

## About Esperanza

**Driven by the biblical mandate to serve the “least of these” (Matthew 25:40), Esperanza strengthens Hispanic communities and all who live, work, and go to school within them. We carry out this mission through a variety of programs and services that are designed to empower people via education, housing and economic development, arts and culture, and social change.**

Nueva Esperanza, Inc. (“Esperanza”) was founded in 1986 by the Rev. Luis Cortés, Jr. and the Hispanic Clergy of Philadelphia to address social and economic challenges in the predominantly low-income, Latino neighborhoods of North Philadelphia. In the 40 years since its founding, Esperanza has grown into one of the nation’s largest Hispanic community development agencies, a \$114-million institution with more than 680 employees serving a range of community needs.

Esperanza is committed to forging an “opportunity community” – a place marked by safe streets, quality schools, thriving small businesses, a vibrant cultural sector, affordable housing and more – where all aspire to live in Hunting Park, one of the poorest districts in Philadelphia. Esperanza addresses the conditions that have historically limited progress for Latinos through an ecosystem of institutions and programs that represent the community it serves; affording concrete skills development, educational degrees, and other assets that offer “on-ramps” out of poverty and into the mainstream economy; Esperanza seeks to facilitate transformative moments in individuals’ lives that provide narratives of hope and success. Here, Hispanic individuals and families, and others who are economically underserved and marginalized can gain greater access to economic mobility and an improved quality of life.

**Esperanza Academy Charter School** serves more than 2,200 students in grades K-12. The student body is 100% minority – approximately 97% Hispanic. With a culture of academic rigor, a rich array of 14 electives and majors, and intensive student supports, Esperanza Academy has an over 90% four-year graduation rate, less than a 1% drop-out rate, 81.56% of graduates are accepted into college, and more than 65% of those enroll in college. The school also facilitates Early College and Dual Enrollment programs with Esperanza College of Eastern University, allowing students to obtain college credits while in high school, which provides long-term cost savings for their education and first time college experiences for families.

**Esperanza Cyber Charter School** serves over 900 students in grades K-12. Founded in 2012, the Cyber School offers a customized online curriculum and in-person support from our teachers and tutors. Each student follows an individualized learning plan that allows them to complete their schooling online. The Cyber School has more than 22 Academic Specialists from Puerto Rico who position the school to fluently address the educational needs of Latino and English as a Second Language learners. Taking a proactive approach to supporting children and families, the Cyber School has a team of case managers who ensure that the needs of children are met and that families remain connected and engaged in their child’s education, even in a remote learning environment.

**Esperanza College**, a branch campus of Eastern University, is a fully accredited, federally designated 2-year Hispanic Serving Institution (one of only two in Pennsylvania) awarding Associate degrees in one of eleven concentrations: Business Administration, Criminal Justice, Community and Human Services, Early Childhood Education, Media and Technology, Digital Communications, Health Sciences, Medical Assisting, eSports Management, Dental Assisting, and Natural Science. Esperanza College serves between 180 and 220 students annually, with a graduation rate that averages 50%, compared to the national graduation rate of 33% at comparable two-year institutions. The Esperanza English Institute, housed within the college, serves approximately 300 individuals each session, with five levels of language education for those seeking to improve their quality of life, pursue citizenship, or access workforce and educational opportunities.

**Esperanza CareerLink Center** serves approximately 18,000 TANF and WIOA recipients and general job seekers each year with comprehensive family stability, job readiness training, case management, job placement, and job retention services. The top performing center among four within Philadelphia, it is also the go-to CareerLink for serving a diverse array of immigrants with different languages. Eastern North Philadelphia Workforce Corporation, which operates the CareerLink Center, has piloted unique workforce programs designed to meet the unique needs of our Hispanic populations, including a successful project focused on eliminating barriers for single working mothers and hosted expungement clinics for the community.

**Esperanza Tec Centro Philadelphia** is a new bilingual workforce training center that will equip unemployed and underemployed adults with the skills needed for stable, family-sustaining careers. As part of the Tec Centro Workforce Network, the center will provide no-tuition adult education and hands-on training in high-demand trades such as Welding, Facilities Maintenance, HVAC, and Commercial Plumbing. Opening in 2026, Esperanza Tec Centro Philadelphia will expand access to practical education and career opportunities for adults in our community.

**Esperanza's Housing Counseling** program provides one-on-one counseling and group workshops in homeownership, financial literacy (including budgeting, credit counseling, and money management) foreclosure prevention, fair housing laws, pre- and post-purchase, rental, down payment assistance, refinancing, and antifraud or anti-predatory lending. Locally we serve 600-1,000 clients through these services each year. In 2008, we were certified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a national housing counseling intermediary, working with affiliates around the country. Through the Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity, Esperanza also operates a BenePhilly center, providing residents with access to a range of public benefit programs.

**Esperanza Housing and Economic Development** focuses on revitalizing and empowering the neighborhood within the Hunting Park community of Philadelphia. Our team engages residents at the block level, providing a robust set of organizing activities that foster civic engagement, including non-partisan get out the vote and Census efforts; COVID-19 vaccine and testing access; food distribution; youth internships; an Esperanza Ambassador network; and more. EHED supports 225 business owners along three economic corridors through training and technical assistance. EHED is increasingly involved in environmental remediation efforts, planting more than 2,000 street and yard trees, training local Tree Tenders to plant and care for neighborhood trees, and facilitating heat mitigation efforts.

