

Casa de Amistad

Annual Impact Report

2025

www.athensamistad.com





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Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

2025 was a year that reminded us why our work matters.

In a world that kept changing, Casa de Amistad continued to be a space where people could come together, learn, and celebrate connection—reminding us that we are stronger together. In our classrooms, students and volunteers showed curiosity and courage, forming relationships and bringing learning to life. Our interns, teachers, board members, and partners contributed their time, expertise, and creativity, helping Casa de Amistad respond to new challenges and explore new possibilities. And to our donors: your generosity helped sustain our programs, create learning opportunities, and keep our neighbors connected.

Looking ahead, Casa de Amistad continues to be a place of learning, community, and belonging. It's where people build skills, form relationships, and honor the stories and traditions that shape our community. Now, more than ever, our work—supporting learners, volunteers, and families—is vital to building bridges of understanding and opportunity in Athens, GA, and beyond.

Thank you for being part of this journey and for believing in the power of learning and community. We are honored to continue this work with you in the year ahead!

Con gratitud,



Hanna O'Connell
Executive Director

Overview

Mission

Casa de Amistad empowers the Latino community and neighbors across Athens and Northeast Georgia through educational programs that foster connection, develop skills, and support integration to build a stronger, more connected place to live, work, and grow.

Vision

We envision an Athens where education bridges cultures and languages, enabling neighbors to connect with empathy and curiosity and creating a collaborative community that is stronger and more united.

Purpose

Our purpose is to create opportunities for learning and connection that empower the Latino community and neighbors across Athens and Northeast Georgia to collaborate and build a stronger future.

Building skills. Bridging cultures. Strengthening community.



Our Team

This year marked an exciting new chapter at Casa de Amistad, with Executive Director Hanna O'Connell and Board President Marcelo Buril bringing fresh vision and collaborative energy to guide the organization forward. We also welcomed Logan Williamson to the Board of Directors, whose strategic perspective strengthened our team and supported the growth of our programs.

Equally vital were the instructors and interns whose dedication brought our programs to life. Their passion and creativity made our classrooms vibrant spaces where students built skills, formed relationships, and felt supported. Together, our leadership, staff, and interns ensured Casa de Amistad remained a welcoming, dynamic community, centered on learning and connection.



Hanna O'Connell

Executive Director

Hanna oversees Casa de Amistad's programs and partnerships. With experience in language education and organizational leadership, she advances the mission of fostering cross-cultural understanding and connection.



