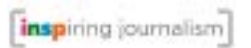


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College is Becoming Increasingly Out of Reach for Vulnerable Students

By Nicole Kiser

With the **unemployment rate** currently at 7.9 percent, almost double what it was before the pandemic shut down economic activity, those looking for a job are facing a tough trial for employment.

For those about to enter the job market for the first time, a bachelor's degree is becoming increasingly necessary. In the last decade, the percentage of 25-34-year-olds with a bachelor's degree has risen from 35 to 44 percent. Those with a bachelor's degree have lower unemployment rates and earn an average of 44 percent more than those without a degree.

However, gaining access

to the significant advantage granted by a college degree is difficult for those experiencing economic disadvantage or homelessness. Lack of confidence, knowledge and finances can create an atmosphere where it

is hard to even apply to college, let alone attend.

Confidence

For first-generation college students, there may not be a culture of furthering education within their family. "The thinking had been that you go to high school, get a job, and help support the family," says Julissa Vargas, who was the first in her family to graduate from college. While

Gaining access to the significant advantage granted by a college degree is difficult for those experiencing economic disadvantage or homelessness. Lack of confidence, knowledge and finances can create an atmosphere where it is hard to even apply to college, let alone attend.

Familial support is only one part of the puzzle. The limited resources of schools in low-income areas may result in students being less prepared for college than their peers. In comparison with those with college-educated parents, first-generation

college students often need developmental coursework and have lower grade point averages.

These differences can make assimilating to the college culture difficult and undermine students' self-confidence. According to a **Strada Education Network national survey**, nearly half of respondents said self-doubt is one of the largest barriers to their enrollment in postsecondary education or a training program.

Knowledge

The process of applying, enrolling, and submitting for financial aid and scholarships also acts as a barrier to many. Though the process has evolved over the years, those with relatives who have previously attended college have insight into the process first-generation attendees do not.

High school counselors, especially those at schools in low-income areas, are often too overwhelmed with helping students at the high school



Before the pandemic, The Stewpot's Venturing Crew visited the campus of the University of Texas at Austin.

level to provide in-depth information on the college application process. A **Stanford study** found that most high school students only had a vague knowledge of what courses colleges required.

Additionally, information about college preparation was often inequitable. Those in higher-level classes received more information and attention from counselors and college recruiters, while those on other tracks often assumed they would gain access to college simply by passing

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WHAT SHOULD WE COVER NEXT? FILL OUT OUR SURVEY AT:
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STREET *Zine*

STREET *Zine* is a program of The Stewpot.



The STREET *Zine* is a monthly newspaper published by The Stewpot, a ministry of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas. The Stewpot provides services and resources for people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of being homeless. The organization also offers opportunities for a new life.

As part of this ministry, the STREET *Zine* seeks to raise awareness about the issues surrounding homelessness and poverty. At the same time, the monthly publication offers financial opportunity for homeless clients who sell the paper to Dallas residents. Vendors are able to move towards economic self-sufficiency by using the money they receive from selling copies to purchase bus passes, food, and necessary living expenses. Clients also receive stipends for contributing articles to STREET *Zine*.

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A Letter from the Executive Director

By Brenda Snitzer

Back in the early 1990s I started serving in the inner-city of Dallas while I was working with Girls Inc. Our organization had a program that worked with young girls ages six through 18. That experience helped me see the impact that a long-term initiative could have on helping young students think about their futures, find scholarships and assist their families.

Fast forward a decade to the early 2000s, and I started bringing the youth from my church to The Stewpot to help at the Saturday School. Among other things, we saw how the volunteers served as mentors for the students.

Now, fast-forward to today, I have been fortunate as executive director of The Stewpot for the last three years to see the comprehensive nature of our Children and Youth Program throughout the course of a year — and throughout the life of our students.

The Stewpot's youth program begins with Saturday School for children ages six through 12. We next offer Venturing Crew to serve children ages 12 through 18. In each case, the programs are not only oriented toward education, but also toward the arts, recreation and entertainment.

All the way through, kids learn about the value of higher education, whether that means attending a traditional four-year setting or securing vocational training. They learn about these paths through their mentors as well as from alumni who return to The Stewpot to share their stories about attending college.

Of course, hearing about college is different from actually experiencing life on a campus. That's why we take our high school students on college visits. The goal is to expose them to what they need to do to get into college.

Our youth program piques the interest of our young people, but they often face financial constraints. So we launched a scholarship initiative in the 1990s to cover university expenses and vocational training. Since its inception, the program has funded 332 students, 83 of whom have graduated from a two-year or four-year school.

