OUR YEAR OF GROWTH

Great dreams are visions that have to be coupled with resources and strategies. That’s what we did back in 2014 when we started to build a model that could provide our most vulnerable communities of color and immigrants with a program that contributes to eliminating the barriers to employment and financial stability that our community was facing. I’m happy that we can proudly say today that we have been successful at it.

With the support of various sectors in the community, we have been able to build an ecosystem of resources that provides the unemployed members of our community with vocational and technical education, English skills, industry credentials and social support services that are creating an empowered pool of talent. We have proudly trained individuals that are now obtaining new jobs, advancing their careers, opening small businesses, and building a stronger community around them.

Today La Cocina VA is standing at the intersection where preparation meets opportunity and we are ready to do more. This annual report shows our success so far and provides a glimpse at our Zero Barriers Training and Entrepreneurship Center, which is currently being built in the Columbia Pike Corridor in Arlington, Virginia. With the continued support of our generous community, we will bring more prosperity to the local community and collectively empower those who are less privileged.

Thank you for joining us through this wonderful journey.

Patricia Funegra  
Founder & CEO

From an idea to a reality is a long and difficult journey – one that many do not have the energy or endurance to make. And yet, here we are taking our founder’s vision off a piece of paper and transforming it into a state-of-the-art building that will allow us to change the lives of countless numbers of our fellow citizens.

With relentless optimism, dogged determination, and tremendous support from the community around us, La Cocina VA has emerged as a model non-profit. Carefully using our resources to maximum effect while aggressively pursuing a plan to grow and serve more and more, we have been able to help the most vulnerable members of our communities and helped to provide local businesses with the single most important asset they could need – a valuable team member.

The shortage of labor in the hospitality industry in this area is a serious and growing problem. As more and more eateries open up for residents to get excited about, there is no concurrent effort to develop a labor force to staff all these new venues. This is where La Cocina VA is able to step in. Our graduates are well trained, eager, and professional, and that is reflected in the higher-than-average retention rate once they are placed.

With our upcoming Zero Barriers Training and Entrepreneurship Center, we will be able to further provide for the economic health of our community by training more employees, and also creating a pathway for entrepreneurship for our students who have the passion to take their own ideas and make them a reality.

Thank you for all of your support along the way. We hope you will continue to be a part of our mission.

Nick Freshman  
Board Chair
Our MISSION and VALUES

La Cocina VA’s mission is to use the power of food as an agent of social and economic change to generate workforce and economic development.

WHAT’S THE CHALLENGE?

According to the findings of a Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census data, U.S. eating and drinking establishments in 2014 employed more foreign-born workers (roughly 2.3 million) than almost any other industry, second only to the construction sector. One of the biggest challenges for many of these workers is the lack of relevant training and limited English proficiency, which often leaves them stuck in dead-end work with very little room to grow financially.

La Cocina VA sees the dire need to confront this challenge for the workforce in the food and hospitality industry. Since its founding in 2014, La Cocina VA has dedicated its resources to creating economic opportunities for low-income Americans, immigrants, and veterans from the Washington D.C. region. Our programs train, certify, and place unemployed low-income women and men, primarily immigrants, in meaningful jobs in the foodservice industry. We also focus on improving their English skills in order to help build a stronger community that supports this population to become self-sufficient and financially independent.

WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT?

La Cocina VA generates workforce and economic development opportunities for these vulnerable populations by providing structured training that helps these individuals obtain real living wage jobs in the food and hospitality industry so that they can create a meaningful career and become financially independent. At the same time, we are looking to the future of this growing industry, where there is a huge gap for skilled, motivated, and dependable workers.

Our approach is to integrate education, job training, and support services to help our clients succeed and to also provide and facilitate employers with access to well-trained ready-to-work individuals. We presently accomplish our social mission through our two core programs: Bilingual Culinary Job Training and Food Assistance.
WHO DO WE HELP?

Our students generally range from **20-60 years** of age and are members of various **immigrant** and **low-income** communities.

95% of our clients are **WOMEN** & **37%** are heads of households.

When joining our program,

- **70.0%** are **UNEMPLOYED**
- **30.0%** are **UNDEREMPLOYED**

Our students come from various areas in the Washington D.C. region.

**OUR DIVERSE WORKFORCE**

We are serving families from all over the world...

Since our program’s inception, we have trained a diverse workforce comprised of individuals that came from Bolivia, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Iran, Jamaica, Mexico, Morocco, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Ukraine, and the United States of America.

