

# ANGELICA VILLAGE NEWS

Volume 3, Fall 2017



**PILLARS OF SUPPORT  
DONATE\***

*120 Community members  
giving at \$10-\$100 per month  
will allow us to continue our  
work.*

What Progress! We now have 31 ongoing monthly donors: one third of the way to our goal. These donors, along with generous one time gifts, have sustained one full-time co-worker salary since February 2017, and will continue to until January 2018. This points to an urgent need to gather our wider community around us. Please consider joining us as a Pillar of Support or pledging to recruit 10 donors from your larger social circles.

## ***WELCOME ONE AND ALL***

Here is what Angelica Village community is up to.  
Thank you for being a part of it all!



**Fall Festival and Fun!**  
**October 14th 4-7**  
**5455 W Virginia Ave**  
**Lakewood Co 80226**

**Join us for fall food, crafts,  
music, games and more!**



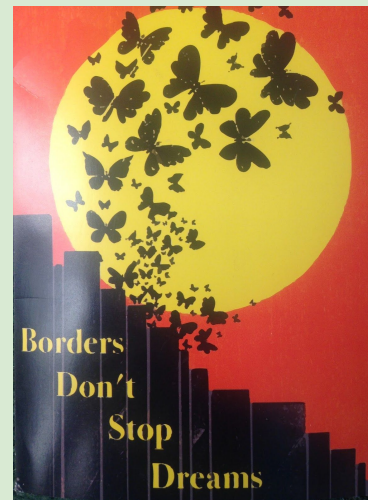
## ***NUESTRO DIAZ***

We see Diaz once or twice a week through triple-locked doors and thick glass, our voices connected by phone--one of the most broken, inhumane systems of our modern time. We give him updates, listen to his hopes and fears, and offer him our loved-filled words of encouragement. "How are you? How is your heart? How is it really?" and we settle in for our timed one-hour long visit on the hard metal stools that would make much better leapfrog pads for small children playing in a park than chairs for the human form. "Good. Good, thank you God," Diaz inevitably begins before revealing himself more deeply as the conversation goes on.

### **Denver's Immigrant Latino Youth**

Walking Denver's streets are an ever-growing number of smartly dressed Latino youth just like Diaz. At first glance they merge seamlessly with their U.S born counterparts, but delve just below the surface and you will find a much different story.

Born amidst the extreme poverty and gang violence of Central and South America and faced with few options, the promise of opportunity in the U. S. lures them



# MISSION

*“Through love, care and sustained mutual support, Angelica Village nurtures conscious community living spaces, where people with special abilities, families seeking refuge from war and violence, individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and fellow community partners receive what they can and give what they can.”*

across the border. Sometimes they make this decision alone and in other instances they are pushed by desperate parents hoping both for more opportunity for their children but also that these youngsters can help once they get there by sending money back home. The journey is treacherous and life threatening. According to the [NY Times](#), “From October 2000 through September 2016, the Border Patrol documented 6,023 deaths in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas,” and this does not include the deaths that occur south of the border. In their desperation some immigrants become drug mules to cartels who run the border and others spend family fortunes on the unreliable promises of coyotes to aid them in a safe crossing.

Those who do make it, turn to often the only community willing to accept them with open arms: the community of youth who have come before them and the savvy organization of the drug world that relies on this stream of incoming youth to replace those who have been caught, jailed and/or deported. In order to survive and fulfill promises of sending money back home to support their families, many fall into the front lines of drug dealing.

## **Diaz’s journey in the U.S. begins**

Arriving here at the age of 15 as an unaccompanied youth, Diaz’s personal story echoes that of his peers. Living day-to-day and bouncing from hotels to couches, this bright youth learned quickly how to keep his head down, make money, and care for himself and his family back home. For almost three years, Diaz endured a life full of burdening responsibilities with survival as the only goal. He had no way out, or dream for another kind of future.

## **Diaz’s story intertwines with Angelica Village**

Diaz did a stint in juvenile jail at age 17. As a minor, the state was required to research a permanent placement for him. After finding no suitable family in the U.S., and determining that deportation to his home country was too dangerous, they placed him in foster care, where he was then connected to Angelica Village.