Many of our students start at a community college

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because they are more affordable than a traditional university. Financial aid can cover the costs of attending one of the Dallas College campuses. Our scholarship dollars then can cover their books and other expenses that financial aid might not. (For a profile of one of our Saturday School students who started at a community college, read the STREET *Zine* interview with Julissa Vargas on page 4.)

To be sure, some of our students go onto a traditional four-year university. In Julissa's case, she attended and graduated from the University of North Texas at Dallas. Others have gone on to such schools as Texas A&M University, Texas Tech University and Texas A&M-Commerce.

More than the money and mentoring, we work with students to give them a vision about their future. We also let them know that we believe in their potential. A vision for tomorrow and a belief in ourselves is hard to come by for many of us, but especially so if you know little about college or have few people to affirm your potential.

The parents of our students often are working so hard to put food on the table that they cannot stop to think about tomorrow. So, we give students a view of the possibilities of life. As I learned when I first started working with families who might be a paycheck or two away from experiencing homelessness, we can together think about tomorrow.

Brenda Snitzer is executive director of The Stewpot.

The Pastor's Letter

By The Rev. Amos Disasa

In Matthew 22 Jesus is tested by his religious opponents, the Pharisees. A group of them surprise Jesus one day and spring a tricky question on him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" they ask. Jesus says "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."

The Pharisees remind me of people that don't ask questions to learn, they ask to check if you already know what they do. When you get stuck in their rhetorical solar system, the gravity of their self-righteousness draws your attention and your whole self toward them. They are the sun, called into being by God to shine light on the darkness of your unknowing. There is nothing for them to learn except that which reaffirms what they already know. They go by many names and can occupy opposite ends of an ideological spectrum, but remain bound by the same assumption: that God needs their approval before loving any of us.

To them, Jesus says that we should Love the Lord your God with all of our body, mind, soul. That's all that matters. It is not the only commandment, but it is the first. If you love with your body and not your soul — saying the right words, reciting the correct creeds, promising to pray in just the right tone — it's not enough. If your body is present but your intention is elsewhere, or your purpose is empty, or your ambition is power, or your passion is winning, or your patience is limited to the point when it starts getting uncomfortable, this is not love. If you are physically present but you left your soul somewhere else, this is not love.

The Pharisees were devoted followers of the law. Their bodies bore the marks of their devotion. Their knees were scraped up from praying, and their eyes were dry from reading scripture. Their faces were fallow from fasting, and they were known to all as righteous men with an uncompromising religious rigor. But they

were stuck because their well-stated profession of faith to God only got them so far.

Jesus says to be unstuck, we need to love God and love our neighbor as yourself. These days, it's hard for me to hear these words above all the other words fighting for our attention, our allegiance and our vote. The messages come at us quickly and are often coded by calls for our support to open schools or keep them closed, require masks or let everyone choose, trust scientists or ignore them. To hear Jesus' command that we ought to love God first, before we argue about anything else, sounds quaint and idealistic compared to the sharp-edged political discourse broadcast by any means possible in support of what we are told is a fight for the soul of our country.

In a world where we hear the rumbling sound of our country arguing about what we owe each other as humans formed in the image of God, how are we to love God above all the other things with all our heart, soul and mind? It'd be easy to tap out and say I'm done when

confronted with this question. Jesus' words are scandal to a world set up to reward those who stop at loving themselves first. To bind yourself to one God that isn't affiliated with a party, cause, candidate or ideology would be strange these days.

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But we need love that does more than it says. The God we say we know, may not recognize us right now; for love is not a gift that we have the option of giving. It is an act of obedience in response to the creator of the universe. It is a command.

I've heard it said that the soul of the country hangs in the balance and we must choose correctly. But today we hear Jesus say something else: before we try to vote our way out of the troubles we've found, let's try to love our way into the right relationships.

If life brings you to a point where you must choose, the answer is always love that refuses to be silent in the face of injustice, look the other way, or say "I love you" without saying I don't love the thing you are doing. Our love cannot lie.

Are we willing to show up at the beginning and end, unfussy and unpretentious, there for others as we are needed, not as we want to be needed? Are we willing to break the rules of the marketplace and be generous with our love to those who can't return the favor, at moments when nobody else is watching? Are we willing to show up to love the unlovable after all the lights go off?

I've heard it said that the soul of the country hangs in the balance and we must choose correctly. But today we hear Jesus say something else: before we try to vote our way out of the troubles we've found, let's try to love our way into the right relationships. More sophisticated preachers may be able to convince you that this year is different and this season is unlike any other, and that the greatest commandment is more complex than it appears. It's not. Go vote, let your voice be heard. Just do it out of love and not to be proven right.