Our students reside in:

- **Virginia** – Alexandria, Falls Church, Manassas, Woodbridge, and counties of Arlington, Fairfax, and Prince William
- **District of Columbia**
- **Maryland** – Gaithersburg, and counties of Montgomery and Prince Georges
Unique CHALLENGES Our Clients Face

FAMILY INCOME
Our clients generally have a family income that is at or below 100% of the poverty line, or 70% lower than the national standard of living. Most of our clients receive or are members of a family that receives one of the following: TANF, SNAP, SSI, free or reduced-price school lunch, or other public assistance.

LINGUISTIC ISOLATION
Nearly all our clients live in fragile circumstances because they are linguistically isolated. This means that all adults in the household have some limitation communicating in English, which limits their opportunities to access training that can give them the necessary skills to obtain better paying jobs. Our programs are bilingual, which allows for access to vocational and technical education in their native language (for Spanish language cohorts), while improving their English proficiency in this particular industry.

HURDLES TO GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT
In addition to the language barrier, immigrants face many hurdles to gainful employment and a pathway to a professional career, including

- Lack of the specific, required job skills and certifications
- Little-to-no access to affordable child care
- Lack of transportation to access training programs and jobs
- Underdeveloped study skills, job-search/networking skills

Our comprehensive approach promotes a collaborative impact by creating and fostering partnerships across sectors with higher educational institutions, local and state agencies, community-based organizations, and the private sector to address these barriers. Through this collaborative support system, our clients are able to establish a path forward to attain upward mobility and economic vitality.

SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES
This graphic illustrates some of the social support services that are provided to program participants during their training at La Cocina VA.
La Cocina VA presently offers two core programs, the Bilingual Culinary Job Training Program and the Food Assistance Program. These programs are designed to help low-income individuals to overcome unemployment hurdles, as well as combat food insecurity and reduce food waste.

Our clients come from diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, and with different social and economic challenges that prevent them from attaining success and building prosperous lives. The collective approach of our services provides our clients with real and concrete opportunities to grow, to obtain jobs, and to start businesses. We provide our clients with the opportunity to change their current situations through access to an ecosystem of resources including: vocational and technical education, industry credentials, English language skills, and a diverse array of social services provided by our partners in the community.
Our **BILINGUAL CULINARY JOB TRAINING PROGRAM** generates new job opportunities by enrolling individuals in a 16-week culinary job training program, which provides social services support and highly valued culinary and food-safety certifications from recognized industry institutions. Our current facilities have the capacity to train and certify 40 individuals per year, which is broken down into 4 cohorts comprised of about 10 students per cohort.

1. **Culinary Skills Training**: Real-world, hands-on training, evaluation and testing in healthy meal design, food preparation, cooking techniques, food safety, sanitation, and commercial meal production.

2. **ServSafe: Food Manager’s Certification**: 10 chapters of instruction on topics such as providing safe food, forms of contamination, cleaning and sanitizing, and more.

3. **Vocational English Instruction**: 12 weeks of English classes designed for the workplace to achieve a level of proficiency where graduates can follow instructions, read and understand recipes and orders, and successfully interact with their coworkers.

4. **Life Skills & Career Readiness Mentoring**: Employment readiness and life skills curriculum lead by a bilingual counselor where students learn how to build employment skills.

5. **Stage**: A 5-day job shadowing experience at our partner’s commercial kitchens under the supervision of an industry professional that allows our students to learn and be exposed to new techniques and cuisines so that they can better understand the concepts and competencies that are taught at La Cocina VA.

6. **Internship**: After 12 weeks of training, students participate in a one-month, full-time, paid internship with a local food-service business where they work closely with mentor chefs.

7. **Job Placement**: Our Workforce Development Coordinator connects and supports graduate students with job opportunities and potential employers while providing assistance in securing a meaningful full-time or part-time job.

8. **Graduation**: Students partake in a graduation ceremony and are awarded certificates.

9. **Additional Training and Career Support**: Graduates participate in technical workshops oriented to increase their technical skills for better salaries and promotions.
Performance & Impact - Culinary Training Program

2018 was another successful year for our signature training program. We trained 40 individuals and helped them reach an average wage of $14.32 per hour. The chart below shows the performance for our signature training program for 2018 in regards to retention, completion, and job placement rates.

![2018 RETENTION, JOB PLACEMENT, & COHORT COMPLETION RATES](chart)

This year also marked an important new milestone for La Cocina VA, as we expanded our training programs to include culinary training for English speakers. Traditionally we’ve focused on serving Spanish speakers through our bilingual culinary job training program, however, we saw a strong demand for our training services from low-income Americans, immigrants, refugees, at-risk youth, and military veterans.

We trained two English cohorts this year. The new English-language training program includes the same services as our signature Bilingual Culinary Job Training Program and offers the same credentials to students upon graduation.

