

**VIDA**

Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement

# 2012 ANNUAL REPORT

IMPACTING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE REGION...  
ONE **VIDA** AT A TIME

# A message from the **Chairman of the Board**

“Education! Jobs! Economic Recovery!” We heard it on every station, spoken by every candidate, at every level of government, regardless of political affiliation. Everyone agrees. This is what our country needs.

This is VIDA's mission! We do not do it alone; VIDA builds the future with committed community partners.

As we integrate the lessons learned from one of the hardest fought presidential campaigns in recent history, we know that the economic engine is fueled through job creation and job retention. Texas has led the country in job creation and the Rio Grande Valley is one of the primary stimulants to that fact. We have an abundant, young, and vibrant workforce. Our region has been deliberate in its focus on education with multi-tiered initiatives across the four counties to address and improve our educational outcomes and post secondary credentialing. Our partners in education are doing amazing things. Our employers are actively engaged, and the residents of the Valley have demonstrated the competency and desire to compete nationally and internationally for quality, high skilled jobs.

This past fall we celebrated the successful completion of post secondary credentialing by 304 VIDA participants from across the Rio Grande Valley. All graduates faced multiple barriers and challenges. Financial hardship is certainly one of them. All graduates invested the time and effort needed to succeed. All made the sacrifices necessary to change the course of their lives and that of their children. They not only changed their future, they ARE our future.

Tony Aguirre



Chairman of the Board

## Board of Directors

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Sister Mignonne Konecny-VIF



Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement

## Philosophy

Our philosophy is very simple. Well trained, well educated people will not only be ready for tomorrow's jobs, but they will also be able to live more prosperous, healthy, and happy lives. The ultimate goal is job retention, not just job placement. Long-term employment will develop strong citizens who can support their families and who are sufficient taxpayers who generate a clear return on investment of federal, state, local and private funding.

Our graduates not only helped the families they support and the businesses that now employ them, but their ability to successfully rise from the ranks of the low-income helps us all. Their increased earnings enhances their contributions to our tax system and reduces their dependence on public welfare assistance. VIDA has demonstrated a model for success by graduating participants into demand occupations that normally were jobs unfilled or filled at a very high cost by people outside of our community.

## History & Services

Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement (VIDA) is a community based, non-profit 501 (c) (3) agency. Created in 1995, VIDA was the result of a local effort led by community leaders of Valley Interfaith and private industry business leaders. The impetus was the need to empower the underserved residents of our region with the tools, education and training to become self-sufficient while fueling the growth of the existing employers and increasing the recruitment of new investment to the area by developing a highly skilled workforce.

Since its inception, VIDA's mission remains constant, to formulate new institutional relationships in the Rio Grande Valley that simultaneously address employers' needs for skilled workers and link the area's unemployed and underemployed with high skilled, high wage jobs identified in the region.

VIDA works closely with the business sector, training providers, and community-based organizations to develop a skilled workforce that will meet the demands of employers in the Rio Grande Valley.

Impacting Sustainable Economic Growth in the Region... One **VIDA** at a time.

# Annual Summary FY 2011-2012

## FY 2011 - 2012 AT A GLANCE

- > 71% Between the Ages of 25-50
- > 70% Female
- > 75% Public Assistance or Unemployed
- > 43% Single Parents
- > 22% Three Dependent Children or more in Household

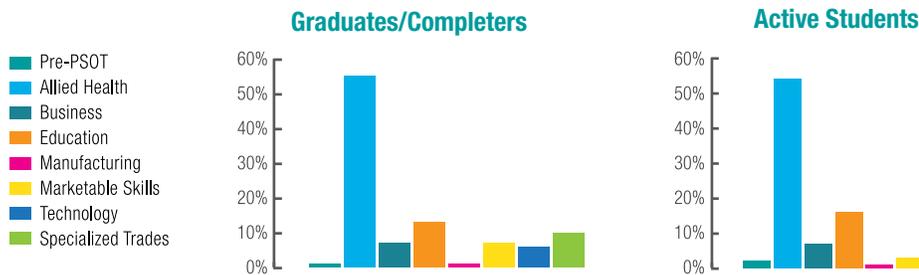
## 789 Economically Disadvantaged Adults Served

Average Salary Reported for 2011-2012 Graduates

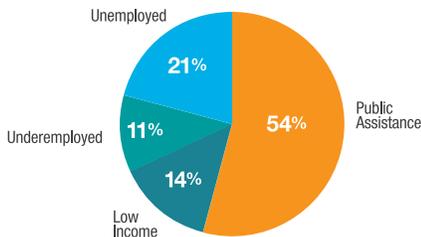
# \$35,568.00

<b>GRADUATES COMPLETERS</b>	ASSOCIATES 54%	BACHELORS 3%	CERTIFICATE 35%	MARKETABLE SKILLS 7%	CPAcad 1%
<b>ACTIVE STUDENTS</b>	ASSOCIATES 67%	BACHELORS 5%	CERTIFICATE 22%	MARKETABLE SKILLS 3%	CPAcad 1%   PILOT GED 2%

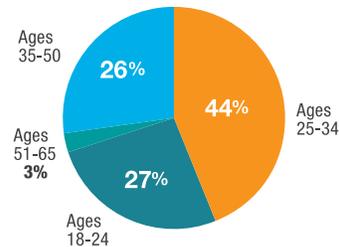
## INDUSTRY ANALYSIS



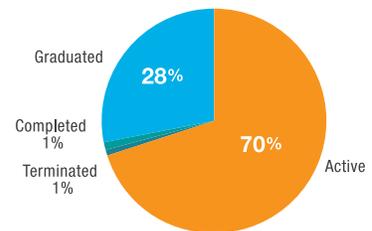
### FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY



### PARTICIPANT AGE



### PERSISTENCE RATE



VIDA gives people hope...and the skills needed to make a better life. People who could not find family sustaining jobs come to VIDA and obtain the education and training needed to compete for quality, dependable, and good paying jobs. VIDA changes lives and fuels our region's economy.



