

# 20 24



REFUGEE CHILDREN CENTER





## REFUGEE CHILDREN CENTER

In 2024, our leadership at all levels came together to assess the work the Refugee Children Center has been doing since its founding and to establish a strategic direction for the future. Since our incorporation as an official non-profit in 2018, RCC has supported over 1,500 children and their families through various programs, securing and distributing more than half a million dollars in in-kind support to directly benefit those we serve.

Our strategic planning discussions provided a valuable opportunity to reflect on our progress, reaffirm our commitment to the vision and mission that guided the organization's creation, and identify areas for growth and improvement. The proactive measures taken by RCC leadership were essential in setting a strategic direction to navigate future challenges effectively, particularly in response to the increasingly harsh immigration policies affecting our participants and the communities we serve.

Over the past year, the Board of Directors and the Executive Director held two retreats focused on strengthening collaboration and strategic planning. These gatherings not only offered valuable training and development opportunities for our current board members, but also facilitated an in-person retreat that brought together the board and staff to begin planning for the next 3-5 years. This process was informed by surveys and stakeholder interviews conducted by our consultant, which illuminated both RCC's strengths and areas for improvement.

After the board approved the draft Strategic Plan, our current staff, student interns, and core volunteers convened in a full-day, in-person planning retreat to create an implementation strategy to start implementation of the Strategic Plan.

The board approved the following Strategic Direction to guide RCC from 2025 to 2029:





## Vision for the Future

*Our Vision is to be a place that offers hope to refugee children and their families in the United States.*

## RCC Mission

*Our Mission is to provide a healing embrace and a dignified welcome to refugee children and their families who have made the perilous journey to the U.S.-Mexico border.*

## RCC's Commitment to the Community

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- To be a physical hub for resources, information, guidance, and referrals to empower participants to begin their new lives in the US.
- To ensure that the basic needs of refugee children and their families are met by providing equitable, affordable, and accessible services.
- To provide services through a holistic, integrated approach, assessing needs and tailoring those services to each individual.
- To provide enrichment activities, education, and programs that can improve the quality of life for all participants.
- To facilitate transitions into the United States for new arrivals in a welcoming and safe space.





## Core Guiding Beliefs

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- That refugee children and their families deserve to be loved and cared for, with empathy, and have their experiences understood and respected.
- In activating dreams and giving children an opportunity to grow, and achieve their potential while recognizing the cultural values that they bring to this community.
- Children and their families who struggle to reach the United States should be supported in meeting their basic needs.
- In giving refugee children and their families access to nourishment through food that feeds and heals the body and soul.
- Children deserve safety and security when they come to a new place in their lives.
- Refugee children deserve a space where they feel welcomed and can find a community of culture and wellness.
- In serving our community with dignity, understanding that they have done the work of seeking help for themselves towards a path of self-empowerment.



## Priorities for Change

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- Providing Holistic Support to Foster the Empowerment of Participants
- Strengthening Partnerships and Collaborations
- Ensuring RCC's Financial Sustainability
- Motivating and Engaging Staff, Board, and Volunteers

### Goals

### Objectives

#### Providing Holistic Support to Foster Empowerment of Participants

- Providing individual Case Management
- Expanding skills development, facilitating economic and financial self-sufficiency
- Leveraging the community garden to provide a range of services and support
- Expanding and clarifying the RCC Legal services program
- Strengthen programs serving younger children

#### Strengthening Partnerships and Collaborations

- Deepen current partnerships and establish new ones with a broad organizational base (economic development, government, foundations, and universities).
- Utilizing board member and staff networks to expand, develop, and strengthen partnerships.
- Participating in collaborations and partnerships that support RCC and further serve the refugee community.
- Expanding referral and resources hub to augment the services RCC directly provides effectively.

#### Ensuring RCC's Financial Sustainability

- Develop and expand the individual giving program.
- Expand and support grant development and management (foundations and governments.)
- Explore opportunities to generate new income streams.
- Enhance investment reserves strategy.