At that time he was eligible for legal status in the U.S. as an unaccompanied minor unable to return to his home country. But the foster care system failed to file the proper paperwork before he turned 18, rendering him ineligible according to his unaware legal team through no fault of his own. In deep frustration and hopelessness, Diaz left foster care thinking they he had no open doors to remain here in the U.S. legally, and quickly returned to surviving in the way he knew how. He stayed connected to his family at Angelica Village however and we were in his life to receive the call from him as things took another terrible turn and he was incarcerated once more.

## **His story, on hold**

Currently locked up in a GEO Ice Detention Center in Aurora Colorado, Diaz is facing what may be the insurmountable challenge of a pending adult drug charge out of one of the toughest counties in the metro area. Stopped as a passenger riding in a car with expired tags, one thing led to another and Diaz, along with all of his friends—many in situations not unlike his own—are now in detention facing deportation.

# JOYFUL EXPECTANCY



We are excitedly expecting some new arrivals this fall! Hunter and her two little girls became housing partners in May when they moved into the Tennessee street house, but they have been part of our community from the very beginning. In mid-October the family will welcome a baby brother. Hunter is following her dream to become a beautician, and is currently in training. Her fiery enthusiasm is a welcome contribution to Angelica Village.

Emilia has been living in at Evergreen Hearth since September 2016, courageously endeavoring upon her life goals of health, stability, family and a career in healthcare. She recently passed her GED so is well on her way! Her baby is expected at the end of October.

Both families have set up registries for needed items. If you are moved to support in this way you can do so here:

[Hunter and Family](#)

[Emilia and Family](#)

Since February 2017, we have been on a harrowing journey with Diaz of trial, error, court appearances, denied bond, moments of hope and hopelessness. We have involved many lawyers in the process as we weigh the cost of representation in monetary terms to the two life changing outcomes Diaz is facing: remaining here in the U.S with a path towards citizenship (something for which he is eligible despite what he was told by his foster care team), access to education and future employment, or being deported to a home country with circumstances that are especially cruel to young men.

## Where we are now

With grit and patience we have re-opened his juvenile case and obtained the court documents required for him to apply for Special Juvenile Immigration Status (SIJS). We have connected to a lawyer who is working her hardest to mitigate his pending adult charges. This critical and final step will ensure his eligibility for SIJS, clearing the way for his permanent resident status.

## Resolution and how you can help

Resolution for this young man will in the next few months. You may feel, as we do, frustrated and saddened by his story, but we hope you will also join in our stubborn optimism that our Diaz will soon be granted justice and the opportunity to live out his potential. If you are moved to support him directly know that we would be deeply and grateful for any and all support. Court/lawyer costs, commissary and money for phone calls to his mother in Honduras are no small thing. Funds for him to begin anew here or in Honduras will also be necessary. Please put 'Diaz' in the *behalf of* section of our [donation form](#) or on your check to see these funds go directly to him! More importantly, may your thoughts, blessings and prayers rain down on Diaz giving his soul the sustenance it needs in this time.

## CURRENT CONSTELLATION

### Angelica Village's Immediate Community Circle

Five households (housing partners) mutually support each other in all aspects of life (practical/physical, emotional, spiritual). These households are made up of 9 adults, 9 youth (15-19,) 2 children (10 and 13), 4 infants and toddlers (0-4,) and two babies who will join in October!

Our housing partners live at Hestia Field, Evergreen Hearth and Veola House (We are still finalizing the names of each house!). An additional household lives in an apartment close by through a voucher provided by a program collaborating with Angelica Village. Two youth have moved beyond the immediate community homes and are supported as they endeavor into adulthood.

During Saturday Community meals we are blessed to have 10-30 members from our wider community join us in sharing food, play and time together.

We are also joined by an ever growing number on one-time and ongoing volunteers, giving what they can and receiving what they need, as they support our collective work.





## HIRE A YOUTH

Our youths are interested in working! We are looking for formal and informal settings including yard work, house cleaning, car washes, babysitting, house painting, moving and so much more! [Contact](#) us if you want to connect in this way!



## WELCOMING NEW BOARD MEMBERS

We are in need of board members who share our aims and have legal or financial expertise. If this sounds like you or someone who might know, please [contact](#) us.