**JUAN "CHUY" HINOJOSA**

District 20 Texas State Senator

October 28, 2009 Valley Interfaith Press Conference for the Jobs and Education for Texans Grant Award.

***For every one dollar invested in the program, there is a return of \$6.89 to the communities we serve***

Economic impact study 2010 - University of Texas Pan American, Data & Information Systems Center (DISC)

# Success Stories

## FROM TRUCKS TO TECHNOLOGY



“ What VIDA did for me was awesome! With VIDA's help and my counselor, Amanda Castro, I was able to graduate with a Biomedical Technology degree from TSTC...and now BOTH of my kids are in college too! Thank you VIDA! ”

Samuel Leal, a single parent of two teenage children, was on public assistance. A truck driver for many years, Samuel had recently lost his job. His experience with intrastate routes could have landed him a job quickly but he was hesitant to be away from teenage kids for extended periods of time. Samuel had preached education to his kids every day while they were growing up and now it was time to practice what he preached. Samuel graduated with a Bio Medical Technology degree in May 2013 and today, both of Samuel's kids are enrolled at Texas State Technical College (TSTC) in Harlingen.

## A FIELD OF DREAMS

David Quiroz, a 30-year old McAllen resident, grew up as a migrant working in the fields with his ten siblings. His immigrant parents worked very hard but college was never an option let alone discussed with their children. But David knew that his life as a part-time server at a local restaurant was not enough. Of his ten siblings, only one completed a bachelor's degree. David was only working ten hours a week as a server at a restaurant before seeking help from VIDA. With VIDA's assistance, David was able to attend the University of Texas-Pan American and earn his bachelor's degree in Education. Today, David is working as an educator in the PSJA School District earning \$54,600 a year and proud to say he accomplished his goal.



## PERSEVERANCE PAVES THE WAY

A divorced mother of two children, Maria Valle struggled to make ends meet with the income from a part-time job at a restaurant and public assistance. Maria wanted a better life for her and her children. She knew the only way to get there was through education. Maria started school at South Texas College (STC) but had to drop out to find work to support her family. She longed to return to school but lacked the means to enroll again. Maria finally came to the realization that she could not afford to forego her education. Maria enrolled and struggled even more to sustain her household until she heard about VIDA. Tears of joy streamed down her face when she was told VIDA could assist her so that she could reach her educational goals. VIDA armed Maria with all that she needed to continue with school and succeed. Through sheer perseverance, Maria proudly walked across the stage and received her associate's degree in social work. For many students, that would have been enough, but not for Maria. Immediately after Maria received her associate's degree she enrolled at the University of Texas-Pan American to pursue a bachelor's degree. Maria promised to keep us informed on her progress.



## FINDING THE COURAGE TO CONTINUE

Rachel De Hoyos, a Valley native, was living in Bastrop with her husband and daughters. She was happy and life was good until she received that dreadful call. Her husband had been in a deadly car accident. Filled with grief and uncertainty, and in need of support from her family, she returned home to the Valley. The loss of her husband was devastating, but she was determined to be strong for her children. Rachel had started college, but ten years had passed since she last attended. Motivated by wanting to set a good example for her daughters, she enrolled at South Texas College and began working on earning a degree in Paralegal Studies. Today, Rachel is on track to graduate at the end of the summer of 2013. Her story does not end there as she has plans to transfer to the University of Texas-Pan American to get her bachelor's degree in Political Science. There is no doubt that Rachel is an inspiration to her daughters and a great example of those who find the strength and courage to move forward after tragedy.

Impacting Sustainable Economic Growth in the Region...One **VIDA** at a time.

# Community Service



Every year since its inception in 1995, VIDA has received the support of numerous cities and counties from across the Valley. They have been, and continue to be, unwavering in their commitment to education and job training because they understand how these can act as a catalyst for empowerment and positive change. Whether it means improving a family's quality of life, breaking the cycle of poverty, or ultimately, as a solid investment in economic development in the region, those who support VIDA know that their participation is making a positive difference in the lives of others who may be facing challenging times. Our supporters are committed to success. That's why VIDA participants are required to commit as well. They commit to going to school full-time, to making the grade, to attending classes, and to participating in the weekly counseling sessions with VIDA Career Counselors - Case Managers. And finally, VIDA participants are required to commit to community service so they can give back to the community

that has given them new possibilities.

VIDA is changing the way participants view community service. When many first enter the program they think of community service as a chore to complete as part of their commitment to VIDA. But it doesn't take long for them to realize that is not the case.

Participants quickly learn that community service is a chance to give back to the communities that invest in them. Here's what some had to say about their community service experience.

"Believe it or not, I really enjoyed coming out and helping at this project. Not only did I help out in my community, but I was also able to spend time with my daughter. With my tough class schedule, time with her is not easy to come by," said a VIDA participant.