#### Motivating and Engaging Staff, Board, and Volunteers

- Foster an engaged board of directors
  - Clarify opportunities for board members, individually and through committees.
  - Continue to expand and educate the board members.
- Build and maintain a stable and engaged staff
  - Ensure the necessary infrastructure and staff size to provide services effectively.
  - Provide opportunities for education and professional development to staff
- Expand volunteer programs
  - Nurturing relationships and enhancing the volunteer pipelines



## REFUGEE CHILDREN CENTER

Additionally, we reaffirmed our commitment to supporting refugee children and their families from Mexico, Central, and South America who have crossed the southern border into the United States. This population remains one of the most vulnerable yet resilient, with 86% of recipients earning less than \$10,000 annually.

Through our services, we also gained insights into the generational breakdown of the caregivers of the children registered in our programs served this past year.

48% Millennials

41% Centennials

6% Generation Alpha

4% Generation X

In 2024, we achieved several significant milestones:

- We continuously recognize that our work cannot be accomplished in isolation, and collaboration with other organizations is essential to bringing additional resources to our community. We are proud to report that this year, we maintained partnerships and collaborated with over 25 organizations.
- A long-standing dream became a reality in June 2024 when we launched the construction phase of our community garden, made possible by generous funding from Best Start San Fernando Valley Communities, First 5 LA, Community Partners, El Nido Family Centers, and the U.S. Department of State's Citizen Diplomacy Action Fund.
- Since July 2024, we have facilitated approximately 70 community garden activities, including volunteer days, community events, and nature-based learning sessions.
- In mid-October, we launched an internal, autonomous early childhood education program that provides transformative opportunities for both children and their caregivers. While the children participated in the program, caregivers engaged in ESL classes, skill-building activities, and formed supportive communities.
- In early November, we successfully concluded the Office of Immigrant Affairs CBO

grant, which has provided vital resources over the past two years. We are deeply grateful for this support and remain hopeful about securing additional funding to continue this important work.

- In December, we received approval to renew our DOJ Recognition through December 4, 2030. This recognition, granted under the DOJ Recognition and Accreditation (R&A) Program, allows the RCC to provide limited immigration legal services, enabling non-attorney representatives to practice immigration law on behalf of low-income individuals before immigration courts and USCIS. This ensures access to critical legal services for our community.
- As an organization that values and supports its workforce, we intentionally provided wellness opportunities for our staff and student interns. We offered training and facilitated 36 wellness activities, including shared meals, mindfulness practices (such as breathing exercises and body scanning), yoga sessions, and plant propagation. These efforts culminated in a joyful and memorable annual holiday office party. We are deeply grateful to our funders for providing staff development funds, making these initiatives possible.

2024 stands as a testament to years of dreaming, planning, and collaboration. However, we recognize that there is still much work to be done and challenges ahead. We must continue to unite and build a brighter future for the refugee children and families we serve. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to our past and current supporters, and I invite others to join us in supporting the RCC. Together, we are changing lives, providing hope, and creating opportunities for brighter tomorrows. For that, we are truly thankful.

Sincerely,  
Mayra Medina-Núñez







**REFUGEE CHILDREN CENTER**



## 2024 Facts and Figures

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### Immigration Legal Services Program

- 216 immigration-related services were provided to participants during this year.
- 25 participants secured pro bono consultations.
- 2 families obtained pro bono representation for immigration relief, including SIJS and other cases.
- 4 families secured low bono representation from private law offices.
- 22 families received support from the Center's staff in signing and mailing their immigration applications, as reviewed by their attorney of record.
- 22 translations (birth certificates, marriage certificates, and declarations) were completed from Spanish to English.

### Children and Families' Program

- Of all active participants, 215 received support from the Children and Families' Department. Of these, approximately 50 were new families with children enrolled in this department.
- 64 of all families attended enrichment activities in 2024.
- 30 community members (non-RCC Participants) received support from the Children and Families' Department.
- 8,900 breakfasts and lunches were served in collaboration with Nest Global and Go Campaign.
- 200 caregiver sessions were provided throughout the year. These sessions encompassed skill-building activities such as:
  - Boxing
  - Yoga, Zumba, and exercise classes
  - ESL lessons
  - Jewelry-making
  - Overall wellness meetups in collaboration with the Department of Mental Health
- Children's Programs:
  - 12 art intervention sessions complemented by resource fairs and immigration clinics.
  - Meals and snacks were provided at each gathering, fostering a sense of community and care.
  - A full-week Spring Break program offered enriching experiences for children and their families.