Our Culinary Training Program’s Track Record

Since the beginning of our operations in 2014 and after completing 15 cohorts with over 100 students graduating from our signature training program, we have obtained a cumulative 95% overall completion rate and an 85% job placement rate. Our indicators also show an average hourly pay rate of about $14/hr. and a 78% employment retention rate for graduates over one year. Wages for students who were working before our intervention show a 34% increase, based on the post-program monitoring and evaluation data that we have collected from our graduates.
Our **FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (FAP)** facilitates access to healthy and free food options for our neighbors in need as well as for agencies and nonprofits working with low-income communities.

As part of the hands-on kitchen training, our students prepare approximately 350 individual healthy meals a week, which we donate and are delivered by our volunteer drivers to individuals living in Arlington’s Volunteers of America RPC homeless shelters and families living at subsidized housing facilities.

Through these meals, we educate our local community about healthy eating habits while simultaneously combating hunger, obesity, and food waste.

**FAP Impact**

Our neighbors in Arlington, Virginia have received more than 20,000 healthy meals since La Cocina VA was created.
STUDENT PROFILE

Five years ago, Karina Herrera didn’t know where to turn... how to take care of her three young children, how to feed and support them, to manage on her own, or how to break free from a very troubled marriage in a new country and culture she didn’t understand.

“I couldn’t drive, couldn’t have friends, couldn’t work, I didn’t have a connection to anything. I was kept at home, caught in a life of violence and despair. In addition, the economic manipulation that I experienced was really difficult... would he give me enough to care for the children? I felt so desperate, almost numbed by the whole situation. How would we ever make it?”

Today Karina’s world has totally changed. She is on her own, supporting her children and at long last, financially independent. “It’s like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders, I now have control over my life, and a safe place for my children.”

This far-reaching change came about when Karina was referred to La Cocina VA where she participated in our intense, full-time training program for careers in the food and hospitality industry. “To have a bilingual program like this has meant a lot to me, it’s given me a diploma, a culinary arts certificate, a license to work, and the culinary skills to advance my career. The training was like in the military, if you can do this, then you can do more. I discovered I’ll keep growing and fighting. Through La Cocina VA, I was able to secure a job that provided the security my family needed.”

Through Karina’s placements for on-the-job mentoring and an internship experience, she was connected to one of La Cocina VA’s employer partners, the Hyatt Regency Hotel. She now works in the Hyatt Hotel’s restaurant in DC as a second Cook. She’s making $22/hr. and has health insurance for her and her family.

“Every day I’m learning so much. There’s a lot of pressure, the adrenaline, doing so many things at the same time... I love it!” Karina has discovered a true passion, one that has awoken something within her. “The mix of colors, flavors and aroma...the ability to create in a single bite, a memory that could last a lifetime. It captivates me!” With the support of Hyatt, Karina is on her way to advancing her career in the food and hospitality industry. She is continuing English classes and plans to enroll in NOVA community college for further culinary studies towards ultimately becoming a head Chef. “I feel really motivated to keep growing because I’ve seen the importance of continuing to study, to move beyond where you are, and to be a professional. I know that I can achieve it.”

"image"}
2019 EXPANSION

OUR NEW FACILITY

La Cocina VA plans to move into a new, larger facility during the last quarter of 2019. As part of a recently announced partnership with APAH (Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing), we will establish the Zero Barriers Training and Entrepreneurship Center (TEC). This new 5,000 square foot facility will be located in Gilliam Place, APAH’s new affordable housing development in the vibrant Columbia Pike corridor in Arlington, Virginia.

TEC will offer services, resources, and support to help eliminate the many barriers our clients face, such as access to vocational and technical education, industry certifications, capacity-building training to start small businesses, access to commercial infrastructure, financial advice, and counseling. It will help the unemployed and those from minority communities to find jobs, create small businesses and become financially independent. The expanded facility will allow us to train up to 120 graduates a year, provide 40,000 healthy meals annually and train and support up to 30 food-related entrepreneurs, in addition to a new array of programs that will generate income for our culinary training programs.

NEW PROGRAMS

Catering Services: We will offer a full-time catering service that will provide apprenticeship opportunities for our students who are facing barriers to employment. This venture will also generate additional income to support our training programs.

Kitchen Incubator: We will rent kitchen space to entrepreneurs while also providing them with small business training support, access to microlending, and distribution opportunities.

Community Café: We will showcase products from our on-site entrepreneurs, be a pop-up space for community events, and generate additional income for our organization.

OUR CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

In February 2019, we began a capital campaign to raise the funds needed to construct TEC. So far, we have successfully raised $1.6M towards our $2.5M goal, which we aim to reach by the spring of 2019.
UPCOMING VENTURES

La Cocina VA Apprenticeship Program
La Cocina VA’s culinary program has been officially registered as an apprenticeship program with the U.S. Department of Labor. Our new apprenticeship program will require students to complete 2,000 paid hours of on-the-job training in our new facilities’ catering and café operations during 2019-2020. We are expecting to provide this opportunity to clients with barriers to employment, particularly focusing our efforts to assist veterans and at-risk youth.

