



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Our Mission



The mission of Amigos en Azul is to dissolve cultural barriers, build partnerships and open lines of communication between the Latino community and the City of Madison Police Department, in partnership with Dane County-area law enforcement.

In 2024, we had participation from the following police departments:



Federal Bureau of Investigation – Madison



Fitchburg Police Department



Madison Police Department

McFarland Police Department



Monona Police Department



Sun Prairie Police Department



UW-Madison Police Department

Verona Police Department



Wisconsin State Patrol



Nuestra Historia

Celebrating Twenty Years

Founded in 2004 as a grassroots initiative by local police officers, Amigos en Azul was created to cultivate trust and improve communication with the Latino community. This year, we proudly celebrated two decades of unwavering commitment to community trust and safety.

In April, La Movida Radio hosted Amigos en Azul for our anniversary celebration. Among the guests was Detective Hector Aguirre from the Fitchburg Police Department, a founding member. Reflecting on the past 20 years, Detective Aguirre recalled how our efforts began with small community forums on topics such as drug recognition and traffic laws. What started with 15 attendees quickly grew to 50, demonstrating the increasing need for engagement and support.



Amigos en Azul Today

Today, Amigos en Azul remains dedicated to serving the Latino community by responding to requests from organizations and the community. Our involvement spans workshops, resource fairs, festivals like Viva México, and events at schools and churches. In 2024 alone, we participated in over 30 independent events.



Fun facts:

- Detective Hector Aguirre is the first Latino officer to serve the City of Fitchburg.
- Gloria Reyes, a founding member, later went on to become a community leader and advocate.

Youth Engagement

Amigos en Azul recognizes the importance of connecting with youth in a safe, non-enforcement setting. Positive interactions with officers help young people see law enforcement as approachable and supportive, reducing fear and misconceptions.

This year, we participated in several educational events, fostering dialogue between Hispanic youth and law enforcement:

- Equity Symposium – Know Your Rights Presentation (West High School, Madison)
- Latinos Unidos en Comunidad Summit (Verona Area High School, Verona)
- La Juventud Career Day (Madison Metropolitan School District)
- Presentation on Policing (East High School, Madison)
- Wisconsin Dells High School Presentation

Additionally, we continued our involvement in youth programs by hosting Fútbol con Amigos and the Latino Youth Academy, along with various school invitations.



Fútbol con Amigos

Since 2015, Fútbol con Amigos has provided an opportunity for youth and families to connect with police officers through soccer. Originally launched in Madison's South Police District, the program has expanded beyond city limits to reach more communities.

This year, we hosted three summer sessions for youth ages 6 to 16, where officers served as chaperones, referees, coaches, and even grill masters—providing free lunch for participants. Events were held in McFarland, and at Lincoln Elementary and Cherokee Middle School in Madison. Over 40 children participated, and those demonstrating sportsmanship, a positive attitude, or leadership were invited to a Forward Madison FC home game.





Despite the rainy weather on game day (September 21st), our group had a fantastic time cheering on the Flamingos. During halftime, Detective Gracia Rodriguez was honored for her outstanding contributions to the Latino community along with other extraordinary individuals.



Latino Youth Academy

Founded in 2011, the Latino Youth Academy continues to build strong relationships between law enforcement and Latino youth. Amigos en Azul continues to play a key role in this program alongside the Madison and Fitchburg Police Departments, and other crucial partners.

Our objectives:

- Build trusting relationships with participating youths, their families, and neighborhoods.
- Educate and interest participating youths in the roles and responsibilities of first responders in society.
- Instill and nurture leadership qualities and life skills that participating youths can bring back to their homes and communities.

Participants are youths entering 7th and 8th grade. Although the academy is inclusive, we are focused on building relationships with whom there are cultural barriers and lack of trust. This year we had 28 participants representing Mexico, Central and South America. The academy is a weeklong program that focuses on important skills such as goal setting, group communication, and leadership.

LYA Highlights

This year's highlights included:

- Team building at MSCR's challenge course.
- Financial literacy by the Wisconsin Latino Chamber of Commerce.
- Career exploration with Forward Madison FC Players and Staff.
- Tour of the Capitol by the Wisconsin State Capitol Police.
- Hands-on experience in Forensics, Traffic Stops, Know Your Rights and Cyber Safety scenarios.
- Exposure to specialized units (K9, Mounted Patrol, SWAT, Drone, and more).
- A fun-filled day with Fitchburg Fire & Fitch-Rona EMS.

The academy concluded with a graduation ceremony celebrating the achievements of the participants with their family and friends.





This year we recognized Lieutenant Lori Chalecki of the Madison Police Department for her volunteerism and devotion to Madison area youth, to our Latino community, and to the law enforcement community. As she retired at the end of the year, we expressed our gratitude for her leadership and influence on this program.



Hispanic Heritage Month

Amigos en Azul acknowledges and celebrates the contributions that Latinos have made to our growing community. Their perseverance, passion, resilience and strength infused with vibrant culture enrich our cities. It is our honor to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, September 15 to October 15, in community.

This year's celebrations included:

- The 14th Annual Hispanic Heritage Luncheon: Celebrating Hispanic Achievements & Contributions
- Viva México Festival
- Centro's Celebrating our Latine Roots
- Fiesta Hispana del Vecindario at City on a Hill
- School celebrations at Leopold Elementary School, Savanna Oaks Middle School and Black Hawk Middle School

These gatherings provided meaningful opportunities to celebrate, reflect and connect. We look forward to continuing these traditions for years to come!