The Rev. Amos Disasa is senior pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas.

Journey to College: A Conversation with Julissa Vargas

By Bill McKenzie

Julissa Vargas started as an elementary school student in The Stewpot's Saturday School program and later graduated from Skyline High School in Dallas, Eastfield College and the University of North Texas at Dallas, where she earned a degree in criminal justice. She spoke with STREETZine's Suzanne Erickson, Nicole Kiser and Bill McKenzie about her journey to college, what she hopes to do with her degree and how students who are the first in their families to attend college can start and finish that journey.

Describe your journey to college? How did that happen? What put you on the path?

A lot had to do with the Saturday School program, which I started in first grade. I had not thought about college. Much of that had to do with where I grew up, in a less fortunate background. The main focus was getting through high school and going right into work. But being part of The Stewpot's Venturing Crew and going on all the college visits, I started to say I wanted to go to college. I heard from others who talked about where they went to college, how you can apply and that there are resources to help you go.

How did your parents feel about you going to college?

My parents were excited about me going to college. The thinking had been that you go to high school, get a job and help support the family. But when I told them I wanted to pursue more education, they said we will figure out how to make that happen.

That shifted gears for the entire family. The thinking now is how do we make it possible for the next family member to continue their education? This was an upward moment for our family.

What role did your high school counselor play in your going to college?

My school was large so my counselor was mostly there for enrolling us in high school classes. It wasn't until my senior year that I met with a college counselor. Her goal was to get us to apply to three schools. After that, she said we will find a way to get you help.

How did you pick criminal justice as a major, and what do you want to do with that degree?

I picked criminal justice because I wanted to go to law school. But I quickly learned law school is expensive. So I decided to stay in criminal justice and work with underprivileged youth the way The Stewpot worked with me. I would like to become a probation officer working with young people.

What opportunities did your college provide — or not provide — for you and students from different backgrounds?

My degree opened up doors for me so I was not applying for the same jobs as high school students. I have been able to apply for jobs because of my degree, even though I may not have the same level of experience as other applicants. People ask me what I can bring to the table from my education and experiences.

What mentoring opportunities did you have at UNT-Dallas? And did that create a culture aimed at graduating from college?

I worked my entire time there so I was unable to take advantage of as many on-campus opportunities. But they had counselors who constantly emailed me to see if I needed anything. Their doors were wide open. They had student life and worked to make sure people were engaged. They had flyers everywhere and constantly emailed us.

What would you say to families who have had no prior college history about navigating the



Vargas at her graduation from UNT-Dallas with Suzanne Erickson, Director of Educational and Workforce Programs at The Stewpot.

financial aid system?

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Especially in a Hispanic culture, you don't want to ask for help because you don't know. But ask counselors at those schools. They want students to come in and ask for help. It's unfortunate that kids struggle because they don't ask for help. The counselors have resources to help, including private scholarships.

What would you say about going for two years at a community college and then two years at a four-year university? What do you think of that model?

I can't speak for others because everyone's experience is different. For me, it was a financial decision to go to a community college first and then to a four-year school. I wanted to knock out those two years at a community college at a lesser rate.

Continued on page 7

View from the Street: An Artist without a Studio

By Sarah Disasa

FlyingB is well-learned, well-traveled and well-skilled. He did not draw or paint until just a little over two years ago, but he currently has one of his pieces on display at the Dallas Museum of Art. I first met FlyingB over the phone, and then in person at a downtown park. “I’m the last person you’d expect to be homeless,” he explained, as he began to tell me his story.

A native of Amarillo until 1985, FlyingB has lived in many different cities including New York, Chicago, San Diego and Seoul. He holds a degree in radio, television and film from the University of North Texas, and he is currently pursuing a teaching certification so that he can teach art. He is an artist who dabbles in a little bit of everything: photography, acting, music, writing and, most recently, drawing and painting.

FlyingB describes his art as semiotic, which he explained relates to the study of signs and symbols. His work is rich with vibrant colors, and it explores language and culture. With interesting titles — School Picture, Butting Heads, Hidden Warrior, Playing Peak-a-BOO ! — the viewer cannot resist looking at each piece a bit longer in search of the meaning.

FlyingB has been homeless off and on since 2017 when he returned to Texas after living in Korea for five years. Up until March, for the past two years, FlyingB could be found Monday through Friday at The Stewpot art studio. He found The Stewpot Art Program through an art show at Dallas’ downtown library in 2017. This program gives clients of The Stewpot the space and supplies to develop their artistic skills and express themselves creatively, as well as a way to sell their art.