**Real Estate Development:** Esperanza owns residential and commercial facilities that we have rehabilitated for rental, sale, or multi-purpose use, including our 17-acre campus which offers 400,000 square feet of facility space for our offices and programs. We have developed more than 100 units of affordable housing, including the Roberto Clemente Homes project, which transformed a dilapidated former school building into 38 units of housing, 5,000 square feet of commercial space, and a playground. Esperanza also focuses on attracting key neighborhood amenities, and has developed a laundromat, drug store, and *La Cosecha Latina* community garden. We have several more projects in the pipeline, including the Amor mixed-use building at 4615-21 N. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, the Modern Age mixed-used project at 4703-4709 N. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, and an affordable housing project at 622-32 W. Erie Avenue, while a new 65,000 square foot elementary school building for Esperanza Academy was completed and opened this year.

**Esperanza Affordable Rental Housing Land Trust** is an innovative project focused on addressing gentrification, bringing down the overall cost of rental units so that they are affordable for households at 60% of Area Median Income, and ensuring that residents for whom programs and services were designed are able to remain in their neighborhood for years to come. Unlike many other land trusts nationally, Esperanza's is focused on rentals to ensure that as tenants build economic stability, these units remain accessible to the next families in need.

**Impacto** was acquired by Esperanza and re-launched in 2020 as a community-based newspaper, the only Spanish-speaking newspaper in the city with door-to-door distribution. With a cadre of independent writers who represent diverse Hispanic countries of origin, and a focus on local stories, needs, and interests, Impacto gives our community a voice and vehicle for sharing their stories and resources. Currently, Impacto is distributed to 13,000-50,000 households directly via door-to-door delivery in Philadelphia, with additional copies placed in strategic points across the Delaware Valley, and 1,500 copies in the Lehigh Valley. Impacto has hosted several public forums designed to ensure elected and prospective elected officials clearly voice their plans for the local community.

**Esperanza Arts Center** is a state-of-the-art public venue designed as the regional hub for Latino arts and culture. Opened in December 2018, the 5,750 square foot *Teatro Esperanza* is the centerpiece of the facility, and regularly hosts Philadelphia's premiere musical, dance, and theater companies—including the Philadelphia Orchestra, Pennsylvania Ballet, Philadanco, Orchestra 2001, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and many others—as well as top performers from around the world and cinema presentations of interest to the Hispanic community. To date, the *Teatro* has hosted over 140 performances and events with an audience of more than 20,000 people. *Galeria Esperanza* was opened in 2023, the city's second art gallery featuring the work of local and international Latino artists. These spaces are complemented by the *Gran Salon* and *La Plaza* for rentals and gatherings.

**Artístas y Músicos Latinoamericanos (AMLA)** promotes the development, dissemination, and understanding of Latin music and culture throughout Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley with an emphasis on at-risk youth. Since 2006, AMLA has annually educated hundreds of children, youth, and adults of all ages, through private and group music lessons. In addition to instrumental learning, AMLA also teaches Latin cultural heritage, music theory, and audio engineering. AMLA has reached more than 1,500 participants through assemblies and artist-in-residence workshops.

**Esperanza Immigration Legal Services (EILS)** was formed in 2009 with the mission to provide low-cost, non-litigation direct legal aid and citizenship education for underserved immigrants and their families. Since its founding, EILS has served more than 2,000 low-income immigrants with one-on-one legal services including citizenship applications, DACA applications and renewals, family petitions, visa adjustments, medical and language waivers, asylum petitions, and comprehensive referrals.

**The Esperanza Institute for Latino Health Equity** facilitates equitable community-engaged research, education, and programs to improve health and health equity in Hunting Park. The EILHE recognizes that meaningful collaboration with our community in research and subsequent action is the foundation for improving our community's health. Its mission is to mobilize, empower, and transform our community to take charge of our collective health and well-being through data-driven action and education; to advance a vision for a thriving community where everyone can live healthy, prosperous, fulfilling lives.

**Esperanza Faith & Capacity Initiatives** seeks to empower the Hispanic community around the country through faith initiatives. Esperanza has worked to strengthen over 550+ Latino faith and community groups nationally through the delivery of training, technical assistance, and management of sub-awards. As a national intermediary, Esperanza has received and successfully managed more than \$48 million in government and corporate grants for a variety of purposes, including mentoring at-risk/incarcerated youth, leadership training, and health promotion. Current programs include mentoring of clergy, an Esperanza Youth Leadership Institute for youth-serving people of faith, programs focused on child character development with parents, and visioning and missional clarification resources for congregations.

**Esperanza's community-based STEM programs** bring a variety of formal and informal learning opportunities to neighborhood residents of all ages. In collaboration with the Franklin Institute and other partners, we have organized Science in the Park, Star[gazing] Parties, and "Creation Station" hands-on engineering projects for young people. Esperanza College's annual Minorities in Health Sciences Symposium engages 400+ high school students each year to learn about post-secondary and career opportunities in the STEM fields. Our STEM Hope Pathways program enables 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students to take college-level STEM classes and participate in summer science camps.

**Hope Digital Skills** programs span workforce development and education, leveraging Esperanza College of Eastern University as a home base to provide small businesses, community residents, and students with access to digital skills. Since launching in 2021, the program has served more than 1,400 individuals, 70% of whom are Latino and 50% Spanish-speaking, with bilingual workshops, one on one support and laptops/internet access; reached over 50,000 with a campaign about digital skills, and surveyed the needs of over 1,600 residents.