Our Team

Board of Directors



Marcelo Buril

President



Chad Howe

Vice President



Logan Williamson

Treasurer



Paul Duncan

Member



Frans Weiser

Member



Our Team

Instructors



Sarah Cohen

GED, Spanish & ESL
Instructor



Caroline Scheneider

Instructor & GED
Program Director



Isabelle Leimkuhler

ESL Instructor



Anderson Smith

ESL Instructor



Owen Rayburn

ESL Instructor



Our Team

Interns



Leticia Baquerizo

Executive Support &
Marketing



Ella Carver

Volunteer Liaison



Gabriela Mota

Grant Writing &
Fundraising



Tessa Cianfaglione

ESL Program Support

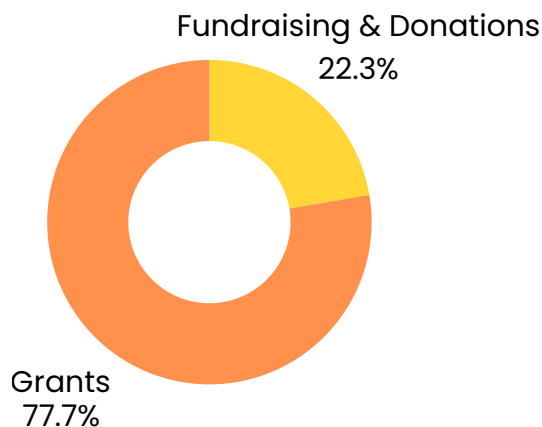
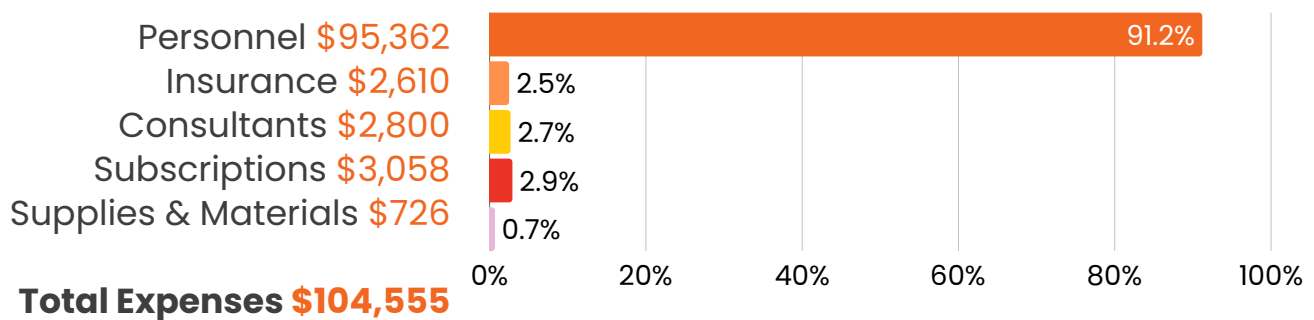
This year, our intern team played a vital role in strengthening CDA's operations. Their efforts expanded organizational capacity, enhanced communication systems, and enriched the experience of both students and volunteers. Through collaborative planning, strategic coordination, and consistent operational support, they streamlined processes and helped the organization move forward with greater clarity and impact. Thanks to their dedication, our programs ran more efficiently, and our network of support grew stronger. Beyond their skills, the interns brought creativity, commitment, and heart to everything they did.



Finances

Our Expenses

In 2025, CDA invested \$104,555 in program and operational expenses to advance its mission. The largest portion supported personnel, with additional costs covering insurance, professional services, educational and operational subscriptions, and essential supplies.



Our Income

CDA generated a total of \$128,003 in income in 2025, supported by a combination of grant funding, community-based fundraising, and individual donations.

Grants \$99,796
Fundraising & Donations \$28,207
Total Income \$128,003

Note: Financials are prepared on an accrual basis and therefore differ from amounts reported on the IRS Form 990, which reflects cash received and spent.

Programs

1

English as a Second Language Classes

Building Skills and Connection Through English

In 2025, Casa de Amistad's ESL program featured two core classes, each designed to help learners strengthen their English skills in different ways.



Grammar Class

Students in both beginner and intermediate levels developed practical grammar skills and expanded everyday vocabulary.



Conversation Class

Students strengthened speaking and listening skills through interactive discussions, gaining confidence in everyday communication.

The ESL program is central to Casa de Amistad's mission, offering free classes that strengthen English skills, boost confidence, and open doors for our community members.



The classes help you socially and professionally. You get to meet and make friends from different nationalities. Plus, the instructors are incredible, they always support you and are truly kind people.



Student – Berenice Antonio



2

GED in Spanish Classes **Education for Professional Empowerment**

This year, Casa de Amistad strengthened access to education through our GED program, which we continued to offer entirely in Spanish. We designed our classes to guide students toward new professional, academic, and personal opportunities, prioritizing strong support and flexibility.

We continued to offer two weekly virtual classes, providing structured instruction that accommodated students' work and family schedules. Students also utilized a computer-based study platform, enabling them to practice at their own pace and prepare fully for the exam.

The GED program continued to provide a pathway for community members to build skills, gain confidence, and pursue their educational goals.

“

The classes motivated me to keep going. Even when I started with low test scores, I saw my progress and gained confidence to work toward my GED.

”

Patricia Huape - Hernandez



3

Spanish Classes

Connecting Through Language and Culture

This year marked the second year of our Spanish Language Program for the broader Athens community. The program provided opportunities for community members, college students, and working professionals to study Spanish while exploring Latino and Hispanic cultures.

Our curriculum served beginners and students working to improve their fluency. Through grammar instruction and conversation-based practice, participants strengthened their communication skills and gained confidence using Spanish in daily life. By creating a space for language learning, the program also aimed to foster curiosity, cultural awareness, and meaningful connections among participants.

