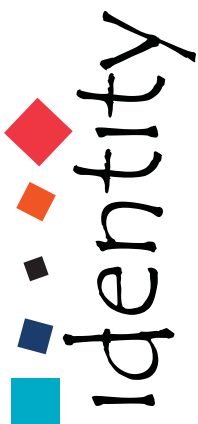


# Annual Report



**FY2024**



## Our Mission

In pursuit of a just, equitable and inclusive society, Identity creates opportunities for Latino and other historically underserved youth to realize their highest potential and thrive.

## Our Vision

A just and equitable society that nurtures all youth and is enriched by their contributions.

### What We Do

Like an extended family, Identity teaches and models the social and emotional, academic, workforce and life skills youth and families need to thrive. No-cost programs and services are provided at school, in the community and on playing fields and are complemented by family case management, non-clinical emotional support, mental health and substance use counseling and recreation. We also work to empower parents to engage in their children's education and be champions for their success and the success of the community. Our youth and parents are full partners in the planning and implementation of Identity's direct services and community engagement. Like family, we celebrate their victories and offer help when something extra is needed. Together, we are building a stronger Montgomery County.

### Board of Directors

Sarah Whitesell, Chair  
Michael A. Jiménez, Jr., Vice Chair and Treasurer  
Monica Marquina, Vice Chair  
Kevin Toruno\*, Treasurer  
Shirley Brandman, Gabriela Dveksler\*, Nancy Ebb,  
Stewart Edelstein, Nancy Kaplan, Steve Hull, Michael  
Knapp, Martin Lespada, Ivonne Lindley, Stephen Metz,  
Christian Mixter, Ana Morales, Vanessa Rodriguez,  
Gislene Tasayco, Tal Widdes, Alejandro Yepes

\*completed their terms mid-FY24

### Our Core Values

- ♦ Young people come first.
- ♦ Every child has potential.
- ♦ Youth deserve more than one chance.
- ♦ Society is enhanced by cultural diversity.
- ♦ Community members are full and direct partners.
- ♦ To serve others is a privilege and requires excellence.

### Staff Leadership

Diego Uriburu, Executive Director  
Carolyn Camacho, Program Director  
Carmen Estrada, Director of Evaluation  
and Quality Control  
Hope Gleicher, Chief Strategy Officer  
Fresia Guzman, Program Director  
Angie Jameson, Director of Finance and Operations  
Nora Morales, Program Director  
Tatiana Murillo, Controller  
Allison Russell, Senior Manager, Grants  
Amy Thrasher, Senior Manager, Development  
and Communications

## Dear friends and supporters,

As we wrap up Identity's 25th year, all eyes are on the future. With a foundation buttressed by a successful Transformational Campaign (see page 16), a superstructure of collaboration and trust with our client community and partners, and a new building (see back cover) to serve as Identity's home and a community hub, we dedicate ourselves to the next 25 years of working to improve lives.

Since 1998, in pursuit of a just, equitable and inclusive society, Identity has been creating opportunities for Latino and other historically underserved youth to realize their highest potential and thrive. We have faced evolving challenges and found innovative solutions. We have grown in unprecedented ways to pursue our mission and keep a record number of young people engaged in education, older youth engaged in work skills development and parents and caring adults equipped to help with both, while also providing case management services and a wide range of emotional and mental health support programming. Identity's work has been designed and implemented with our client community in partnership with outstanding staff who believe it is a privilege to serve and requires nothing less than excellence.

As we envision the future, we will continue to listen to our constituents, empowering them to voice what is most important to their well-being and future and to co-create and deliver solutions. We know that the right support at the right time allows people facing unimaginable challenges to lead the way. For example,

- ♦ *Encuentros* is empowering the community to heal itself. In the face of a national mental health crisis that is especially devastating for young people, Identity Community Mental Health Workers and Youth Peer Leaders co-facilitate emotional support groups that have helped almost 5,000 older youth, parents and friends since March 2021 to cope with stress, anxiety and despair.
- ♦ Expanded Workforce Development programming is empowering community members with more sustainable opportunities to care for themselves and their families. In September 2023, we launched a pilot career pathways program in hospitality with Marriott International. Now, 12 Identity clients are employed by Marriott – and more in the pipeline – with access to good wages, benefits and opportunities for advancement.
- ♦ Latino youth and parents turned to Identity for information and strategies to prevent substance use. So, in partnership with the University of Maryland School of Public Health, we completed a Community Needs Assessment which revealed a desperate desire by parents and young people for education from trusted sources. Parents especially longed to participate in the development and implementation of community solutions. The Needs Assessment is now informing the development of the County's response to the fentanyl crisis.
- ♦ *Padres Latinos Conectados* continues to empower parents to be champions for their children's success. Eighty-six recent graduates plus more than 100 active alumni are encouraging their peers to advocate for educational equity and engage in civic life. With the Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence, they successfully persuaded Montgomery County Public Schools to pilot an early warning system so parents know when their children have fallen behind and what specific supports they should be receiving.

