

2020

# ANNUAL REPORT



*Perseverance and Innovation*

Amigos

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Houston, TX 77027  
[amigosinternational.org](http://amigosinternational.org)

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# A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

In a press statement to our community on March 16, 2020, I was deeply saddened to share that for the first time in our 56-year history we made the difficult decision to suspend all 2020 AMIGOS programs. Our Summer Programs were canceled, and the Spring Gap Program in Ecuador and Uruguay were evacuated, in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

This year was also incredibly powerful as communities across the world united in protest of systemic racism and violence. This is a moment for each of us to reflect on who we are, who we want to be, and the role we can play in creating a more just society. We must be active rather than passive in this pursuit. And this must happen in our personal lives and in the organizations where we work.

Out of concern for the health and safety of our volunteers, staff, host community members, and everyone in the AMIGOS family, we acted boldly to limit and slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Yet, when we shuttered our Summer and Gap Programs, we did not sit back. We designed new virtual programs to support students in their journeys in leadership and self-discovery.

We were very fortunate to have our incredible community which backed this transformational pivot. With this support, we were able to develop new programs to continue to support youth and communities facing extraordinary challenges across the Americas. These critical initiatives resulted in strengthened capacity of the organization, shaping our direction for the near and far future.

See how this work began in the following report. We thank you for taking the time to understand how our programs and operations unfolded in 2020, a year like no other.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sara Nathan".

Sara Nathan  
President & CEO







# 2020 Programs



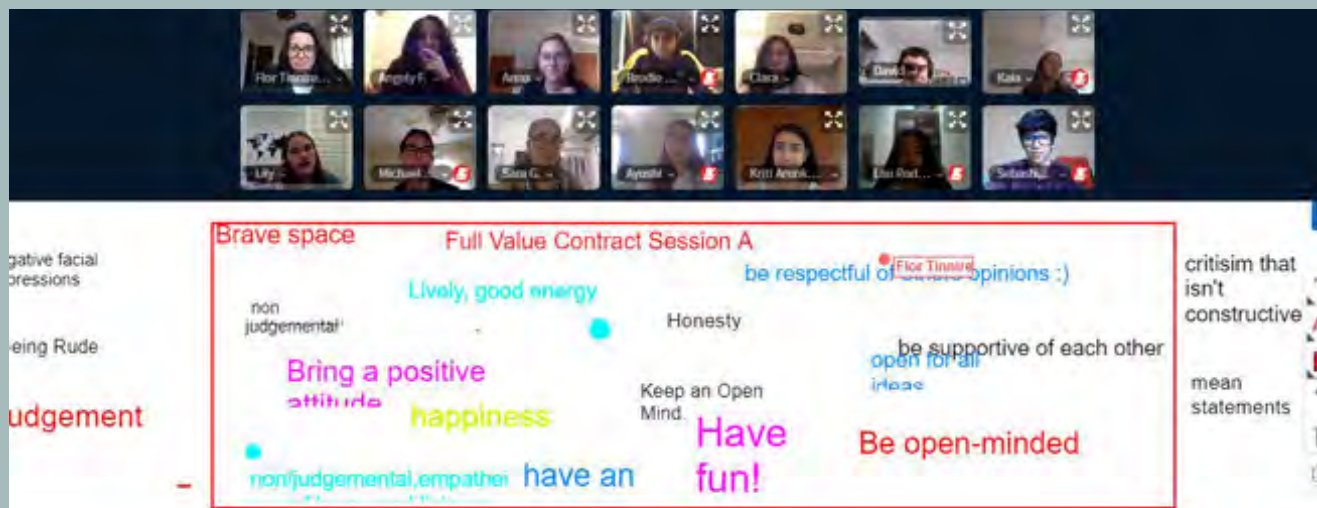
# 2020 PROGRAMS

## Spring Gap Semester in Ecuador and Uruguay (concluded early due to the COVID-19 pandemic)

- Students completed the first half of the program before its early closure due to the closing of international borders in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

## Community Impact Project (AMIGOS first virtual program)

- 6-week virtual program for students
- Cohorts of students from the U.S., Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and the U.K.
- Students learned how to use design thinking to create their own service projects
- Learn more about the program at <https://ami.gs/cip>




## Civic Action Gap Semester in partnership with Tufts University

- 12-week virtual program
- Program cohort with students from the U.S. and Brazil
- Students completed virtual internships with nonprofit organizations

