

# HOLA Hispanic Community Center opens in Painesville

Long-neglected property breathes new life, complete with commercial kitchen, host of programming, services

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Lake County Land Bank Executive Director John Rogers addresses attendees during the recent opening of HOLA Ohio's Hispanic Community Center in Painesville. (Chad Felton — The News-Herald)

For [HOLA Ohio](#), the future is now.

The Painesville-based nonprofit recently held the ceremonial official opening of its Hispanic Community Center at [265 N. State St.](#) in Painesville.

The \$2.1 million, 6,900-square-foot facility — purchased in 2019 and additionally funded by corporate support, donations, grants and philanthropic organizations — also houses a commercial kitchen to be used by Hispanic start-up businesses.

The resource will also involve an ongoing collaboration with Kent State University for students interested in culinary arts.

The new center/headquarters serves to enable [HOLA](#) to expand programs and services to Latino workers, families and children throughout the state.

Additionally, the building is equipped with space available for job training, ESL and GED classes, cultural and instructional/academic programming for youths and adults, and also offers a variety of nutrition and wellness courses.



The project, in the making, overall, for nearly six years, can finally be called “home,” noted HOLA Ohio Founder and Executive Director Veronica Dahlberg, noting the itinerant origins of the organization.

“We never had a fixed space where we could meet with the members of our community, or develop programs and services,” she said. “We didn’t have offices. We also had a shoestring budget. Six years ago, we began to work in earnest to raise money to obtain our own space. It was a journey, but we were determined that this was our priority and we stayed focused. We are grateful for all those who stepped up to help us in this crowning achievement.”

One of the individuals instrumental in the creation of the center, Dahlberg added, is John Rogers, a former state representative and the current executive director of the [Lake County Land Reutilization Corp.](#), commonly referred to as the Lake County Land Bank.

“We discussed the needs of HOLA and I mentioned a structure that stood empty and in a serious state of disrepair for many years,” Rogers said. “We met a few days later to tour the structure and the idea of what is now a reality began to germinate.”

In 2019, HOLA purchased the property with a vision in place.

“This was not an easy task,” Rogers added. “Nor was it one without hurdles and a few naysayers along the way. Yet, the collaborative efforts that ensued met the challenges head-on, and every one and each organization involved, should take great pride in what they have accomplished working together.”

Last year, HOLA assisted over 2,000 clients with everything from access to medical and mental health care, direct needs, citizenship and immigration support, and more.

“With the new center, we expect the numbers of clients we serve to increase significantly,” Dahlberg said. “We are proud to contribute to the economic development of Painesville, which is home to thousands of Hispanic families, and, now, our permanent home.”

### About HOLA Ohio

Formed in 1999 as an informal group of Hispanic women in Lake County who sought to help the growing Latino population comprised of Mexican immigrant workers employed by area nurseries and their families, HOLA Ohio serves to

improve quality-of-life opportunities and empower the Latino community through outreach, education, civic engagement, entrepreneurship, and skills development.