2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Empowering Latinas at every stage of life.

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As a long-time MANA de San Diego member, I was thrilled to be named Executive Director. I was a volunteer leader for many years when the organization had no staff. I know the important role volunteers have played in growing the organization. I want to thank Sofia Salgado Robitaille for her eleven years moving the organization forward. Thanks to Sofia’s leadership, the Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, and community partners I am leading a financially secure organization, with a longstanding history of excellent programming, that has doubled in staff size and reached a milestone $1 million budget during the past 2 years.

In 2020, I am proud that we were able to adapt to the extraordinary times that we are living due to COVID-19. By June, we moved our programs and events to a virtual setting in a successful manner. We shifted one of our signature events, the annual Latina Success Conference, into a Latina Success Virtual Symposium. Two initiatives that we took on is to distribute COVID-19 relief funds from the San Diego Foundation to our Hermanitas’ families; we also joined the San Diego Latino Health Coalition as an outreach partner to keep our community informed on COVID-19 issues. COVID-19’s detrimental effects were not just health related. In December, MANA de San Diego held a press conference to shine light on the disproportionate amount of job losses faced by Latinas due to COVID-19. Latinas account for 14% of total county employment, but 20% of employment in the three hardest hit sectors (tourism, retail, and education).

I am honored to be at the helm of a strong member organization that is making a difference in San Diego. I look forward to our continued collaboration to ensure that Latinas are prepared to help lead our beloved community. If you are not yet part of our community, I invite you to join us.

Muchisimas Gracias,

Inez González Perezchica, Ed.D.
Executive Director

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Knowing the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Latino community here in San Diego and across the country, MANA has worked in various ways to raise awareness and provide support to our community. We are proud to have been part of one such opportunity to raise awareness through the Virtual Press Briefing held with other Latina leaders in December of 2020. Coming together to share the health, economic, and emotional toll of the pandemic on Latinas is the first step to address the needs of our community.

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STAFF

Rosa María Hernández
Director of Development

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Programs Manager

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Membership and Events Coordinator

Samantha Jimenez
Executive Administrative Assistant

Johanna Lara
Americorps VIP Fellow
In 1986, a group of San Diego Latinas sought a more meaningful presence in educational, economic, political and social arenas. They established the San Diego Chapter of MANA, a national Latina organization whose mission is to empower Latinas through education, leadership development, community service and advocacy. With over 500 members engaged in fulfilling our mission, MANA de San Diego is proud to be the largest and most active of the 17 MANA national chapters.

MANA de San Diego’s mission is to empower Latinas through education, leadership development, community service and advocacy.
HERMANITAS PROGRAM

The Hermanitas Program, Spanish for “little sister,” is a nationally recognized youth mentorship and leadership program that provides Latina middle and high school students with ongoing support, resources, and tools to empower them to finish high school and pursue higher education in preparation to enter the professional work force and affect positive change. This work is led by a strong and committed group of volunteers, the Hermanitas Leadership Team.

In 2020, MANA de San Diego continued to serve and support Hermanitas, checking in with the families of all 65 participants early in the pandemic to offer support, despite COVID-19 physical distancing guidelines. MANA de San Diego referred families to services such as food distribution, worked to obtain laptop donations from a local partner to distribute them to Hermanitas in need, and secured funding to help some families cover basic needs on an emergency basis. In addition to providing educational content and wellness check-ins via video conferencing, MANA has supported mentors in safely staying connected to their Hermanitas through technology.