Like family, you, our treasured allies and donors, embrace our client community's vision of a just and equitable society that nurtures all youth and is enriched by their contributions. Together, we celebrate victories, offer help when something extra is needed and imagine a more equitable future. Together, we will continue to build a better Montgomery County over the next quarter century and beyond.

### Un fuerte abrazo,



A blue ink signature of Diego Uriburu, written in a cursive style.

Diego Uriburu  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



A red ink signature of Sarah Whitesell, written in a cursive style.

Sarah Whitesell  
BOARD CHAIR



# Identity Highlights in FY2024

**13,172 Clients, benefiting over 52,000 residents**

Identity is honored to have supported the successful growth and development of tens of thousands of young people living in high poverty areas of Montgomery County since 1998. This year, our 25th anniversary, we served over 13,000 youth and families.

Identity youth report real improvements in their ability to resolve conflict; manage difficult emotions; speak up for themselves; connect to school, the workforce and the community; and avoid substance use and other harmful behavior. Identity youth show improved school attendance and achievement, and their families report improved trust and communication and more involvement in their children's lives and in civic life after participating in our programs. Lifesaving safety-net support and caring human connections stave off hunger, homelessness and despair in families during times of extreme crisis. The personal perseverance of our youth and families and their ability to push beyond obstacles related to trauma, poverty and language isolation inspires us every day.



## Organization-Wide Highlights

Identity worked with many more youth and families in FY24. For example, compared to FY23, we assisted:

7%

more clients with Case Management

52%

more students with out-of-school time programming

76%

more youth and adults with Workforce Development services

25%

more teens at five high school-based Wellness Centers

57%

more clients with *Encuentros* non-clinical emotional support groups

200%

more youth with Therapeutic Recreation programming

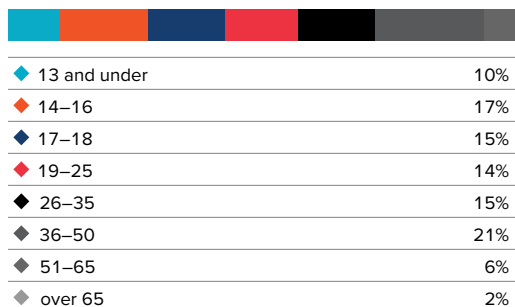
We continued to see significant impact in our work building young people’s protective factors with Positive Youth Development programs:

- ♦ 69% of youth who began the year with low expectations for a positive future reported higher expectations after participating in our programs.
- ♦ 69% of youth who began the year with poor conflict resolution and anger management skills reported increased skills after participating in our programs.
- ♦ 59% of youth who began the year with a fragile connection to school such as not feeling not feeling accepted, safe, or close to an adult at school reported increased school connectedness after participating in our programs.
- ♦ Of youth who reported knowing little about the dangers of using drugs, 71% reported increased awareness at exit.

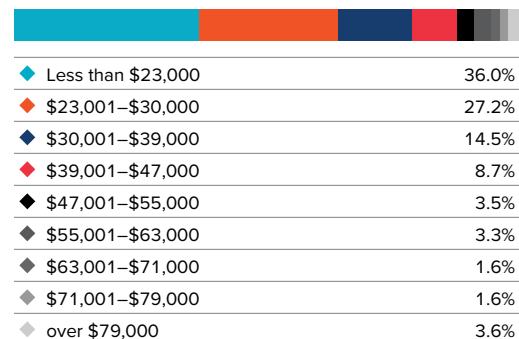
# Who We Served

## Demographics

### Ages

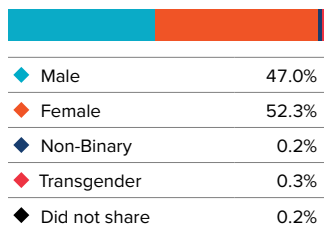


### Family Income

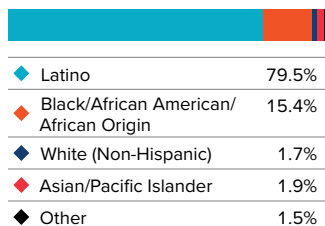


## Youth 25 and under

### Gender

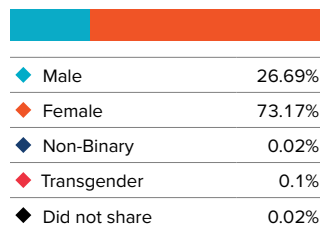


### Race/Ethnicity

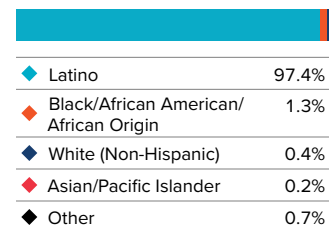


## Adults 26 and over

### Gender



### Race/Ethnicity



## Family Cohesion

33%

of youth lived in a single parent home.

