

BELONGING BEYOND BORDERS

Annual Report

2 0 2 4



Vision

We dream of a world without “others,” where fear gives way to connection, and every person’s humanity is fully honored.

Mission

To create physical and relational spaces where connections build peace, leading to collective flourishing on the border and beyond.

“Abara is holding space for a more complete narrative of the American story.”

— Border Encounter Participant

From Our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Reflecting on this past year, I am deeply grateful—for your presence, generosity, and belief in Abara’s work. In a world often divided, you have chosen to step closer, listen with compassion, and invest in a vision that bridges physical and unseen borders.



In 2024, we welcomed 321 Border Encounter participants, strengthening understanding and action around migration realities. We deepened our partnerships with 25 migrant shelters, ensuring dignity, resources, and care for displaced families. And we’ve now raised \$1.5 million toward Abara House, moving closer to establishing the first dedicated peace-building center at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Abara House is more than a project—it’s a dream of beloved community. Standing just feet from the border fence, this 4-acre campus will be a hub for hospitality, advocacy, and learning. With its café, event space, training rooms, contemplative gardens, and guest housing, it will be a financially sustainable center that amplifies voices, fosters dialogue, and catalyzes change.

Yet, there is still work ahead. As we step into a new season, I invite you to continue journeying with us. Your prayers, financial support, and partnership make this vision possible. Together, we are shaping a future where communities flourish through justice, healing, and connection.

With gratitude and hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sami DiPasquale". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Sami DiPasquale

Executive Director, Abara

Fear over immigration divides us. We create spaces for connection to build peace.

Without meaningful relationships with our neighbors—whether across the aisle or the border—fear thrives. Harmful narratives spread, and we lose sight of our shared humanity. Located on an ancient crossroads along the US-Mexico border, Abara creates physical and relational spaces for people to connect.

We're writing a new story—one of belonging and peace.



What We Do

Creating Connection on the Border

Border Response | Meaningful Action

Working alongside 25 shelters, Abara provides:

- * **Essential resources** – Meals, hygiene kits, and infrastructure support.
- * **Micro-enterprise training** – Economic opportunities for displaced families.
- * **Leadership care** – Respite and training for shelter directors and staff.

Border Encounters | Experiential Learning

Three-day immersive experiences that deepen empathy and understanding through:

- * **Firsthand engagement with migration realities.**
- * **Conversations with migrants, shelter leaders, and border patrol.**
- * **Space for reflection, storytelling, and action.**

Abara House | Relational Connection

A 4-acre historic site is being restored into a center for peace, learning, and hospitality.

Anchored at the Hacienda Restaurant, Abara House will feature:

- * **Global Café & Marketplace** | Celebrating food, culture, and craftsmanship.
- * **Event & Training Spaces** | Hosting dialogues, leadership development, immersive learning, concerts, and a mix of public and private events.
- * **Contemplative Gardens & Chapel** | Spaces for reflection, lament, and healing.
- * **Guest Housing** | Welcoming visitors to engage firsthand in border realities.

Where We Work

A Region of Movement and Connection

The El Paso-Juárez region is one of the most dynamic border crossings in the world. As the largest bilingual, binational community in the Western Hemisphere, it is home to **2.7M+** people connected by culture, commerce, and family ties.

A Global Migration Corridor

In recent years, tens of thousands of migrants arrive at the border annually, seeking safety and opportunity in the U.S. **25** shelters in the El Paso - Juárez area provide refuge with community and faith-based support.

Interwoven Lives & Economies

1 in 4 El Paso residents was born in Mexico. Juárez is a major manufacturing hub, driving binational trade. Families and businesses flow daily across the border.

A Place of History & Resilience

A **historic** crossroads for Indigenous trade, the Camino Real, and modern migration. The border fence symbolizes both division and connection. Despite challenges, the people here embody hospitality and strength.

Reflecting on a Year of Impact

Key Highlights

321 Border Encounter Participants

- Hosted students, faith leaders, and communities for immersive experiences.
- Facilitated conversations with asylum seekers, advocates, and law enforcement.
- Created transformative spaces for learning and action.



