

RESISTANCE & RESILIENCE



2020 Annual Report

SANTA FE
DREAMERS
PROJECT



Dear Friends and Supporters,

2020 has been a challenging year like no other. The Trump administration has continued to be relentless in its attacks on immigrants, finding ways to reach new heights of cruelty and disregard for human life. The federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been completely abysmal, and few places, if any, are as dangerous as the horrific immigrant private prisons, places which were already deadly prior to the pandemic. Trump, ICE, DHS, and the immigration prison industry continue to take aim at the most vulnerable among us, and to use immigrants both as scapegoats for the nation's problems and as bodies to imprison and profit from. These are difficult and dire days.

Despite all of these challenges, this organization, Santa Fe Dreamers Project has a lot to be proud of. We chose the themes of this year's report to be Resistance and Resilience. Resistance is in recognition of the hard work our staff, partners, volunteers, and supporters have put forth to fight the Trump administration tooth and nail at every turn. Resilience is in recognition of the enduring strength of our clients and the millions of other undocumented immigrants, many of whom have left behind everything in their home countries, and overcome incredible obstacles in order to make better lives for themselves and their families in the United States. Over the last four years we've had to react to so many unprecedented and arbitrary changes of policies, procedures, and enforcement practices, that it's hard to keep count. The Trump administration has done everything it could imagine to disrupt the immigration legal system, inserting road blocks, rule changes, fee hikes, as well as executive orders of unimaginable cruelty. Nevertheless, we adjusted our methods and found new ways to be effective in our services and to bring top quality legal representation to those that need it. For every method of cruelty that they surmised we responded with new methods of resistance. When the pandemic hit, we adjusted our practices in order to be able to continue to provide our services uninterrupted. When undocumented immigrants were specifically excluded from stimulus relief, we partnered with other community leaders to help bring financial and other forms of relief to undocumented families. Our resolve is unshaken. Our clients will never give up on their dreams for a better life and we will continue to support them every step of the way on their paths towards legal immigration status in the United States.

As 2021 approaches, with the promise of a new Administration, we remain steadfast in our efforts, ever hopeful that brighter days for immigrant justice are ahead. We shall continue to do everything in our power to fight on behalf of our clients and to ensure that their right to legal representation is realized. Thank you for your ongoing support of our work. It is together that we are made strong and together that we can realize our mission on behalf of our clients, their families, and our communities.

Sincerely,



Michael Santillanes
Executive Director



Photo: Kerry Sherck

Mission Statement

Santa Fe Dreamers Project provides free legal services to immigrants to promote economic empowerment, community development, family unity, and liberation from detention. Our work is centered around the belief that supporting immigrants makes our whole community stronger. We are committed to representing every qualified immigrant who walks through our doors, to using service strategies that expand vulnerable peoples' access to legal counsel, and helping to elevate the voices and narratives of immigrants in our community to support positive reform.



Standing Strong in a Pandemic

In March, Santa Fe Dreamers Project closed our 3 offices to our staff and the public to join the nationwide effort to keep our communities safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Along with the rest of the world, we had to adapt quickly to continue our mission of serving immigrants and refugees while also protecting the health of our employees, their families, and our clients.

- **Our employees now work in a hybrid home and office model with the help of technology grants from Hispanics in Philanthropy**
- **Our 3 weekly legal clinics are held telephonically. We used our RV/Mobile Legal Office, Dreams on Wheels, to provide socially distanced legal services to DACA recipients when the threat to the DACA program coincided with the strictest lockdown in NM**
- **We received grants from multiple funding partners to provide families with grocery store funds, rental assistance, and gas cards**
- **We worked with statewide partners to pressure ICE to release individuals trapped in detention during outbreaks**
- **We provided weekly food distribution to families in partnership with Santa Fe Community College, the City of Santa Fe, and World Center Kitchen**
- **Our legal team that supports trans individuals in detention has pivoted their work to help people stranded due to the covid-19 closure of the southern border**



Where We Work

We have offices in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and El Paso

This year we served people detained in New Mexico, Texas, Nevada, Colorado, and Louisiana

Our community programs team serves people in 13 different NM counties

We have legal clinics in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Los Lunas, and Taos

What We Do



Provide High Quality Legal Representation

- DACA
- Green Cards
- Naturalization
- U-Visa and VAWA
- Special Immigrant Juvenile Status
- Work Permits
- Political Asylum
- Removal Defense
- Bond
- Parole Requests from Detention
- Appeals to the Board of Immigration Appeals