“

It has become much easier for me to use different sentences now. I understand other grammatical tenses, and my vocabulary has improved a lot. The instructor is really great, and I learned so much in the class; it is very helpful.

”

Student – Olivia Ginn

Partnerships

Forging Connections: Our 2025 Partners

Casa de Amistad's vision of building a stronger, more united Athens is fundamentally built on the power of collaboration. In 2025, the strategic support of foundations, community entities, and local businesses not only ensured the continuity of our educational programs but also significantly expanded our capacity to empower learners and create spaces for connection and growth. We are deeply grateful to each of our partners for investing in learning and community.

Foundational Support & Grants

Clarke County School District

The Clarke County School District (CCSD) provided Title III funding for our ESL program, giving English learner family members the tools and confidence to connect with their children's schools and support their learning.



Clarke County Library

The Athens-Clarke County Library hosted our ESL classes, providing a central, welcoming space that helped learners connect, build relationships, and become active members of the community.



Partnerships

Foundational Support & Grants

Emmanuel Episcopal Church

Emmanuel Episcopal Church generously provided space for our fall and spring conversation classes, and funded our summer ESL and art workshops for children and adults.



Greater Athens Properties

Greater Athens Properties hosted our classes for a second year, providing a welcoming space that strengthened community connections and supported student learning and growth.



City of Refuge

City of Refuge provided space for our ESL classes serving families in the Clarke County School District and partnered with us to help connect students to supportive community resources.



First Presbyterian Church of Athens

First Presbyterian Church of Athens provided vital funding that supported both our day-to-day operations and the successful execution of our classes, ensuring our programs ran smoothly and effectively throughout the year.



Partnerships

Foundational Support & Grants

Dollar General Literacy Foundation

The DGLF grant funded our English conversation classes, expanding opportunities for adult learners to practice language skills, build confidence, and strengthen everyday communication.



Jackson EMC

Jackson EMC funded our ACC-Library class, helping create welcoming learning spaces where adult English language learners could engage in meaningful practice and community connection.



Community Support and Event Sponsors

Casa de Amistad continues to make an impact thanks to the support of local businesses and community partners. We are grateful to those who helped raise funds through events or contributed items and services for our silent auction.

- Paloma Park
- Taqueria la Parilla
- Jeni's Ice Creams
- Bruster's! REAL ICE CREAMS
- Athentic Brewing Company
- Alumni Cookie Dough
- Athens Rock Lobsters



Partnerships

Community Support and Event Sponsors

Host & Community Partner

- Athentic Brewing Company



Silent Auction Donors

- ACC Water Conservation
- Bachata Conexion
- Calor Creative
- Creature Comforts Beer
- Fuel Hot Yoga
- Janette Hill
- Juancho Cano
- Kamilah Kannan
- Paula Mellon
- Pink Goblin
- SalsAthens
- Tazikis Mediterranean Cafe
- TimbAthens
- Town and Gown Players



Building Capacity

Expanding Impact



**Institute for
Leadership Advancement**
Terry College of Business
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



We extend our sincere thanks to the University of Georgia's Leadership Dawgs team for their efforts beginning in 2024. Through their project, Casa de Amistad was awarded \$5,000 in 2025, strengthening our organizational capacity and long-term sustainability.

We especially appreciate the contributions of Olumide Ajayi, Alex BeMiller, Alex Borges, Maranie Brown, and Abhinav Kaluri, whose work helped lay a strong foundation for the next chapter of our work.



**School of Public &
International Affairs**
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

We also acknowledge the University of Georgia's School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA) for placing student interns with Casa de Amistad. Their support was essential to our growth, strengthening areas such as planning, communications, volunteer engagement, fundraising, and program development, and significantly expanding our organizational capacity and community impact.



Community Impact

Our Impact: **By the Numbers**

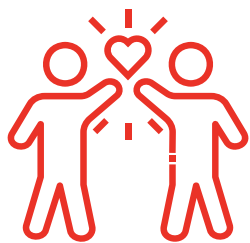
Casa de Amistad empowers the Latino community and neighbors across Northeast Georgia through educational programs that develop skills and foster community involvement. Our results below reflect this commitment to connecting cultures and building a more connected, thriving community where everyone can live, work, and grow.