Denise Picazo

Denise is a proud daughter of immigrant parents who started in the Hermanitas program as a 7th grader with the hope of becoming the first in her family to attend college. Six years later, Denise has realized that dream by being accepted into 7 colleges/universities, including the University of San Diego where she hopes to earn her degree Psychology. Despite a heavy course load of college preparatory classes in which she maintained a 4.0 GPA, Denise gave a lot to her community through her Hermanitas community service project, serving as a tutor at the Barrio Logan College Institute, and as President of the Interact Club at her high school, a Rotary supported organization that involves youth in community service activities. Denise had a powerful model for giving back in her mentor, Tanya Concha, who was herself an Hermanita who decided to return to mentor other young Latinas after graduating from UCLA. Denise is receiving financial support in her college journey through MANA and a four-year scholarship through the San Diego Foundation, as well as emotional and mental support for the path ahead thanks to the Hermanitas program and her mentor Tanya:

“My Hermanita mentor Tanya has taught me many valuable lessons about college and life beyond. She has positively influenced my life and has guided me on my journey to being an empowered Latina.”

2020 ACTIVITIES

In this unique year, MANA met the goal of youth empowerment through online content that included:

- Monthly educational and skill development workshops
- College preparation support
- One-to-one mentoring from a female professional
- Social media campaign to promote the accomplishments of Hermanitas
- Family support

2020 OUTCOMES

- Over 90% retention rate in the program among Hermanitas
- 100% on-time graduation
- 100% admissions to college/university
- Tens of thousands of dollars in scholarships received

PROGRAM FOCUS AREAS

- Academic Achievement
- College Readiness
- Career Exploration
- Professional Development
  - Confidence
  - Leadership
  - Self-awareness
  - Self-advocacy
  - Goal setting and planning
- Civic Engagement

SPOTLIGHT

2020 ACTIVITIES
Hermanitas seniors not only graduate high school on time and enter college, but they remain connected to ongoing support through MANA de San Diego’s Scholarship and Tias programs. One of MANA de San Diego’s longstanding programs is the Scholarship Program. The program has grown from awarding one $1,000 scholarship to awarding $31,000 to 31 Latinas pursuing higher education. Scholarship recipients include Hermanitas, Hermanitas alumnae, as well as Latinas pursuing their higher education, from community college students on the road to a Bachelor’s Degree to doctoral candidates on the verge of a Ph.D. MANA de San Diego has awarded $518,500 in scholarships to date.

Hermanitas alumnae stay connected with the organization through the Tias Program. The Tias, Spanish for “aunties,” are volunteers that provide ongoing support to the college students to ensure they become college graduates. We have partnered with Arena Pharmaceuticals to establish a unique employer pilot program. This program will connect the college students with this top, local employer with the hope of placing some of the students in paid internships. During the school year ending in 2020, the Tias program supported 52 Hermanitas alumnae as they worked to complete their college degree, including 12 college seniors who graduated with degrees ranging from a BA in Psychology to a BS in Chemistry.

These programs continue to grow and thrive thanks to the work of our volunteers and generous donations from our community.

2019 Scholarship Recipient Ceremony

52 college students supported by Tias

12 Tias program participants graduated from college

31 Scholarship Recipients

SCHOLARSHIPS AND TIAS

2020 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

SPOTLIGHT

Kimberly Meraz

Kimberly is an Hermanitas and Tias Program alumnae who graduated in 2020 with a BS in Chemistry. Kimberly persevered despite the pandemic, not only completing her degree but also applying to a PhD program in Epidemiology.

“The gifts and letters that the Tias would take their time to send me helped me feel motivated and supported throughout my educational career.”

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The Latina Success Leadership Program (LSLP) was created in 2015 to address the issue of under-representation of Latinas in leadership roles in both business and government. In partnership with the Center for Creative leadership, a world renowned leadership research and education institution, LSLP, empowers Latinas through a series of dynamic sessions focusing on professional and personal growth including leadership development, strategic networking, effective personal branding, building resiliency, and increasing civic engagement.

The 2020 cohort had only completed one session before the pandemic changed the way everyone learned and connected. Committed staff and volunteers adapted the program and resilient participants persevered to complete the program by Fall of 2020, including some additional sessions added to address networking in a new online only environment. Throughout this difficult year, past alumnae and 2020 participants continued to pursue their goals and achieve great success!