"Recognizing that we are all part of the economic cycle of our community is as

much a part of our education as the classroom instruction" commented a recent graduate. "Our individual success is the community's success. We have better jobs, buy homes, cars, patronize restaurants... and we must give back to our community."

"Looking back, the community service projects gave me a chance to give back to the community and meet other VIDA participants in different programs. It was tiring, but I had plenty of fun," said another VIDA participant.



“ The community service projects gave me a chance to give back to the community and meet other VIDA participants in different programs. ”

# Back On Track

2012 Update



## Juan Pablo Benavides

His parents brought Juan Pablo Benavides into the United States when he was just 3 years old. He and his three siblings grew up working alongside their parents as migrant workers. His family worked long and hard in hopes of a better future. Juan Pablo knew that he wanted to create opportunities for his life beyond working as a laborer, but bad judgment landed him in the 92nd District Court where Judge Ricardo Rodriguez placed Juan Pablo in the Back on Track program. Judge Rodriguez's pilot program gives first time, non-violent offenders a chance to make restitution such that they are able correct their mistakes. Upon successful completion of the program, their offenses will be stricken from their records. Juan Pablo entered and completed VIDA's College Prep Academy at South Texas College, where he is now enrolled and pursuing an associate's degree in Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning. Earlier this year Juan Pablo successfully completed the Drug Court program and is scheduled to graduate this summer. Juan Pablo is an excellent student and role model and is committed to changing his life to create better opportunities for himself.

(Picture Above L-R: Judge Ricardo Rodriguez and Juan Pablo Benavides)



## Juan Carlos Montelongo

Juan Carlos Montelongo emigrated from Mexico at the age of 14 with his grandparents. His parents owned a successful interior design business, so while growing up in America Juan Carlos lived a comfortable life where money wasn't a problem for his family. Juan Carlos had aspirations of going to college and getting a degree so that he could secure a good paying job and earn his financial independence. He completed high school and started college shortly thereafter. But those dreams were shattered when the family business fell on hard times and eventually had to file for bankruptcy. With no income, the world that Juan Carlos was accustomed to quickly changed and left Juan Carlos vulnerable. What resulted next was a decision that led him to be arrested. While in the judicial system, Juan Carlos learned about the Back on Track program. He wanted to straighten up his life and knew the key was to earn his college degree. Juan Carlos learned about VIDA from a session he attended as part of the Back on Track program and was encouraged to apply for assistance from VIDA to return to school. He was accepted and enrolled at South Texas College. In May of this year, Juan Carlos graduated earning an associate's degree in Import/Export Logistics.



## The Open Society Foundations

The Open Society Foundations (OSF) was the first funder to invest in the 500 participants who enrolled in VIDA and the ISIS Project. Their very generous grant was made possible through Abt Associates, the coordinator of ISIS. OSF works to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. To achieve this mission, OSF seeks to shape public policies that assure greater fairness in political, legal, and economic systems and safeguard fundamental rights. On a local level, the OSF implements a range of initiatives to advance justice, education, public health, and independent media. OSF places a high priority on protecting and improving the lives of people in marginalized communities.

Investor and philanthropist George Soros established the Open Society Foundation, starting in 1984, to help countries make the transition from communism. OSF activities have grown to encompass the United States and more than 70 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

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

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



## The Allstate Foundation

The Allstate Foundation has provided a grant to VIDA to support a partnership with Mujeres Unidas, a shelter for abused women. The project will empower survivors of domestic violence to achieve their educational and job related goals. In addition to VIDA's core services, Mujeres Unidas will implement Allstate's Financial Empowerment curriculum which helps women recognize and stop financial abuse. Since 1952, The Allstate Foundation has been dedicated to a straightforward purpose: helping people. The

Foundation has created practical, proven programs for thousands of individuals and families to help them overcome personal challenges and uncertainties - leading to better, safer lives. Working with community partners across the country, The Allstate Foundation makes long-term security a reality for survivors of domestic abuse. They are committed to helping survivors build their financial skills as a way to escape abusive relationships, get safe, stay safe and thrive.

[www.allstatefoundation.org/domestic-violence-program](http://www.allstatefoundation.org/domestic-violence-program)



## MUJERES UNIDAS

Ana (not her real name)

All Ana wanted out of life was to get married, raise a family and watch her children grow up to be successful in life. Ana met and married her husband and began raising a family. Ana felt her life was on track until she found herself in an abusive relationship. She knew she needed to leave the situation not so much for herself but for her four children. The key to her escape was education, but going to college was out of the question since her husband controlled her every move. Without an education so she could get a good paying job to support herself and her children, Ana felt there was no way for her to leave her husband. Then the day came that she knew she needed to leave. Ana somehow built up the courage to divorce her husband. Ana realized that if she could muster up the courage to leave her abusive relationship, she could do just about anything. In the spring of 2013, Ana graduated from South Texas College with an associate's degree in Health Information Technology and she is on her way to making a better life for her and her children. This was made possible in part with the assistance Ana received utilizing funds allocated to VIDA by the Allstate Foundation. (Pictured below L-R: Estella De Anda, Mujeres Unidas Executive Director and Myra C. Garcia, VIDA Executive Director)

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



The Allstate Foundation grant has helped us solidify a long standing working relationship with Mujeres Unidas. A critical element of breaking the cycle of domestic abuse is to empower victims with economic independence. Together, Mujeres Unidas and VIDA are able to braid resources and make an impact. We are very proud and excited about our partnership.