# 2024 Facts and Figures

## \$3,000 in pro bono services

The RCC has received an estimated \$3,000 in pro bono services in 2024 that range from bono consultations, translation and interpretation services, to pro bono training for staff and administration.

## 7,000 donated hours

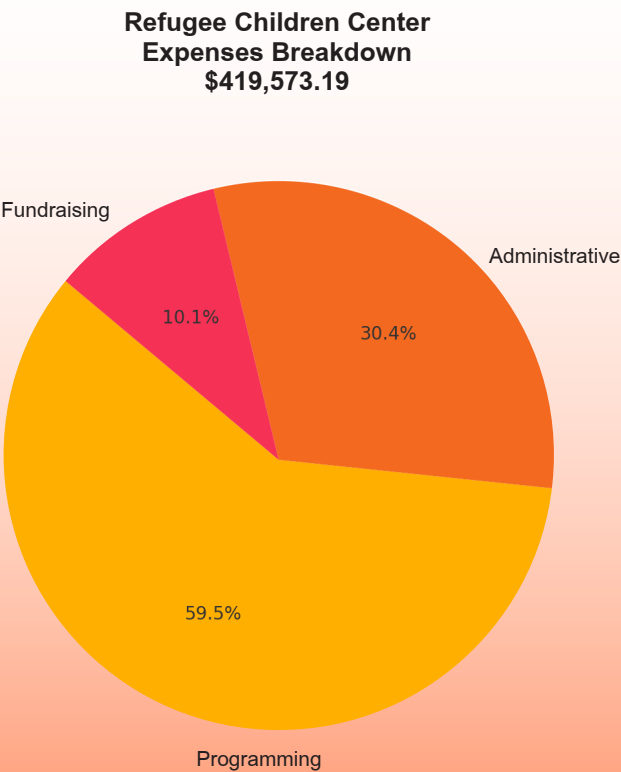
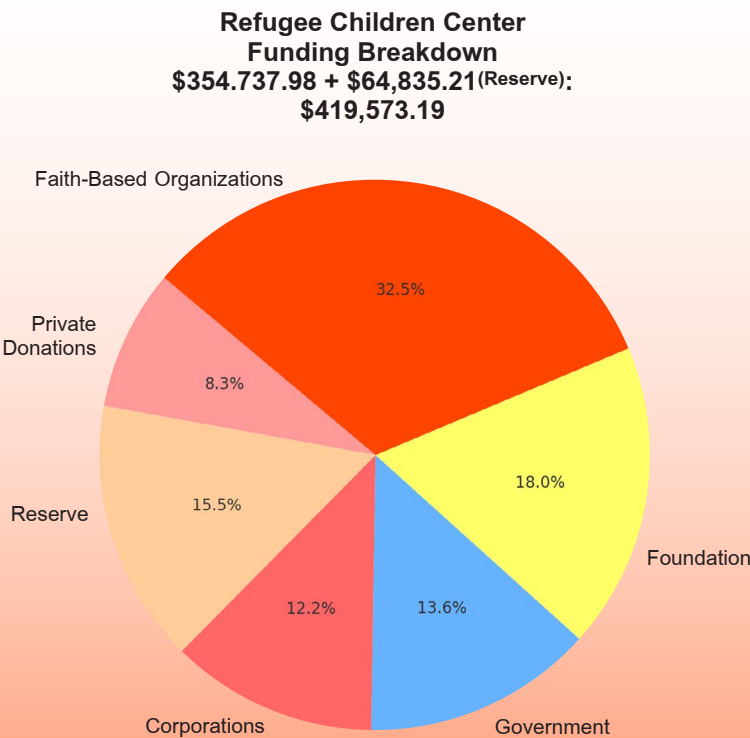
Student interns, attorneys and volunteers have donated an estimated 7,000 hours by supporting our children and their families.

## \$40,000 in kind-support that directly benefited our participants

Our Children and Families Program secured gift cards, food donations, toys, clothing for all ages, furniture, diapers, baby wipes, hygiene kits and formula totalling \$40,000 that was distributed to our participants in 2024.

## Countries

In 2024, the RCC provided services to our migrant and asylum seeker community from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Nicaragua, and Mexico.