Community Education & Engagement

Education is essential to fostering mutual understanding and ensuring community safety. As part of our commitment to outreach, we actively seek opportunities to engage with the community on various law enforcement topics.

This year, we:

- Held a training session on Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events for Formando Lazos Familiares, a group that promotes and supports the safety, well-being and success of Latino children and families.
- Participated in the Dane County Immigration Resource Fair, offering guidance on local police-related matters.
- Expanded our reach through radio and media, bringing important information directly to families at home, at work, and on the go.

We continued our appearances on La Movida, Madison's local Spanish-language radio station, and MiWisconsin Latinos, a nonprofit media organization. These platforms have been instrumental in helping us connect with the community in meaningful ways.

Car Seat Clinic and Vehicle Inspection Event

The Car Seat Clinic and Vehicle Inspection event is one of our longest-standing programs and continues to be a collaboration with Safe Kids – Madison Area. Fitchburg Police and Fire Departments became new partners in 2022. This year we were at Fitchburg Fire Station One, and we invited various service providers. Families were able to learn about their services, and kids had the opportunity to learn about pedestrian safety in the neighborhood.

The goal of the event is to educate families on how to properly install the correct car seat for their child and provide free car seats if needed. While waiting, families receive vehicle safety education from Wisconsin State Troopers. This year we served over 37 families, inspected 67 car seats, and distributed 44 seats. The event also featured a fundraiser by Saint Joseph Church 'El Buen Pastor', offering delicious tacos, elotes, aguas frescas, and more.



New Partnerships & Outreach

This year, we expanded our impact through new collaborations.

- Dane County Restorative Court – Our team was invited to a training session with the Dane County Restorative Court, where we learned about their ‘listening circles’. The training underscored the vital role bilingual, bicultural officers play in the restorative justice process. Recognizing this need, Amigos en Azul members actively participated in listening circles throughout the year, contributing to more inclusive and effective dialogue.
- Safe Communities of Madison – Dane County: We launched the monthly Manejando en Wisconsin radio show on La Movida, focusing on key traffic safety topics. Each show featured expert guests with monthly hosts Lupita Montoto from La Movida and Detective Gracia Rodriguez from Amigos en Azul. Listeners engaged through call-ins and Facebook live comments, allowing us to connect with thousands of community members in Dane County. This program is made possible thanks to the sponsorship of WisDOT, NHTSA and the Dane County Traffic Safety Commission.



Safe Communities

Manejando en Wisconsin Topics of 2024

March 26: Seat Belt Safety

Officer Juan Hinojos: Fitchburg Police
Department and Cheryl Wittke with
Safe Communities



June 4: Speed/Slow Down
Campaign

Officer Juan Hinojos: Fitchburg Police
Department



July 2: Pedestrian & Child
Passenger Safety

Lisa Bullard-Cawthorne with Safe
Communities and Terri O'Brien with
Safe Kids Madison Area



August 6: DMV and Points
System

Julie Niemeyer and Nick Dunwald with
the WI Department of Motor Vehicles



Manejando en Wisconsin

Topics of 2024



September 13: School Zone and Bus Safety

Sgt. Joe Engler: Madison Police Department and Niko Magallon, a Madison Crossing Guard Supervisor



October 1: Slow Down Move Over

Trooper Wameng Vang: Wisconsin State Patrol and Nick Jarmusz with AAA



November 12: Consequences of Traffic Violations

Todd Meyer, a Municipal Judge in Western Dane County



December 6: Impaired Driving

Sgt. Sam Brier: Madison Police Department

Amigos Phone & Social Media

Since our inception, our mission has been to serve as a valuable resource for the Latino community on police-related matters. To support this, we provide a dedicated phone line monitored by Spanish-speaking members of Amigos en Azul. Community members can call and leave a message with general questions. This year, we transitioned to a new phone number: (608) 228-4038. For most of the year, our previous line was inactive, but we are pleased to announce the new number is now fully operational and available for community use. Callers must leave a voicemail for a callback.

Social media remains our primary platform for connecting with the community. We manage an active Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsInBlue> where we engage with 1.6k followers. Our posts frequently reach thousands of people as our followers share our content. Through this platform, we provide updates on events, educational resources, and important community information.

We can also be reached via email at amigosenazul@cityofmadison.com.



Giving Back

Community service remains at the heart of Amigos en Azul. In 2024, we participated in:

- Police be my Valentine – Delivering flowers and sharing a meal with Latino older adults from New Bridge.
- Thanksgiving Meal Deliveries – Providing meals to 14 Latino families in need thanks to the referrals made by our partners.
- Host-a-Family Initiative – Supporting a family during the holidays with a Christmas tree, gifts, and basic necessities. This year we picked a family familiar to us from past professional contacts.



Thank You to our Partners

Our work is made possible by the generosity of our partners and donors. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to:

- La Barra 608
- The Flock Foundation
- Dick's Sporting Goods – East Towne Mall
- Madison Community Policing Foundation



All of our events were also made possible by the collaborations of local organizations, service providers, school staff and established relationships with the community.

If you would like to make a monetary donation, you can do so via [The Madison Community Policing Foundation](#), attention: Amigos en Azul.

Together, we build a stronger, safer and more connected community.
¡Gracias por su apoyo!