**MYRA C. GARCIA**  
VIDA Executive Director

## THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

The Kresge Foundation is a \$3.1 billion private, national foundation headquartered in Metropolitan Detroit, in the suburban community of Troy. Kresge's broad fields of interest have become seven narrowly defined programs – Arts and Culture, Community Development, Detroit, Education, Environment, Health, and Human Services. Each has a particular point of view with long-term goals and strategies to guide their grant making and investing. Kresge partners with those committed to the needs of poor individuals and communities – small, mid-size and large nonprofit organizations, intermediaries, and the public and private sectors. VIDA received its award under Kresge's Human Services program which seeks to "expand access and opportunities for vulnerable, disadvantaged and low-income individuals and families by strengthening nonprofit organizations and generating new knowledge about efforts to ameliorate, and create pathways out of poverty."

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

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

# Funding Partners

## Capital One

In 2011, Capital One continued its commitment of investing in our community through VIDA. Capital One invests in communities in order to strengthen relationships among community members – neighbors, small business owners, their associates, and those nonprofit partners who enable Capital One to expand their reach and use their resources for good. Their philanthropy program provides grants to organizations that support education, financial literacy and community development initiatives. Capital One strengthens low-income neighborhoods by supporting workforce development efforts including VIDA.

## JPMorgan Chase

VIDA was very pleased to receive a grant from JPMorgan Chase. Their investment in VIDA is part of an unwavering commitment to making a positive difference in the communities where they operate. JPMorgan Chase's philanthropic goal is simple—be a catalyst for meaningful, positive and sustainable change within their highest-need neighborhoods and communities across the globe. In 2010, JPMorgan Chase and its Foundation gave more than \$150 million through grants and sponsorships to thousands of not-for-profit organizations across 28 domestic markets and 25+ countries abroad.

## The TJX Foundation

TJX has continued to invest in VIDA this year to ensure that participants are able to get the training they need to be successful in the workforce. The TJX Foundation focuses its charitable giving on programs that provide basic-need services to disadvantaged women, children and families in communities where they do business. In 2010, the TJX Foundation supported over 1,300 nonprofit organizations in the U.S., not including many other organizations that the Company supports in Canada and Europe.

## The Trull Foundation

VIDA is grateful for the ongoing support of the Trull Foundation, including its most recent renewal of their grant. For over sixty years, the Trull Foundation has been actively interested in various educational, religious, cultural and social programs, the majority of which have been in the State of Texas. The Trull Foundation continues to be concerned with people with improving their quality of life, especially for those living in poor or oppressed conditions.

## BBVA Compass Foundation

BBVA Compass is one of VIDA's new funding partners. The BBVA Compass Foundation demonstrates their support to the communities where VIDA has a presence. The Foundation has a long and proud tradition of providing charitable grants to qualified nonprofit organizations. Their holistic approach involves many aspects, including charitable giving, volunteerism, environmental management, diversity and inclusion, and other areas that promote the well-being of people.

REVENUE & OTHER SUPPORT		
SOURCE	FUND TYPE	AMOUNT
City of McAllen EDC	Local/Public	\$820,000
City of Harlingen EDC	Local/Public	\$300,000
City of Mercedes	Local/Public	\$45,000
City of Port Isabel EDC	Local/Public	\$10,000
City of Mission EDC	Local/Public	\$75,000
City of Weslaco EDC	Local/Public	\$55,000
City of Brownsville EDC	Local/Public	\$275,000
City of La Feria	Local/Public	\$2,500
City of Edinburg EDC	Local/Public	\$242,000
City of Pharr EDC	Local/Public	\$33,000
City of Mission EDA	Local/Public	\$300,000
Hidalgo County	Local/Public	\$250,000
Willacy County	Local/Public	\$50,000
The Trull Foundation	Private Foundation	\$5,000
The Greater Texas Foundation	Private Foundation	\$50,000
The TJX Foundation, Inc.	Private Foundation	\$5,000
BBVA Compass	Private Foundation	\$2,500
JPMorgan Chase Bank	Private Foundation	\$10,800
Capital One, N.A.	Private Foundation	\$10,000
The Allstate Foundation	Private Foundation	\$20,000
Open Society Foundations	Private Foundation	\$875,000
The Kresge Foundation	Private Foundation	\$175,000
Abt Associates Inc.	Fee for Service	\$282,267
Hidalgo County HPRP	Federal	\$103,219
City of McAllen CDBG HPRP	Federal	\$37,279
Texas Comptroller - JET Cameron	State	\$22,418
Texas Comptroller - JET LRGV	State	\$21,206
South Texas College - JFF Initiative	Fee for Service	\$23,695
InKind Contributions	Donations	\$42,205
Fundraising	Other	\$49,273
Other	Other	\$63,562
<b>Total Revenue &amp; other support</b>		<b>\$4,255,927</b>



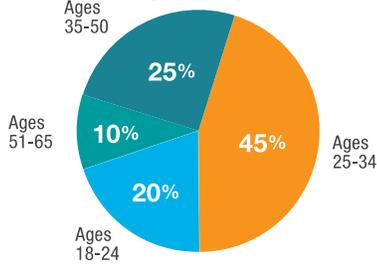
***For every one dollar invested in the program,  
there is a return of \$6.89 to the communities we serve***