Around that same time, FlyingB was in search of a support group after being diag-

nosed with bipolar disorder. He came upon Achievement Through The Arts (ATTA), which is a group that supports artists who have been diagnosed with a mental illness. A fellow member of ATTA, who was also part of The Stewpot Art Program, encouraged FlyingB to take part in both.

The Stewpot Art Program, as well as ATTA, has opened up opportunities for FlyingB to meet other artists, develop his talent, learn new skills and sell his work. His favorite piece, *Acid Fish*, sold at this year’s Soup’s On! event in February. “That’s my favorite. I had fun with the colors on that one,” says FlyingB. The program has also helped FlyingB gain exposure, most recently with a piece at the DMA that is featured as part of an exhibition of several Stewpot artists.

Since March the Stewpot’s art studio has been closed because of COVID. But that hasn’t slowed FlyingB down too much; it has opened up a new medium for him -- pastels. With all of his brushes and paints at the art studio, FlyingB was forced to find something that he could do outside of the studio. When asked about the challenges of doing art now, away from The Stewpot studio, he explained, “Having space, that’s the biggest part.”

Having access to the internet has enabled FlyingB to maintain an Instagram page featuring his work. He also has his work on display at Southern Area Behavioral Health Care, where it can be purchased as well.

After meeting FlyingB briefly, it was appar-



Acid Fish
Pencil and Paper, 9" x 11", 2018.

ent that he is a man with goals and direction. “On one hand, it’s like, 53 is old to take another left turn and start a whole new thing,” he said, when telling about his current pursuit of becoming certified to teach art. But he knows where he has been in life, and he knows where he wants to go.

FlyingB is working toward having a sustainable income once again. “I’ve had a very odd track,” he said, while thinking back on his life. But he also can see that his past experiences are making a way for what is next: “Every job I’ve had comes into play, especially for teaching.” Once he obtains his teaching certificate, FlyingB wants to get back to exploring different areas of the world, especially those rich in art.

Sarah Disasa is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas and the STREETZine Editorial Advisory Board.

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A Menu for the End of the World

By Whitley O'Connor

In his 2015 photography series, food photographer Henry Hargreaves re-created meals cooked by Doomsday Preppers across the U.S. When COVID-19 hit, Hargreaves checked in with some of the preppers he worked with in 2015 to see how they had been affected by the pandemic and to see whether preparing for disasters in advance had helped them navigate their way through these uncertain times.

Where were you when the world shut down? And what did you eat? When COVID-19 shut down Oklahoma City in March, most restaurants temporarily closed, and people flooded grocery stores to stock up on food and supplies.

As the pandemic took our world by storm, many found themselves completely unprepared. Grocery store shelves were quickly emptied as people hurried to buy up everything they could. Companies quickly rushed to restock while local governments urged people to remain calm.

But we quickly learned that this wasn't just a case of normal panic buying before a storm. As the pandemic spread, outbreaks hit food processing plants across the country, leading many to close. What began as temporary store shortages quickly became a supply chain issue.

With the fragility of our food system laid bare, it begged the question: How many people are prepared to face a disaster — not a couple days of discomfort, but a major disruption like a natural disaster or significant financial crisis? There was one group of people, however, who found themselves ready while the rest of us scrambled: Preppers.

This is what world-renowned food photographer Henry Hargreaves explored in his 2015 photography series, 'Ready for Dinner'. In his stylized images, Henry depicted meals put together by preppers across the U.S.

"I'm really interested in people planning for the end of time," Henry says. "So, I connected with a bunch of preppers from around America to talk

to them about their Armageddon menus, which are all diversely designed around their religions, their lifestyles, their locations and just what they think is going to happen."

From an Orthodox Jew stocking kosher foods in preparation for a terrorist attack to a diabetic mother and daughter storing low-carb meals and insulin in preparation for major tornadoes, these images not only show individuals and their nutritional needs but also major events that could disrupt the food system locally, nationally or even globally.

Henry took the opportunity to check in with several of the preppers to see how COVID-19 impacted them and to find out whether all of their work paid off. Catching up earlier this year as many states remained locked down, one prepper noted, "We have ample supplies to wait this out and have no debts to worry about. Unfortunately, my neighbors are not so fortunate. Some have lost their jobs and the money has run out. They worry about the future of their quality of life after this is all under control."

Another prepper put it a little more plainly saying, "I'm not worried; I'm just ready."

As you look through the images of Henry's re-created meals, consider your own cabinets and dietary needs. With COVID-19 continuing to impact Oklahoma and the U.S, maybe it's time to get ready for dinner.

Courtesy of The Curb-side Chronicle / INSP.ngo. All photos are by Henry Hargreaves.



