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About Casa Chirilagua

We are a community of people “learning together to love our neighbors as ourselves” in a Latino neighborhood in Alexandria, Virginia.

As a faith-based Christian non-profit with a small staff and over 100 volunteers, we serve alongside more than 100 families and their children (1st-12th grades) each week through our community programs.

Our mission is to develop relationships with families to see the Chirilagua neighborhood transformed by Christ and our vision is to see God’s Kingdom established in the Chirilagua community.

Our relational network of volunteers and donors reflects a diverse group of individuals from all over the Washington, D.C. metro area. As a non-profit, we rely on the community for assisting program directors on-site, being mentors, supplying the needs of our food pantry, and everything in between. Each member of our Casa community holds a unique gift, whether time, talent or treasure.

What does Chirilagua mean?

Chirilagua is the name of a small town in El Salvador. Many residents of Chirilagua, El Salvador escaped the violence created by the civil war in the 1980s seeking asylum and made their new home in Arlandria, a neighborhood located in Alexandria, Virginia. As families were reunited and the Central American population increased, they affectionately renamed their Arlandria community Chirilagua.

Families and neighbors who are a part of Casa Chirilagua reside in the Chirilagua neighborhood of Arlandria, where 70% of the population is comprised of Central American immigrant families. The main countries represented in Chirilagua are Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

Programs:

Casa Chirilagua's program areas are divided into 6 major categories: Elementary, Youth, Mentoring, Local Leaders, Adults and Families, and Emergency Relief.

Elementary

Casa is creating space for our community to shape its youngest members into its future leaders. We provide programs for 1st–5th grade students to hone their academic skills, improve confidence, and find an accepting community where they belong.

Youth

With Teens Club and Casa to College, Casa is providing 6th–12th grade students social and developmental support through group classes, tutoring, experience and exposure field trips, Bible studies, and college preparation.

Mentoring

Our community-based mentoring program matches students enrolled in Casa programs with a caring adult mentor for a minimum of one year. Transforming two lives through one mentor relationship!

Local Leaders

Local Leaders are college-age young adults from the community hired to run our afterschool programs while receiving part-time job experience, professional development and training, professional mentoring, and support for continuing education.

Adults and Families

Casa Chirilagua's family strengthening programming provides families with safe spaces to engage in community dialogue, share achievements, strengthen parent/child communication, and serve in a leadership capacity to promote the well-being of the family. Casa offers classes to learn English, Spanish literacy, computer skills, and more.

Emergency Relief

Our deep roots in the community have positioned us to respond to the needs of the community quickly and effectively. We invite you to join us and be a part of our food distributions and rent & utility relief efforts.

History of Casa Chirilagua

Casa Chirilagua began in 2007, when three young women moved into the heart of the Chirilagua (also known as Arlandria) neighborhood of Alexandria, Virginia with the goal of listening to the stories and wisdom of their Latino neighbors. After two years of life in the neighborhood, Julia, Emily, and Dawnielle decided to respond to neighbors' concerns about their kids' academic progress by opening a reading club in their own apartment.

This seedling form of Kids Club grew for two more years before the three ladies established Casa Chirilagua as an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit. Now, Casa Chirilagua is a community of parent committee officers, staff members, board members, church partners, children and their families, and many weekly volunteers working together to see the Kingdom of God established in the neighborhood surrounding that little apartment.