## TOTAL ECLIPSE: A SYMBOL OF HOPE

By Francis Leighton

If anybody ever tells you that 97% coverage of the sun is pretty much as good as a total eclipse, don't believe them. I was lucky to be able to experience the totality of the eclipse with friends in Nebraska. I read about what to expect and had seen a number of total lunar eclipses. Still, I was unprepared for the power of this event.



A partial eclipse is a phenomenological experience, and absolutely awesome, but a total eclipse is a spiritual experience. In that moment when the sun is entirely covered by the moon, something quite extraordinary occurs. A brilliant, palpating, vibrant light radiates out from the darkened disc; a quality of light that I have never before witnessed on this earth. I can only describe it as heavenly. I sat there with tears pouring down my face for the minute and a half I was in the presence of this light.

Today our country and our world is in turmoil, as if the sun, our source of life, is overshadowed by darkening forces, and the light itself is under threat. After my eclipse experience, I have more hope. When the darkness was greatest, radiant light streamed from beyond it.

The sun is intimately related to the human heart. Each of us carries a replica of this glorious light within us. Even when hearts also appear to be eclipsed, we can keep the faith in the pure goodness that will burst out from the shadows and fill all our lives with living, healing light.

### GIVE WHAT YOU CAN, RECEIVE WHAT YOU NEED

- ★ Community meals on Saturdays Come One, Come All! Each presence brings a profound impact to our community and greatly strengthens our work and sense of community support.
- ★ Tutor/Mentor a Youth
- ★ Help us in loving and tending to our Garden
- ★ Co-Host a meal here at Angelica Village (one time or monthly or weekly) Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday options!
- ★ Provide Childcare (ongoing or one time shifts available)
- ★ Support the household needs of our parents and guardians (cooking, cleaning, errands etc.)
- ★ Teach English to our Spanish speaking adults
- ★ Actively commit to signing up 10 *Pillars of Support* from your own community circles
- ★ Facilitate holiday support for all five households in the community
- ★ Grow our clothing and food pantries! Make Angelica Village a place where people can stop by to get their basic needs supported
- ★ Donate an unwanted vehicle!
- ★ Are you someone or do you know someone who wants to invest in a huge and new way? Angelica Village is looking for socially minded investors to purchase current and new properties to support us in our capacity and growth.

# SUMMER DAYS

## FROM THE BLOG\*\*\*



*“The corn is twelve feet high, and the soccer goal lies in a heap in the field. It was used maybe twice.”*



School is out and daily activities have shifted gear. Most of the kids have jobs now, but that doesn't prevent them from pursuing creative ideas around the home, and being willing participants in cooking and household chores.

We cleared the wild and weedy area behind the house and filled seven large circular beds with corn, beans and pumpkins. Pedro\*, creator of the project, waters it religiously every day with a hand-held hose – except when he has soccer practice. On those days, Amy or Renata sigh and pick up the hose with a good deal less enthusiasm.

Pedro asked if he could erect a soccer goal in the sheep field, anticipating many hours of in-home training with his brother. With expertise and ingenuity he begged or borrowed the materials and tools he required, and in record time a goal was in place, mystifying the suspicious sheep.

His brother Dominic,\* too young to be employed, spends his days between soccer and busying himself around the house, sweeping the floors and running the dog. Francine\* loves to be in the kitchen preparing traditional dishes from home. Sombe, made from cassava leaves, is a favorite, and is eaten with just about everything. Chapatis, fried spicy flatbreads, are popular too, and rice is a staple.

On July 4<sup>th</sup> Francine appeared at the door of Hestia House asking, “Can I have a chicken, please?”

Anamaria honored the promise she made to donate one of her old laying hens to Francine's cooking pot. Together they went out to the henhouse, and Francine, a slender eighteen-year-old who weighs less than ninety pounds, firmly grabbed a squawking chicken and left, triumphantly holding up her trophy by its legs. Down at Evergreen Hearth, the serious business of neck-wringing and plucking took place. Mrs. Hen was popped into the pot, boiled all day and served up with a spicy sauce, right alongside the usual American Fourth of July fare of hot dogs, chips and ketchup. We find such joy in the ways that these kids enthusiastically bring their own cultural expressions to daily life in the Denver suburbs.