Economic impact study 2010 - University of Texas Pan American, Data & Information Systems Center (DISC)

## Greater Texas Foundation

We are very pleased to be partnering with the highly regarded Greater Texas Foundation (GTF). They will be funding VIDA over a three-year period to ensure our participants meet their educational goals. GTF's mission and vision are aligned perfectly with VIDA's. GTF is committed to working to ensure that all Texas students have equal opportunity to access and succeed in post-secondary education. They know that an educated workforce is essential for our dynamic economy, particularly as Texas businesses continue to expand and new companies relocate to our state. For that reason, the Board of the Greater Texas Foundation has made access to and success in post-secondary education the cornerstone of its vision. GTF places particular focus on helping underserved and disadvantaged populations. We are very excited and grateful for this new partnership. We hope to collaborate with the Greater Texas Foundation for many years to come.

### PARTICIPANT AGE (AT ENTRY)



### GTF Cohort (20 Individuals) 100% PERSISTENCE RATE

- 65% Between the Ages of 25-50
- 75% Female
- 84% Unemployed or on Public Assistance or Both
- 50% Single Parents
- 45% Two or More Dependents

### GTF - CPAcad (13 STUDENTS)

- 69% (9) Passed 3 of 3 Section
- 23% (3) Passed 2 of 3 Section
- 92% (12) College Ready\*

All College Ready Students have registered in college credit course work

- 4-Technology
- 2- Allied Health
- 1- Specialized Trades
- 1-Manufacturing
- 5- Education/Social Work

85% (11) Passed the Math Section

\*College ready is defined as successful completion of 2 of the 3 sections of the college entrance exam which allows enrollment in college credit courses work

### GTF - PSOT (07 STUDENTS)

All seven had successfully completed the VIDA CPAcad immediately preceding GTF Funding

	AGE	GENDER	MARITAL STATUS	DEPENDENTS	EDUCATION	MATH	READING	WRITING
1	55	F	Single Parent	1	HS	Y	Y	Y
2	51	F	Single Parent	1	HS	Y	Y	Y
3	45	M	Single	0	HS	Y	Y	Y
4	36	F	Single Parent	1	HS	Y	Y	Y
5	30	F	Single Parent	1	HS	Y	Y	Y
6	30	F	Married/Children	1	HS	--	Y	Y
7	28	F	Married/Children	1	HS	Y	Y	Y
8	27	F	Married	1	HS	Y	Y	Y
9	26	F	Single Parent	1	HS	Y	Y	Y
10	21	M	Single	1	GED	Y	Y	Y
11	20	M	Single Parent	1	GED	Y	Y	Y
12	18	F	Single	1	HS	Y	--	--
13	18	M	Single	1	HS	Y	--	Y

	AGE	GENDER	MARITAL STATUS	DEPENDENTS	EDUCATION	PROGRAM OF STUDY	EXPECTED GRADUATION
1	46	M	M	0	HS	PTA	Fall 2016
2	39	F	SP	2	GED	Accounting	Fall 2013
3	34	M	M	1	GED	IT	Fall 2013
4	31	F	SP	2	GED	ADN	Fall 2014
*5	30	F	SP	4	HS	Accounting	Spring 2013
6	26	F	M	0	HS	EC-6th	Summer 2013
7	23	F	SP	1	HS	ADN	Fall 2014

\* GRADUATED

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

## VIDA'S COLLEGE PREP ACADEMY

VIDA's College Prep Academy was created in partnership with South Texas College and has proven to be highly successful. Many new VIDA participants are academically unprepared for college. A statewide study in 2007 showed only 25% of those who took Texas' required college entrance exam passed the math section on the first attempt and enrolled in college-level classes. Community colleges enroll those who cannot pass the exam in remedial classes, but this model is not working well.

After VIDA participants attend our intensive 16 week, five days per week, six hours per day College Prep Academy, 83% of participants are college ready as they passed at least two of three sections of the college exams. Of that 83%, sixty-six percent passed all three of the sections with no further developmental education required. Additionally, 72% of the total served passed the math section of the college entrance exams in just one semester. This compares with the same 2007 statewide group mentioned above that required remediation—only 15.1% passed the math section of the exam one year later.

**16**  
Number of College Prep Academy Sessions

**248**  
Cumulative Enrollment

**94%**  
Complete College Prep Academy

**70%**  
Met Math Standards on College Entrance Exam

**82%**  
Satisfied College Entrance Requirements

**73%**  
Satisfied College Entrance Requirements and Started College Courses

**34%**  
Graduated College

**79%**  
Persistence Rate Graduated or Continuing Training

\*79% Persistence rate in college (34% graduated and 45% still actively enrolled in college course work)

\*\*79% Earned an Associate's Degree & 21% earned a certificate

# Success Stories

## VETERAN GETS BACK TO WORK



“ I remember sitting down at the dinner table doing homework alongside my daughter. She often told me she was proud that even though I was ‘old’, I was going to school and getting better grades than she was. ”

Hector Castillo, a 33 year old U.S. Marine Corps veteran, found himself unemployed and unemployable. Hector was troubled and worried about providing for his wife and seven-year-old daughter. With VIDA's help Hector was able to return to his original career interest in the automotive field, and he earned an associate's degree in Automotive Technology from South Texas College. Today, Hector is employed at South Texas GMC earning \$39,520 per year with full benefits. He is very proud to be an excellent example for his daughter and now can provide for his family better than he ever expected.

