



# Taller de José News

A ministry of accompaniment—Connecting people to services and services to people

## Walking With Our Community

By Daisy Gomez Meza, Social Work Intern and Compañera



*I love connecting with people and love that our clients feel assured that all staff are welcoming and interested in working with them.*

ride there and the time spent at the waiting room are often times that clients and Compañerxes are able to connect. In fact, I look forward to traveling with

Recently, I was able to attend a health fair at our second location at the Quinn Center. I had been to health fairs before and knew that people stopping at the booth would more than likely inquire about what kinds of services we offer and who we are. To my surprise, many people came up to let me know how Taller de José has helped them, how they have heard about us from friends and family, and thanked me for the work that Taller de José has done.

Looking back at my year at Taller de José, it comes as no surprise just how well we have managed to connect with our community members and our clients. Each and every one of us care about the clients that we meet and we want people to be able to connect to resources and services that they need. While accompaniments at face value sometimes seem to just be a simple meet up for translation services, the

clients to their destination, because they get to become more comfortable with me and often share more with me than they would have in a standard office visit. Even if it's the first time that I've worked with them, it feels as though I have known them for a while. I love connecting with people and love that our clients feel assured that all staff are welcoming and interested in working with them.

A couple of weeks ago, I was able to go to an accompaniment with someone I had not met before. It is still shocking to me how much some of our clients apologize for asking for services. Although they know our aim is to connect people to resources and services, some are still embarrassed about needing assistance. For this accompaniment, I was to help someone obtain copies of certain documents from the Chicago Police Department;

*(continued on page 2)*

*\* Client names and identifying details are modified to protect their privacy.*



## Celebrating New Citizens

In December 2022, Chicago held its largest **Citizenship Oath Ceremony** at Wintrust Arena. Nearly 2,000 people from 120 countries were naturalized at the ceremony. Two of our Compañeras had the honor of accompanying clients to the ceremony and were a part of this very special day for them.

*See more Taller de José highlights inside!*

Taller de José (Joseph's Workshop) accompanies individuals, serving as a bridge to connect them to the health, legal, and social services needed to achieve their goals. As a member of the Congregation of St. Joseph Mission Network, we create more connected communities.

# Taller de José Highlights

## Walking With Our Community

*(continued)*

gathering these documents was part of a process of applying for a U visa, which is a specialized immigration visa for victims of certain crimes who have been helpful to law enforcement or government officials.

On the ride there, he talked about his life, his children and how he ended up where he is now. He also reminisced about when he first got to the United States. When we got to the station, I realized that people other than my client needed assistance with communicating with the staff at the station. While my client waited for his name to be called, I worked to help walk-ins with forms and documents that they needed to submit back to their respective windows. On the ride back, he commented about not being the only one that needed services. He also mentioned how he now felt silly to be embarrassed about needing services, when there are many people who also need them but might not know how to access them. In the end, he was thankful for the services provided by Taller de José and was happy to hear that we are always available to schedule any follow ups or additional support.

I hope that, as more clients have similar experiences, they will continue to share this with their community. As the health fair experience showed me, the referral from a friend or family member not only helps individuals find TDJ's services, it also helps to reduce feelings of shame or embarrassment about seeking support. The more that we can share stories of accompaniment with one another, the more we can all learn to reach out for the support of a companion when we need it.



In fall 2022, 10 Team Taller de José runners finished the Bank of America Chicago Marathon in support of TDJ! This year, we're excited to have a team of 18 runners training and fundraising to support our mission. Use the QR code to learn more about our runners and why they are running for Team TDJ!



In 2022, Taller de José joined the **Wellness West collaborative**, and our staff have been focusing on additional outreach to west side residents with chronic health conditions. We are grateful for the opportunity to help improve health equity in our communities!



The Taller de José team has been hard at work on our new **strategic plan**. Our boards and staff have been meeting regularly to envision the future for the mission of accompaniment, and we are energized by this opportunity to think strategically about the years ahead!

# Builder's Day 2023 Highlights

On April 14, Taller de José celebrated our 14th annual Builder's Day celebration, and we hosted our largest gathering so far, welcoming over 200 guests to celebrate the mission of accompaniment. We were honored to award The Quinn Center of St. Eulalia with the Accompaniment Award in recognition of their strong collaboration with TDJ and David Komaniecki with the Companion Award for his long-time partnership through his work at the Department of Healthcare and Family Services.



# Letter from the Executive Director



*... so far, from July 1, 2022–April 30, 2023, we have seen a 30% increase in clients as compared to that same time period the year before.*

Dear Friends of Taller de José,

In our newsletter last spring, I shared that Taller de José had seen a significant increase in the number of individuals served, as compared to the previous year. We saw this increase as more services reopened and community members felt safer seeking assistance after the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccine. In total, last fiscal year, we saw a 20% increase in clients over the prior year.

This fiscal year, we are yet again seeing even higher numbers of individuals—so far, from July 1, 2022–April 30, 2023, we have seen a 30% increase in clients as compared to that same time period the year before.

Our staff have been hard at work attending outreach fairs, community events, and providing presentations to local schools, which has ensured that more individuals in need of our services are able to access them. In addition, the city of Chicago has seen a tremendous increase in the number of newly arrived immigrants from Central and South America, and many have sought accompaniment services from Taller de José.

Your support has made this work possible, enabling us to continue offering our services free of charge so that all are able to access the support they need, regardless of their ability to pay. With your support, we hope to continue building our capacity to meet these growing needs in our community.

In gratitude,

Anna Mayer Diaz

## Save the Date!

We can't wait to see you at Midwest Coast Brewing on **Thursday, September 7** for our annual **Pints for a Purpose!** This year, our Associate Board event will be even more special because Taller de José is celebrating 15 years of accompaniment this September! Visit our website, Facebook, or Instagram for tickets and additional information in the coming weeks!