Use Innovative Strategies to Access and Support our Clients

- El Paso Immigration Collaborative (EPIC)
- In-house Counseling Program
- Community based legal clinics
- Rural legal programs
- SAFE Place
- Sponsor recruitment for transgender migrants
- Transitional Apartment program to support transgender migrants leaving detention
- Dreams on Wheels Mobile Legal Clinic



Advocate for Local, Statewide, and Nationwide Policy Change

- Statewide campaigns to abolish ICE detention
- Nationwide lawsuits
- Formal complaints about detention conditions
- Public education

SFDP by the Numbers 2020

Community Programs

DACA

583

DACA cases filed

NATURALIZATIONS / CITIZENSHIP CASES

53

Naturalizations cases filed

GREEN CARDS CASES

81

Green Card cases filed

U VISA/VAWA

96

Consultations

50

U Visa cases filed

SPECIAL IMMIGRANT JUVENILE

14

new initial SJ applications

9

Received

state court orders for either custody or kinship guardianship of children

10

Received

approvals for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

Legal Clinics

Hosted **100** legal clinics

TEAM DEFENSE LGBTQ DETENTION DEFENSE

120

individuals released from not only Cibola County but also detention centers in

Tacoma, WA; Aurora, CO; Winn, LA; Florence, AZ; Otero, NM; and El Paso, TX; through bond, parole, and/or political asylum.

Aggressive advocating during the COVID-19 pandemic to demand the release of LGBTQ individuals including supporting a nationwide class action lawsuit

Initiated a program to help serve transgender individuals stranded in Juarez and Tijuana, Mexico because of COVID-19 border closure

SAFE PLACE ASYLUM CLINIC

57

asylum seekers served

NON-DETAINED DEPORTATION CASES

10

Supporting cases outside of Safe Place (courts have been closed since March, so there is a pretty big slow down)

EL PASO IMMIGRATION COLLABORATIVE (EPIC)

1200

intakes



Resilience

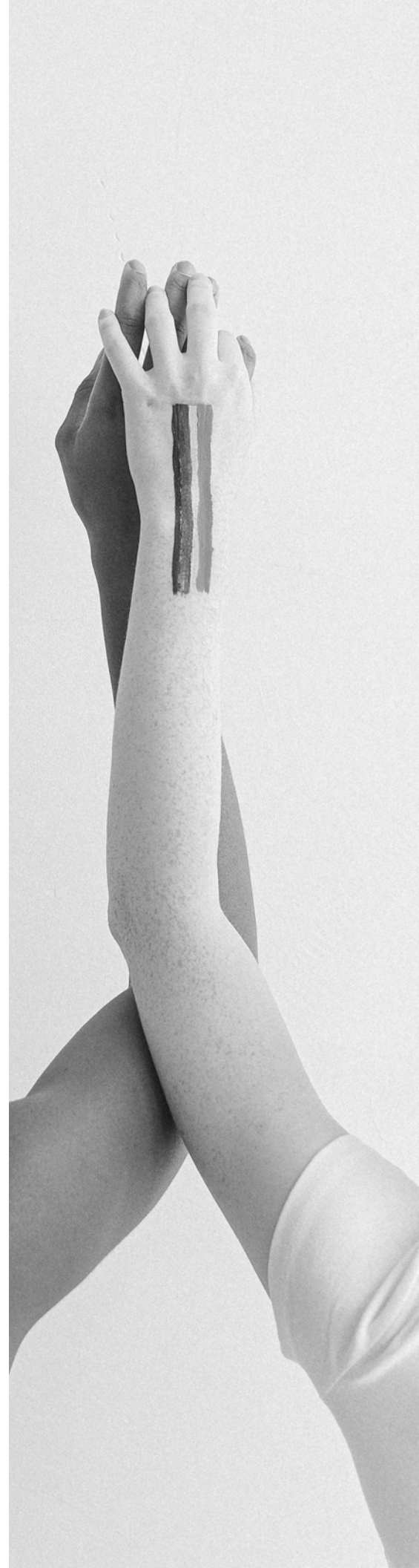
Supporting Transgender Women Nationwide

In January of 2020, after 3 years of working in Cibola County's controversial trans pod supporting hundreds of transgender women detained while seeking asylum, we were shocked when ICE abruptly and without warning transferred all of our clients to Colorado and Washington State.