Strengthening the Migrant Shelter Network

- Partnered with 25 shelters across El Paso and Juárez.
- Provided thousands of meals, hygiene kits, and essential supplies.
- Expanded the Huellas Microenterprise Program for migrant women.
- Hosted Leader Care Events and getaways.

Progress on Abara House

- Secured 4 acres at the historic Hacienda site.
- Raised \$1.5M toward the capital campaign.
- Advanced site development for a sustainable peace-building center.
- Historic study completed, adobe workshops hosted.



Abara House: A Borderland Center for Peace



Rooted in History, Shaping the Future

Located only feet from the U.S.-Mexico border, this historic site has long been a place of movement and exchange:

Indigenous trade routes predated colonization.

Spanish settlers arrived in 1598.

The site witnessed revolutions and key moments in U.S.-Mexico relations.

Now, it is being restored as a space for peace and transformation.



A Vision for Sustainability

Abara House will be financially self-sustaining, generating revenue through:

Hospitality & Events

Supporting dozens of events and advocacy.

Education & Training

Facilitating border encounters and immersive learning experiences.

Micro-enterprise initiatives

Empowering migrant communities and people around the world experiencing instability.



An Opportunity to Invest

We are raising \$15M+ to complete Abara House as a self-sustaining hub for learning, hospitality, and advocacy.

Your investment will:

- + Preserve a Historic Landmark**

Restoring the Hacienda and its surrounding spaces.

- + Create a Sustainable Campus**

Green infrastructure, water conservation, and shaded spaces.

- + Expand Transformative Programming**

Supporting Border Encounters and advocacy.

Practicing Resurrection | A Border Response Story

Notes: Names have been changed for the safety of the subjects of this story. Mateo and Esmeralda were interviewed by Lyn McKinley and Clara Duffy on Tuesday, March 26th, 2024. This couple's story and photos are shared with explicit permission.

A young couple was working on the 'masa', or dough, when we arrived at the shelter on a Tuesday afternoon. The young man oiled the dough by hand and covered it with a clean trash bag. "They have to stay warm for the yeast to activate," he explained.

Mateo and Esmeralda grew up in the same town in the state of Morelos, México. Mateo started working at Esmeralda's family bakery when he was 16, and Esmeralda had been working there since even younger. "We learned to make bread, to bake it, and little by little I learned to decorate cakes. The business was growing, and people from other cities came to us and bought 50 or 60 pieces of bread, because they knew us," she shared.

"Because we were growing so much, those in our city who were involved in organized crime came and asked us for their piece...for a fee." The couple thought they would be able to negotiate with the cartels. But when the knock at the door came, Mateo and Esmeralda were given 3 hours to pay the Mexican equivalent of 30,000 dollars, or one hour to leave everything behind.



"It was extortion," she said, matter of factly. "We'd seen the bullet holes in the businesses that hadn't paid. We'd seen the buildings burned down."

Months later, living in a temporary shelter in Ciudad Juárez, Esme and Mateo used their baking skills to support the organization hosting them. They saw donating the profits of their donut sales as a way to express their gratitude for the hospitality they'd received, helping the shelter's doors stay open for more people on the move.

Wendell Berry writes that we must "practice resurrection." It's beautiful to see some of those resurrection themes play out in a story like Mateo and Esmeralda's. Broken things can be filled with new life. Stolen things can be returned to us. Humans who have been mistreated can care for and uplift others.

Clara caught up with Esmeralda and Mateo, who eventually received their CBP1 appointment and crossed into the US—they're planning to apply for their work visas and open another bakery like their family's.

An Unraveling | A Border Encounter Story

Note: Read from the heart of a dear friend of Abara, Brooklyn Stetphens. She writes from the lens of her personal Christian faith.

My name is Brooklyn Stephens, and I have had the gift of attending multiple Border Encounters with Abara. Each has been transformative in my life.

In 2019, I was deeply confused and heartbroken by the stories I had heard on the news about family separations at our southern border. I knew that God was inviting me to step closer and understand more.

