

Sin Barreras/Without Barriers, Inc.

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction

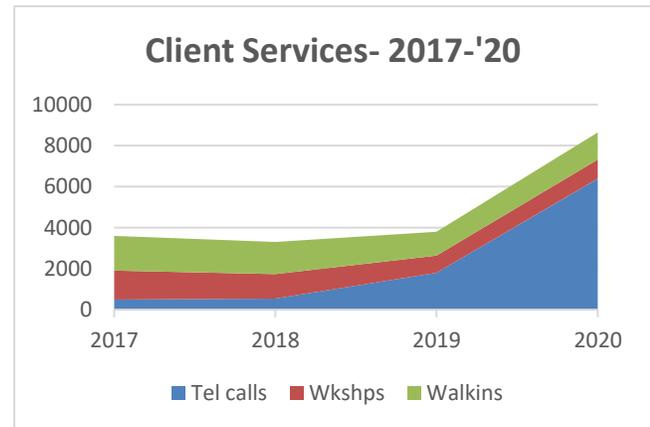
Sin Barreras is a Charlottesville NGO offering services to the mostly Hispanic immigrant community. Founded in 2012 by area residents concerned that immigrants were not availing of social services because of language obstacles and there was no organization adequately addressing other Hispanic immigrant issues, it earned its 501(c)(3) status in July 2014. After three years run by volunteers, in 2016 it began paying its first part-time employee, now in 2020 up to two full-time and three part-time staff. Overseen by a five-person Board, it is also assisted by several long-term volunteers and a dozen short-term ones. This is its sixth Annual Report.

I. Executive Summary

Sin Barreras' second Three-Year Strategic Plan focused on improved services to the Hispanic community, first by offering workshops on topics of community interest and also providing one-on-one client services in a variety of areas. The plan also proposed strengthening Advocacy on Hispanic priorities with like-minded organizations. The Covid-19 crisis radically reduced many of the organization's planned services, but also allowed Sin Barreras to respond to community needs in ways it had never done before.

Last year Sin Barreras provided direct services to 4,300 people and indirect benefits to another 3,825, total 7,616. This year Cville Sabroso had to be cancelled, thus no indirect services were provided. However direct services, including a remarkable 350% increase in telephone calls, had us interacting with eleven percent **more** people than last year, 8,450 in total. Summarizing:

- In spite of deep cuts in face-to-face interactions, we offered office visit services to 1,325 clients in 2020, 14% more than last year.
- In the pre-Covid months, we presented or assisted in presenting 7 workshops to 935 attendees. A third of these were Mexican citizens renewing documents through SB's ongoing relationship with the Mexican Consulate.
- In 2020, we responded to 6,384 telephone calls, three-and-a-half times more than 2019!
- We assisted 350 clients in immigration and legal affairs, down five percent from last year, of which DACA and immigration consultations were for 247 plus citizenship tutoring sessions done remotely for 62. Total: 412 clients.
- We continued our Advocacy efforts this year in many areas to be discussed below.
- Responding to the Covid crisis, we won important grants in rent and food assistance for almost 900 families from various foundations, Charlottesville City and Albemarle County, plus several church groups and numerous generous individual donors.
- We have continued to enjoy enormously strong volunteer participation: 7,300+ volunteer hours in 2020, representing an in-kind contribution of over \$200,000, the equivalent of over three-and-a-half additional full-time employees.



II. Accomplishment Detail

A. Community Events

The first pillar of Sin Barreras' Mission is providing group services and workshops focused on Hispanic immigrant community needs. Because of Covid we were only able to host nine events this year. One was with the Mexican Consulate offering 309 people the opportunity to process their Mexican government documents (245 passports, 51 birth certificates, etc.), saving them the all-day trip to the Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C.. Another was English as a Second Language classes each week in pre-Covid days. After an eight-month hiatus, that activity has now resumed, conducted remotely.



Pre-Covid Mexican Consulate Visit

Latino Leadership Development: For the second year, in conjunction with the Sacred Heart Immigrant Center in Richmond we co-hosted a two-semester, 80-hour study program in Civics and Leadership Development for seven students. The University of Richmond awarded a Certificate in Latino Leadership and three units from its School of Continuing Professional Education to these seven course participants.



