

YOU Help us make the Community a Better Place for EVERYONE

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Updated 13 May 2019

Just in the span of one year, Frederick County's population has grown by over 1%- a trend that is projected to continue, and even increase, in coming years. What's more is that 52% of this population increase was accounted due to immigration- which can be one of the most terrifying experience that some individuals and families will have to experience in their lives.

It is because of organizations, such as the Spanish Speaking Community of Maryland (SSCM), Frederick County is able to accommodate to and provide services specifically tailored to these families and individuals' needs. Is it the SSCM's mission to empower low-income families and immigrants through promoting self-sufficiency, education and legal rights- all to spark amazing social change.

Natalie Cioffi, SSCM Program Director, explains that "our main mission is to be proactive so that we extremely reduce the homeless rate, the gang rate, and the poverty levels of international families that are coming and currently living here in Frederick County."

SSCM provides a wide variety of resources and services to adults and children alike. Cioffi explains that "the problem is that they [these children] are ending up on the street, ending up homeless, ending up in gangs, they're doing unlawful things, then expected to act right at school..." That is exactly where the Spanish Speaking Community comes into play. They assist these individuals and families to become stable on their own, empower international students to stay in school and graduate, and even assist people in acquiring work Visas and their United States citizenship.

In 2018, SSCM received a Live United Grant from United Way of Frederick County that funded their efforts, or "things to let the community be aware of the services that were available to them through us", as Cioffi states.

Moreover, as current Community Impact Partners with United Way of Frederick County, SSCM will receive installments of money over the next three years that are specifically funding a community liaison for their organization.

Cioffi says "the reason we needed that [the community liaison] was because we knew there was a need in Frederick County, but we did not know how big the need was..." The SSCM is utilized by nearly every school in Frederick County on such a common basis that it virtually became impossible for the organization to be everywhere they were called to. Whether by the principals, counselors, or other teachers, the largest reason they are called to assist in Frederick County Public Schools is due to immigration issues.

The community liaison has already proven invaluable to SSCM so that now the organization can focus on community outreach, grant writing, as well as providing to students in the Frederick County Public school system equally. The initial grant from United Way was enough funding for a part-time community liaison, though Cioffi goes on to say "just recently... the Cheney Community Foundation, through United Way, gave us additional funding for a full time community liaison." Because of this, SSCM will be continuing their efforts of international empowerment as they enter their second year of impact in Frederick County.

“I think that has been the most invaluable thing that we have received from United Way, just the open-armed support and the connections that have been made through the United Way” says Cioffi, adding that “we probably wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for United Way...”

Immigrating is not an easy, one-and-done deal- it is a scary process and experience. That is exactly why Frederick County has to make it our duty to welcome everyone with open arms and support like they have never seen before. The Spanish Speaking Community of Maryland plays a large role in these efforts.

Each non-profit organization in Frederick County understands the amount of support and empowerment that needs to be fostered among each other and put back into the community. It is just as important that the Frederick community does the same. We have to support each other and our own community in times of need. When you give to United Way of Frederick County, you are contributing directly to that effort. You would be playing a large role in helping other organizations, such as the Spanish Speaking Community of Maryland, to make the community a better, and more welcoming, place for everyone.