I had friends with immigration stories, and had heard about the border on the news, but I didn't understand the complexity of the immigration system in the United States, and much less the ways that God was at work on the edges of our country.

Little did I know that the prompting of God to go on a Border Encounter with Abara would end up lighting a fire in my soul for my immigrant neighbors, and a desire to advocate for just and compassionate policies for refugees and asylum seekers.

I have seen how Border Encounters unfold and unravel worlds and safe narratives into a far more beautiful story. In a world concerned with doing, the positioning of listening and presence as priorities throughout Border Encounters is transformative. It is only when we finally sit still and listen that we can truly come face to face with people who have migrated.

My life has expanded beyond what I could have ever imagined because I have had the opportunity to see the work of God in El Paso and Juárez and in so many people there. I now work as the Community Engagement

Coordinator for We Choose Welcome and get to invite others to participate in the fullness and beauty of loving our neighbors (Mark 12:34) and to go on Border Encounters with Abara just like I did. The reverberations in my life of going on a Border Encounter are too many to name and trace. Imagine the unique impacts on each life that comes to the border! God is at work, bringing restoration and dignity to all nations, tribes, and tongues.

In 2019, a Border Encounter with Abara marked a shift in my view of the world and how I move in it. The same is true for any person who walks on the sacred soil of the margins—who sits at the crossroads of the historic La Hacienda.

The land cries out, and if we are still enough to hear it, we will join in—join in by sharing our stories of hope and pain, advocating for our neighbors, and cultivating beloved communities wherever our feet land.

In Hope,

Brooklyn Stephens

December 2024



Looking Ahead

Expanding Border Encounters



- * Welcome more participants, including students and faith leaders.
- * Enhance curriculum for deeper learning and engagement.
- * Expand reflection spaces for immersive experiences.



Strengthening Migrant Shelter Partnerships

- * Expand micro-enterprise opportunities for displaced families.
- * Grow resources for frontline leaders.
- * Increase advocacy to amplify migrant voices.

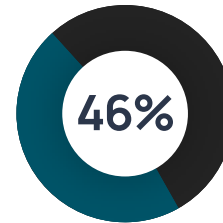
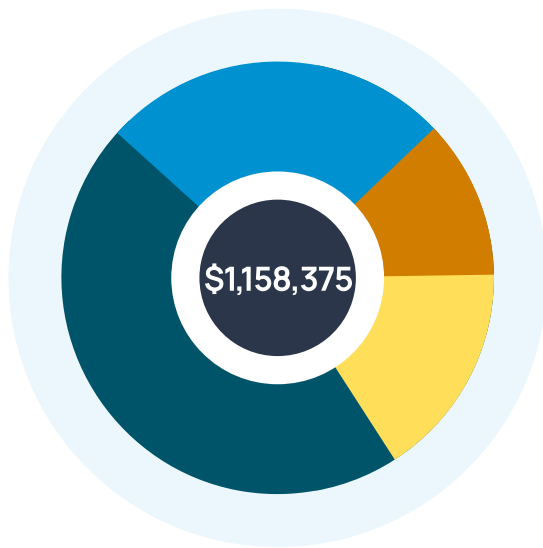
Advancing Abara House



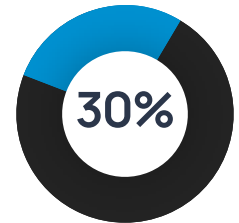
- * Continue renovations on the historic Hacienda.
- * Launch new programs for learning, dialogue, and leadership.
- * Received verbal matching gift commitment to acquire Historic Ft. Bliss Barracks