(Pictured L-R: Veterans Ricardo Garcia, US Navy, Hector Castillo, US Marine Corps, and Felix M. Rodriguez, US Army)

## MOM MAKES IT DESPITE THE CHALLENGES

Monica Lape of Brownsville, a married mother of two children, constantly struggled financially. With a disabled husband, two children and a part-time job as a substitute teacher, Monica had little time to do more than dream of going to school and getting an education. She knew the only way to fulfill that dream was to go to college. Monica's primary challenge was to find a way to cover the cost of tuition, books and fees. She qualified for financial aid, but that just would not be enough. Monica's dream began to come into focus when, with the help of VIDA, she enrolled at the University of Texas at Brownsville and began work on an associate's degree in Respiratory Therapy. As is the case with most health related fields, the coursework was very demanding and these pressures were compounded by caring for her children and her husband. Many a time Monica was overwhelmed and she felt that she could not continue. However, after meeting with her counselor, she was convinced that she could handle the life of a student, mother, and wife. Through sheer determination, Monica graduated and today works as a Certified Respiratory Technician and earns \$43,000 a year with full benefits.



## CARING FOR SELF BY CARING FOR OTHERS

Jessica Cordero, a widow on public assistance, was raising two children and struggled to make ends meet with the income from social security survivor benefits. Jessica wanted a better life for herself, and more importantly, for her children. When her husband was alive, he was the primary income earner and she never thought she would have to worry about how to provide for her children. Jessica needed to find a good paying job but lacked the training to make her competitive. She decided to educate herself and become a licensed vocational nurse (LVN). Jessica enrolled at South Texas College (STC) after being approved by VIDA to receive assistance. Juggling the day to day life as mother and student was difficult, but Jessica knew it would be worth it in the long run. Through hard work and determination, Jessica completed her coursework and received her LVN certificate. Today Jessica works in a nursing home earning \$39,520 per year plus benefits.

## RISING STARS



### RETURNING HOME WITH A DREAM

Jaime Marroquin, a 28-year-old veteran of the US Army, returned home to his wife and two children after two tours in Iraq. He knew he had to focus on taking care of his family now that he was back home in Mission, but he did not know how to do it since he was unemployed. The atrocities of the war weighed heavily on Jaime's mind, and things became more complicated when he learned that his platoon was bombed shortly after he left. In the service, Jaime was a medic and he wanted to continue this path as a civilian. He decided to study to become a nurse and began course work in the registered nurse program at South Texas College. He struggled financially, but has been able to maintain his grades and has earned his Patient Care Assistant certification which puts Jaime one step closer to his goal of providing for his family. With VIDA's guidance and Jaime's determination, we are confident of his continued success.



## Jobs & Education for Texans (JET)

In December 2008, Texas State Comptroller Susan Combs released Texas Works, a report detailing the widening gap between the skills required in today's job market and the number of graduates trained with those skills coming out of our education system. The report indicated how many Texas businesses have a hard time finding skilled technical workers, and numerous employers said dwindling enrollment in vocational training programs negatively affects their businesses. The 2009 Texas Legislature approved a funding for Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) program to meet this demand.

A portion of the funding supports and expands existing nonprofit programs with a proven track record of good performance such as VIDA. The money from this fund was allocated to develop, support or expand programs of nonprofit organizations that prepare low-income students for careers in high-demand occupations. These innovative and successful organizations also assist students in applying and enrolling in a public community college or technical school.

[www.everychanceeverytexan.org/funds/background.php](http://www.everychanceeverytexan.org/funds/background.php)



## JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

Jobs for the Future (JFF) identifies, develops and promotes new education and workforce strategies that help communities, states and the nation compete in a global economy. JFF improves the pathways leading from high school to college to family-sustaining careers. It is through their Breaking Through Initiatives that opportunities have been created in South Texas. Opportunities that unite organizations, institutes, and other agencies that together have changed people's lives forever.

South Texas College (STC), Texas Workforce Solutions LRGV and VIDA partnered in 2009 on a pilot project funded by Jobs for the Future. This Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) Career Pathway allowed for two cohorts, each consisting of 12 individuals, the opportunity to prepare concurrently for a GED and a Certified Nursing Assistant License. A seamless progression was built into a concurrent curriculum for Patient Care Assistant Certificate and a hybrid of the College Prep Academy to prepare for the college entrance exam. Once completed, this accelerated program design will lead participants directly to the LVN Program.