## Our programming and services were organized in the following ways:

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### **Immigration Legal Resources Program**

- Referrals to Immigration Legal Service Providers for pro bono, low bono, or private representation.
- Pro Se Document Preparation Clinics, supervised by immigration attorney volunteers.
- General Orientations on:
  - Know Your Rights
  - Asylum Process
  - Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) Process

### **Children and Families' Program**

#### **• Social Services Offered**

##### **◦ Basic Needs Support:**

- Rent relief information
- Food bank information
- Housing assistance
- Clothing and hygiene donations (preferably distributed by appointment)
- Diapers, wipes, formula, car seats, and school supplies (while supplies last)

##### **◦ Health and Wellness:**

- Mental health resources
- Medi-Cal enrollment assistance
- Counseling to find information and resources in preferred languages
- Skill-building and overall wellness activities

##### **◦ Child and Family Services:**

- Child care referrals and support for child development
- School enrollment assistance
- Over-the-phone interpreters

##### **◦ Crisis and Empowerment Support**

- Crisis management with continual in-person and over-the-phone assistance
- Youth empowerment group

##### **◦ Educational Programs:**

- Caregiver/Parenting Classes in collaboration with other organizations
- Music classes in collaboration with Nueva Vision Community Schools for 7-16 years old
- Nuevos Comienzos: Early childhood education drop-in program for children ages 2-5 years old.
- ESL Classes for caregivers
- Financial literacy and vocational training information for caregivers

##### **◦ Nature-based learning for all ages**

- After-school youth garden series
- Wellness in the Garden activities for all ages
- Garden Fellowship series
- Environmental Justice and Advocacy
- Cultural Affirmation and Practices
- Garden Community Days



### Executive Committee

#### **Anchulee Raongthum, President**

*Director of Education, Outreach & Support at Square Group, LLC (ASG)*

#### **Charles Laing, Treasurer**

*Tax Manager at Clumeck Stern Schenkelberg & Getzoff*

#### **Gabriela Lagarda Arias, Secretary**

*Former Director, Creative Marketing at Participant Media*

### Board Members

#### **Aimee Porter**

*Early Childhood Trauma Specialist, Children's Book Author and Photographer*

#### **Amanda Hillsberg Arya**

*Writer & Producer*

#### **Lori B. Schoenberg**

*Immigration Attorney, Private practice*

#### **Rosa Navarrete**

*Writer & Director*

#### **Thea Smolinski**

*Art Advisor and Private Collection Manager*

### 2024 Advisory Council

#### **Ivelise Markovits**

*Former Chief Executive Officer at Penny Lane Centers  
Retired*

#### **Ninette Ayala**

*Fundraising Consultant, Ayala Brown Consulting LLC*

#### **Guillermo Torres**

*Immigration Program Director at CLUE (Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice)*

#### **David Farley**

*Former Director, Justice and Compassion Essential Ministry Team,  
Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church  
Retired*

### Emeritus Board

#### **Rev. Frederick Birten Morris, Founder**

*Former Executive Director for the Refugee Children Center and Former Senior Pastor  
at the North Hills Hispanic Mission United Methodist Church,  
Retired*





**Mayra Medina-Núñez**

*Executive Director*

**Frida Ramírez Aldapa**

*Operations and Volunteer Manager*

**Carolyn Mendoza | MSW**

*Program Manager*

**Natalie Jubrail**

*Coordinator for Children and Families' Program*

**Dayna Méndez**

*Former Co-Coordinator for Children and Families' Program*

**Natalia García**

*Former Special Events' Assistant and Interim Co-Coordinator  
for the Children and Families' Program*

**Kendra Rivera**

*Former Immigration Legal Resources  
and Community Engagement Coordinator*





# REFUGEE CHILDREN CENTER





## 2024 Student Interns

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### **Doctor of Occupational Therapy Students**

Yerania Venegas (2023-2024)

Kayla Leah Francisco (2024-2025)

### **UCLA Undergraduate Students**

Guadalupe Martínez

Mia Arteaga

Karla Alejandra Vásquez Pérez

Macy Benson

Jessica Bailin

Hrishika Sharma

Fatima Mushtaq

Sungmin Son

Wenyue Zhu

Delsy Velediaz

Nicole Lau

Maya Panozzo

Elya Aboutboul

Mackram Hassanieh

Andrea Fernández

Emily Sabory

Nicholas Weber

Melany Solares

Rachel Hsu

Harrison Hill

Sophie Graf

Tessa Mazzocco

Kendra Zimmermann-Gallegos

Emily Gharibian

Sumaiya Akbar

Madeleine Alseriyani

### **CSUN MSW Graduate Students**

Jose López (2024-2025)