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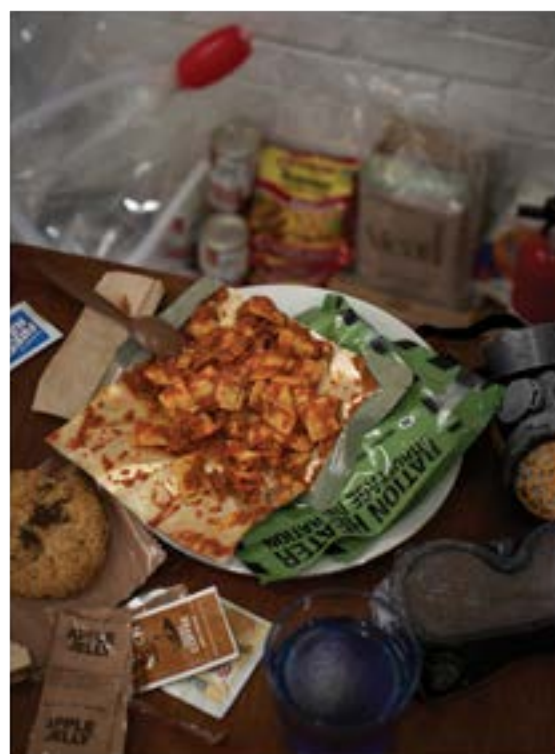
A FOODIE WITH A VAST PANTRY
HER MORMON FAITH ENDORSES PREPPING

PREPARATION:
DIDN'T WANT TO EXPERIENCE CHANGE IN HER DIET -
CONSTANTLY ROTATES HER FOOD STORES

LIKES TO COOK FROM SCRATCH WITH REAL PRODUCTS
PRESERVES INGREDIENTS FOR LONGEVITY

FOOD STORED:
WAXED CHEESE
PICKLED VEGETABLES
VACUUM SEALED MEATS
FREEZE DRIED FOODS
PASTA

CAUSE OF DOOMSDAY: FINANCIAL COLLAPSE



JASON CHARLES
Firefighter
New York

EMERGENCY RESPONDER IN 9/11 ATTACKS - NATURAL
DISASTER MAY POLLUTE THE AIR LIKE THIS AGAIN

PREPARATION:
NYC APARTMENT CAN BE SEALED OFF LIKE A BUNKER
WATERBOB FOR BATHTUB TO STORE DRINKING WATER

FOOD STORED:
MRE
WATERBOB
RAMEN
OTHER SHELF CANNED GOODS

CAUSE OF DOOMSDAY: VOLCANO



WILMA BRYANT
MISSOURI

SHE AND HER DAUGHTER ARE BOTH DIABETIC AND
INSULIN DEPENDENT

PREPARATION:
DIET MUST BE LOW IN CARBOHYDRATES, HIGH IN
PROTEIN TO AVOID RAISING BLOOD SUGAR

LIVE CHICKENS KEPT TO BUTCHER

INSULIN ONLY LASTS 6 MONTHS - STILL RELIANT ON
MEDICAL SUPPLIES

NEARBY STREAM TO KEEP INSULIN COLD SO IT WILL
NOT TURN BAD

FOOD STORED:
CHICKEN
BEANS
NUTS
SOUP
PICKLED GOODS

CAUSE OF DOOMSDAY: TORNADOES



Continued from page 4

The transition to UNT-Dallas was not that hard academically because community college was not easier than a four-year university. Community colleges have the same amount of hours that a four-year school expects. They have made the transition seamless. You just go from one school to another.

What would you say to prospective students about finding a school with a nurturing culture?

It is very important. You want to make sure you go to a school that will provide those basic needs for you. You don't want to go to a school with no support or where you don't fit in. It is important to find where you fit in and your crowd. That teaches you so much about who you are as a person.

You want to find a place where they consider individual differences. You are going to be lost if you go to a school that is not nurturing. I was fortunate to go to one that was inclusive. I used

to be shy but UNT-Dallas opened me up. I found students who had the same goals as mine.

What is the importance of finding a school that graduates students on time? It's one thing to get students into college. It's another to get them to graduate.

"Don't be afraid to ask for help...It's unfortunate that kids struggle because they don't ask for help."

I agree that this is important. You just don't want to get in and waste all the money it takes to go to college, especially money someone may have given you through a scholarship. You want to make sure the graduation rate is up there.

That means everyone is doing what they are supposed to do. It also says something about the people who work there and how engaged the students are. It says something about how well the professors are getting students to learn their material and pass their courses.

What can colleges do to make both college and opportunities at college more accessible to all students?