As for the others, Rosie is in Switzerland visiting relatives for the summer; Emilia is focused on the upcoming birth of her child in October. Wanda\*, with her gentle ways and sweet smile, has been a welcome addition to the family for the summer months, and will move on in August to join her siblings in another part of Denver. Most days you'll find Brian and Kevin playing basketball or riding bikes dangerously along the road. Brian, eight, can scarcely see over the handlebars of his adult-size hand-me-down bike.

One day in June, Amy left for the auto dealer to sell her truck. “The payments are too high,” she explained. “I'm just going to drive the old minivan.” Oh yeah? A couple of hours later she returned, grinning, with the cutest little light blue convertible bug!





"Well, he gave me such a good deal, and this will be great for the kids to drive!"She is definitely the princess of our motley fleet of cars.

Fast forward to mid- August. The nights are cooler and everyone is preparing for school or looking into colleges and vocational trainings. The corn is twelve feet high and the soccer goal lies in a heap in the field. It was used maybe twice.

\*\*\*Look for more stories from Francis Leighton and guest contributors on our upcoming [BLOG](#)

## ON THE HORIZON:



**We are DREAMING BIG! Here is a glimpse of some of the intentions we are holding and supporting in coming into being**

- ★ Complete our current project of connecting water and waste-water to a home-structure at Hestia Fields House, making it a fully functional living space for our partner currently living there.
- ★ Add an attached apartment to the Evergreen home to welcome an additional family of co-workers.
- ★ Work on additional living spaces so that we can welcome more immediate community partners (families, youth and interns) into the community and grow in our capacity to serve. This includes future purchases of additional homes as well as finding host-home opportunities for interns hoping to join our work for varied amounts of time.
- ★ Open our dining area at Evergreen to the back yard and add a patio to connect our outdoor eating space with indoor eating and gathering space.
- ★ Build a creative and practical arts space and music studio.
- ★ Begin dreaming of a corner store cafe that can provide meeting spaces, employment opportunities, and additional ways for the wider community to engage in giving and receiving of our collective work together.
- ★ Welcome and provide meeting spaces for groups endeavoring on spiritual work and activism
- ★ Welcome a partner with special needs
- ★ Develop Angelica Village scholarship program to support educational opportunities



*"In Africa we say: if you can't give me food, if you can't give me clothes, if you can't give me resources, it's ok. You can come and be with me, speak with me, care about me, and then we will all be happy. We will be OK. We will have what we need to be strong in life."*

*-Francine\*\**

## IN LOVING MEMORY



Our dear Veola Williams passed December 19th 2016, after a long, hard-fought battle with cancer. She joined Angelica Village as a housing partner and board member in July 2015 in our fledgling stages. She filled our lives and hearts with her joyful smile and laugh, and brought a practical and spiritual wisdom to our work as

## ***THE GIFT OF TRANSPORTATION***

One of the biggest practical challenges we face is getting everyone where they need to go to connect with opportunity and life goals. With a growing number of licensed youth and adults we would humbly welcome vehicle donations\*!

## ***FIND US ON FACEBOOK***



## **For More Information and to contact us!**

[www.angelicavillage.org](http://www.angelicavillage.org)

Renata Heberton

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we envisioned what Angelica Village could be. With fortitude she began the hard work of stabilizing after being homeless for over two years. Her ultimate determination was to reunite with her brother Curt who is a special needs adult. After caring for him for 14 years, they became separated when Veola became homeless.

Life seemed to be coming together when she was diagnosed with cancer in November 2015; the beginning of a long, fierce, courage-filled and soul impacting journey that would last over a year.

This was a journey that called upon us all to deeply examine what it means to live in community; to fulfill the mutual promises of giving what one can and receiving what one needs. So often, receiving proves the greater challenge as we give way to acceptance and trust in others. Our love prevailed, our connection grew, and our resolve to show up in each other's lives brought light and strength to our path. Angelica Village is humbled and blessed to have been on this journey with Veola. We were further humbled to accompany her through the healing process of reconnecting with friends and family who were able to join Veola in piercing through the hurts and harms of life, and honor what really matters in the end.

Veola passed on surrounded by family, friends, healed relationships, and the trusted knowledge that she was a vital part of our community and would always have a place called home. Her gifts live on, and we feel deep gratitude for all that she continues to bring to our lives.

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\*Angelica Village is an established 501c3. All donations are tax deductible

\*\* Some names throughout the Newsletter have been changed for privacy reasons