

SANTA MARIA COMMUNITY SERVICES



**SANTA
MARIA**
COMMUNITY SERVICES™



FROM THE CEO



It is hard to believe that in June I completed my 35th year at Santa Maria Community Services. I am grateful for the opportunity to continue to lead this great organization.

As the summer winds down, I'm also grateful that we can celebrate

the successes of so many of the families we serve:

- Dozens of young children graduating from our home-visitation programs: at three years of age – off on a successful start in life – and at five years old moving into kindergarten ready to learn in school;
- Young adults earning their High School Equivalency certificates and moving into the world of work; and
- Families digging in to earn more income, grow their savings, and make progress on a path out of poverty.

We also celebrate so many of YOU who are involved in supporting our work financially through gifts of cash, stock or other investments, and through our fundraising events. The Sharing Table in April was a huge success as a complete sellout, and we look forward to the 14th annual Price Hill Pacer 5K coming up on September 7th, which benefits both Santa Maria and our partner Price Hill Will. Gifts of support through whatever means are critically important to sustain our impact in the community. Thank you for your part in our success!

H.A. Musser, Jr.
President and CEO

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SANTA MARIA PRESIDENT AND CEO CELEBRATES 35 YEARS

H.A. joined Santa Maria Community Services on June 18, 1984 as a Planning Specialist and soon became a Neighborhood Organizer, helping bring together Price Hill residents to discuss common issues and work toward solutions. It was not long until he moved into the position of Santa Maria's Sedamsville Center Director. H.A. has been the chief executive of Santa Maria since 1989 and currently leads as President and CEO. For 18 months during this tenure at Santa Maria, H.A. also served as the first part-time Executive Director of Price Hill Will, a community development corporation in Price Hill. H.A. has served as a board member and on advisory councils for many local organizations. He not only serves the community through his professional career, but is an active volunteer in the community. We are excited to congratulate H.A. for his 35 years of dedication to helping families in Cincinnati!

Please consider celebrating H.A. by supporting Santa Maria in his honor! You can do so by contributing to H.A. Musser's 35th Anniversary Fund located on our donation page. Visit www.santamaria-cincy.org and click Donate. H.A. Musser's 35th Anniversary Fund will be located in the "Donation Designation" dropdown menu within the online donation form.

"I am so thankful to the Lord Jesus that I've had the opportunity to spend most of my professional career at Santa Maria Community Services. It is a privilege to work at something I enjoy and to serve alongside our wonderful staff and volunteers. Price Hill has been a great place to work and live and raise our family."
-H.A. Musser, Jr.



H.A. Musser pictured with wife, 4 children, and 10 grandchildren. Adults pictured left to right: Joel (son) with wife Nancy, H.A. Musser with wife Rhonda, Hannah (daughter), Samuel (son), Austin (son) with wife Meggin

Q&A WITH H.A.

1. What brought you to Santa Maria Community Services 35 years ago? *I was finishing grad school at VCU in Richmond, VA and because my wife and I had the first grandchild on either side of the family, and because both sets of grandparents lived in Central KY, we wanted to move back to this part of the country. I applied at several settlement house agencies in Lexington, Louisville, Columbus, Indy and Cincinnati, including Santa Maria, and our executive director at the time, Sr. Jane Ellen Shappelle, SC, is the only one who replied. She invited me to come for an interview and I was eventually offered a four-month position to help her and the board develop a strategic plan, and here I am 35 years later!*

2. What kept you here for 35 years? *I have loved living and working in Price Hill all these years. I enjoy being in a "helping" profession in a neighborhood-based setting, working to help strengthen families and the community.*

3. What is one memorable experience you've had working at Santa Maria? *One thing that stands out to me from my 35 years here is the trusting relationships that we have built and maintained with the families we serve, the community, and our partner organizations. I'm proud that we are known for being trustworthy.*