Requirements for professionals are becoming more competitive, so getting a college degree or a masters in a field you feel passionate about gives you that extra edge. It shows you can accomplish what you set your mind to doing.

But what can colleges do to make it more accessible for students?

Some of the greatest minds come from nothing, so universities need to be more inclusive when it comes to who they accept. It's not just who can afford this college or fit in this bubble. It is who is going to make our college better, make our economy better and think outside-of-the-box. A lot of times it is those people you never thought about.

Bill McKenzie is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas and the STREET-Zine Editorial Advisory Board.



Finding the Will and the Way: Luis Ibarra's Story

By Poppy Sundeen

Swimming against the current — that's how Luis Ibarra describes the challenges of his youth. "I was entering into the unknown," he says of his family's move from Mexico to Dallas when he was nine. "It was a scary feeling. I didn't know what to expect."

Luis, his brother, sister, father and mother shared a two-bedroom apartment with another family. "I hardly saw my parents," he says. Both parents worked long hours cleaning houses and offices to support the family. The bright spot in his week was Saturday or Sunday when they'd find time for the one family outing they could afford: fried chicken in the park.



Ibarra, right, with his parents.

During one such outing, they saw children gathering near City Park. "My mom was curious, so we tagged along." The group was headed to Saturday School at The Stewpot, and before long Luis and his siblings were regulars in the program.

A home away from home

Luis made lifelong attachments at Saturday School, both with other kids and with the teachers. "I didn't have my mom and dad at home much, so they were like family. It felt like home."

When the Ibarra family moved to another apartment, The Stewpot was no longer within easy walking distance, but that didn't stop Luis and his siblings. "We'd take the bus or walk. Sometimes, it took an hour or two to get there." Saturday School was worth the time and effort to the Ibarra children.

Difficult times and tough decisions

By the time Luis started high school, he could see

Luis made lifelong attachments at Saturday School, both with other kids and with the teachers.

the toll that hard physical labor was taking on his mother and father. "They were exhausted. I would help and work alongside them. In the Hispanic community," he explains, "parents are a priority."

At the same time, he was going through what he calls "the whole teenage phase." It was compounded by feeling like an outsider. "I was acting up and trying to distract myself from reality. I wasn't interested in school and thought about quitting."

"I was face to face with myself, fighting with myself," he says. He credits his surrogate family at The Stewpot who had watched him grow up with helping him persevere and complete high school.

He credits his parents as well. "One of the reasons they came here to the U.S. was for me to get an education." In June of 2009, they watched with pride as Luis got his diploma from W. H. Adamson High School.

A scholarship and a career path

From the time he was old enough to wield a wrench, Luis enjoyed helping his father take care of the family car. "We'd do oil changes together, things like that."

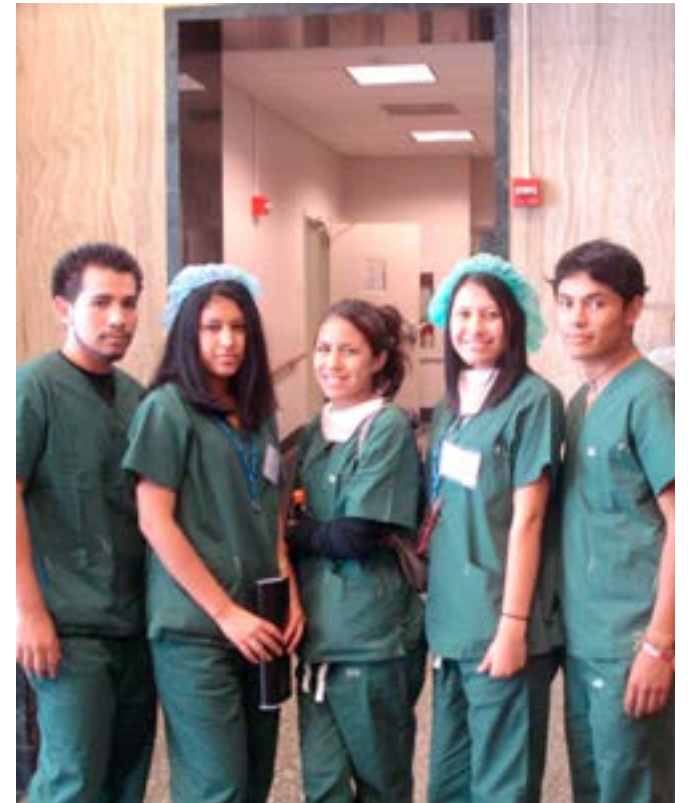
He decided to apply his interest in mechanics to a career as an automotive technician. So when The Stewpot awarded him a scholarship, he used it to go to community college and learn the trade. "I went through both the automotive and diesel programs."

