

Jaclyn Boland has been the CEO of the InterCultural Advocacy Institute and Hispanic Outreach Center since 2018. Located at 612 Franklin Street in downtown Clearwater, the center was founded as a partnership with the Clearwater Police Department in 2000. The center's goal was initially to provide interpreter services for police officers in the course of their duties and to provide advocacy for Spanish-speaking crime victims. Their services quickly expanded to include English classes, education seminars, youth leadership programming, and legal clinics for Hispanic families. In their 22nd year a lot has changed, and under Jaclyn's leadership it continues to thrive and evolve.

Hi Jaclyn,

Thank you for taking time to answer a few questions about yourself and your work with the InterCultural Advocacy Institute and Hispanic Outreach Center.

Are you a Clearwater native or do you hail from other shores? **I was born and raised in Cleveland, OH.**

What brought you to Clearwater? I first came to Pinellas County in 2012? To work with immigrants & refugees through literacy. I left to pursue a Masters in International Development and worked in Nairobi, Kenya for a social enterprise that provided low-cost, high tech health care in the urban slums. When I left Kenya to come back to the States, I decided to return to Pinellas County where I had last worked in the USA. I love Pinellas County and Clearwater because it is diverse and, of course, the weather.

Tell us about the Hispanic Outreach Center here in Clearwater. Who do you serve and what types of services do you provide?

The Hispanic Outreach Center (HOC) is a multi-service center providing programs and services for Hispanic children and families in Pinellas County. Our purpose is to assist Spanish-speaking and Hispanic families to adapt to life in the USA and also help them in being successful. We provide youth programs and services to assist Hispanic students with reading, scholarship applications and assistance with post-secondary education. We assist adults and families with basic needs, crisis intervention, family support, and victim support services for victims of crime. We also provide English classes, Jewelry classes, computer classes and citizenship classes as well as a number of workshops and seminars.

Do you have a staff? Yes, we have an amazingly talented team who help our community every day. We are able to do what we do because of our dedicated and passionate staff who come to work wanting to make a difference in our client's lives. Our team represents over five Latin & South American countries with staff who are bilingual and bicultural.

What challenges did the Hispanic Outreach Center face and how did you adapt during the height of Covid?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we knew that we had to adapt to continue to serve our community. We began providing programming virtually and began a weekly food distribution that served over 150+ families a week with fruits, veggies, and pantry staples. We leveraged our partnerships to be able to host vaccine clinics, virtual conferences, and distribute PPE and other supplies to families. During the pandemic, we grew our programs and services and we have continued to expand ever since to meet the changing needs of the community.

Are there any unique challenges Hispanic people face in our community?

There are challenges that the Hispanic community faces such as language barriers, understanding and navigating complex systems in the USA such as the judicial and education system, and transportation. Our families and community are extremely hard-working and humble. Our families are resilient. They often have overcome many challenges in their home countries before coming to the USA that we may find hard to imagine. I have a deep respect for our community and admire their drive and dedication to their families and community.

I know Clearwater Police Officer Paloma serves as a liaison at the Hispanic Outreach Center, can you tell us what kinds of things he does?

Officer Paloma acts as our Hispanic Liaison Officer with the City of Clearwater Police. He has office hours at the Center so community members can come to speak with him to ask questions, report a crime, and be an advocate for Hispanic residents. Officer Paloma and his role are essential to this community. He builds trust within the community with law enforcement and

What special events are planned for National Hispanic Month?

In partnership with the City of Clearwater DDB, we are planning an event on Friday, October 28, 2022 at Station Square in celebration of Dia de los Muertos. All are welcome to attend and there will be food, entertainment, altars on display and a Frida Khalo dress-up contest.

Recently, the city of Ixmiquilpan, Mexico became an official Sister City with Clearwater. Can you explain the importance of this?

I am so excited to see that Ixmiquilpan, Mexico is a Sister City with Clearwater. This is significant with over 20% of Clearwater residents identifying as Hispanic and the majority of those coming from Ixmiquilpan. This recognizes the Hidalguense in Clearwater and their contribution to the city. While many call

Clearwater their home, they still have family in Ixmiquilpan. So this symbolically recognizes both of their homes, in Clearwater and in Mexico. I think it is important that Clearwater officially includes Ixmiquilpan as a Sister City as a homage to the homeland of many of its residents.

How is the Hispanic Outreach Center funded?

The Hispanic Outreach Center is funded primarily by the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County (~75%) as one of the nine Neighborhood Family Centers within the County. We receive funding in the form of grants to support operations and programming through the Pinellas Community Foundation, the City of Clearwater Community Development Block Grant, and other foundations (~20%). We also receive donations and in-kind support from community partners, supporters, community members and friends of the Center (~5%).

I bet you're always looking for volunteers or more Clearwater resident engagement. In what ways can people make a difference at the Hispanic Outreach Center?

Yes! We are always looking for volunteers from the community to help. There are a few ways volunteers can get involved: 1.) Volunteer at our monthly food distribution at the Center each Wednesday from 3 – 5 pm; 2.) Volunteer at our weekly food distribution at Oak Grove Middle School on Thursday afternoons and 3.) Volunteer as a mentor and/or program support for a number of HOC programs. Anyone interested in volunteering can message us on Facebook or stop by the Center in-person.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I love to read, go to the beach, run outside by the water, cook new recipes, travel, and spend time with my husband and our French bulldog.

Anything else you'd like us to know?

We have a new look! The HOC has a new logo that reflects the vibrancy of our Hispanic community. We are the same HOC just with a fresh face.

Thank you so much for sharing your story with me, Jaclyn. And thank you for all you do for our community. Here is Jaclyn with her amazing staff.



Jaclyn's amazing staff! From left:
Yhamille Tejada; Annette Delmas; Noely
Tlanepantla; Jaclyn Boland; Clinton
Collings; Vicky Sosa; Vicky Obando;
Yurimar Garcia