## Youth Ambassadors Program (virtual exchanges)

- 9-month program with new virtual 3-week exchanges, including virtual host families
- Funded by U.S. Department of State
- Students from Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, The U.S., and Uruguay





***"I consider dancing for me to be a way to escape and express my emotions. But for others, dancing isn't a way to escape. They continue to face prejudice and intolerance in a place that should be considered a way for them to escape. I want to reach out to those who have felt this way and learn more about what I can do."***

**-Julia, 15, 2020 Community Impact Project alumna,  
Corte Madera, CA**





***“...As someone who wants to study Political Science when I go to college, this has been a very important learning experience. Speaking with different staff members at [Feeding Texas] taught me about what it is like to work directly with legislators, proposing policies, as well as the challenges that arise when trying to get communities more directly involved in these processes...”***

-Romina, 17, 2020 Civic Action Gap Semester alumna,  
Annapolis, MD





# VIRTUAL ADELANTE FESTIVAL

With in-person events impossible during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, AMIGOS launched its first-ever virtual Adelante Festival and raised \$135,000 in place of an in-person benefit that was originally planned in San Francisco.

The festival ran over three weeks and included a variety of activities to raise funds to support the organization and to connect our community to one another. We hosted an auction for the first time in many years and learned new technology to livestream the headlining Adelante Benefit program.

We devised creative ways to connect our community to one another online, with community members joining the event from five countries. Watch the full benefit program, including a moving speech from keynote speaker and alum Josh Fryday ('98), Chief Service Officer for California Volunteers, on the AMIGOS YouTube channel [here](#).

## **Adelante Festival Co-Chairs**

Stacy & Doug Alexander

Kate Janeway & Howard Wright

Dominique Schulenburg & Dorn Wenninger

Kirsten Tobey & Ben Saenz

## **Adelante Festival Activities**

Virtual Adelante Benefit

Alumni Connections: Arts Gallery of Action and Impact, StoryCorps  
Intergenerational Interviews, Alumni Fundraising Challenge, and  
Silent Auction

# **BECOMING AN AMERICORPS VOLUNTEERS IN SERVICE TO AMERICA (VISTA) SPONSOR**

In 2020, AMIGOS became a sponsor organization and partner of the AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) federal grant program. AmeriCorps brings people together across the U.S. to help communities tackle their toughest challenges.

From 2020–2023, AMIGOS will be a sponsor for AmeriCorps VISTA members who serve in year-long positions to expand the capacity of the entire organization. The first round of VISTA members was selected in fall 2020 and will begin their year of service in January 2021.

## **STANDING UP AGAINST RACISM**

In 2020, communities across the world united to protest systemic racism and violence. For AMIGOS, we saw how integral standing up against racism was to our vision of a world where all people share responsibility for our global community.

As individuals and as a team at AMIGOS, we reflected on the steps we can take to both stand in solidarity and act. We committed to taking the following actions to reset our vision for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and hold ourselves accountable:

1. Review of our organizational goals to ensure action on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
2. Launch a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Work Group comprised of staff representatives from all departments.
3. Provide space and resources for learning, dialogue, and feedback from our staff at-large and make time for staff to reflect and engage in action.
4. Recognize Juneteenth and provide time off for staff to reflect, learn, and act.
5. Share resources on antiracism and implement a strategy to amplify Black voices.
6. Build racial equity and justice modules into the AMIGOS curriculum.



# VIRTUAL CONNECTIONS ACROSS BORDERS

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic upended young peoples' lives while schools began facing insurmountable challenges. Youth were at major risk of becoming disconnected and cut off from the institutions, networks, and learning experiences that would prepare them to lead productive and rewarding lives.

We had a responsibility to meet the moment. We pivoted to launch our first-ever virtual programs. Like our traditional programs, these programs were built on several components to our approach: leadership, community action, and cross-cultural connection. And despite challenges our organization had never seen, 288 students joined our virtual programs in 2020 that tapped into new technologies for continued mission impact.

## Community Impact Project

In this 6-week virtual program, students from 12 countries were divided into cohorts led by a program coordinator and program mentors. The students completed virtual activities related to leadership, project design thinking, and cultural competency. They participated in language lounges and shared parts of their daily life with one another.