While still in school, Luis got his first job as an automotive technician. "I would work from 7:00 to 5:00 and then rush to make it to school at 6:00. There was no time for anything except work and school."

The effort paid off. He got his degree in 2012 and then went after his dream job as a BMW technician. He's been working on BMWs ever since. When the pandemic furloughed most of the staff at the dealership where he worked, another area BMW dealership recruited him. "They started the hiring process the same day, and within a week I was on the job."

Satisfaction in giving back

Luis enjoys taking on tough challenges at work. "The most amazing thing is the feeling I get when



Ibarra, left, participating in a health careers camp when he was in high school.

I diagnose a difficult problem for a customer, like tracing down a hidden pinch in a wire. It's like finding a treasure."

To his customers, Luis is the treasure. His parents and extended family feel the same way. "I know my mother and father are proud, and I'm in a position to help them now with whatever they need."

He hopes to have a family of his own someday. For now, he focuses on his niece and nephew, sharing the lessons he learned. "They're eight and nine," Luis says, "but it's never too early to start teaching them."

Poppy Sundeen, a Dallas writer, is a member of the STREETZine Editorial Advisory Board.



Ibarra in his BMW technician uniform.

Continued from page 1

high school.

Finances

The main obstacle to a postsecondary education is finances. Simply applying to a university can cost \$50 or more, so applying to multiple universities can create a financial burden.

The cost of college attendance has also increased over 150 percent for a four-year university while the share of tuition that federal aid for college covers has shrunk. Less than half of university scholarships are need-based, making it even harder for students with financial need to obtain the funding they need to attend college.

In addition to the cost of food, housing, and transportation, students of the modern era must cope with a widening technology divide due to the cost and availability of computers and internet connection. Those with financial difficulties may work full-time while attending college, which can leave students without enough time to study and cause them to drop or fail classes.

Some students are having to choose between paying for housing or for school. As of 2017, over 50,000 college students were homeless. While a bachelor's degree confers financial benefits in the long term, its short term costs are difficult for those with low-income to bear.

Resources

Expanding access to postsecondary education is a multifaceted problem, but many organizations are working toward solutions. The Children and Youth Programs at The Stewpot has lecturers discuss their careers with students and takes students on college campus visits. These opportunities help students to consider college as an option that is available to them.

One of the best ways to bridge the knowledge gap

is to reach out. College counselors can help students understand the application and enrollment process, and universities often have resources to help with financial aid (including waivers for the application process). Though high school counselors are often overwhelmed, teachers may have more time to help students with applications if a student asks.

The Children and Youth Programs at The Stewpot offer workshops on financial aid, essay writing, requesting letters of recommendation, resume and interview preparedness and other topics to help students through the application process. The programs also connect students to resources such as ACT/SAT preparation and outside scholarships.

Online resources can also help students who are unsure of what to do. **College for All Texans'** website has resources for finding the right college, applying and financial aid, as well as other information. The **US Department of Education's** website has resources on student loans and federal aid like Pell Grants. **EduMed** has also compiled a list of resources for low-income students.

To help with the financial burden of college, students should fill out the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid** (FAFSA). National scholarship sites like **Niche**, **Fastweb**, and **Scholarships.com** can provide great opportunities, as well as more localized options, such as scholarships offered for a specific university or by a local foundation like the **Dallas Foundation** or **Communities Foundation of Texas**.

Some universities offer free tuition to eligible students. There are **twelve free tuition programs in Texas** (with various requirements): Dallas College District, Texas A&M University-College Station, Texas Tech University, University of Houston, University of Texas at Dallas, University of Texas at Austin, Lamar University, Stephen F. Austin University, Sam Houston State University, Ange-

lo State University, Texas A&M University-Commerce and Midwestern State University-Texas.

The Dallas College District program allows tuition-free transfer to Dallas College, Texas A&M University-Commerce, Texas A&M University-Texarkana, Midwestern State University, and Southern Methodist University if the student is eligible.

One of the best ways to bridge the knowledge gap is to reach out. College counselors can help students understand the application and enrollment process, and universities often have resources to help with financial aid (including waivers for the application process).

Programs like **Promise House** and **Our Friends Place** can also provide housing, food and other essentials to students who have become homeless. They also provide educational assistance and housing assistance to help students obtain necessities while staying in school.

As the pandemic has increased financial insecurity, obtaining a postsecondary education has become more inaccessible. Though a postsecondary education may not be the path for every individual, programs like those at The Stewpot, Promise House and Our Friends Place, as well as in-school and online resources, can help more students reach the opportunity granted by a bachelor's degree.

