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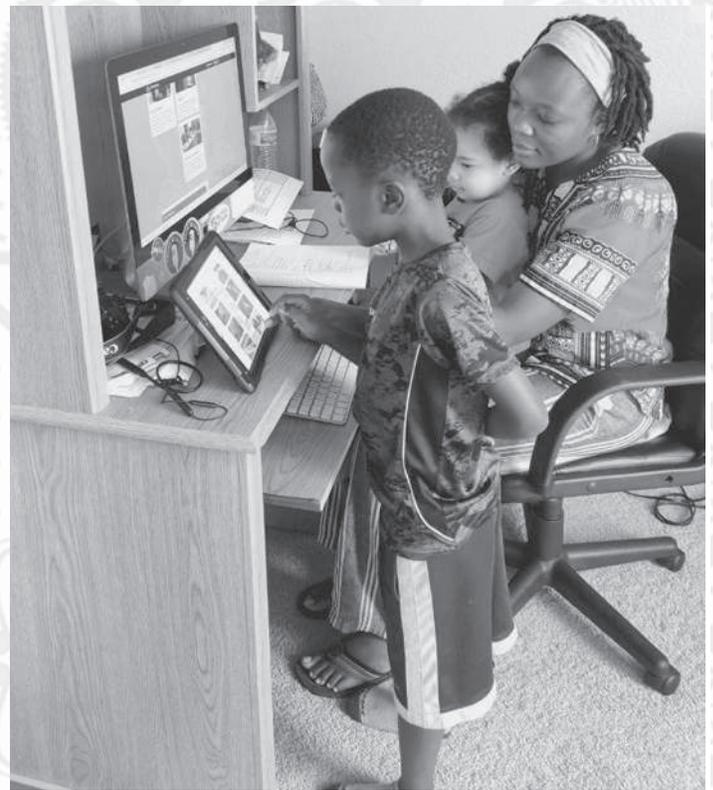
Virtual Programming at the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center

by Imgard Akinyi Rop, Esperanza Staff

In the beginning of March, The Esperanza Peace and Justice Center staff began working remotely due to the spread of the corona virus. As a precaution, we had to postpone most of our events that included a performance, *I'm Still Here*, by Monica Palacios, the *MujerArtes Mother's Day Sale*, *Limitless Africans* with Mikael Owunna, a collaborative event with Trinity University, the *Emma Tenayuca Speaker Series* and so much more. With all these postponements and cancellations happening not just within the Esperanza but also all around us, we had to figure out, quickly, how we can continue to interact and stay plugged-in with our community and utilize the resources that we have. Our programming creates an avenue for us to engage and connect with the community. The artists that we work with are part of our community and we want to ensure that we support them by providing a platform where they can perform and share content, especially now when most of them are losing revenue. We are maintaining the same dynamics that existed before the pandemic, which included planning, organizing and creating awareness. Above all, finding intersectionalities within our programming.

Currently, the Esperanza is streaming live performances like *Noche Azul* via Facebook and YouTube for free. Last month's live stream of *Noche Azul* was so successful that we were able to get views from Mexico, England, Iowa, California, and other states as well—and we continued to engage with buena gente from the Eastside to the Westside of San Antonio. We made phone calls to inform people about the event, posted multiple times on social media and on online community calendars. The City of San Antonio Arts department has also made it clear that they will continue to highlight events and share content through their social media posts and other digital platforms.

Paseo por El Westside is one of our yearly community events that takes place in the first week of May as part of *His-*



Imgard with her children at home balancing parenting, teaching and work.

toric Preservation Month at the Rinconcito de Esperanza. Past *Paseo* events have included: storytelling, westside walking tours, workshops, music, education and history. This year we hope that we can integrate these aspects into our digital platforms and find ways to work with those who are offline as well. We plan to have virtual westside tours, workshops, and performances so that we can keep collaborating and engaging with the community and other organizations through these times of the COVID 19 pandemic.



Imgard with her children, Andrew Hawi and Amirah Khosravi.

This period is an opportunity for the Esperanza to evaluate its digital platforms and look for ways on how we can work both online and offline to meet the needs of the community. Through this process we are learning more about our audience and community: How we can utilize technology and at the same time think about how we can engage with those that are marginalized. We are also sharing resources and information that is timely and relevant to our community to ensure that their needs are met. We live

in an age where misinformation is rampant; it is vital for us to ensure that the information that we are disseminating emanates from reliable sources.

One of the pillars of the Esperanza is to create bridges between people and we strive to do that by ensuring that those we serve are still connected to us through our programming. Our vision and mission drives us to preserve and promote artistic and cultural expression and that is what we will focus on through our programming especially this time when things are not certain.

¡Todos somos Esperanza! This too shall pass!