Financial Overview

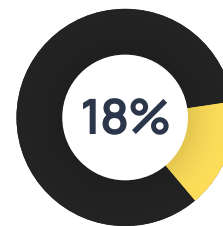
2024 Income



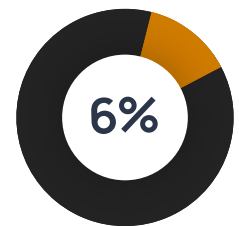
Foundations



Individuals

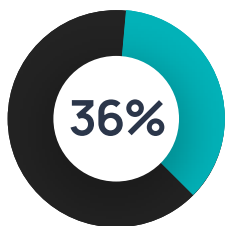


Earned Revenue

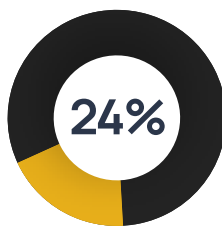


Nonprofit/Church Partners

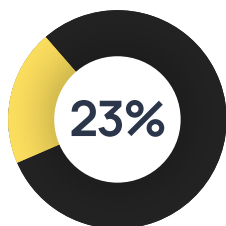
2024 Expense



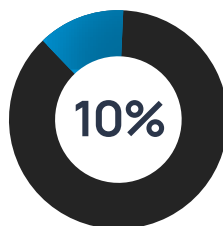
Abara House



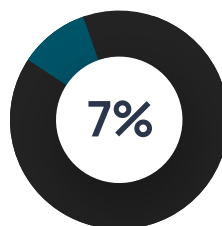
Border Response



Border Encounter

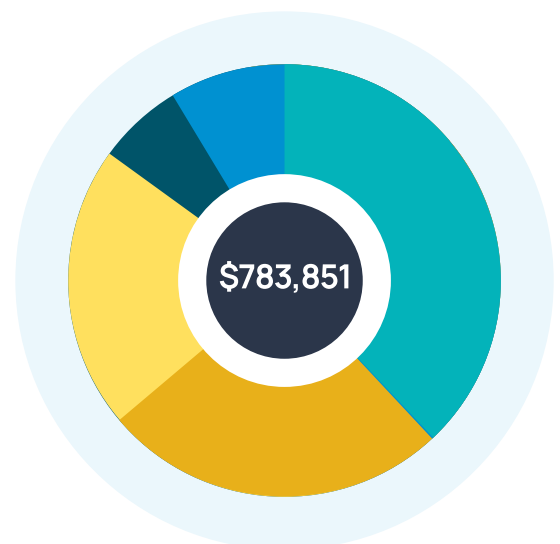


Admin



Fundraising

Total Expense



ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT IN PROPERTY ACQUISITION & IMPROVEMENTS ~

\$180,000

Border Response Stats of 2024

Cd. Juárez & El Paso

Area of Focus	Total Number Served, Number of Shelters
1 Children and Adolescents: games, art therapy, holiday parties	→ 950 children and teens served in 2 unaccompanied minor shelters in Ciudad Juárez with games and art therapy
2 Adults: Huellas Microenterprise, English Classes, Computer Lab	→ 218 adult migrants and shelter leaders served in Ciudad Juárez and El Paso with employment support, english, and computer skills
3 Leaders: Respite and Shelter Leader Care Events	→ 95 Leaders + Volunteers from 16 shelters served in Ciudad Juárez receiving leadership care in 7 events throughout the year
4 Basic Needs + Emergencies: Groceries & Prepared Food, Clothing and Shoes, Hygiene Products, Medical Care, Shelter Referrals	→ 2,883 people from 12 shelters served with basic needs in Ciudad Juárez and El Paso
Totals for 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Supported a total of 25 partner shelters with resources (18 in Juarez, 7 in El Paso)→ Served a total of 17,361 forcibly displaced neighbors and shelter leaders

Our impact is measured in two ways:

First, we count the fixed number of individuals directly served through Abara’s work on the ground – leadership events, respite care, English classes, computer lab access, art therapy, field trips, healthcare support, and asylum narrative translation.

Second, the larger number—over 17,000—reflects individuals who passed through shelters where Abara’s efforts helped strengthen the collaborative network we are part of, supporting partners who sustain this critical care. Whether through food, climate control, or infrastructure improvements, our contributions reinforced the capacity of those offering daily, frontline support.