Brynne Velasquez (2024-2025)

Diana García (2024-2025)

Cinthia Gutiérrez (2023-2024)

Yesenia León (2023-2024)

Katarina Schultz (2023-2024)

### **CSUN Undergraduate Students**

Iketra Porter

## 2024 Consultants & Volunteers

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### **Consultants**

Carlos Long  
Graphic Designer

Leslie Robin,  
Strategic Planner

### **Volunteers**

#### **Art Program**

KC Porter

#### **Enrichment Programs**

Brandon Miranda  
Axel Méndez  
Miranda Brake  
Daniela Herrera  
Chiara Lepe  
Alexander Rodríguez  
Lucia Allain  
Patrick Roque  
Pau LeDoux  
Catalina Haaga  
Rinnae Huang  
Albert Lim

Amanda Grose  
Ryan Pallett  
Andre Guzmán  
Sebastian Ferrario  
Camila Ferrario  
Frederick Bobola  
Nasim Afsar

Narim Honarpour  
Nava Honarpour  
Nika Honarpour  
Jacqueline Larco  
Ilan Lepe

Citlali López  
Paola Araujo  
Samantha Hamilton  
Idali Germon

#### **Nuevos Comienzos Program**

Micaela Bronstein  
Reylúm Reyna

#### **Grant Writing**

Abe Luz Sánchez Salazar  
Deborah Pérez

### **Legal Support**

Lori B. Schoengerg  
Sumangala Bhattacharya  
Sharilyn Nakata  
Monica Valencia  
Gabrie García  
Evan Martin

### **Ixil Language Interpretation**

Gerónimo Ramírez

### **ESL Program Instructors**

Jackson Gzehoviak  
Flora Zempleni

### **Garden Program**

Alban Martínez  
Sebastián Araujo  
Flora Woo, Boy Scouts  
Troop 15 of Culver City  
William Torres  
Jim Mendoza  
James Mendoza

## 2024 Consultants & Volunteers

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### **Tierra del Sol**

Odette Limani

Olga Solis

Michael Salinas

Erika García

Jessica Palucho

Vanessa Vargas

Karoline Tahmasian

Alexander Rivera

Kenneth Beatty

Ramina Izadi

Jessica Palucho

Bryan Avelar

Jasmine Sánchez

Ana Díaz

### **Distribution of surplus of donations at the San Diego-Tijuana border**

Reverend Joel Hortiales

Pastor Rubén Esponda

### **GO Campaign Volunteers**

Ryan Pallet

Amanda Grose

Tolula Adeyemi

Seth Willey

Scott Fifer

Ronald Gladden

Elizabeth Vidal

Linda Konner

Lilit Mardiyani

Kristen Plumberg

Joanna McCoy

Jeffery Kolodny

Holt Kolodny

Doria Anselmo

Davida Williams

Benn Konner

Angelina Grover

Lauren Kezon

Kendal Grusd

Andrea Rodríguez

Keira Molinski





## 2024 Grants & Donors

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### Grants

- Capacity-Strengthening Grants from the LA Office of Immigrants Affairs through the Center for Nonprofit Management
- Levine Family Charitable Foundation
- Renaissance Charitable Foundation
- Best Start San Fernando Valley Communities
- First 5 LA and Community Partners
- Whole Foods Market Foundation
- Seed Money
- Klub Nocturno
- GO Campaign
- Third District- Office of Lindsay Horvath
- Semptra Hardship Fund
- Presbytery of San Fernando: Disaster Relief PDA Grant

### Donors

#### **\$50,000+**

- The Wilson Family Foundation

#### **\$11,000 - \$25,000**

- Dr. Lois Henson
- T. June and Simon K.C. Li Charitable Fund

#### **\$5,000-\$10,000**

- Robert Weber Family Fund
- The Martha Wells Family Foundation
- Myna and Uri Herscher Family Foundation

## 2024 Organizations & Networks

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### **Faith-based organizations**

