

# THE PROMISE



Magali and Mirsa at  
César Chávez Elementary School

**"NOW I FEEL FREER"**

Mirsa is a mom who has a long history with César Chávez Elementary School. She had the opportunity to enroll her three daughters there, plus obtain services that the school has to offer.

Mirsa is originally from Guatemala and has been living in the U.S. since 2002. Since a young age, Mirsa has had to work heavy jobs to help her family. She had to learn responsibilities and trades in addition to being her own guide. Her experience has been difficult since she immigrated to the U.S., as she didn't know the language or how to get around.

"We come here without knowing English and without direction," Mirsa says. "Before, I didn't know. I was 19 years old and I knocked on many doors."

Mirsa mentioned that several people took advantage of her situation. She encountered people who humiliated her for not knowing any better.

Mirsa eventually gave birth to her daughters and learned the U.S. lifestyle and enough English to communicate. Unfortunately, Mirsa suffered from domestic violence. After a few years -- and thanks to the support of **La Casa de las Madres** -- Mirsa was able to escape that difficult situation. However, this led her to become the sole parent to her daughters -- and this affected her family. Over time, her daughters were able to reflect on all the sacrifices her mother made for them. As a thank you, her daughters would help as much as they could, looking out for one another.

The first time Mirsa found out about Mission Promise Neighborhood was through César Chávez Elementary School, where Celina Castro-Saelao and Yadira Diaz connected her with **La Casa de las Madres** to help her get out of the domestic violence she was facing. Mirsa was then referred to **Casa Justa : Just Cause** and **Centro Legal de la Raza** to help her deal with the displacement case she was facing and for her to know more about her rights. She was also referred to **MEDA's** Workforce Development program to help her find a job. After all the help, Mirsa continues to work with Magali Valdez-Robles: Mirsa mentions that she helps her build confidence and maintain calm whenever new problems arise. Mirsa continues to work with MPN as one of her daughters will go from César Chávez Elementary to either Buena Vista Horace Mann or James Lick middle schools. These schools have an on-site Family Success Coach.

Mirsa mentions that now she feels protected, for **MPN** and **MEDA** have helped her much and now she is not afraid to tell her story because she knows about her rights.

"Now I feel freer. When someone new arrives, I can help them!" Mirsa says. "If they need a job, I ask them and help them find it."

Mirsa feels determined and sure of herself. She believes that anything is possible and that a woman can be independent and entrepreneurial.

"I thank God for allowing me to meet good people like you, for putting y'all in my path," Mirsa says about all of the people who helped her. "Y'all are very humble people and may God give you health and life so y'all can continue to help. Thank you. God bless you always. ¡Si, se puede!"



Families enjoying the "Todos Vacunados" event

## VACCINE OUTREACH PROJECT: "TODOS VACUNADOS"

Giuliana Martinez was born in Peru and came to the United States at the age of five. She is the Founder and Principal of GM Consulting Group (GMCG), a Latina-owned, community engagement firm. Giuliana has eight years' experience working in San Francisco, primarily with the Latino community, and over a decade of experience working with underserved communities across the Bay Area and beyond. She has significant experience in engaging community stakeholders, facilitating productive visioning and planning discussions, and developing and implementing extensive community engagement and culturally responsive strategies.

GMCG, along with eight community-based organizations (CBOs) have been on the front lines providing information, resources and COVID-19 tests and vaccines to the Latinx community -- and anyone else that requests such services. The organizations involved in this project, in no particular order, are: Promotoras Activas SF; Felton Institute; Good Samaritan's *promotoras*; Instituto Familiar de la Raza; Jamestown; Mission Graduates; Mission Neighborhood Health Center (MNHC); and MEDA/MPN Family Success Coaches. Each organization has its plan for promoting resources and information, while MNHC has been the main health provider for this project.

At the start of the pandemic, Dr. Alicia Fernandez, Director of the UCSF Latinx Center of Excellence (LCOE), began advocating for case investigation and contact-tracing work specifically targeting the Latinx community. At the same time, Martinez was working with UCSF LCOE as their Community Engagement Consultant. Dr. Fernandez wanted to partner with CBOs and the Department of Public Health to help implement a strategy. Martinez was brought to this project and immediately thought about the work Promotoras Activas SF does. She imagined that *promotoras* could be the bridge between the community and medical experts.

Due to the existing partnership between all the CBOs, Martinez was able to incorporate project management, facilitation and collective-impact strategies into this work. With eight organizations on board and 50 outreach workers, this project has reached over 450,000 people, of which 1,400 have gotten a vaccine and 75% of them obtained their booster shot.

The collaborative continues to meet the needs of the Latinx community, as they worked together to host "Vidas Saludables," a community health fair and resources for the community on Saturday, April 23, at In Chan Kaajal Park. During the fair, the community had access to COVID-19 vaccines and tests, blood pressure and HIV screenings, housing services, food access, activities for children, Danza Azteca, Zumba, raffles and much more. Nearly 600 community members attended the event.



## THE PROMISE COMMITTEE

*Clockwise from top left: Magali, Ana, Liz and Alejandro. Our mission is to share accomplishments and stories with students, families and partner organizations that are part of our network. The Promise newsletter will be published quarterly, so the next one will be in the Summer 2022. If you have an idea or would like to share your story, contact Alejandro at (415) 857-2834 or [abautista@medasf.org](mailto:abautista@medasf.org).*