14%

of youth lived in a restructured family (with stepparents).

14%

of youth lived without either parent.

58%

of youth had been separated from their fathers.

31%

of youth had been separated from their mothers.

6

was the average number of years of separation from a parent.

## Socioeconomics

26%

of youth lacked health insurance.

70%

of students received Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS).

13%

of youth lived in precarious housing (rented a room, lived in a shelter or a group home).

90%

of families had an annual income of \$55,000 or less.

## Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

ACEs are potentially traumatic events or conditions in childhood that undermine the child's sense of safety, stability and bonding and can have long-lasting effects on health and wellbeing. Identity youth are exposed to ACEs at higher rates than U.S. and Maryland youth, and their parents were exposed as children with similarly high rates.

72%

of youth had at least one ACE.

20%

of youth had 3 or more ACEs.

48%

of parents had at least one ACE.

19%

of parents had 3 or more ACEs.



# Where We Served

**In schools. In the community. On playing fields.**

We help youth, and the families who love them, improve social and emotional wellbeing, achieve academic success and prepare for work. All programs are supported by case management, mental health and substance use counseling, non-clinical community mental health, family reunification and strengthening, recreation, and parent education and engagement.

**Youth Opportunity Centers**

- Down-County Youth Opportunity Center
- Up-County Youth Opportunity Center

**High School Wellness Centers**

- Gaithersburg High School
- John F. Kennedy High School
- Seneca Valley High School
- Watkins Mill High School
- Wheaton High School

**Bridge to Wellness High Schools**

- Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School
- Clarksburg High School
- Albert Einstein High School
- Col. Zadok Magruder High School
- Quince Orchard High School
- Richard Montgomery High School
- Rockville High School
- Springbrook High School

**Out-of-School-Time Programs and Family Programs**

- Gaithersburg Elementary School
- Stedwick Elementary School
- Summit Hall Elementary School
- Harriet R. Tubman Elementary School
- Watkins Mill Elementary School
- Whetstone Elementary School
- Gaithersburg Middle School
- Montgomery Village Middle School
- Neelsville Middle School
- Thomas Edison High School
- Northwest High School

# School-Based Programs

66%

of Wellness Center students who reported poor expectations for their future at intake reported more positive expectations after participating in Wellness Center programs.

59%

of Wellness Center students who began the year with low connection to school felt more connected, happier and safer at school after participating in Wellness Center programs.

6,746

hours of Student Service Learning (SSL) earned which students need to graduate.

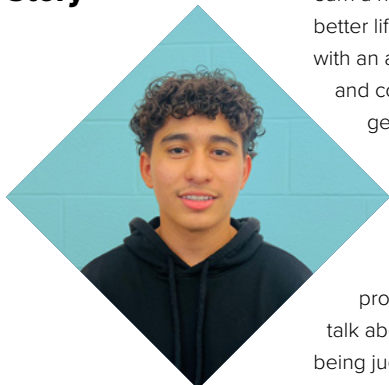
## High School Wellness Centers

2,790 youth served

Identity managed Wellness Centers at five Montgomery County public high schools: Gaithersburg, John F. Kennedy, Seneca Valley, Watkins Mill and Wheaton. These on-campus centers combine social and emotional skill-building, academic support, clinical and non-clinical mental health support, therapeutic recreation, workforce development and family case management with access to medical care. They serve as hubs that promote physical, social, emotional, and academic well-being. The Centers serve the full diversity of the school community and operate in partnership with Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, 480 Club, Emerging Triumphantlly, EveryMind and True Connection Counseling.

We continued our 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center partnership with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to offer academic support integrated with social and emotional learning, arts and recreation for 147 ESOL students at Watkins Mill High School and Wheaton High School who need extra help to thrive in school. We collaborated with MCPS on a program of summer school classes for credit paired with social and emotional skill-building activities and arts, recreation and field trips. Eighty-two ESOL and METS students from Gaithersburg, Watkins Mill and Wheaton High Schools earned 126 credits to keep them on the path to graduation.

### Brian's Story



Brian came to Maryland by himself at 17, determined to earn a high school and college degree and hopeful for a better life. Instead, he was overwhelmed and isolated, living with an aunt he had never met before. Brian felt alone and confused by the culture and language and was not getting along with his aunt.