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



# Funding Partners

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## ISIS

INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR  
INCREASING SELF-SUFFICIENCY

VIDA, one of nine programs from across the nation, was selected in 2011 as a key partner for the nationwide Innovative Strategies for Increasing Self Sufficiency (ISIS) evaluation project. VIDA brings together several key components of the career pathways framework. First, following a thorough assessment of their needs, participants receive extensive support services, primarily financial assistance and intensive case management designed to facilitate full-time school attendance and address any barriers that could derail academic progress. Second, VIDA offers accelerated remedial education for individuals who might otherwise spend one or more years and a large share of their financial aid package trying to complete basic education requirements before qualifying for college-level courses. Finally, through ongoing dialogue with business leaders and economic development boards, VIDA regularly adjusts the roster of occupational training programs it supports based on local demand for labor. As a result, participants are likely to readily enter employment after training. This project will require VIDA to enroll 500 new participants by the end of 2013. ISIS is providing a rigorous evaluation of next-generation strategies (including VIDA's strategies) for increasing the economic self-sufficiency of low-income individuals and families. The project is evaluating nine innovative workforce training approaches aimed at increasing access and completion of college across the US. ISIS is run through Abt Associates and is fully funded by the U.S. Health and Human Services Planning, Research and Evaluation Office of the Administration for Children and Families. [www.projectisis.org](http://www.projectisis.org)

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## Project GROW

*Growing Regional Opportunities for the Workforce*

Growing Regional Opportunities for the Workforce (GROW) is an ambitious regional workforce and economic development initiative led by a consortium of five WIBS, the Border for Workforce Alliance (BWA), in the Rio Grande Region of Texas. The consortium, made up of the Cameron, Lower Rio, Middle Rio, South Texas, and Upper Rio Workforce Investment Boards, will partner with regional employers, one-stop operators, community colleges, training providers, and community-based organizations such as VIDA, and with national workforce intermediary Jobs for the Future, to align and strengthen workforce system components to accelerate credential attainment and career entry by lower-skilled adults to meet the workforce needs to area employers. GROW will be a three-year project that will increase skills training and English literacy for eligible participants who live along the border. Project GROW was one of 26 grantees selected from more than 5,000 applicants nationwide for the Workforce Innovation Fund, a Labor Department grant pool created to test innovative approaches to workforce training. [www.wfsolutions.com/projectgrow](http://www.wfsolutions.com/projectgrow)

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THE RAUL TIJERINA JR. FOUNDATION

The Meadows  
Foundation

EARL C. SAMS  
FOUNDATION

BILL & MELINDA  
GATES foundation

Capital One

The  
Trull Foundation

TJX  
THE TJX COMPANIES, INC.

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***For every one dollar invested in the program,  
there is a return of \$6.89 to the communities we serve***

Economic impact study 2010 - University of Texas Pan American, Data & Information Systems Center (DISC)

# Collaborative Partners

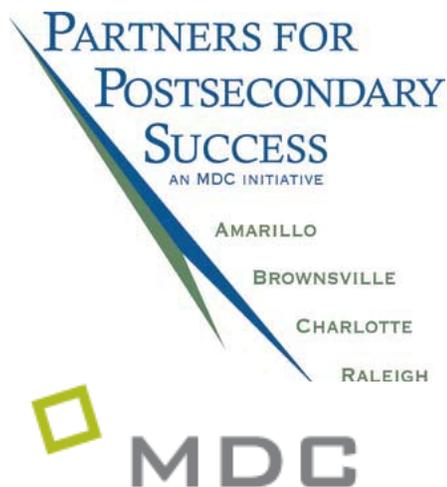


## EDUCATE TEXAS

a public-private initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas

Educate Texas has been nationally recognized for tapping into a bold, new brand of teamwork with significantly greater potential to create meaningful change for Texas students. By strategically connecting the diverse groups committed to this cause — from legislators and funders to business and civic groups to school administrators and teachers — Educate Texas is leveraging the power of collaboration, bringing together resources and expertise. It's a unique approach and it's already generating remarkable results for Texas by establishing a robust network of partners, aligning and integrating the efforts of policy makers, practitioners and philanthropic organizations to reach shared goals more quickly and use funds more efficiently. These connections allowed us to generate scalable, sustainable improvements for Texas education by using private funds to pilot breakthrough programs and then using public funds to replicate the most successful ones.

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



For generations of Americans, the high school diploma delivered on the value of an education. It gave you a ticket to the American Dream. That meant a steady job to support your family and a chance to launch a career. But now, high school is no longer enough. The median wage for workers with no college is now close to the poverty line for a family of four. That leaves only one path out of poverty: education—a college education. Whether it comes as a certificate, an associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree, a postsecondary credential is the best bridge between poor students and good jobs.

The **Partners for Postsecondary Success (PPS)**, a MDC Initiative, funded by the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** recognizes the seriousness of the fact that while college enrollment has grown nearly 35 percent since the 1970's, college completion rates have faltered dramatically during the same time period. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has allocated funds to various organizations including PPS to address the problem of young people enrolling in college but failing to get a certificate or degree.

The PPS team led by the **United Way of Brownsville** and includes the Brownsville Independent School District, University of Texas – Brownsville, Texas Southmost College, the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce, Brownsville Economic Development Corporation and VIDA. The PPS-Brownsville's plan was funded and the work has commenced to double the number of young adults (aged 16-26) who earn a postsecondary credential with labor market value by 2025.

[www.mdcinc.org/projects/partners-postsecondary-success](http://www.mdcinc.org/projects/partners-postsecondary-success)



## The National Fund for Workforce Solutions

VIDA hosted a delegation from National Fund for Workforce Solutions along with other agencies from across the nation. The National Fund is a collaboration between the nation's top foundations and a nationwide network of companies, workforce intermediaries, government agencies, and foundations.