4. What is your biggest wish for the future of Santa Maria and the families we serve? *I remember Santa Maria's celebrations at our 90th and 100th anniversaries, and I look forward to celebrating our 125th anniversary of service in Cincinnati in a couple of years. My wish for Santa Maria going forward is to be able to consolidate most of our services under one roof to better help families achieve their goals while improving the efficiency of our operations.*

5. What is one interesting thing about you others may not know? *My junior high and high school years were spent in Brazil where my parents were Christian missionaries. That is where I was introduced to the international "football" game. I was captain of the Berea College soccer team and later refereed high school and college soccer in Ohio and Kentucky for about 15 years.*

ON THE COVER

Maribel's Story

Maribel moved to the United States from Mexico nearly 20 years ago. As an immigrant and single mother of four children, Maribel has faced many challenges throughout her life in the US. When Maribel first contacted Santa Maria in 2016, she was struggling to communicate with her landlord regarding issues with pests and plumbing. "I had problems and someone told me to come to Santa Maria, that someone here could help me," said Maribel. Molly Swaidan, a Santa Maria Bilingual Case Manager, helped Maribel enroll in the agency's Stable Families Program. "It's 18 months of case management where we set goals around housing, employment, income, and stability," explains Molly. Maribel says the program helped her look for a new apartment and helped her become more stable.



Molly Swaidan and Maribel Navarrete

Presently, Maribel balances raising her three youngest children (boys, ages 15, 10, and 9) with her job of cleaning houses, a huge success after being unable to work to care for her children. She describes herself saying, "I'm not a perfect mom, but I'm a good mom. I take care of my kids, and I'm always with them." When her first son was born, Maribel was living in a Kentucky homeless shelter with her 7 year old daughter. Reflecting on her time there Maribel remembers feeling alone with no other Latinas to connect with. At the time, neither she nor her daughter could speak English. Maribel didn't know how to drive or take the bus and struggled communicating her needs, even when she was having labor pains. Over time, Maribel managed to work and save enough for an apartment with help from shelter staff. While things were looking up for Maribel, her infant son suffered a tragic accident.

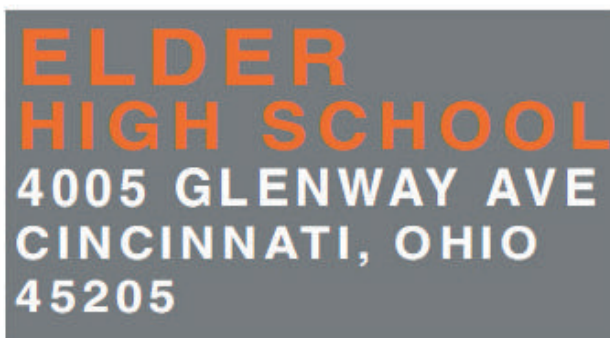
At just four months old, Maribel's son experienced a traumatic brain injury and was hospitalized for two months. A fall off a bed left him with hyperactivity issues, slowness, and rapid personality changes throughout his life. Recently, Maribel's middle son, age 10, was diagnosed with schizophrenia which has led to frequent panic attacks and shaking. Her youngest son, age 9, suffers a mental delay, hyperactivity, and speech and sleep problems. Having three children with special needs has required countless doctor appointments, therapy sessions, and school meetings. Without a car, Maribel takes the bus to each of these. While she has been fortunate to receive some in-home assistance with her youngest son and medication for her middle son, her oldest son receives only limited assistance.

Though Maribel and her family have faced many challenges, her involvement in Santa Maria has placed her on a positive path. Maribel joined the Spanish-speaking Women's Group which gives members an opportunity to engage in community with other Spanish-speakers and learn cooking, gardening, parenting skills, and more. The group helped Maribel feel a sense of community she had not experienced while living in Kentucky. "When I come to Santa Maria, there's a lot of Hispanic people," said Maribel. "And when I come to the group there's a lot of Hispanic women. I feel better here." When asked about her future goals, Maribel stated, "I want to save money to be able to buy a house." Molly seems to have no doubt that she will reach her goals saying, "she's very strong," to which Maribel replied, "I have to be."