Nicole Kiser is managing editor of STREETZine.



Venturing Crew Adventures (2015-2018)



Left: The Venturing Crew saw University of Texas at Austin's famous clock tower.

Right: The Venturing Crew sat with Scrappy the Eagle when they visited the University of North Texas.



Left: The Venturing Crew visited the University of Texas at Arlington.



Around The Stewpot: Education Resources

By Nicole Kiser

For this month's Around The Stewpot, STREETZine emailed with Alma Reyes, the manager of Children & Youth Programs at The Stewpot, to ask for her insight into The Stewpot's college resources.

Education has always been considered a way out of poverty. As educational attainment increases, earnings increase and unemployment decreases, helping those experiencing poverty break the cycle. However, children who are at risk or experiencing homelessness face increased barriers to their education that others do not, creating an education gap along the income gap. (To read more about the barriers to education for vulnerable students, read our cover story on page 1).

The Stewpot works to close this gap by providing programs for students as they age. "Our programs are considered cumulative," says Alma Reyes, the manager of Children & Youth Programs at The Stewpot. "Most students begin participating in elementary [with Kids' Club], continue through middle school [with Junior Crew], and go on to attend during high school [with Venturing Crew]. During each of these programs we focus on enrichment activities that are on par with their needs to prepare them for their next academic and life ventures."

However, anyone can join the Venturing Crew. "In order to participate in Venturing Crew, the applicant will need to complete an application. The applications to participate in our programs are given out in the spring and after the summer typically," says Reyes. "It is encouraged that they participate in our programs for a minimum of two years."

Reyes has a reason for her recommendation. In or-

der to be eligible for the Community Ministries scholarship, students must participate at least two years in The Stewpot's at-risk outreach programs, in addition to other requirements such as community service. Students who receive the scholarship can request up to \$2,000 a year for tuition, housing, books and other school needs. Since the program's inception in 1991, 322 students have received scholarships.

The Stewpot works to provide reliable resources for the community. "We help strengthen links in community resources to provide students with a network they can depend on," says Reyes.

Stewpot scholarship recipients have gone on to do some pretty impressive things. "Currently, we are all facing a new reality, so it is an adjustment as a lot of them who are still attending higher education institutions are attending their classes virtually. Those that have graduated are working as entrepreneurs, social workers, engineers, in hospitality, marketing, education; just to name a few," says Reyes. One recipient even works for a company designing space suits for NASA. "Some are not only working their full-time jobs, but also come back and join us by working with our current students. All of them are successes in their own right and we couldn't be prouder."

Access to scholarships isn't the only resource that The Stewpot provides for students. "We take note of our students' preparation levels and make sure that we are tailoring our resources and assistance to meet their needs," says Reyes. Students are provided workshops on financial aid, essay writing,

requesting letters of recommendation, resume and interview preparedness and other topics to help them apply to college. The Stewpot Children and Youth Program also takes students to visit college campuses and has alumni of The Stewpot programs return to speak to students. (To see photos of some of these college visits, see page 10).

The Stewpot's Children and Youth Program also helps students who decide on a path other than college. "Not all of our students decide that a college or university is right for them and that's okay! We will also connect them to trade/vocational institutions. We definitely encourage them to pursue what they are passionate about, what will set them up for success," says Reyes.

Education alternatives also exist for The Stewpot's adult clients as well. The Stewpot has ESL classes available for clients, and the Educational and Workforce Programs connects clients to educational or vocational resources in the community.

Clients have been referred to places like CitySquare and Richland college, which offer professional certificates for skills like hospitality, construction, accounting and warehouse logistics, says Suzanne Erickson, the director of Educational and Workforce Programs at The Stewpot. "We also work with a non-profit called Cardboard Project. They help people connect with employers as well as offering resume and other job skills help."

Though access to education can be difficult for those who are at risk or experiencing homelessness, The Stewpot works to provide reliable resources for the community. "We help strengthen links in community resources to provide students with a network they can depend on," says Reyes. "Luckily, there are so many entities out there that are looking to break those barriers."

Nicole Kiser is managing editor of STREETZine.

Key to September Crossword:

Election Day

Across

2. Libertarian
4. November
5. Green
8. Democrat
11. Ballot
12. Canvass
13. Redistricting
14. Convention

Down

1. President
3. New Hampshire
6. Partisan
7. Republican
9. Register
10. Donations

[inspiring journalism]

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- Exterior public pay phones;
- Public transportation stops;
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- Self service gas pumps;
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