U.S. Army Career Skills Program Partnership
Having graduated our first military veteran from our culinary training program in 2018, we are aiming to expand our training opportunities to include more veterans and their spouses in 2019. We have signed an agreement to become an approved training provider for the U.S. Army Career Skills Program. This program prepares enlisted soldiers that are nearing separation from the Army for civilian employment through apprenticeships, on-the-job training, job shadowing, internships, and employment skills training. This partnership will allow La Cocina VA to serve our military veterans with job training in culinary arts and job placement, as well as with entrepreneurship development to start food-related small businesses.

Culinary English Learning Online App
La Cocina VA is finalizing its new Culinary English Learning Online tool to provide ESL (English as a Second Language) students with additional language learning opportunities. Students would be able to practice culinary vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling of ingredients, cooking techniques, and industry terms that will enhance classroom instruction. The software will also provide informative metrics on student performance in each unit. During the first quarter of 2019, students will access our online platform through a computer or mobile device and begin practicing English without the limitations of time in our classrooms. The goal is for students to master kitchen terms in English in a shorter amount of time and with more confidence. This innovative online learning tool was developed with the generous support of the Crimsonbridge Foundation.
**FINANCIALS**

**Revenues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Grants/Subsidies</td>
<td>$66,000</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>$268,000</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporations</td>
<td>$42,000</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>$28,000</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Kind</td>
<td>$144,000</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>$17,000</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenues</strong></td>
<td><strong>$566,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expenses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Costs</td>
<td>$432,000</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management &amp; General</td>
<td>$108,000</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>$24,000</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$564,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
La Cocina VA would like to thank our continually expanding ecosystem of partners who have joined us on our mission to substantially change workforce development by using the power of food to create positive social change. We extend our deepest gratitude to our partners and supporters for believing in our work and joining us in this exciting work to extend economic opportunities and nutritious meals to those in need.

Our complete list of donors and employer partners is displayed below.

DONORS
Arlington Community Foundation
Arlington Employment Center
Arlington Presbyterian Church
Arlington-Alexandria Workforce Council
Bank of America Charitable Foundation
Cafritz Foundation
Capital Impact Partners
Capital One
CoBank
Community Foundation of the National Capital Region
Community Foundation of Northern Virginia - Investment Fund
Crimsonbridge Foundation
Dominion Guild
ECHO of Northrop Grumman
Fairfax County Job Link
Gannett Foundation
Giving Circle of Hope
Harriet Krug Miner Trust
The Herb Block Foundation
Inter-American Development Bank - Improving Lives Grant
JBG Smith
Jean and Bruce Wyman
Joan Kasprowicz
John Edward Fowler Memorial Foundation
J.O.Y. Charitable Fund
Keener Squire Properties
Les Dames De’Escoffier International
Mason-Hirst Foundation
Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation
Maximus Foundation
Meyer Foundation
MGM Resorts International
Mount Olivet United Methodist Church
Nestle
Peter and Mary Levin Family Foundation
Points of Light CivicX
Purple Onion
Richard E. and Nancy P. Marriott Foundation
Rita Susswein Gottesman Fund
Robert & Toni Bader Charitable Foundation
Rock Spring SAM Grants
Tom and Magaly Hirst Family Foundation
Venable Foundation
Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development
Virginia Small Business Financial Authority
Washington Forrest Foundation
Wegmans
Wells Fargo
World Bank Group, Community Connections Program

EMPLOYER PARTNERS
Alexandria Restaurant Group
Chef Geoff's/Lia's
Chaia
Chesterbrook Residences
Culpepper Garden
Design Cuisine Caterers
Embassy Suites - Hilton
Epicurean - Vigor Restaurant, LLC
Fabio Trabocchi (Sfoglina)
Farmers Restaurant Group (Founding Farmers)
Foreign National (Brothers and Sisters, Maketto, Paper Horse)
Guckenheimer
Hanks Pasta Bar
Hilton Alexandria Old Town
Hilton McLean
Hyatt Centric Arlington
Hyatt Crystal City
Hyatt Regency Tysons Corner
Lebanese Taverna Group
Leonora Bakery
Main Event Caterers
Menu's Catering
MGM National Harbor
Mom's Organic Market

La Cocina VA
1500 N Glebe Road
Arlington, VA 22207
www.lacocinava.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/LaCocinaVA/
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/lacocinava/?hl=en
Twitter: @LaCocinaVA

Copyright © 2019, La Cocina VA. All rights reserved.