Brian sought help at the Wheaton High School Wellness Center where Parent Outreach Worker Mirna Diaz suggested he join *Encuentros*, Identity's non-clinical emotional support group program. Brian says *Encuentros* gave him a place to talk about his feelings and immigration experience without being judged, while also learning to cope with stress. At the same time, Mirna made sure he didn't come to school hungry and connected him to affordable health services. And Case Manager Valeria Alvarez-Belay began working with him on his ambitious academic goals.

Brian and his aunt recently enrolled in Identity's Family Reunification program that helps (re)connect youth with parents or guardians after long periods of separation. Brian says they are communicating better and building a more trusting relationship in a safe space, away from the overwhelming stresses of school and work.

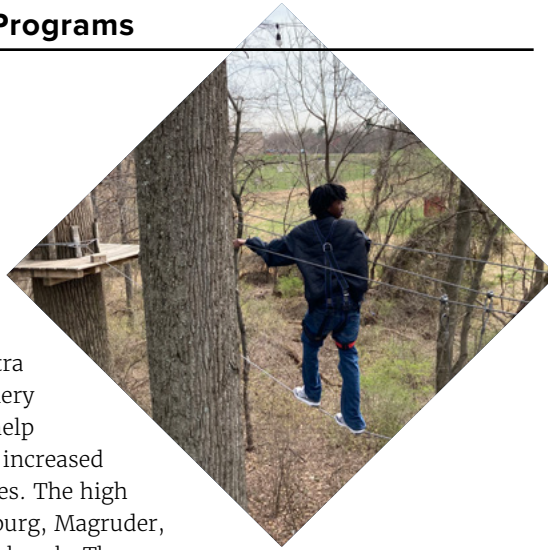
Now more confident in English and on the honor roll, Brian started studying cybersecurity at nearby Thomas Edison High School of Technology. The two-year program culminates in industry-valued IT certifications as well as a high school diploma. And before catching the bus home, Brian pops into the Wellness Center, checking in with trusted adults who have his back as he works to achieve his dreams.



## High School Bridge to Wellness Program

708 youth served

Identity offered social and emotional skill-building programs, activities and mentoring for youth who need extra support to thrive at eight high schools through a Montgomery County initiative called Bridge to Wellness. The goal is to help students connect to their peers, school and education with increased access to Positive Youth Development programs and services. The high schools are Albert Einstein, Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Clarksburg, Magruder, Quince Orchard, Rockville, Richard Montgomery and Springbrook. The programs are run in partnership with the YMCA, EveryMind, Sheppard Pratt and Street Outreach Network.



215

Bridge to Wellness youth completed curriculum-based social and emotional skill-building programs, including *Encuentros* and Botvin LifeSkills.

63%

of Bridge to Wellness youth initially reporting low levels of anger management and conflict resolution skills reported an increase in those skills at exit.

## Líderes de Mañana, Middle School

170 youth served

Identity provided social and emotional skill-building, academic coaching, STEM enrichment and family engagement to students at Gaithersburg, Montgomery Village and Neelsville Middle Schools. The goal is to improve participants' overall wellbeing and success in school while also helping them build resilience, develop leadership skills and expand their horizons so they can envision a more positive future for themselves.

We also worked with families to increase parent engagement in their child's academic success and, when needed, to stabilize basic needs.



65%

of program participants who reported low levels of conflict resolution and anger management skills reported an increase in their ability to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence.

75%

of program participants who reported poor expectations for their future at intake reported more positive expectations at exit.

## Alternative Spring Break

During Spring Break, a group of middle school students participated in activities designed to give their science and math brains a workout while also exposing them to future education and career options through a partnership with Montgomery College.

Over 80% of this group reported they were more confident about what they can achieve and better at exploring new ideas after participating in the Spring Break STEM program.





OVER  
**70%**

of program participants reported increased levels of school connection, decision-making, self-management and relationship skills after participating in the program.

## Jóvenes de Mañana, Elementary School

207 youth served

This program combines literacy lessons, STEM enrichment, social and emotional skill building and family engagement to promote success in school for struggling second and third grade Latino students. It was delivered at six high-need elementary schools: Gaithersburg, Stedwick, Summit Hall, Harriet R. Tubman, Watkins Mill, and Whetstone. Small group instruction with plenty of hands-on literacy activities and special STEM enrichment provided through a partnership with KID Museum helped young students stay engaged and persist in their learning journey, while creating connections with each other and trusted adults. Field trips to Imagination Stage, the Kennedy Center and other theaters reinforced literacy.

**90%**

of program participants reported being more interested in STEM, better at exploring new ideas, and more confident in what they can achieve after the enrichment sessions.

