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Narrative Description of Activities of Community Service Organization

Overview

Caminando la Utopía (CLU) is a not for profit organization established within the laws of the Puerto Rico commonwealth with a mission to support and promote self management processes within low income communities in the Puertorican archipelago.

This mission is materialized in three main activities: i) supporting as advisors and coordinators of the Centro de Apoyo Mutuo Las Carolinas (CAMLC); ii) playing the same role of advisors and coordinators in the Red Regional de Apoyo Mutuo (RRAM); iii) training community members and leaders in the 5NP (5 needle protocol of ear acupuncture) to spread that healing tool through the communities in PR; iv) and developing permanent and non permanent Espacios de Relajación y Bienestar (ERB) in rural and urban communities in different cities. CLU's *vision* is to be a dynamic and effective tool for the low income communities of Puerto Rico (PR) in their social and economical development, and their collective wellbeing.

Caminando la Utopía was born on May 2018 because of the common ideals of Daniel Orsini and Lourdes Hernández, people that had devoted most of their adult life serving communities and working toward a more just and equitable society. Both of them have had great leadership experience coordinating intergenerational events in defense of life, culture, harmony, and collective transformation.

Since Hurricane María's path through the islands in 2017, both of them had engage wholeheartedly in community work to alleviate the collective trauma that persist to this date in most of the houses and families in PR. They were and still doing so facilitating Espacios de Relajación y Bienestar (ERB), organizing Peoples Kitchens to minimize the peoples hunger,

strengthen community organizations, like CAMLC, and networks like the RRAM, that empower the communities with the inner projects and business cooperatives they are working towards.

In all of its works, Caminando la Utopía have a positive impact in hundreds, if not thousands of peoples, and for that, every day we are more convinced that the fertile time to create the conditions of change are now.

Our Founders Background

The founding members of Caminando la Utopía has both graduated universities. Lourdes Hernández has a Master Degree from Rutgers University in Community Development, while Daniel Orsini has a Juris Doctorate from the Escuela de Derecho Eugenio Maria de Hostos, in Puerto Rico. The knowledge acquired by both in the academia makes them assertive and effective assets for the organization and the works within the communities where they are positively affecting.

Both of them are not only practitioners, but also trainers of the the 5 Needle Protocol, an ear acupuncture treatment that helps with traumas, body aches, detoxification of the body, addictions, and stress relief.

They put this powerful yet simple healing tool to the service of low income communities, especially in the rural areas of PR where they have poor access to medical services, and a more precarious situation than communities within the cities. They offer 5NP trainings in these communities to some of their neighbors so they can become part of the healthcare culture within their own community.

The experience in doing this are magnificent. The trainees feel very empower, and their self esteem get stronger because they feel they have value and things to offer to their own community to make it a better one. The neighbors that receive the treatments from their peers feel very comfortable because they know them and they trust them.

And the most beautiful thing is the amazing changes that start to occur within the communities in their individual and collective care of their health, and the positive changes they start to see in them with the acupuncture treatments. Those community programs where people receive the 5NP, the Espacios de Relajación y Bienestar, are sprouting in the communities throughout Puerto Rico thanks to the work Caminando la Utopía is doing.

Our Programs

PEOPLE'S KITCHEN

40% of our time and resources of our time and resources are allocated this program.

The *Centro de Apoyo Mutuo of Las Carolinas (CAMLC)* community in the city of Caguas is a women led community self managed project established in the premises of the María Montañez Gómez school, closed by the state in May 2017. It started six month after the category 5 hurricane María devastated Puerto Rico with the initial intention to solve the hunger and health issues that was affecting the community before the hurricane, but was deepen by the latter.

During the first 6 months the *Peoples Kitchen (PK)* created by the project was working 5 days a week serving at least 250 hot meals a day. Once the electric grid was up again illuminating most of the houses and communities throughout the archipelago the need for hot meals decrease so the PK also decrease its working days from 5 to 3 per week. At this moment the PK is only serving food 2 days a week, being the recipients bedridden people and their companion. The quantity of food plates served each days surpass 90, meaning that more or less 900 plates are serve per month. In conclusion, more than 44,000 meals have been serve by the *Peoples Kitchen* of the CAMLC.

NUEVO AMANECER

10% of our time and resources are allocated this program.

This is a program focused on the elder people of the community that offers them art therapy, emotional intelligence workshops, and coordinates excursions for the participants to sites with natural, historical, and/or recreational importance. Puerto Rico's population is mostly old. The economical crisis in the island has left the grandpas and grandmas in critical situations, sometimes not having food on the table, not being able to buy their medicines, let alone not having the emotional support of being alone in this position.

