

**Primeros Pasos, Inc.
Early Learning Center**



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Primeros Pasos Inc. – A Brief History:

It all began with a gentleman named Gonzalo Martinez, a Chilean who worked for many years as an official of the World Bank in Washington, D.C. Gonzalo had enjoyed many vacations and holiday visits to Rehoboth Beach where he made many friends. When he retired from the bank in 1995, he decided to settle in Rehoboth. To keep busy, Gonzalo worked as a host and announcer for a small Spanish language radio station in Georgetown. In so doing, he became aware of the growing Hispanic population in the area who had been attracted by the availability of unskilled jobs in the poultry industry, agriculture, construction and other fields.

Responding to the social and human service needs of the Hispanics in Georgetown was a trio of Spanish-speaking Carmelite Nuns. One, Sister Rosa Alvarez, devoted herself to pre-natal education and support for young mothers as well as early care for their children. She quickly convinced Gonzalo that there was no quality early child care education center in the Georgetown area and none that served the Hispanic population. Thus, Primeros Pasos had its genesis.

Gonzalo recruited a group of concerned citizens, secured the services of a *pro bono* attorney (Peter B. Jones, now a Judge in the Family Court) and on December 30, 1996 Primeros Pasos was incorporated as a Delaware non-profit foundation. In 1997 the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) determined that Primeros Pasos, Inc. was a 501 (c)3 non-profit corporation thereby qualifying it to receive tax deductible contributions.

The following few years Primeros Pasos was serving the community in several different locations. At one-point Rev. Earl Beshears, Pastor of St. Paul's Episcopal Church took on the role as President of the Board of Directors of Primeros Pasos. That was the beginning of our long history with the Episcopal Diocese of

Delaware. In 2005 the Diocese approved the use of space at St. Paul's Church in Georgetown, DE for our early childhood center where we served the children until April, 2017. At that time, we moved into our new facility. Over the years the Board membership always consisted of several Episcopalian members from St. Paul's Church and St. Peter's Church in Lewes, DE. Currently we have four Board members who are members of St. Peter's Episcopal Church. Reverend Jeffrey Ross, rector of St. Peter's Church is a Board member and also maintains the position of our Diocese Liaison. Barbara Tenney, MD, Deacon Christine Miller-Marcin, and Jacqueline Ferris are also Board members.

2021- Completion of the Third Building and Two New Playgrounds

For the past several years, the Board was able to raise the funding for the construction of the third building. In January, 2021 we were excited to receive the Certificate of Occupancy. Next the search for additional teachers began. To date we were able to hire 4 additional teachers. The ratio of Early Head Start children is one teacher per four children. our enrollment increased with the addition of 16 Early Head Start children. Our enrollment is currently at 63 children. Currently we have 14 staff personnel. We just hired a curriculum coordinator. At this time Primeros Pasos is actively searching for an additional teacher.

In addition to the new building two new playgrounds were also added this spring. One playground is for our two-year-old toddlers and one playground for our three-year-old children and older children. Along with the playgrounds walkways were also added to connect the playgrounds to the building. The children love the new playgrounds. In the remaining fenced-in area there is room for the children to play ball.

COVID 19 Additions

In order to limit the close contact with parents and to help keep 6-foot distance, an additional walkway was added to the back exit out of the building to the sidewalk leading to the parking lot. An exit door in the fencing was also added to enable the parents when picking up their children to exit the building from the back door. This enables the flow of parents and children during drop off and pick up.

During the pandemic Primeros Pasos was able to remain open. In March Primeros Pasos contracted with a grass cutter who comes in weekly on the weekends and a cleaning crew who comes in daily after hours when the children and staff are not present. These new contractors enable the Board volunteers to stop coming in to cut the grass and eliminate the additional cleaning by the staff.

Upcoming Financial Needs

- Need to hire an additional teacher
- Continuation of pay increases.
- The following monthly bills have increased with the additional building:

Utilities/Insurance Bills	Budget for 7/1/2021-6/30/2022
Public Works (water, sewer, trash removal)	\$3,000.
Chesapeake Natural Gas Bill	\$1,500.
Comcast-Telephone & Internet – upgraded network	\$4,500.
Advantech Security	\$1,200.
Clean Energy – Cost of Solar Panels on all three buildings	\$1,478.
Delmarva Power – Electric	\$2,400.

We are happy to report that we now have solar panels on all three buildings. The first two buildings were installed two years ago and we pay monthly for those panels. The third building solar panels were installed this year. Primeros Pasos was able to apply for a grant that paid for the cost of most of the panels and installation on the third building.

Episcopal Diocesan Council Budget Request

We are requesting for the calendar year 2022 the same amount that we received last year. That amount is \$8,700 which equates to \$725 per month. This funding will be used toward the utility expenses as listed above (Chesapeake Natural Gas, Comcast, Public Works, Advantech Security, Delmarva Power, and Clean Energy).

Thank you for your consideration for this budget request. We greatly appreciate your past support of our program and mission: Primeros Pasos Early Learning Center provides exemplary education in a culturally diverse environment for all children.

Sincerely,

Sandra C. Baker

Sandra C. Baker, President, Board of Directors