The program concluded with students presenting service project ideas such as supporting small businesses during the pandemic and creating college readiness toolkits for other high schoolers to a panel of community leaders.

Hear from Community Impact Project volunteer Simran [here](#).

## Civic Action Gap Semester

AMIGOS and the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts University ran a 12-week Civic Action Gap Semester for high school graduates. One cohort of students from the U.S. and Brazil completed a 3-credit Tufts online course on “Internships for Social Change” taught by Professor Grace Talusan. They simultaneously conducted virtual “volunteerships” at partner community organizations across the Americas.

## Virtual Youth Ambassadors

The Youth Ambassadors program converted into a virtual format of “exchanges” for students and families from five countries. The Youth Ambassadors program is funded by the U.S. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The students completed their virtual exchanges with virtual host families and covered all aspects of AMIGOS leadership and cultural competency curriculum. After the exchanges, they spent several months implementing a virtual service project in their local community.





# OUR COMMUNITY

## **Bill Arnold Leadership Award**

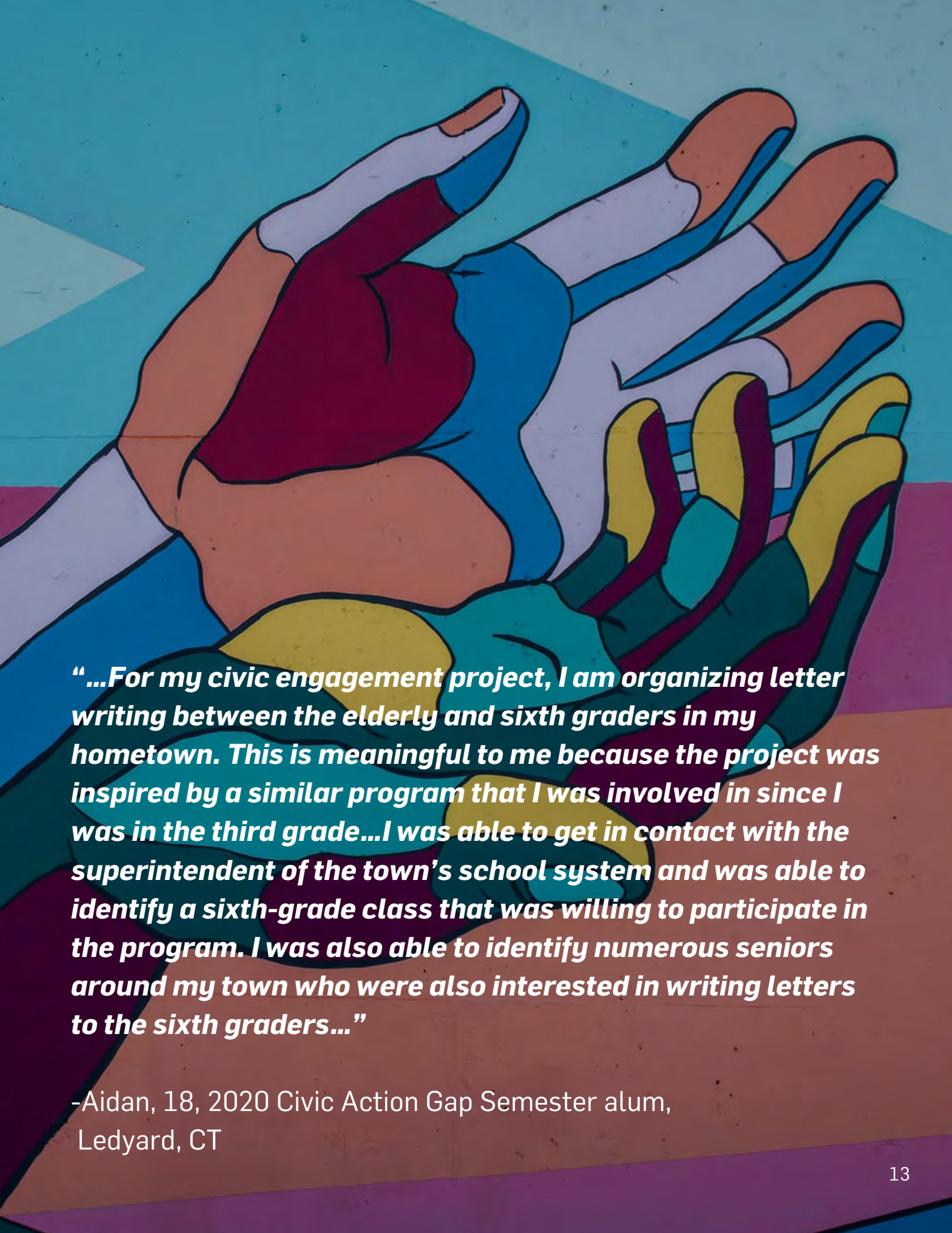
AMIGOS lost a cherished member of our community, William “Bill” Arnold, on August 5, 2020 after a battle with cancer. In 1965, Bill was part of the first AMIGOS class of volunteers who traveled to Honduras. Over the next three years, Bill helped launch the “youth led program” model that AMIGOS has championed ever since. In 1966, he served as the senior member of the staff team and in 1967, he served as Country Director of Guatemala. That summer, Bill met Cathy Anthony, a volunteer from Houston. They married in 1971 and their daughter Elizabeth also became an AMIGOS volunteer 30 years later. The Arnolds have been an inspirational AMIGOS family.

