION!

**Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup> ~ 1 – 3:30 pm**

### *The Director's Desk*

Three nights a week our teachers hustle through the doors of Cristo Rey DLS High School to prepare for classes. Set up includes gathering sign-in sheets, classroom materials, COVID cleaning supplies, and connecting computers to classroom TVs. That's all **BEFORE** 100+ students charge in - all smiles.

As the longest tenured staff member (2011), I've watched Las Casas grow in numbers, complexity, and breadth. But one thing that has never wavered is the dedication of our volunteer teachers, and the joy, humor, and investment of our student body. It takes tremendous effort to finish their jobs, leave their families, and gather in joint pursuit of empowerment and equity.

***This work is only possible through the funding of generous individuals and foundations. We ask you all to celebrate with us on Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup> to show your support, meet our school community, and make a gift - of any size - to help us continue Opening Doors to Opportunity.***

Come enjoy food, music, great raffle prizes and bid on some delish baked goods! Join our student and staff panels - hear their stories, encourage their efforts. ***Let us remember... One teacher, one book, one pen can change the world. / Malala***  
We do it every night!

**Give through our GoFundMe campaign  
DONATE NOW or via our website.**

*Las Casas is a registered 501(c)3 organization, under the [Dominican Sisters](#)*

### Our Voices

I am happy to know my family is well and all our children put their best effort to continue studying, that makes me proud. Even though they are far away they make me feel strong. I have to continue this fight away from them.

- Irma, Intermediate High, 2016



### Our Student Demographics

Since 2013, we have collected demographic information on our students. We use this data to compare trends, better understand the needs of our students, and to share with our supporters and community partners.

#### At a glance for 2021-22:

- Men 60%, Women 40%
- Guatemala 65%, Mexico 18%, El Salvador 11%, Afghanistan 3%
- Average age - 31 years old
- Time in the U.S. - Average 7 years
- Nearly 150 children are in our student households
- Prior schooling – Average 8 years
- Full-time employment is down from prior years - just 50%
- Yearly earnings - 65% of our students earn \$15,000 per year or less, across full and part-time.



## FACES OF LAS CASAS

Walner Diaz - Program Assistant



**“When I was back in my country, I used to listen to music in English even though I did not understand anything, it was my favorite hobby!”**

Walner came to the U.S. in 2003 and attended SF City College before moving to Oakland. He started at Oakland Adult School (OUSD), but in 2010 the entire adult ESL program was shut down due to massive funding cuts.

*“I didn’t attend any school for a while, not until one of my coworkers told me about an English program that was only five minutes away from where I lived. I was so excited that I had found a place to continue learning English! I went to an Assessment night, and I was given the privilege of joining Las Casas as a Program Assistant.*”

*I have been at Las Casas for 3 years now and the experiences I’ve had are priceless. I assist teachers in class, answer questions at the door, and help students fill out forms and surveys.*

*Las Casas has helped me in many ways. Every time I am given the opportunity to make a class announcement, it is a chance for me to overcome my fear of speaking in front of a group. In addition, Phyliss and Dana helped me start classes at the College of Alameda. I’ve now attended Laney College and Berkeley City College. I truly admire the Las Casas staff for their commitment and their work ethic.”*

Walner’s daughter, Sheylin, also joined Las Casas as a Program Assistant for two years during high school. Last year she started college at San Francisco State. We are so proud and grateful for them both!

### Back In the Swing of Things

After a delayed start due to the Covid surge, Spring classes kicked off on February 14<sup>th</sup> with a student body of 138 students. This semester we opened a sixth class to accommodate our 25+ student waitlist from the Fall. We welcomed close to 80 new students! In late March, we completed our final Assessment for the year and brought in another 20 students. Even with a shortened school year, we have already logged 6,000 hours of student learning and 1,500 volunteer hours. And, critical to our program, 8 new volunteers have joined the Las Casas family, with 4 more in the orientation process!

Our Spring Staff Workshop focused on incorporating more writing into class lessons at all levels. Writing has always been a challenge for our students, and the results of our custom *Las Casas Assessment Tool (LCAT)* provided us further evidence. This month, students will participate in a special writing project for our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration - we look forward to sharing their work with you on April 30<sup>th</sup>!

### Las Casas ESL

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