According to MCPS, chronic absenteeism—defined as 18 or more days absent in a school year (above 10%)—is a critical problem. The subgroup of Pre-K to high school Latino students has the highest percentage of chronically absent students system-wide at 31.5%. Even the percentage of chronically absent elementary schoolers, regardless of subgroup, is 20%. By comparison, *Jóvenes de Mañana* program participants have much better school attendance, with a 9.3% absenteeism rate.

### Kaethlyne's Story



Kaethlyne's family had recently arrived in Maryland when she had the opportunity to join Identity's academic and social and emotional enrichment program at Whetstone Elementary. She didn't know anybody and spoke no English but was curious and unafraid to ask questions. At the same time, Kaethlyne was quiet about how her family was living, until one day she told her Identity facilitator that they were sleeping and eating on bare mattresses on the floor, in an unfurnished basement apartment shared with strangers.

Identity staff moved quickly to get simple furniture, food, clothing and other essentials for her parents and her three-year-old brother.

With her home support system more stable, Kaethlyne really blossomed. The more she worked on understanding English and reading, the more confident she became—and the more she inspired and encouraged her friends to work on their own English. Kaethlyne was especially amazed by field trips designed to enrich their studies, like a play at the Kennedy Center and a visit to the Baltimore Aquarium. After every field trip, she thanked Identity staff for taking her to a place she never thought she would see. By the end of the program, she was advanced and assured enough to read out loud in English—a major accomplishment for Kaethlyne that inspired her friends to keep trying themselves.

# Recreation

201 youth with soccer, 168 youth with other recreational activities

Identity’s bilingual coaches not only provide youth access to healthy recreational activities and team sports without fees, but also model leadership and teamwork skills. This program may be the only option for our middle and high school players to be involved with competitive sports, as many don’t qualify for school teams, leaving them especially vulnerable to disconnection. Our coaches also connect families to basic resources and safety-net supports, organize hikes on nearby trails and facilitate participation in special outdoor activities across the region.



# 66%

of youth in the Recreation Program who initially reported poor conflict resolution skills reported an improvement after involvement in the program.

# 66%

of youth in the Recreation Program who initially reported poor school connectedness reported an improvement after involvement in the program.

# 39

of the 44 youth who tried out for their school teams made the teams.

## Middle School Champions

A record number of girls participated in Identity soccer teams this year, making up 48% of our players. The Gaithersburg Middle School girls team has been together since 6<sup>th</sup> grade and for the last three years has advanced to the finals of the Montgomery County Soccer4Change tournament. This year they won the Soccer4Change All-Stars Championship!



78%

of YOC youth who reported poor conflict resolution and anger management skills reported increased skills after involvement in our programs.

83%

of YOC youth who reported depression symptoms reported a decrease in depression symptoms at exit.

54%

of youth who had dropped out of school before joining the YOCs re-enrolled in school or enrolled in our GED program.

163

GED and ESOL participants served

44

GED tests passed, approaching pre-pandemic levels

# Community-Based Programs

## Youth Opportunity Centers

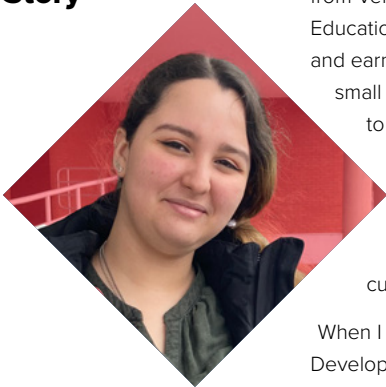
559 youth served

The YOCs, located in Gaithersburg and Takoma Park, emphasize mentoring and building social and emotional and job readiness skills to help vulnerable older youth (re)connect to the education system, the workforce, their families and the community. We partnered with Pride Youth Services and Maryland Treatment Centers to serve diverse YOC program participants. Individually and in groups, all services are complemented by intensive case management and mental health services.

For clients who are no longer in school, Identity offered English and Spanish GED classes as an alternative path to a high school diploma, ESOL classes and tutoring. Whenever possible, we advocated to re-enroll school-age students in MCPS. In addition, we offered industry-recognized certification and career pathway courses in collaboration with Montgomery College.



### Shuiquingel's Story



My name is Shuiquingel. I made the dangerous journey from Venezuela by myself at 16 to seek asylum in the US. Education is very important to me, so I went to high school and earned my diploma, at the same time working on a small family farm feeding and taking care of the animals to support myself. I have always loved animals and have dreamed of being a veterinarian since I was a child. But in this country, it was difficult for me to ever imagine having such an opportunity due to not knowing the language, and the whole culture shock of life here.

When I was 20, I heard about Identity's Workforce Development program, and began working with Workforce Specialist Jerman Marcia who helped me enroll in a Vet Tech certification program. The online courses were a challenge. First, I had to master the medical information in English, and second, I was working more than full time

to support myself. But then Jerman found scholarships that gave me the gift of time for my studies. I finished the course and passed the final exam on my first attempt!