Nuevo Amanecer offers the old people of some of the most vulnerable communities the opportunity to feel cared for in their final years, sense of a community, and a family. They feel they still can create when they see the final product of their collective art therapies. They sing, they dance, and laugh with people like them, and they also cry together, but they feel great because they know they have each other. They have the opportunity to visit places that they have never been before, because their difficult lives could not permit them to go. They feel the nature in ways that they could not imagine, and appreciate things that they didn't before. This place give this old people some of the quality life they have been deserving their entire life.

ESPACIO DE RELAJACIÓN Y BIENESTAR

30% of our time and resources are allocated this program.

This program offers to peoples of all ages auriculotherapy, acupressure techniques, aromatherapy, music therapy, massages, and mindfulness tools to help the management of the generalized anxiety and depression that persists within the population. The most powerful healing tool that is provided in this spaces is the 5 Needle Technique, that helps with traumas, body aches, detoxification of the body, addictions, and stress relief. The communities were this spaces are developed are located in distant places in rural areas were few or none healthcare gets

there. The depressed economies of these places translate usually in high cases of violence, traumas, and addictions.

The Espacios de Relajación y Bienestar offers the residents of these communities physical and emotional care, not just only with the 5NP, but with all of the other therapies. The way acupuncture works, it's a great analogy on how this Espacios de Relajación y Bienestar has been working for the wellbeing of these communities. The insertion of a needle in one body point helps with something that is not necessarily near where the needle was placed. When someone starts to feel better, physically and/or mentally because they have participated from these healing spaces, the positive effect is not just on them, but in their family members, their neighbors, because they see that the treated person is happy and have a more positive attitude towards life and the situations that arise in it.

ESPACIO DE DOULEO

10% of our time and resources are allocated this program.

This program will be offering the services of certified doulas which will be customized to the needs of the birthing mom and her support team. Emotional Support is often defined by helping create a birth plan that includes a woman's unique communication style and gives her confidence in voicing her needs. Physical comfort measures can include: massages, labor positions, hydrotherapy, optimal fetal positioning, aromatherapy, acupressure, deep relaxation and visualization techniques. Advocacy includes helping a woman to resource the community of birth services and facilitating her birth plan into action.

Another important service that will be given by the doulas is postpartum support, meaning helping the family to find a harmonious new sense of normal with the baby. This also means nurturing moms with physical and emotional comfort measures, while assisting her with discovering her baby's cues, breastfeeding, light house-keeping and help around the house. All these services will be offered to the women of low income communities, specially to young women and teens. The numbers of impregnated kids are raising in Puerto Rico, mostly in poor communities. This service will give this young women the knowledge of how to take care of themselves and their child, physically and emotionally. But also will have the constant aid of the doulas during all her pregnancy and the early post pregnancy process.

DELICES

5% of our time and resources are allocated this program.

This space will be a workplace that will be producing fermented fodder and also will facilitate workshops to the community and the general public about its health benefits, processes and more. In an island that basically is a food desert, this type of knowledge is of extreme importance. Mostly in an island of the Caribbean that receive the constant threats of powerful hurricanes, and with them the possibility of long term inaccessibility of electricity and food availability, the knowledge of how to keep food from getting bad and to keep their nutritional value without the necessity of a fridge, is a life saving one.

Red Regional de Apoyo Mutuo (RRAM)

5% of our time and resources are allocated this program.

The RRAM is a collaborative between 4 community organizations based on different cities around Puerto Rico in low income communities located in the rural areas. Their objective is to work together strengthening their projects and with it giving communities access to more services and economical possibilities that will help make those communities better places with healthier people.

Programs for Volunteers

At times, per the discretion of the board of directors, we may provide internships or volunteer opportunities which will provide opportunities for involvement in outreach activities and programs in order to have a greater impact for change. One of the activities that volunteers may be involved in is basic education on topics such as nutrition, diet, agricultural techniques, livestock growing, and water treatment in order to promote sustainability. Such activities shall always be free of charge to participants and will not include compensation to the volunteers.

Multimedia

It is our goal to bring awareness from every medium possible and this does not exclude documentaries and photos of our activities, projects, programs and expeditions. By documenting and reporting our efforts we intend to broaden our outreach. These multimedia features will be recorded by our volunteers during the aforementioned activities and will be available to the public.