Leadership '20 Graduation Ceremony

Facebook Communication

As a natural evolution of our community outreach, and responding to a need to develop other-than-Covid-restricted in-person events, in mid-March Sin Barreras strengthened its offering on its Facebook page of videos on topics of high interest to the community. The response has been beyond our wildest expectation, over 25,000 views in nine months! We published twenty-one videos averaging twenty-six minutes with 18,9811 viewers, over 900 viewers per session. Four of them drew a wide audience: a nine-minute presentation on the Governor's Executive Order on Covid restrictions; two presentations on Driver's Licenses and Driver's Privilege Cards, forty and seventy minutes respectively; and a half-hour End-of-Year wrap-up. We also published a three-minute "billboard" of Driver's License information viewed by 6,500 people! Sin Barreras has discovered a dramatically successful way to keep our community informed— in spite of Covid-19.¹



Facebook Videos

B. One-on-One Services

Our second pillar of activities is one-on-one services carried out in office visits and telephone calls. In response to Covid, our telephone lines exploded with activity. Compared to 2019 when we had 1,800 calls, this year we had almost 6,400, 350% more than last year! Many of those calls were related to food and rent checks (of which more below,) but others were cries of help related to unemployment compensation, landlord-tenant issues, and others. And in spite of

¹ Please read more at: https://www.facebook.com/pg/sinbarrerascville/videos/?ref=page_internal

Covid—and with due caution regarding masks and social distancing—we also conducted 1,325 individual appointments, **14% more** than 2019’s total.

Legal Consultations: For 103 clients we advised on “big” legal issues: detention, bond hearings, job discrimination, divorce and custody cases, court appearances, driving offenses, and others. As last year, we also brought about other quality-of-life improvements: some people requesting help to obtain automobiles titles; some requests for dealing with traffic court; dozens of documents translated, sometimes provided by volunteers who continue to help even after moving out-of-state.

Immigration: Meanwhile, immigration is likely *the* most important issue facing most of the area’s immigrant community. Three years ago Sin Barreras received USG recognition to undertake immigration services offered by two Department of Justice-approved non-lawyer volunteers called Accredited Representatives. Also benefitting from the contribution of two local immigration lawyers, in 2020 Sin Barreras had four pro bono volunteers providing immigration consultations. This year, we counseled 247 DACA and immigration clients, down one-third from last year. We speculate that Covid-19 has thrown the Hispanic community into a “survival” mode where employment, food, and rent issues have become the community’s Number One priority, leaving little time for other issues.



New Citizen!

A four-year report just submitted to the Department of Justice shows 77 citizenship petitions filed; 39 Green Card petitions; 97 DACA cases (for 67 clients) and 97 work permits; 34 people with U and T visa petitions, asylum, and other petitions; and 20 clients for work permit renewals and other important immigration benefits. Overall: **247 clients** with life-changing immigration outcomes, and **248 other clients** assisted in one-off consultations with colleague immigration lawyers. See Section III for several real-life stories.

Language Training: Another interrupted service this year was one-on-one English-as-a-Second- Language training for eight Latinos who want to integrate better into U.S. society. UVA student volunteers from Madison House, the Latinix Group, and Migrant Aid helped carry out this training—now being done remotely.

Legal Assistance Fund: Several years ago, Sin Barreras received a special donation to create a set-aside revolving fund to help immigrants who were facing difficulties paying USG document fees or other pressing financial needs. This fund benefitted four people during 2020 and remains a wonderful addition to our services.

Naturalization Exam Coaching: The Citizenship exam requires knowledge of 100 civics questions, English writing ability, and some conversational fluidity. Many applicants are ill-prepared for this test, and coaching takes months sometimes—sessions every two weeks as the client painstakingly memorizes civics questions and learns how to write an English sentence. This year we provided 62 such tutoring sessions. One client was a breathtaking success: this person’s language ability suggested that passing his test was most unlikely; but he did -- because of his hard work and intensive coaching. Bravo to him for his effort and to all who helped him achieve his dream!

Eye Examinations and Eyeglasses: We were only able to serve six patients with free eye examinations and free eyeglasses before Covid-19 made the physical proximity required for eye

examinations too risky. With the collaboration of the Virginia chapter of the Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity, we hope to restart the service late in 2021.