Then Identity arranged a stipend for me to be able to take advantage of otherwise unpaid work experience at a veterinary hospital in Gaithersburg. This hands-on experience has deepened my passion for the field and my commitment to this career path. How did I turn my goals into reality? Identity took me in and allowed me to realize my self-worth and gave me the opportunity to prove that to myself.

“

**My experience with Identity has been truly transformative.**

”

## Community-Based Programs



### Ileana's Story

Ileana says she has an “entrepreneurial soul.” She was trained in management and marketing in El Salvador, which she fled due to violence. Last year, family difficulties forced Ileana to search for a way to both care for her small daughter and earn a living.

Ileana had been creating jewelry for some time when she heard about Identity’s first Entrepreneur Expo in June 2023. She was amazed at the confidence and preparation of the entrepreneurs who presented their business plans.

Soon after, Ileana joined Identity’s year-long Entrepreneurship Program and registered her LLC: Mariana by Ileana, named for her daughter. And daring to dream big, she asked Identity to coach her through the application to the Maryland Women’s Business Center Shop Local

Incubator. From a large pool of applicants, Ileana was one of only three women selected this year to showcase her creations and manage a small shop in Rockville Town Center for 6 months.

“Identity’s program has helped me tremendously, both on a personal and professional level,” Ileana says. “With their support I was able to learn new concepts to take my business idea to the next level. I appreciate the constant support plus every individual coaching session and class. I will be forever grateful.”

“  
Identity’s program has helped me tremendously, both on a personal and professional level.”

## Workforce Development

Identity’s Workforce Development programs help unemployed or underemployed older youth and parents establish a path to economic stability and mobility. We offered a comprehensive range of services to support clients in gaining industry-recognized certifications, obtaining scholarships and work experience, and finding and retaining a job in their chosen field. In addition to training, Case Managers help address issues that frequently derail efforts to find and keep gainful employment by resolving basic impediments such as transportation and business clothing or uniforms, while also stabilizing their living circumstances.

Our clients this year earned certifications such as Electrical Technician I-IV, Early Childhood Educator, Certified Medical Assistant, Phlebotomy Technician, MCPS Bus Driver and Cosmetologist. We also partnered with employers to meet their workforce needs while creating opportunities for job seekers. For example, in September 2023, Identity launched a pilot career pathways program in hospitality with Marriott International. Now, 12 Identity clients are employed by Marriott—and more in the pipeline—with access to good wages, benefits and opportunities for advancement.

653

youth and adults enrolled in job readiness and career readiness programs.

105

clients obtained jobs or participated in work experience and internships.

170

clients earned career pathway certifications or industry-recognized certifications.

33

clients participated in Identity’s intensive, year-long Entrepreneurship program.



29,459

services were provided, directly or by referral, for food, healthcare, clothing, mental health support, legal services, rent and utility assistance and other safety-net needs.

95%

of services were successfully completed.

93%

OF PARENTS/  
GUARDIANS AND

88%

OF YOUTH

who initially reported poor relationships with their children/parents, reported improved relationships after completing the Family Reunification program.

83%

of adult *Encuentros* participants reported feeling better able to help their friends and families handle difficult emotions after completing the program.

68%

of adult *Encuentros* participants reported a decrease in anxiety after completing the program.

90%

of youth *Encuentros* participants reported increased ability to handle or cope with their painful feelings after the program.

## Case Management

7,754 clients served

The whole person—the whole family. Identity’s Case Managers are trained to identify the safety-net, health and mental health support youth and families need and connect them to resources inside and outside of Identity to stabilize and strengthen their ultimate support system. Case Managers worked with thousands of people in distress across Montgomery County to access life-saving food, clothing, healthcare, and other essentials and benefits.

Case Management services are available to participants in Identity programs and their families, as well as to families in crisis across the county. Identity families live in extreme poverty, with 90% living in households earning less than \$55,000.

## Non-Clinical Community Mental Health

For the growing numbers of community members who need emotional support—but not necessarily clinical therapy—Identity’s non-clinical support groups help youth and families manage difficult emotions and the impacts of trauma, including isolation and family separation. These programs give participants greater access to a trained, empathetic ear and practical tools to cope with stress, anxiety and despair.

### Family Reunification and Strengthening

301 participants

Multi-session healing programs help reconnect youth and their families after experiencing long periods of separation. Some of the painful challenges youth face include poor or no communication during separation and adapting to new family dynamics. Group sessions, individual coaching and home-based exercises offer opportunities to forge new parent-child relationships.

### Encuentros

1,915 adult participants, 811 youth participants

Since the program was established in 2021, 4,948 members of the community have participated.