To honor Bill's memory, we established the Bill Arnold Leadership Award to be awarded annually to an AMIGOS volunteer or project staff member who demonstrates exceptional leadership, consistent with the selfless example set by Bill. The award provides a stipend for the recipient to pursue their education or other civic pursuits thanks to the financial support for this award from the Arnold Family, Cook Family, and many others.

## **Final Goodbye to Star Lane**

In September of 2020, AMIGOS bid farewell to the Star Lane property in Houston, TX that was home to our headquarters for 42 years between 1974–2016. The property and buildings were donated to AMIGOS by the Frank family. More than 1,000 senior program staff were trained here. Nearly 2,000 Houston Chapter volunteers fondly remember weekend trainings in the building. It was a special space and served as the heart of AMIGOS for decades. We will never forget the flag-lined wooden atrium and the many moments that were captured there.





***“...For my civic engagement project, I am organizing letter writing between the elderly and sixth graders in my hometown. This is meaningful to me because the project was inspired by a similar program that I was involved in since I was in the third grade...I was able to get in contact with the superintendent of the town’s school system and was able to identify a sixth-grade class that was willing to participate in the program. I was also able to identify numerous seniors around my town who were also interested in writing letters to the sixth graders...”***

-Aidan, 18, 2020 Civic Action Gap Semester alum,  
Ledyard, CT



# 2020 FINANCIALS

## Total Revenue

**\$2,778,621**

Program, including fees and group fundraising

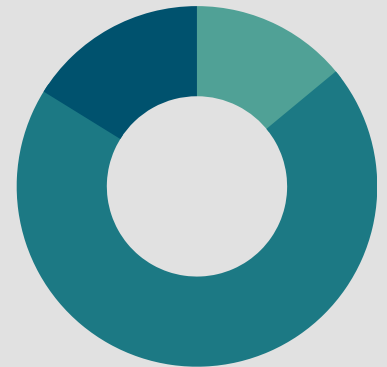
\$388,717

Fundraising and Grants

\$1,940,081

Investment and Other Income

\$449,823



## Total Expenses

**\$3,173,823**

Program-related expenses

\$2,377,138

Financial assistance

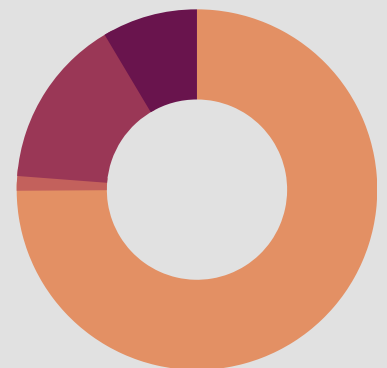
\$41,564

Administration

\$483,453

Fundraising

\$271,668



## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Following the suspension of in-person programs, the first course of action was to stabilize the organization. The AMIGOS Management Team and National Board of Directors worked together during this greatest crisis in our history to reduce expenses while also simultaneously developing new program models that could operate during the global pandemic. AMIGOS community of supporters and local chapters made contributions to keep AMIGOS strong amid the interruption of our traditional programs and business model. Their investments allowed our team to innovate and develop new ways to carry our mission forward through this crisis.