Molly calls her work with Maribel "rewarding" and says the two "have a friendship at this point" and are "almost family." "Maribel is an incredible mother who is doing the best she can while maintaining a positive environment for her children," says Molly. "She doesn't miss her group sessions with Santa Maria and is open to sharing her struggles with the group." Maribel's first child and only daughter, now grown, recently moved back to Cincinnati from the East Coast with her child, Maribel's granddaughter. After transitioning to four different schools throughout first grade, Maribel's youngest son recently completed his first full school year and passed second grade. Her oldest son is also experiencing success in school making As and Bs. Maribel continues to participate in Santa Maria programming and live her life for her and her children. With the help of Santa Maria, she is currently on track for achieving her personal goals including becoming a first-time home buyer, among others. "She is resilient," adds Molly. "She is not giving up at all."



PRICE HILL PACER 5K



WWW.PRICEHILLPACER.ORG

Join Santa Maria Community Services and Price Hill Will for the 14th Annual Price Hill Pacer 5K Walk/Run! The Price Hill Pacer is a family-friendly 5K race in Price Hill benefiting two non-profit organizations who share a vision of improving the quality of life for all families in the Price Hill community. Enjoy food, entertainment, participant goody bags, and more! The race will begin at 8:30 am with race-day registration starting at 7:00 am. The cost to participate is \$30 for adults over 18 and \$25 for those 18 and under. Group registrations are offered for 5-10 people at \$25 each. Registrations include post-race refreshments and a participant goody bag. Performance race t-shirts are also available for purchase. For more information and to register, visit www.pricehillpacer.org!

Thank you to our Impact Sponsor



STUDENT ART FAIR SUPPORTS INTERNATIONAL WELCOME CENTER



For the third year in a row, art enthusiast Nina Wurzelbacher has hosted an arts and crafts fair titled *Arts 'N Smarts* to raise money for the educational programming provided within Santa Maria Community Services' International Welcome Center (IWC).

The *Arts 'N Smarts* fair began as a senior capstone project for Nina in 2017 but continued after her graduation from Seton High School. Working previously with immigrants, children, and education during her volunteer position at Holy Family Parish's Children's Church in Price Hill, Nina became passionate about helping immigrant families achieve their educational goals. Nina's desire for helping stemmed from her two mission trips to Guatemala with her school in 2016 and 2017 through Agua Viva Children's Home, and internship/mission trip to Guatemala in 2018 with From Houses to Homes. During her trips, Nina worked with children and assisted with various art projects.

For the past three years, Nina has recruited local artists to participate in the fair, and each contribute 10% of their sales to Santa Maria. Nina also donates the artists' registration fees to the agency and collects donations from friends, family, and those interested in supporting the IWC. "I am an artist with a passion for the Spanish language and a desire to serve God by helping His people," said Nina. "What better way to put it all together than an art fair that raises funds for a charity that supports the immigrant community right here in my neighborhood?"

This year, *Arts 'N Smarts* was held at Rapid Run Park and included artists and crafters who create poetry, jewelry, painting, soaps, knitting, and crocheting. In total, Nina has raised over \$1,000 for Santa Maria's International Welcome Center. "We are so grateful to Nina for her support of the International Welcome Center and the families we serve," says Luz Schemmel, Santa Maria's Outreach Director. "Not only does her fair help provide

important resources for families getting acclimated to life in the area, but it supports a community of people who can connect in a welcoming and safe place. Nina's kindness and thoughtfulness is greatly appreciated by the families we work with."

Santa Maria Community Services' International Welcome Center (IWC) provides support for immigrant families transitioning into a new culture. Support includes English as a Second Language, Spanish literacy classes, Ohio Public Benefits and other community resources, financial education, educational assistance, employment assistance, and family support. The IWC also includes a Youth Enrichment Program which provides enrichment activities for children, and a coffee hour which provides immigrant participants with a sense of community. Santa Maria is excited to announce this year marks the 10th anniversary of the IWC.