Inspired by Latino cultural traditions of family and friends helping each other in times of emotional distress, Identity’s *Encuentros* emotional support groups help community members manage the mental health impacts of their own and their families’ trauma. *Encuentros* was designed with and for the Latino community. The adult groups are co-facilitated by trained Community Mental Health Workers with support from Identity staff. Community Mental Health Workers are natural connectors and trusted leaders in their community.

We continued to expand groups to help high school youth who are experiencing increasing mental health struggles. Youth Peer Leaders were trained to co-facilitate teen *Encuentros* groups with Identity staff. The curriculum is evaluated and continuously improved through a partnership with the University of Maryland School of Public Health.





**Elkin's Story**

Elkin had suffered devastating loss and family turmoil by the time he was in high school. He witnessed his father's descent into substance use and violence toward his mother, ultimately landing his father in prison, and his beloved grandparents who had stepped in to help raise him passed away. Elkin didn't want to add to his mother's worries by revealing the deep depression he was going through.

Once he connected with the Watkins Mill High School Wellness Center, Elkin started working with a bilingual therapist, learning techniques to manage stress and process his trauma. In addition, Program Manager Marlon Morales invited him to join a non-clinical *Encuentros* emotional support group for teens. "It was during *Encuentros* that Elkin finally found the voice and courage

to share all that was inside," says Marlon. "That was an invitation to other students to be more vulnerable and to share and talk about traumas in their childhood. Elkin was a role model for that group, ultimately training to co-facilitate *Encuentros* groups for other teens.

Elkin says, "I've been through a lot since I was 13 years old. My story is something I know I need to use as motivation to be a better version of myself and to create a better future for my mom and myself."

**“  
My story is something I [...] use as motivation to be a better version of myself.  
”**



**Youth Peer Leaders**

Identity staff and Youth Peer Leaders presented at the National Association of Community and Restorative Justice conference on the peer-led emotional support circle model. Several youth shared their personal journeys, with one describing how *Encuentros* helped him manage aggression leading to healthier relationships. Another shared how participating helped her feel less isolated by connecting her with new friends and a sense of community.



419

clients were treated individually by Identity's bilingual mental health counselors.

359

clients participated in group mental health therapy.

355

youth and families were provided with opioid awareness information and education.

22

youth experiencing OUD were referred to residential treatment, and

14

youth successfully completed treatment.

71

referrals to social services to support families experiencing OUD, of which 97% were successfully completed.

## Clinical Mental Health

861 clients served

Clinical mental health services are open to most program participants. Because of the prevalence of trauma among our client population, all non-clinical frontline staff are trained to recognize early warning signs that clients may benefit from clinical therapy, individually or in groups.

## Substance Use Prevention and Intervention

### Substance Use Prevention Needs Assessment

With researchers from the University of Maryland School of Public Health, Identity conducted focus groups of Latino teens, parents and educators on their concerns about increasing substance use among young people. The research found that both children and parents agree on the importance of addressing substance use prevention from a health perspective rather than a punitive or law enforcement approach. They expressed an urgent need for better information from trusted sources, and the desire for frank and informed conversations between parents and children. The assessment came on the heels of a report showing that Latino youth accounted for 42% of opioid overdose-related ER visits in Montgomery County, the largest of any racial or ethnic demographic, amid an alarming spike in youth drug overdoses overall. The Needs Assessment, which was shared widely in March 2024, guided changes to Positive Youth Development and social-emotional programming across Identity and is informing the development of Montgomery County's response to the fentanyl crisis.

### Substance Use Prevention Pilot

In early February 2024, the Montgomery County Council allocated dollars to Identity to pilot an Emergency Youth Opioid Response effort in highly impacted neighborhoods in Aspen Hill, Glenmont, and Wheaton, especially supporting middle and high school Latino youth and their parents.



## Community Education and Engagement

### Parent/Guardian Engagement

2,296 parents served (duplicated attendance)

Building the ability of parents to engage with their children's education has been shown to directly impact long-term success in school and in life. As an organization and in coalition, Identity champions equitable and sufficient resources, supports and opportunities for Latino and other historically underserved youth and their families in order to interrupt patterns of underachievement, lost hope and disconnection.

We offer parents workshops as a roadmap to deeper parental involvement in their children's school life. Workshop topics include navigating the school system, using ParentVUE, report cards, effective communication with school staff, preventing bullying and cyberbullying, recognizing and preventing substance use, and child and adolescent development. Bilingual Parent Outreach Workers help parents navigate the school system and provide referrals to social services.

Identity co-founded the Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence with the NAACP Parents Council in Montgomery County, working to leverage the combined influence of Black, Brown and low income students and families to undo the impacts of systemic inequity in education.

# 195

parent education and engagement workshops with opioid awareness information and education.