North Hills Hispanic Mission United Methodist Church

The Baha' is Community of Malibu Canyon

United Methodist Foundation

Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church

First United Methodist Church of Glendale

Presbytery of San Fernando

Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church

Neighborhood Unitarian Universalist Church

Claremont United Methodist Church

Hunger United Methodist Church

Ministry of Justice and Compassion of the UMC

CA Pacific Annual Conference of the UMC:

Justice and Compassion Essential Ministries Empowerment

Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE)

Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC)

### **Attorney Referral Network**

Law Offices of Lori B. Schoenberg

ImmPowered Law Office

Marymount Immigrant Justice Clinic

Immigo Immigration Services

Dreamer Fund





# REFUGEE CHILDREN CENTER





## 2024 Organizations & Networks

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### **Collaborating Organizations**

North Valley Caring Services

Nueva Vision Community School

Baby2Baby

Center for Family Health & Education

Hands4Hope LA

Kams Foundation

Global Education Connection

Skirball Cultural Center

Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health

The Los Angeles County Office of Immigrant Affairs

Nature for All

Pacoima Beautiful

U.S Department of State Citizen Diplomacy Action Fund

Boy Scouts Troop 15 of Culver City

Allied Cultures

Center for Nonprofit Management (CNM) of Southern California

Valley Nonprofit Resources

Undocu Brahmas

North Los Angeles County Regional Center

Los Angeles Valley College

The Claremont Colleges

Tierra del Sol Foundation

West Coast University, Center for Graduate Studies

## 2024 Organizations & Networks

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### **Collaborating Organizations**

Providence Saint Joseph Medical Center

Klub Nocturno

GO Campaign

Music Center of Los Angeles

Love on 4 Paws

KIND

USC School of Dentistry

University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

California State University, Northridge (CSUN)

Nest Global

Department of Mental Health

Tarzana Treatment Centers

Participant Media

Art and Practice

California Victim Compensation Board

International Institute of Los Angeles

Molina Healthcare

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Hermanidad Mexicana Nacional

EPIC

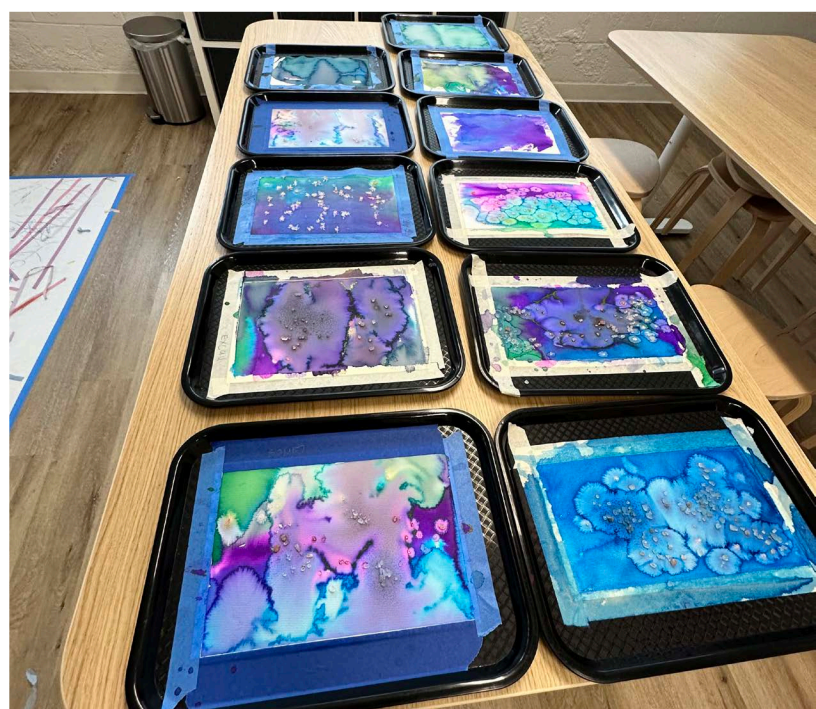
Dreamer Fund

**In-kind support**

Undocu Brahmas of Pierce College	Nest Global	Home Depot
Baby2Baby	Children’s Dental Fun Zone	Colgate
Sisters on the Streets	Panda Express	Raising Canes
Miry’s List	Ike’s Sandwiches	Klub Nocturno
Hands4Hope LA	Costco Wholesale	UCLA Lab School
	Tender Greens	Target











**Thank  
You**