Border Encounter & Abara House Stats 2024



Abara House

→ Over **75%** of the first **\$2 million** for Phase 1 has been funded to secure the historic site

→ Hosted dozens of events involving over 2,000 voices

→ Secured a **\$50,000** matching gift to purchase Historic Ft. Bliss Barracks



Border Encounters

→ **321** leaders representing **25** states

→ **100%** feel better equipped to contextualize current border realities

→ **97%** better understand root causes of forced displacement

Our Team

Board of Directors

Donny Cannoy
Board Treasurer

Co-Founder and Chief People Officer
at Steele Consulting

Sami DiPasquale, MBA
Board President

Founder and Executive Director at Abara

Tiffany Etterling
Vice President

VP of Operations at AMPED Marketing

Joseph Gainor

Founder & Owner at Wholesalers USA

Alisia N. Muir, Ph.D, NBCT

Board Secretary

English Department Chair at Northwest
Early College High School

Sarah De Los Santos Upton, PhD

Professor at University of Texas at El Paso

Team



Sami DiPasquale

Executive Director



Victoria De Anda

Research & Executive Assistant



Rosa Mani

Migrant Services +
Microenterprise



Daniel Banda

Juárez Shelter Coordinator



Clara Duffy

Education & Outreach
Coordinator



Monica Bharadwaj

Development
Coordinator



Meredith Mayo

Leadership Coach & Strategy



Kim Schaefer

Architect/Project Director,
Abara House



Angelica A. Garnett

Border Encounter Coordinator
& Asylum Narratives Translation
Project



Salvador Sierra

Abara House Caretaker +
Land Steward



Jonathan Klassen

Office and Hospitality
Coordinator



Araceli Iglesias

Loretto Fellow



Anamaria Solis

Loretto Fellow



Rebeca Alvidrez

Graphic Designer



Nate Ledbetter

Director of Partnerships
+ Engagement

Our Team

Wisdom Council Members

- + **Dr. Sarah De Los Santos Upton**
UTEP Professor, Abara Board Member, Wisdom Council co-chair
- + **Dr. Alisia Muir**
Researcher & Professor, Abara Board Member, Wisdom Council Co-chair
- + **Sami DiPasquale**
Executive Director of Abara
- + **Adrian Aragon**
Chicano Studies Professor
- + **Irvin Diaz**
Local Artist
- + **Claudia Cochran Miller**
EPCC Professor
- + **Omar Rios**
Architect + Migrant Advocate
- + **Jesse Kapenga**
EPCC / UTEP Professor
- + **June Straight**
High School Teacher
- + **Monico "Mono" Acuña**
Brown Street Market Owner
- + **Veronica Salgado**
Teacher
- + **Naomi Fertman**
UTEP Professor
- + **Luis Mendoza**
Ciudad Nueva Community Connector
- + **Alma Martinez**
Ciudad Nueva Food Co-op Coordinator
- + **Lupe Negrete**
Community Leader
- + **Socorro Heredia**
Community Leader
- + **Salvador "Sal" Sierra**
Abara House Caretaker and Land Steward
- + **Rev. Dr. Edgardo Martinez**
Pastor & Faith Leader
- + **Andrew Wong**
Civil Engineer
- + **Andrea "Andie" Everett**
GIS Services, Indigenous Storyteller
- + **Rafael Batrez**
EP Finest Artist Collective & Leathermaker
- + **Blanca Estrada**
EP Finest Artist Collective & Muralist
- + **Eddie Endlich**
Retired HS Principal, ESL Program Director
- + **Betty Camargo**
Advocate & Organizer
- + **Lucero De Alva**
Teacher, Author, Volunteer (Juárez)
- + **Rosa Mani**
Social Worker, Advocate (Juárez)
- + **Kathrin Zeiske**
"Luchadora" + Activist (Juárez)
- + **Dr. Luis Diaz**
Academic (Juárez)
- + **Jorge "Yorch" Perez**
Artist, Baker, Activist (Juárez)
- + **Dra. Flor Rocio Martinez**
Academic (Juárez)
- + **Dra. Leticia Chavarria Villa**
Human Rights Activist (Juárez)

Join a Growing Community of Voices & Neighbors

Creating physical and relational spaces for belonging
and building peace in our divided world.

38 States

22 Denominations

Abara welcomes all who come in peace including faith, interfaith, public
universities and people from all walks of life.



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ABARA

Belonging Beyond Borders

abara.org • abarahouse.org

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