# LEADERSHIP

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Sendero a las cascadas  
con su aporte mejoraremos el lugar  
a solo 20 minutos



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*Gifts of \$1,000 or more to the AMIGOS National Office*

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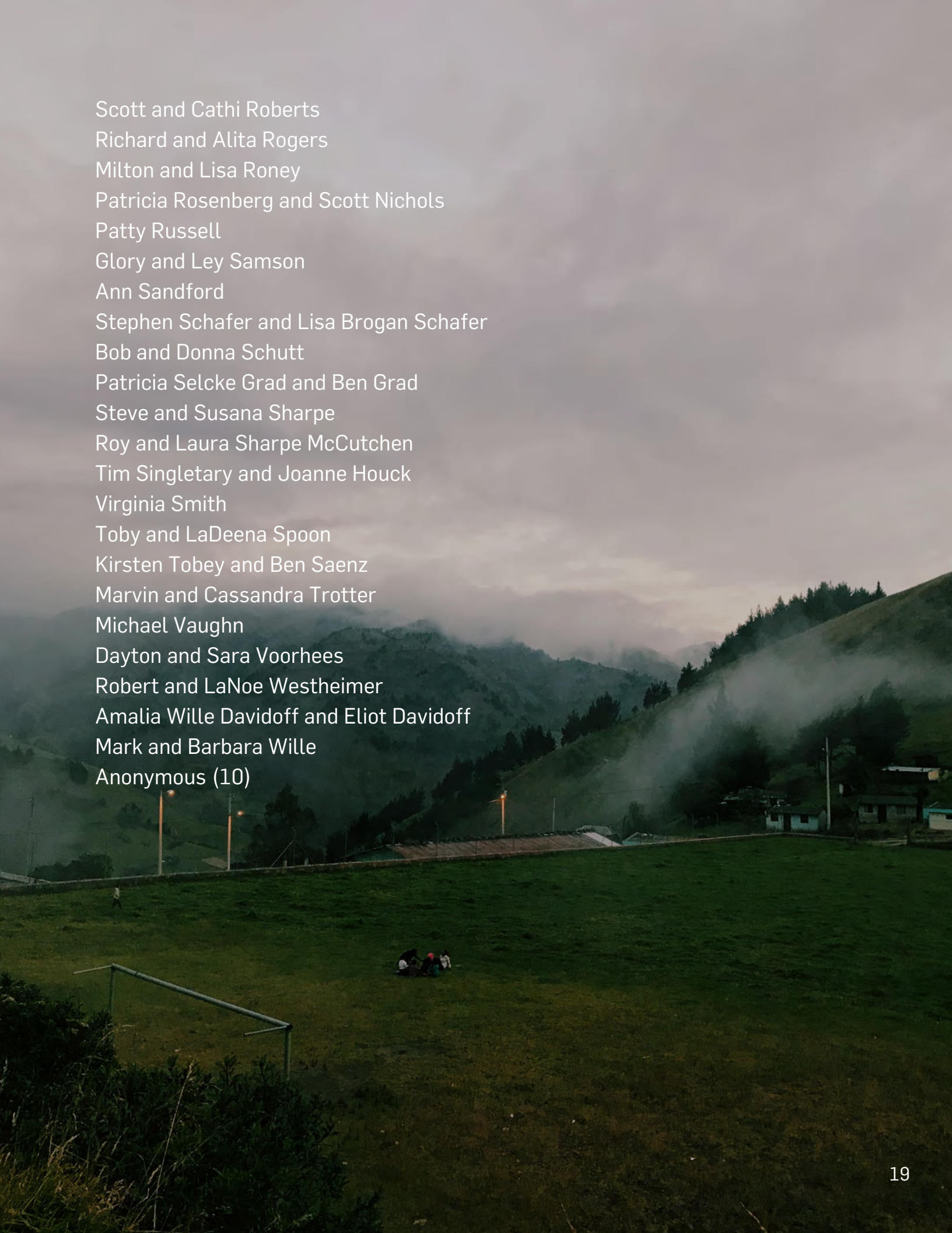


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**Questions?**

**Contact us to learn more about AMIGOS.**

[impact@amigosinternational.org](mailto:impact@amigosinternational.org)

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**POWERFUL  
SERVICE AND  
IMMERSION  
PROGRAMS FOR  
YOUTH ACROSS  
THE AMERICAS**

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