**2020 OUTCOMES**

**MANA reached**

250 LSLP ALUMNAE

**34 LSLP graduates in the 2020 cohort**

2 LSLP alumnae elected to public office

3 LSLP alumnae started a business in 2020

Dozens of 2020 graduates and past alumnae received promotions, raises, completed certification programs, and were chosen for leadership positions on boards/commissions

**2020 LSLP GRADUATION**

This year’s graduation was unique from past ones. The 2020 Cohort participants completed the program mostly via virtual sessions. MANA de San Diego wanted to celebrate the 2020 graduates in a special and meaningful way. The idea of a “drive-up” ceremony came to be. This outdoor event gave the graduates the opportunity to collect their LSLP completion certificate as well as share this experience with MANA volunteers, staff and their peers. Congratulations to the 2020 Cohort for their resiliency and commitment to LSLP during these most challenging times!

**SPOTLIGHT**

**Sara Salas**

Sara participated in LSLP in 2019 after years of work in human resources, specifically within diversity and inclusion positions. After participating in LSLP and hearing the stories of other local elected officials that Sara was inspired to become more involved. Within a year, Sara applied and was selected for the City of San Diego Civil Service Commission.

**Teresa Acosta**

As a longtime MANA member and Hermanita mentor, Teresa decided to expand her leadership development experience through LSLP. In 2018, Teresa graduated from one of the first LSLP cohorts and dedicated herself to serving her community. In 2020, Teresa reached an important milestone in her journey of public service, becoming the first Latina to be elected to the Carlsbad City Council.
MANA membership is an opportunity for individuals and groups to receive the benefits of MANA membership and to give to the community MANA programming supports. Membership provides people access to opportunities for networking, professional and personal development, leadership education and practice, and connection to the Latina community to uplift and inspire each other. Through membership, individuals help sustain the programs at the heart of MANA’s mission of education, leadership development, advocacy and community service. There are many levels of membership, from student membership to Leadership Circle members, and different events, programs, activities to connect to MANA. Regardless of your involvement, whether Hermanitas mentor or Networking Breakfast attendee or program Committee Chair, there is a place for everyone at MANA.

**MEMBERSHIP**

**Member Benefits available to all membership levels include:**

- Pláticas (“Talks”)
- Mega Mixer
- Annual Holiday Party
- Annual Membership Meeting
- Quarterly Networking Breakfast
- Weekly e-newsletter

**FEBRUARY NETWORKING BREAKFAST**

DID YOU KNOW...
the February Networking Breakfast was the time MANA featured a non-Latina speaker? In commemoration of African American history month and solidarity in the work for equality for all women of color.

**WOMEN’S MARCH**

DID YOU KNOW...
Hermanitas are encouraged to participate in civic engagement activities? In January 2020, Hermanitas and adult MANA members participated together in the Women’s March.

**2020 LATINA SUCCESS VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM**

The Latina Success Conference was re-imagined in 2020 as the Latina Success Virtual Symposium to continue our mission while preserving the safety of our community in the midst of the pandemic. Thanks to the Latina Success Conference Committee, the morning experience was a success, filled with learning, inspiration, reflection, and connection. We were honored to have several Latino and Latina local and state elected officials, thought leaders, and health experts reflect on their journey, share their knowledge, and highlight ways to engage with and care for ourselves and our communities.

Our Symposium was not only an opportunity for learning but for connection. Both our speakers and participants represented a broad cross-section of our membership, from Hermanitas to leaders with decades of involvement in MANA. For anyone that missed it or who would like a dose of education and inspiration, our symposium was taped and is available on our [YouTube channel](#).
Achieving our mission takes a community of staff, volunteers, board members, donors, and other supporters, particularly during challenging times such as these. Our work in 2020, would not have been possible without the support of our gracious support of our comunidad. Thank you to the hundreds of people that have contributed to this work and continue to support MANA’s mission every year!