LADYS: In 2020 as in 2019, Sin Barreras was awarded a support grant in favor of LADYS (Leadership, Advancement, and Development of our Young Sisters), a program of the Alpha Rho Chapter of Sigma Lambda Upsilon at UVA. The grant will help LADYS to empower eight or ten young women of color in middle and high school through one-on-one mentoring in college and career preparation, community service, pride in one's culture, and others. This grant from the Junior League of Charlottesville allows us to continue to support to LADYS in 2021.

Food and Rent Support

Arguably our biggest success this year has been the Board's decision to address the Covid-19 crisis by embarking on a program of individual grants to families facing economic crisis—a new role for Sin Barreras. We are grateful to have attracted substantial additional funding to do so. We collaborated with a local group, Cville Community Cares, to distribute \$56,850 in food coupons to 367 families. We channeled food and rent support of \$20,000 from the Community Foundation of the Blue Ridge to 67 families, and from the Hispanics in Philanthropy Foundation of California of a \$15,000 grant to 47 families. From the City of Charlottesville we won \$149,000 for rent support for 298 families and we won two competitive \$50,000 grants from Albemarle County for the same purpose for 110 families. Total: 889 families



Food & Rent Support to almost 900 Families

to date, while we continue to search for other interested donors. Many of these grants came with little or no administrative recovery, meaning that the staff costs to run the projects had to be covered by hundreds of local donations. We are enormously appreciative of this financial support that enabled us to deliver these grants!

C. Advocacy

The third pillar of our service to the community, Advocacy, became all the more important as 2020 was another year of ferocious attacks on the Hispanic immigrant community by the Trump Administration—in Asylum (which was effectively eliminated on Jan 11, 2021) and in many other areas. Our Advocacy working group met twice a month throughout the year and took up various issues, among them: further work on **driver's licenses for all** (regardless of immigration status), **guardianship for immigrant children**, position papers and letters to legislators in support of the **eviction moratorium**, efforts to promote Hispanic **voter registration**, a position paper on the **Covid-19 outbreak** in the Farmville detention center, and **letters to the editor** on various other topics. Again this year, the committee had an **in-person meeting** with our State senator, Creigh Deeds, to discuss priorities. Many of these issues were given further exposure by including them in our **Quarterly Newsletter**. We also received several **favorable press articles** in our local papers.

The Virginia Legislature: As in the last seven years, Sin Barreras organized a "Visit-Your-Legislator Day" to Richmond, which was particularly important this year because of the Democratic majority in the Virginia Legislature for the first time in twenty-six years. Advocacy on drivers licenses for all was high on our list of topics. Dozens of mostly Hispanic Charlottesville residents accompanied SB members in making these presentations and it worked! The Virginia

legislature approved a Driver's Privilege Card for undocumented immigrants effective Jan. 1, 2021—an issue of overwhelming community priority for almost twenty years! We are so proud to have participated in this significant step forward for our community.

The Albemarle County Regional Jail: Readers of previous Annual Reports will recall that Sin Barreras has been an active member with other local groups lobbying the Albemarle County Regional Jail to repudiate its policy of informing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) 48 hours in advance of immigrants finishing their jail sentences. We are gratified to announce this ACRJ policy has now been rescinded.

Driver's License Rally: Sin Barreras was the key organizer of a 400-person rally walking to Senator Creigh Deed's office in support of the Driver's License for All campaign before its successful vote in the Virginia legislature later that week.

State-wide Activism: We also participated in the Virginia Coalition of Latino Organization's (VACOLAO) State-wide Seventh Immigrant Advocates Summit.



Charlottesville Driver's License Rally

D. Volunteering

Volunteers are the backbone of our organization, and as in previous years, total volunteer hours have been gratifying, over 7,400, almost as much as last year. Average volunteer hours this year were 615 *per month*. Several highly active volunteers offered 95 or more hours most months; additionally we have a dozen ad-hoc volunteers, some of them UVA students who contribute during non-exam periods. Total hours were split: two-thirds for Board and core volunteers and one-third for student and other volunteers. Using the established in-kind valuation in Virginia of \$27.20 per volunteer hour to quantify this impact, the monetized value of this donated time is over \$200,000. Thank you all for your invaluable help!