Overnight, our team scrambled to organize with advocates on the ground in two out-of-state detention centers to ensure that our clients were safe. Thanks to the hard work of that nationwide collaboration, all of the women transferred from Cibola County were released from detention.

Here are the ways our team continues to defend the rights of transgender individuals in migration:

- **With the border closed due to COVID-19 we are providing remote legal support to women in Juarez and Tijuana to prepare them to ask for asylum when the border reopens**
- **Representing LGBTQ individuals detained in Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Louisiana, and Nevada in their bond, parole, asylum cases, and appeals**
- **Recruiting sponsors to open their homes to transgender individuals who come to the country and are detained without a safe place to be released to**
- **Maintaining an apartment for asylum seekers released from detention in Albuquerque, NM and providing critical support to survive and build leadership skills**
- **Supporting former clients released from detention with their legal, housing, and social needs around the country.**
- **Tracking human rights abuses inside of ICE detention centers and filing complaints**
- **Providing counseling to detained individuals nationwide who need mental health support**





“ I advocate on behalf of detained transgender women in asylum defense. It’s important for me as a trans, mad, crip attorney. My clients’ stories of violence and repression they faced in their home countries are horrific. Their stories of neglect and abuse in for-profit taxpayer-funded detention, unconscionable. Due Process in our immigration system would be laughable if it were not so tragic. The US has no justice system, we have racist carceral systems of control and marginalization for those deemed criminal or a migrant on stolen land. I should not have a job - these systems should be abolished. ”

- Charlie Flewelling (They/Them)



“ I’m grateful for my work at Santa Fe Dreamers Project, connecting TGNC asylum seekers to sponsors in the U.S., because it allows me to play a small role towards the liberation and self-determination of our asylum seeking compes.

In an ever increasing violent immigration system, I’ve witnessed the incredible heart and perseverance of both our clients and community advocates, which makes me believe that when we continue to show up and fight for one another, we are capable of transforming the world we live in. ”

- Michael Galvin



Photo: Kerry Sherck

Continuing to Stand with DACA Recipients

At the heart of all that Santa Fe Dreamers Project does are our DACA clients, the people who inspired the founding of the organization and continue to bravely assert their right to live and thrive in the country they call home.

In 2020 our nation's DACA recipients went above and beyond demonstrating their value as frontline and essential workers during the global pandemic. This year we continued our legal clinics to help over 500 people renew their DACA and maintain their protection from deportation and the right to work in the US.

As New Mexico locked down because of COVID-19, we moved our legal clinic into our RV, Dreams on Wheels, to provide safe, socially distant legal services. In spite of an enormous victory in the Supreme Court that declared Trump's 2017 attempt to end DACA illegal, the program remains under threat as long as Trump is president and we will continue to fight alongside our clients, co-workers, neighbors, and friends for a permanent pathway for them to stay in our country.



Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Our Clients

In 2020, Santa Fe Dreamers Project expanded our pilot program to provide counseling services to our immigrant and refugee clients facing trauma and needing emotional support. Under the leadership of a licensed counselor, we welcomed interns training for their Masters in Social Work. Throughout the year this team provided:

Individual counseling with SFDP families

Mental health triage for people in traumatic situations

Telephonic counseling for detained transgender clients

One-on-one social work for guests at our post-detention apartment

Helping families secure means-tested benefits



Photo: Kerry Sherck

“ It is such a gift to be able to provide no-barrier bilingual mental health services to our clients in a way that both supports and complements their legal cases. So many of our clients are experiencing complex trauma and grief, which is then exacerbated by the process of applying for asylum and other forms of relief. Our in-house counseling program allows us to provide both crisis-response and long term mental health support to our clients, without having to refer them to somewhere with long wait lists, prohibitive fees and a lack of bilingual clinicians. ”

- Isabel Ribe

Ensuring Refugee Families Have Legal Counsel

In 2019, an enormous surge of families came to our Southern border seeking political asylum. In response, Santa Fe Dreamers Project created a weekly legal clinic we call SAFE Place to engage over sixty families and ensure that they have legal accompaniment and that our organization can be a vital point of contact for connecting with other community services.

This year, as their hearing dates were pushed out indefinitely with the COVID-19 court closure, our team supported our SAFE place families by filing paper asylum applications and securing the absolutely critical permission to work legally in the United States.

Additionally, we have been able to connect these families with counseling and food, clothing, gas, utility, and rental support during the pandemic.