The national investors provide seed money to regional sites to build a localized approach. In each of the regions where the National fund is working, regional collaborative bring together government agencies, foundations, and other philanthropic organizations to target financial resources and strategic thinking on creating jobs and careers. The regional collaborative have, together, committed an additional \$100 million to the effort. Involving nearly 300 funders the National Fund is working to bring to national scale, and evaluate, new ways to prepare workers-who don't have the needed skills-for careers that can support them and their families. The National Fund is dedicated to preparing job seekers and employees for career, not just a job. The National Fund brings together local and regional leaders from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors to spark and drive innovation. They work hand-in-hand to create practices and systems that can help employers and employees succeed in a post-recession economy.

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

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

# Collaborative Partners

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## Valley Interfaith

(Non-Profit Organization) will work in partnership with VIDA to secure other funding for the project, recruit project participants, and recruit employers.

## Workforce Solutions - Hidalgo County, Workforce Solutions Cameron

(Public Workforce Investment Systems) will assist with recruiting project participants, identifying demands in the workforce and employment support in emerging green industries and/or incremental training for incumbent workers. Whenever possible and with joint assessment, our respective teams will labor to leverage resources to best meet the needs of the participants served in this proposal.

## The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

(Labor Organization / Employers) The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Independent Electrical Contractors, National Association Plumbing, Heating and Cooling Contractors of American will train area residents in the electrical and plumbing apprenticeship programs. Their memberships will provide the On the Job Training component, and will ultimately be a reliable and dependable source of employment for the graduates

## Hidalgo County; Willacy, Starr, and Cameron County

(Public Sector / Employers) will assist VIDA with public services announcements for recruiting and training participants and employers. The counties of Hidalgo, Cameron, Starr and Willacy will make reasonable efforts to make use of the various training services offered under this grant as may be appropriate for certain jobs within each county.

## The North American Advanced Manufacturing Research & Education Initiative (NAAMREI)

The North American Advanced Manufacturing Research & Education Initiative (NAAMREI) is devoted to developing a world-class advanced manufacturing industry in the Rio South Texas Region. NAAMREI combines the innovation, talents and strategy of more than 60 partners in business, education, economic development, industry, finance and government to offer manufactures across North America, and the globe, access to proprietary, world-class advanced manufacturing and rapid response manufacturing.

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## RISING STARS



### LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER

Nellie Ramirez, a divorced mother of three on public assistance living in Starr County, was determined to set a good example for her children. With no financial assistance from the father of her children, maintaining her household was difficult. Nellie knew she needed to get a good paying job to give her children the life they deserved. She took a bold step. Nellie enrolled at South Texas College in Rio Grande City and began coursework to become a licensed vocational nurse (LVN). With assistance from VIDA, Nellie is slated for graduation this August. Nellie is even more proud that her oldest daughter is currently enrolled at STC. We wish both of them the best.

**"I AM EXCITED ABOUT MY GRADUATION IN AUGUST AND VERY VERY READY TO GET STARTED. BUT WHAT I AM MOST PROUD OF IS THAT MY OLDEST DAUGHTER IS NOW ENROLLED IN COLLEGE ALSO. OUR EDUCATION WILL CHANGE OUR LIVES FOREVER!"**



### FROM COOK TO COLLEGE

Ralph Martinez, a married father of two children, provided as best as he could working hard as a cook. His family's financial situation was made even tougher because his wife lacked the documents to be in the United States legally, so she could not contribute to the household. Ralph was determined to change his life and that of his family. He enrolled at Texas State Technical College (TSTC) and began classes to attain an associate's degree in Automotive Technician Technology. But after just two semesters, Ralph dropped out of school to help his wife become a US citizen. For the next four months, Ralph lived in Mexico with his wife while they collected the documents needed. Upon his return from Mexico, he and his wife both found jobs as cooks. But Ralph held on to his dream to continue his education. Two years later, with assistance from VIDA, he once again enrolled in classes at TSTC. As it turns out Ralph is a good student achieving a 3.36 GPA, and he is on track to graduate in December of 2013.

Impacting Sustainable Economic Growth in the Region... One **VIDA** at a time.

## Executive Staff

Myra Caridad García  
Executive Director

Irma García  
Compliance Officer

Daniel Mena  
Director of Finance

Priscilla Dinn Alvarez  
Director of Program Services

Bernie Saenz  
Director of Information Services &  
Community Outreach

Amanda Castro  
Senior Counselor/Project Manager

## Counseling Team

Melissa Cardenas  
Career Counselor-Case Manager

Ruben Garcia  
Career Counselor-Case Manager

Alma Perez  
Career Counselor-Case Manager

Sarah Puente  
Career Counselor-Case Manager

Pricila Rubio  
Career Counselor-Case Manager

Christina Sedeno  
Career Counselor-Case Manager

## Support Staff

Belinda Garcia  
Accounting Support Specialist

Iris Hinojosa  
Case Aide

Leevana Jilpas  
Placement Coordinator

Elva Mirola  
Case Aide

Martha Morales  
Receptionist

Nancy Sanchez  
Retention Specialist

Jessica Tristan  
Accounting Clerk

Cruz Villarreal  
Executive Secretary

Cristina Yanes  
Case Aide



“ VIDA not only changed my life...I am convinced that VIDA saved my life! Without the degree that allowed me to get the job with medical insurance, I would have gone without the medical attention, ignored the symptoms of thyroid cancer, and found out too late. ”

EMILY GONZALES VIDA Graduate (UTB/TSC)  
Associate's Degree in Nursing



# 2012 ANNUAL REPORT

IMPACTING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE REGION... ONE VIDA AT A TIME.



Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement.