### Identity's *Padres Latinos Conectados*/Parent Leadership Academy

Identity's *Padres Latinos Conectados* program trained 86 new parent leaders and mobilized 106 active alumni to advocate for positive change in their communities and schools. We continued to engage the alumni network with monthly events to inform and encourage community activism. Some of the topics this year were Bullying and Cyberbullying, Substance Abuse and Narcan, Combatting Chronic Absenteeism and Understanding FAFSA.

### Parent Ambassadors

Seven graduates of Identity's Parent Leadership Academy/*Padres Latinos Conectados* completed an intensive supplemental training program to build their skills as community ambassadors in the schools. The mothers connected other parents to programs and opportunities for their children, got involved with their schools' PTAs, provided input on school decision-making and regularly delivered testimony to the MCPS Board of Education on systemic issues of importance to the Latino community. In addition to working with parents in their five different home schools, they co-facilitated small group meetings (Cafecitos) in five additional schools, raising awareness of system-wide concerns related to reading and math performance, safety in the schools and the need for more extracurricular programs.



# Transformational Campaign

## Thank you to everyone who seized a transformational opportunity to secure Identity's future and invest in the future of Montgomery County.

We recognize with deep gratitude the many generous foundation, corporate, family and individual investors in Identity's Transformational Campaign who joined together to support ambitious growth and innovation so that more young people and families have the social and emotional, academic, workforce and life skills to thrive.

Launched in June 2022 and concluded in June 2024, the following friends of Identity supported our first major fundraising campaign to

- ♦ Scale up and sustain existing, effective programs to address growing community needs
- ♦ Innovate and test new programs to respond to in-demand opportunities
- ♦ Ensure capacity to respond to unforeseen events and needs
- ♦ Create a thriving community center that symbolizes and transforms the Latino community's sense of belonging, wellbeing and opportunity and accommodates Identity's recent and planned growth



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## Backpack Drive

A new backpack full of new supplies, a handwritten note of encouragement and an in-person welcome from caring adults are especially meaningful for students whose connection to school is insecure or fragile. This year, 57 volunteers and 57 donors supplied, packed and distributed 600 backpacks to elementary, middle and high school students who otherwise could not have afforded school supplies. Together we are investing in their success.

In the last four years, **2,850** Identity youth started the school year with new backpacks and school supplies.



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**Burness**

Over the last ten years, one company, Burness, has played a huge part in helping Identity and our youth and families tell our stories. Working pro bono, Burness graphic artists have designed our Annual Reports and other publications, updated our color palette and created special anniversary logos. Burness experts in various communication areas and media platforms have advised and trained staff and Board members. And finally, Burness has opened their home to us, sharing their offices for special meetings and events and during emergencies. We are beyond grateful, and our community is enriched by their contributions!



# Financials

## Revenue



<b>Local Government Grants and Contracts</b>	\$13,009,337.75	64%
<b>State Government Grants and Contracts</b>	\$284,000.00	1%
<b>Federal Grants and Contracts</b>	\$2,007,327.06	10%
<b>Foundation Grants</b>	\$3,497,731.00	17%
<b>In-Kind Donations</b>	\$290,234.00	1%
<b>Individual Contributions</b>	\$1,146,604.59	6%
<b>Other Revenue</b>	\$177,933.80	1%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$20,413,168.20</b>	

## Expenses



<b>Support of Youth and Families</b>	\$13,616,785.06	83%
<b>Management and General</b>	\$2,169,113.32	13%
<b>Fundraising</b>	\$668,942.75	4%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$16,454,841.13</b>	

Revenue and Expenses are for Identity only and do not include fiscal sponsorships or related entities.

Revenue includes 1) funds paid or promised in FY24 that are restricted to spending in FY25 or beyond and 2) Transformational Campaign pledges to give made in FY23/FY24 to be fulfilled in future years.

Revenue does not include an additional \$20,000 estimate of additional in-kind donations due to GAAP restrictions.

Financial statements are pending final audit review.



Architectural illustration of the new lobby



## New Headquarters

In 2020, a tragic fire destroyed Identity's iconic Pink House which served for two decades as our headquarters, a community gathering spot and safe haven.

Together with the community, we longed to create a new center to anchor our work and be an open door to Latino and other historically underserved youth and families and the greater community. After a three-year search, we found our new home in Olde Towne Gaithersburg where we are creating a thriving new community center.

After renovations are complete, the building will provide space for a wide range of programs and services, plus educational, cultural and recreational activities and will accommodate most program and operations staff.



**IDENTITY**  
415 East Diamond Ave.  
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TEL: 301-963-5900

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**[www.identity-youth.org](http://www.identity-youth.org)**

*Report designed pro bono by Burness. Special thanks and appreciation to Todd Hilgert and Maria Goodrick.*

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