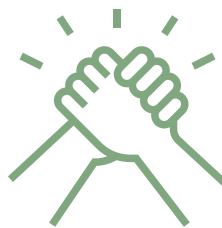
+200
Students



+\$28,000
Donations



+150
Volunteers



+50
Partners and
donors



Program Achievements

English as a Second Language

The ESL Program provided opportunities for English language learners in Athens to strengthen their language skills and expand their networks, welcoming participants from across Northeast Georgia. Over the Spring, Summer and Fall sessions, **167 participants** attended one or more classes at Casa de Amistad.

98

Students in
Spring

31

Students in
Summer

88

Students in
Fall

GED in Spanish

The General Educational Development (GED) in Spanish Program strengthened pathways to growth and opportunity for adults in our community. This year, through our Spring, Summer, and Fall sessions, Casa de Amistad served **40 unique participants**, equipping them with the academic skills needed to pursue further education and career advancement.

9

Students in
Spring

19

Students in
Summer

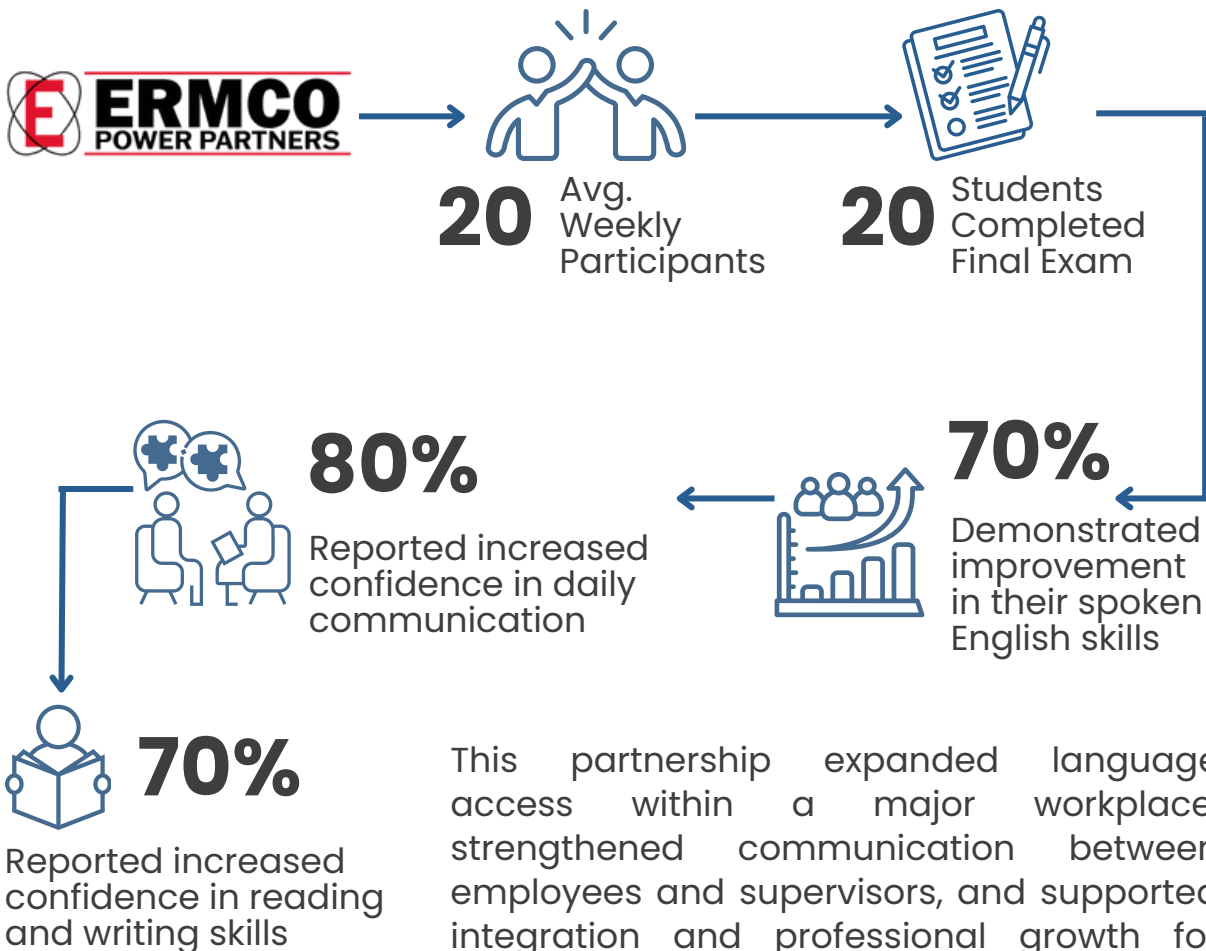
22

Students in
Fall

Partner Achievements

Power Partners ESL Program

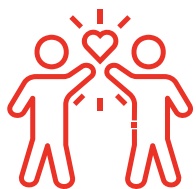
In 2025, Casa de Amistad broadened its educational impact through a dedicated onsite ESL program designed for Spanish-speaking employees at Power Partners.



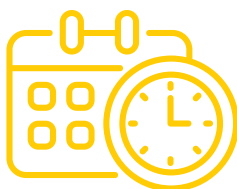
Volunteerism

Volunteers are at the heart of everything we achieve at Casa de Amistad. Your commitment is the direct embodiment of our vision: neighbors connecting with empathy and curiosity to build a stronger, more united Athens. We extend our deepest gratitude to every individual who dedicated their time, skill, and talent to our community.

Your generous hours supported classroom instruction, one-on-one student support, event assistance, outreach, and fundraising. We are immensely grateful for the over 700 hours you contributed. Thank you for joining us with open hearts and minds, and for learning alongside our students—together, your dedication turns our mission into action.



+150 Volunteers



+700 Hours



\$22K* Value

*Based on the current Georgia value of volunteer time.



Challenges and Growth

2025 was a year of reflection, adaptation, and growth for Casa de Amistad. Like many organizations, we navigated new challenges while continuing to advance our mission of education.

External and Environmental Factors

Broader environmental challenges led Casa de Amistad to review and adapt program protocols and messaging. Changes included moving some classes online, updating communication practices, refining volunteer onboarding, and adjusting partnerships to ensure programs remained accessible, inclusive, and responsive to learners' needs. These adaptations helped Casa de Amistad continue supporting adult learners effectively amid changing circumstances.

Program Participation and Structure

Many GED students did not reach the testing stage, showing the need for cohort-based structures, small group mentorship, and focused end-goal support—changes we plan to implement in 2026. Spanish classes had limited attendance, pointing to opportunities for partnerships and delivery models better suited to workplace and professional learners.