III. Human Stories behind Sin Barreras Numbers

Jose (not his real name) is married, has one child, and has been living and working legally in the United States for over 7 years. He had been eligible to apply for citizenship for some time, but he found the process overwhelming. "I had a lot of trouble filling out the papers. It was difficult...very difficult. I had no one to help me. Then my wife told me about Sin Barreras. They translated my papers and helped me fill out the forms. They arranged to have a lawyer meet me at the office, and they had a translator there to help. The lawyer was very good! He was so nice and friendly. He took time with me. Everything went more quickly than I expected, and my application was accepted. Then, Sin Barreras helped me get ready for my interview and the test. The volunteers who worked with me were so kind. They encouraged me. They told me: 'You are doing good!' and 'Wow! You studied!' I passed the test and now I am just waiting for my citizenship ceremony. I tell my friends: 'If you need help, call Sin Barreras. They will answer you right away and keep in touch with you.' I hope people continue supporting Sin Barreras so Sin Barreras can keep helping people like me."

Maria is originally from Mexico, is married and has three children. She has lived in the United States for over 16 years. "I heard about Sin Barreras in my church. The first thing Sin Barreras helped me with was applying for citizenship, and then they helped my husband to apply for legal

status so we could be together. This was so important for us and our three children. We had looked into hiring a lawyer, but there was no way we could afford it. Without Sin Barreras, these big steps would not have been possible. Then I participated in a leadership course offered by Sin Barreras. I learned about the law and how the government functions here. I even took part in a video visit to Richmond to meet some state Senators. This was all new to me. Now I want to help others, especially in telling them how to obtain a driver's license or a driver privilege card. I am grateful to Sin Barreras. There are people who do not know any English and know nothing about how the law works in this country. And Sin Barreras helps them. I cannot stress enough how grateful I am. Sin Barreras changed my life, and not just my life but the lives of so many people."

Pablo is originally from Mexico. He is married, has four children, and works in construction. He has lived in the United States for 22 years. "I wanted to get my Green Card, but lawyers are very expensive. I heard about Sin Barreras being able to help. We hesitated a little because people always say it's better to pay a lawyer. But Clay did a great job! After Clay sent in our paperwork, we never got any notice saying we were missing any items, and very quickly we got a response. It was amazing! Imagine the difference he made in our lives. For so long you are "illegal," and then you are legal and it changes your life. When you have your documents, you don't feel pressure like when you were undocumented. You don't have the fear of being stopped by immigration and they will arrest you. It is a big relief. And after I got my Green Card, I was able to go back and visit my home-town. I saw so many old friends and a lot of family. I got to see my little sister I hadn't seen for 22 years! Can you imagine? I have only good things to say about Sin Barreras. It is a great service and a great help. Without Sin Barreras, many people would be literally helpless. I only wish Sin Barreras was able to help even more people. I have friends and family in other states and wish that Sin Barreras could help them as well."

Marisol came to the United States when she was 8 years old. When she was about to graduate from high school, she went to Sin Barreras to learn more about DACA and to see if she could apply. "I didn't really know much about the DACA program or how it might help me, but Sin Barreras explained it to me. Then they brought in Clay to help me fill out the paperwork. They helped me in everything that I needed, and I was approved for DACA! So, I think I went to the right place for help. My brother went to another place to get help, but they were not able to help him, and then the applications were closed. Now that the government has re-opened DACA applications, my brother is going to try again; but this time with the help of Sin Barreras. Having my DACA has helped me a lot! I could apply more freely for jobs. I got a Social Security card. I was able to get a driver's license and buy a car. And, I could continue to study after graduating from high school. Now I am attending PVCC and hoping to enter the Veterinary Technician program. Even with DACA, I am still not eligible for financial aid, so I have to work waiting tables to pay for classes; but I can get in-state tuition which is a big help. Sin Barreras has helped me and my family in so many ways."

IV. Conclusion

In spite of Covid-19 Sin Barreras has had continuing success in 2020, reorienting our programs to respond to the crisis, even surpassing last year's total clients served by over 14%. Largely because of generous private donors, we now have two full-time and three part-time staff on the payroll as we become an ever more versatile resource for the Hispanic immigrant community in central Virginia. We are enormously grateful to our donors and to the volunteers who make our work possible. In the coming year, we hope and pray that justice will begin to return to our immigration system, and we commit to even further dedication to our Mission, a better life for all Charlottesville immigrants.