“ One of our SAFE PLACE clients fled her home country after experiencing severe trauma when her husband and brother were murdered by gang members who then began to target her teenaged children. She hoped for safety and peace in our Santa Fe community, but for her, like for many of our SAFE PLACE families, 2020 has been especially challenging. She underwent surgery on her ankle, which was injured during her escape from her home country, and shortly afterward, was diagnosed with Covid19. Despite these hurdles, she worked closely with the SAFE PLACE team to ensure that her asylum application was submitted on time and to apply for work authorization for herself and her children. While her family successfully received their work permits, many of our SAFE PLACE families have recently been denied the opportunity to apply for legal permission to work, due to mean-spirited regulations put in place by the Trump Administration designed to make it harder for asylum seekers to live in the United States while awaiting adjudication of their cases. ”

- Lynne Canning and
Nick Valenzuela



Facing a System Under Assault

The Trump Administration has made no secret of its threat to undocumented families and people seeking asylum at our southern border. Less obvious, however, is the threat posed to the programs that provide eligible immigrants with a path to permanent residency and citizenship in the United States. Santa Fe Dreamers Project's Community Programs team provides legal services to individuals who qualify to seek those benefits and month after month this year they faced an onslaught of policy changes designed to frustrate those processes and close doors where they were once open making it harder to secure green cards, protect victims of domestic violence, get status for juveniles who have been abused, abandoned, or neglected, or apply for citizenship.

The community programs team has stayed organized, nimble, and fierce with every new change, often dropping everything to file as many cases possible for eligible clients before horrific policies took effect. They have stayed up to date on the ever changing rules and laws and have been an open and accessible source of information and advice for the immigrant community statewide that depends on accurate information to keep their families safe.



Photo: Sylvia Johnson

“ This year has seen a lot of tumultuous policy changes, and a lot of our clients have been targeted by the Trump Administration’s cruelty. When the new public charge regulations rolled out, our team was able to meet a huge community need for families who would be affected by the new rules, potentially losing their chance to apply for permanent residency. We were able to rally together to provide legal representation to almost 50 New Mexican families who would be adversely affected by these regulations in time before the implementation date in February. I’m proud to be part of a team that is continuing to provide free legal representation to families in my community, in the face of constant chaos and upheaval in our legal system. ”

- Emma O’Sullivan

A blurred background image of a protest. In the center, a sign with the word "RESIST" in white capital letters on a black background is visible. The image is overlaid with a teal-colored geometric shape that covers the right and bottom portions of the page.

RESIST

Resistance

Challenging Policy with Nationwide Lawsuits

One important way that Santa Fe Dreamers Project has stepped up our resistance this year is by participating in several nationwide lawsuits to challenge the Department of Homeland Security's punitive policies and abusive actions.

Las Americas v. Trump: Santa Fe Dreamers Project and partner organizations sued the Trump Administration to challenge the weaponization of immigration courts against asylum seekers.

CGB v. Wolf: Santa Fe Dreamers' team provided ground support to file a class action law suit with the Transgender Law Center demanding the release of all transgender individuals from detention during COVID-19

Santa Fe Dreamers Project v. Wolf: Santa Fe Dreamers Project and other nationwide organizations partnered with MALDEF to sue acting director of USCIS Chad Wolf to challenge the legitimacy of his memo restricting DACA after June's Supreme Court decision allowing the program to proceed.

Carranza v. USCIS: Our team at EPIC supported lawyers at the American Immigration Council to sue the government over phone access issues for individuals detained during COVID-19.

In addition, we filed our first formal complaint as an organization against the Winn County Correctional Center in Winnfield Parish, Louisiana for the abusive treatment of LGBTQ people detained there.



“ Here at SFDP, we have spent years working with the system the government has created to help our clients access the benefits and protections they deserve. Now that we are at the point where the system itself is so dangerous, so unjust, and so weaponized against our clients' well being, we have had to turn to the courts to demand that the Trump administration is held accountable for their complete lack of humanity. ”

- Allegra Love

Helping Our Neighbors Facing a Crisis

As families across the nation confronted crisis when the economy shut down due to COVID-19, immigrant families faced extra challenges as undocumented workers were excluded from unemployment and federal stimulus aid. Santa Fe Dreamers Project, in partnership with the City of Santa Fe and others, stepped up to be a direct line between community aid and immigrant families in need:

We worked closely with Santa Fe Mutual Aid, and helped to create the Share My Check program which allowed more affluent Santa Feans to donate their stimulus checks directly to undocumented individuals

We conducted needs assessments with our clients to identify where they were vulnerable and connect them with community resources

We distributed grocery store gift cards and gas cards to families with the highest need

We partnered with community organizations to provide and distribute weekly meals to families facing food insecurity

“

My job is important because practicing kindness makes us more human. I know that we can't help everyone in the world but everyone can help someone. I was able to help those who need it the most. The kids! Being able to deliver trays of food, gift cards and a smile made me feel like I was more than the paperwork. I know exactly how these families felt receiving this help. When I was a kid I was receiving this same type of help. It was so helpful for me and my family. It was the same for these families. ”

- Maria Santos



EPIC: Confronting Injustice in Detention

The El Paso Immigration Collaborative, or EPIC, is a unique project of 10 local and nationally based legal services organizations that formed in 2019 in order to use collaboration and collective power to challenge the notoriously dangerous detention and court system in ICE's El Paso enforcement region which includes New Mexico and West Texas. EPIC uses innovative strategies and technology to provide legal representation to a high volume of people. EPIC follows a unique model which pursues the clients' release from immigration detention while simultaneously collecting an enormous amount of data that can be used on multiple fronts to confront these deadly systems of government sponsored injustice.

This year EPIC focused on providing representation for bond and parole to any individual detained in New Mexico or West Texas. As the year ends, we are expanding to provide representation to refugees who face asylum hearings while in detention.



“ EPIC is made up of badass organizations who work together to release people from horrible ICE immigration jails. One of the clients who I always remember was in our system for about seven months. She came in as a referral in September 2019. She was detained after being previously in MPP. I worked on her bond case while Innovation LawLab and Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center worked on her parole request. Her requests for release and bond were denied. Then when COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, EPIC made the decision to file a humanitarian parole request. After seven months in our system, she was finally released in April 2020. We were able to secure her release because of the fierce advocates who work in collaboration. This allows us to be innovative in our arguments and apply them on a mass scale.

”

- Estrella Cedillo



Focusing on Anti-Racism

The Anti-Racism Committee was formed in recognition that the organization has been rapidly expanding and that not enough focus and attention was being paid to systemic issues of white supremacy and how they are internalized and recreated through office culture. There are a number of goals that flow naturally from these concerns including how best to support BIPOC staff, how to grow the culture to attract a more diverse staff, and how to help our clients.

Since its inception the Anti-Racism Committee has engaged a number of outside facilitators to work with the whole staff on anti-oppression and anti-racism training.. The Committee has identified a number of ways to grow the staff culture and is engaging with the larger staff and management on realizing our collective potential. The Committee also supports the work of allyship in community with the political goals of abolition and decolonization.

“ *The antiracism committee is important to me because it is creating accountability structures for me personally and for the organization as a whole. It grounds me in the notion that our work on a bigger scale is work towards collective liberation and that I have as much at stake as anyone else in this, because ultimately all of our struggles are intimately connected.*

The work is not done and is really only just beginning. This committee is helping create sustainability at SFDP and encouraging the imagining it's going to take for all of us to grow. ”

- Ben Karge



“ As a person of color, I’ve struggled with feeling like everyone around me in the workplace knows some special social code that I do not know. In the last few years I’ve come to recognize that office settings are almost always white spaces dictated by white culture. While doing this work I began to think about the ways in which my assimilation into professionalism, as limited as it may feel to myself, may be substantial enough to result in me perpetuating professionalism in client interactions in a way that further enforces the power dynamic and makes them feel even more othered in a white supremacist immigration system that is designed to other them. The work of the antiracism committee has been paramount to rethinking, radicalizing, and de-centering whiteness as the default in our everyday work. ”

- Sarah Sanchez





Organizing for Abolition of Immigrant Detention

This year, Santa Fe Dreamers Project helped to lead multiple critical organizing campaigns demanding the abolition of immigration detention in the state of New Mexico. These campaigns conducted in coalition with human rights groups and other partners across the state are designed to create public awareness and political imperative around the inhumane and unjust detention of immigrants in New Mexico and across the country, a deadly system that generates enormous profit year after year for private prisons corporations. Here are snapshots of 3 of this year's campaigns that we are very proud to be a part of:

- **Prison Divest New Mexico's** mission is one tactic for starting to dismantle racist private prison corporations by providing a model for individuals to divest their retirement funds from private prison corporations' stocks. The focus this year was to pressure the New Mexico Educational Retirement Board (NMERB) to divest NM state educator's pension funds from private prisons corporations Core Civic and GEO Group who ICE contracts with to detain immigrants. On Oct 16, 2020, in a huge victory, we succeeded in getting the NMERB trustees to vote to divest from private prison corporations!
- The **Free Them All** campaign is a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the danger that being held in a prison facility presents to all detained and incarcerated individuals. Along with a broad coalition across the state, we helped to create awareness, momentum, and engagement on the collective demand to release people from prisons, jails, and immigrant detention centers in NM during the public health crisis.
- **People over Prisons** is a coalition of individuals and organizations who seek to end the private incarceration and detention of individuals in New Mexico as a broader effort to end mass incarceration and criminalization. It is focused on legislative work with an aim of bringing a bill to the NM Legislature in 2021 that will end private detention in our state.



“ *The system of immigrant detention that many of our clients get funneled through is so inherently racist, and its profit model that depends on a constant supply of human bodies is so fundamentally problematic, that the only way to fix it is complete system change. Our advocacy work to divest, free them all, and ban detention facilities in NM engages the community to learn about and feel empowered to end this broken system once and for all.* ”

- Sylvia Johnson





Community

Partners

Santa Fe Faith Network for Immigrant Justice	Second Presbyterian Church of Albuquerque	Immigration Equality
Millions for Prisoners NM	Bend the Arc Jewish Action - NM	Trans Queer Pueblo
Teachers Against Child Detention	ABQ SURJ	Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services
Detention Watch Network	ACLU-NM	NM Faith Coalition for Immigrant Justice
NM Dream Team	Center for Civic Policy	Esperanza Shelter
New Mexico Immigrant Law Center	CAFE	Casa Respettrans
Sin Fronteras	fronteristxs	ISLA
Las Cumbres	ELCID	University of Texas-El Paso
United Way of Santa Fe County	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)	Solace Crisis Treatment Center
Valencia County Shelter Services	The American Immigration Council	Transgender Resource Center of NM
Communities in Schools	Innovation Law Lab	Casa de Salud
The Adelante Program of Santa Fe Public Schools	Asylum Seekers Assistance Project	NM Faith Coalition for Immigrant Justice
Gerard's House	Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network	Miles for Migrants
Catholic Charities of Southern New Mexico	Northwest Immigrant Rights Projects	National Immigrant Justice Center
The City of Santa Fe	Santa Fe Mutual Aid	Detained Migrant Solidarity Committee
Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center	Santa Fe Earthcare	Ballard Spahr LLC
Immigrant Justice Campaign	AVID	Literacy Volunteers of Santa Fe
Transgender Law Center	TranslatinA Coalition	
RAICES		
Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network		



Photo: Kerry Sherck

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This year our operations at Santa Fe Dreamers Project were made possible by over 700 unrestricted donations from individuals and family foundations. There are simply too many to name in the pages of our annual report. We would like to acknowledge the extraordinary generosity of everyone who contributed and extend our most sincere gratitude on behalf of our staff and our clients, as nothing that we do would be possible without it. Thank you for believing in our work!

We are supported by the following foundations and grants:

AIDS Healthcare Foundation	Con Alma Foundation	Robert Moody Foundation
Albuquerque Community Foundation	Eric Oppenheimer Foundation	Rotary Club of Santa Fe
American Immigration Council	Fianza Fund	Santa Fe Community Foundation
Arcus Foundation	Four Freedoms Fund	• <i>The Just Woke Up Fund</i>
Ark Foundation	Glickman Family Fund	Santa Fe Neighborhood Law Center
Austin Community Foundation	Hispanics in Philanthropy	Seattle Foundation
CHRISTUS Fund	Isora Foundation	The State Bar of New Mexico
Denver Foundation	John Joseph Sigstein Foundation	Tawingo Fund
Dunn Family Charitable Foundation	Kindle Foundation	Tides Center
Eaton Vance Investment Counsel	Lannan Foundation	Thornburg Foundation
The City of Santa Fe	Loeks Family Fund	Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
Community Health Funders Alliance (CHFA)	The Max and Anna Levinson Foundation	
• <i>Anchorum St. Vincent</i>	Newton Family Fund	
• <i>CHRISTUS St. Vincent</i>	Niner Foundation	
• <i>Santa Fe Community Foundation</i>		