Volunteer Engagement

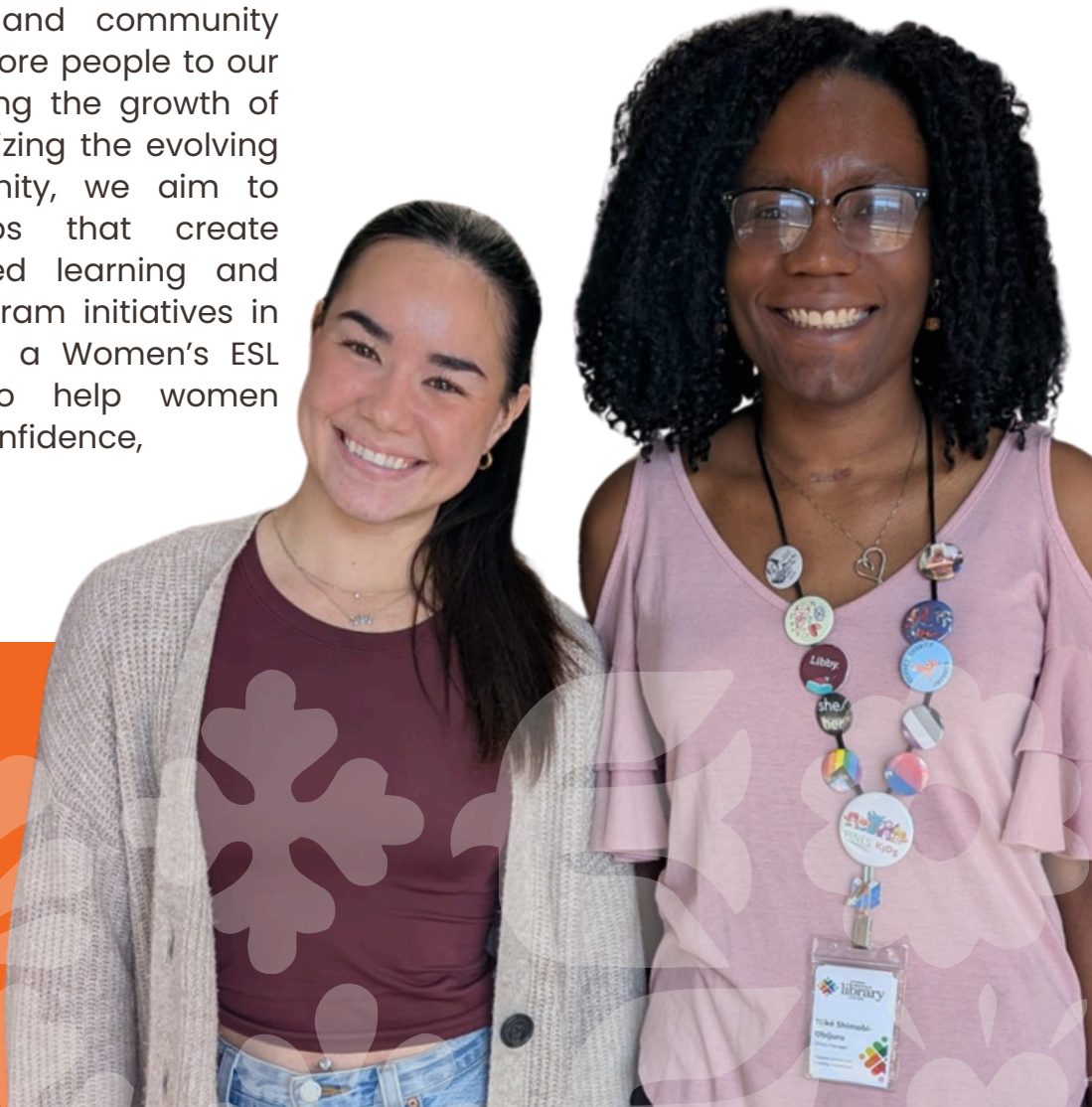
Volunteers contributed over 700 hours in instruction, one-on-one support, events, and outreach. With so many new volunteers joining this year, we recognized the need to strengthen our onboarding and program infrastructure to provide consistent instruction and broaden opportunities for volunteers to support fundraising, outreach, and other programs.



Looking Ahead

In 2026, Casa de Amistad will build on 2025's achievements, strengthening programs and deepening connections with the Athens community. Ensuring consistent, high-quality instruction remains a priority, with a focus on volunteer training and program support systems. To advance this goal, we are exploring a potential partnership with UGA's Center for Multilingual-learner Education, Research, and Innovative Teaching (MERIT). If funded, this partnership would provide tools, templates, and training to enhance ESL instruction and support volunteer and instructor preparation. Volunteers will have new opportunities to engage in outreach, fundraising, and community initiatives, connecting more people to our programs and supporting the growth of our community. Recognizing the evolving needs of our community, we aim to strengthen partnerships that create opportunities for shared learning and collaboration. New program initiatives in 2026 include launching a Women's ESL Conversation Circle to help women practice English, build confidence,

and form meaningful connections, and piloting a Spanish/ESL workplace program at Power Partners (ERMCO), aimed at improving cross-cultural communication in the workplace. Additionally, our GED in Spanish program will adopt a cohort model, in which students register at the start of the term and work closely with peers and volunteer mentors, including members of the Brothers of Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, to stay motivated and reach testing goals. Through these initiatives, Casa de Amistad will continue empowering learners and strengthening the bonds that make our community thrive.



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