Artists display crafts with event host Nina Wurzelbacher (pictured third from left)

A LOOK INTO THE AGENCY'S ESL PROGRAM

For several years now, Santa Maria Community Services has offered ESL (English as a Second Language) classes to help members of the community better their English skills. The classes include a diverse group of students from Guatemala, India, Mali, Senegal and more, and provide individuals with the ability to better communicate with their peers while having access to more jobs in the area. Three different levels are available to students based off their English abilities. Within these levels, students learn to use pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax, grammar, and conversational skills.

During ESL class time Santa Maria offers a Youth Enrichment Program (YEP) for children of the ESL students. This program invites youth ages 3-10 to participate in activities while their parents attend classes. Previous activities of the YEP program have included "Outdoor Time" with IMAGO and craft time with the Cincinnati Art Museum, among others. At the end of the program, ESL participants who graduate or advance to the next level are awarded with a certificate recognizing the hard work they have dedicated to the program.

This May, 64 students graduated within or out of the ESL program. Graduating is a significant accomplishment to participants mainly because of the challenges they face along the way. "One obstacle many students face is their education level," says Francesca Phillis, Santa Maria ESL Coach. "A lot of the students have only completed a 6th grade education level or below, if they obtained any formal education at all. This results into more challenges for students who are trying to develop their literacy skills. So, it is really rewarding for those students who may have never been to school before, to be able to read and write, even if it's only a little bit." Recognizing their hard work and the dedication they have put into their classes while balancing their life outside the program is important to Santa Maria. To celebrate, Santa Maria hosts an awards ceremony and potluck dinner each year. During the ceremony, students are recognized for their achievements including participation, most improved, and best attendance.

Two students who graduated this May include Karamjeet Leti Singh and Rodolfo De Leon. Karamjeet came from India and joined the program to advance his English-speaking skills in hopes of finding better employment, while Rodolfo who came from Guatemala joined the program to better communicate with his family and friends. Both men migrated to America to better themselves and their family's lives. They are both married with three children, each with two boys and one girl, and both of their children are enrolled in the Youth Enrichment Program. Karamjeet's wife, Daljit Kaur, and Rodolfo's wife, Maria



ESL graduates pose for picture. Francesca Phillis pictured front right, Rodolfo De Leon pictured to her left, and Karamjeet Leti Singh pictured in red cap.

Pablo Lopez, were also participants of the ESL program. Both students have shown a tremendous amount of dedication and enthusiasm for the program and each have earned an award for their hard work. Karamjeet earned Most Improved and Rodolfo earned Most Improved and Best Attendance. "I really enjoyed English classes," says Karamjeet. "The classes were excellent," adds Rodolfo. "I learned a lot and my favorite activities were the phonics lesson and learning how to write numbers."

The ESL program has helped families improve parts of their lives that will help them gain access to more opportunities in their communities. Students involved in ESL are able to navigate their communities more easily by conversing with people in everyday locations like grocery stores, community centers, and in the workplace. Many students join ESL because they want to build on their skills for future jobs. English also helps students become more involved in their kids' lives because they are able to read to them, help them with homework, and understand what's going on with them at school.

Santa Maria is excited to announce the transition of its ESL and YEP programs to Holy Family Church. The new location will allow Santa Maria to better serve the church's growing Hispanic population and provide easier access to Santa Maria's East Price Hill services. "The move to Holy Family will be better for many of our students who live in the Price Hill area because it is much closer and within walking distance," says Francesca. "The school itself is more spacious for both the YEP and ESL program; the kids will have more room to play, and we can have more students in a classroom for the ESL classes." Santa Maria looks forward to starting ESL classes this September.



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Santa Maria Community Services is a catalyst and advocate for Cincinnati's Greater Price Hill families to attain their educational, financial, and health goals.

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