

# EL PASO MATTERS

2023 Impact Report





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Several law enforcement agencies, including the Mexican Army and National Guard, responded to an altercation between migrants and immigration agents at a downtown Juárez hotel in March 2023. (Courtesy La Verdad)



Kaitlyn Melendez, now 13, was with her grandfather, David Johnson, when he was among 23 people shot to death by Patrick Crusius at an El Paso Walmart on Aug. 3, 2019. She was accompanied by a service dog as she gave a victim impact statement Wednesday, July 5, at the first day of Crusius' sentencing hearing. (Nacho Garcia Jr./El Paso Matters)



Protestors who say that the city failed to seek community input in the police chief hiring process demonstrate outside of the Museum of Art in September 2023. (Corrie Boudreaux/El Paso Matters)



Karina García was hugged by her brother Memo during her quinceañera in December. Their father was among 23 people killed in El Paso's 2019 mass shooting. (Corrie Boudreaux/El Paso Matters)

### Letter from the CEO

In 2023, El Paso Matters continued to grow in its mission of providing news that helps El Pasoans better understand their community, and use that information to help shape changes that are important to them.

Our reporters repeatedly shared stories that otherwise would have gone untold – a deeply investigated report about shocking mistreatment of women police officers by their fellow officers; a disturbing rise in felony arrests for THC vaping at schools; the impact of climate change in what proved to be El Paso’s hottest year on record; a moving story about the quinceañera of a girl who lost her father in the 2019 mass shooting.

Our reporters also provided deep coverage of the May elections, which included the controversial Proposition K. We have the only reporters in El Paso focusing on issues like education, health care and the environment. In 2023, we launched the El Paso Matters Book Club, which celebrated El Paso authors and connected them with a local audience hungry for their work.

And El Pasoans increasingly turn to El Paso Matters for news. At a time when news organizations around the country lost readership and viewership, our audience continued to grow in 2023. The number of page views at elpasomatters.org has doubled in the past two years. Few news organizations in the country have seen that kind of growth.

At the same time, we have expanded our business operations to help build sustainability for the future. While we continue to receive strong support from major national and regional foundations, we increased the amount of money we raised from El Pasoans this year. We hired veteran advertising salesman Bill Pitchkolan to be our business development director, and he built a strong sponsorship program that allowed local businesses to support the work of El Paso Matters and connect with our audience.

We are grateful for the support we have received in El Paso and elsewhere, and look forward to expanding our impact in 2024.

With gratitude,

**Robert Moore,**  
Founder and CEO

## Who We Are



Newsroom



**Ramon Bracamontes**  
Editor



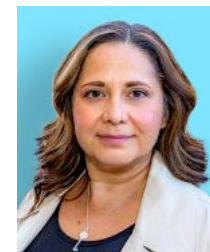
**Cindy Ramirez**  
Reporter and Editor



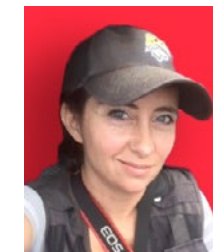
**Priscilla Totiyapungprasert**  
Health Reporter



**Diego Mendoza-Moyers**  
Environment and Climate Reporter



**Elida S. Perez**  
Senior Reporter



**Corrie Boudreaux**  
Photographer and Writer



**Angela Kocherga**  
Multimedia Editor



**Claudia Lorena Silva**  
K-12 Education Reporter



**Daniel Perez**  
Higher Education Reporter



Audience and Revenue Development



**Kassie Ckudre**  
Major Gifts Director



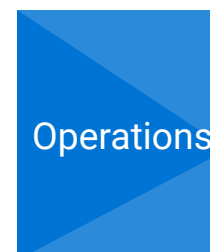
**Bill Pitchkolan**  
Business Development Director



**Angela Saavedra**  
Audience Development Leader



**Brandy Ruiz**  
Reporter/ Audience Engagement Specialist



Operations



**Robert Moore**  
CEO and Founder



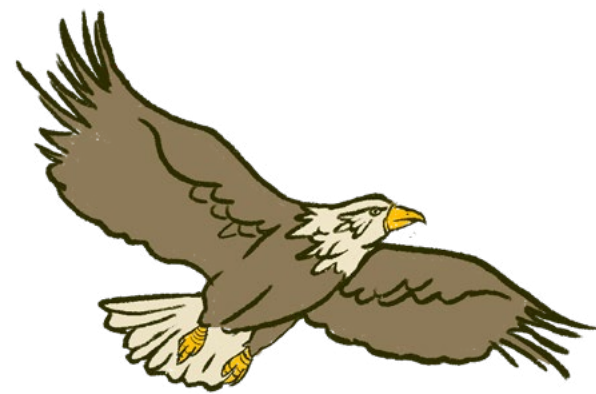
**Vanessa Mills**  
Controller

# Local Stories *with* **NATIONAL IMPACT**

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Because of our location, El Paso has increasingly been in the national news in recent years, and 2023 was no different. El Paso Matters reporters often break national news, or provide important context often missing in national media outlets.



A group of migrants waits on the concrete bank of the Rio Grande as Border Patrol agents call for transport vans in September 2023. (Corrie Boudreaux/El Paso Matters)



A group of migrants manage to cross the concertina wire barrier at the Rio Grande in September 2023. (Corrie Boudreaux/El Paso Matters)



A Border Patrol agent holds back a group of people as migrants wait to surrender themselves at the station on Oregon Street in May 2023. (Corrie Boudreaux/El Paso Matters)

Most prominently, El Paso Matters reporters played an important role in telling the story about immigration and border enforcement. Our journalists told the story from El Paso, Ciudad Juárez and the Darien Gap in Panama.



Migrants walk from a canoe that brought them to a Panamanian reception center in the village of Lajas Blancas in June 2023. (Robert Moore/El Paso Matters)



Haitian migrants carry their belongings, including humanitarian kits provided by relief works, after arriving at the Panamanian reception center in Lajas Blancas in June 2023. (Robert Moore/El Paso Matters)

As Gov. Greg Abbott increased Texas' challenge to the federal government's traditional role in immigration enforcement, several important stories played out in El Paso. The county government is a lead plaintiff in a lawsuit challenging a new law that would allow local police in Texas to enforce immigration law. And El Paso Matters, in a joint report with KTEP public radio, detailed the harrowing story of a local family forced off the road and held at gunpoint by the Texas Department of Public Safety after they were mistaken for smugglers.



Gerardo Ayala, his wife Alejandra Lopez, and their daughter say they were mistakenly forced off the road and held at gunpoint by agents with the Texas Department of Public Safety in October. (Angela Kocherga/El Paso Matters)

Another major national story that played out in 2023 was the criminal case of the gunman in the 2019 racist shooting at an El Paso Walmart. El Paso Matters was the first news organization to report that the gunman would plead guilty to federal charges that would carry multiple life prison sentences. We also reported on the continuing slow pace in prosecution of state capital murder charges that could carry the death penalty. For federal court hearings, El Paso Matters hired sketch artist Nacho Garcia Jr. to capture events, since cameras were not permitted. We shared the sketches with news organizations around the country.



Illustrator Nacho Garcia Jr.

# You heard it from us first: Stories that would have gone untold without El Paso Matters

## WOMEN & GENDER

### Women officers fight for gender equality, reform in EPPD

 by Victoria Rossi



(Image by Barracuda Public Relations)

El Paso Matters reporter Victoria Rossi spent more than a year investigating sexual harassment and abuse that El Paso women police officers faced at the hands of their fellow officers. Her reporting documented a culture of misogyny in the Police Department that made it difficult if not impossible for women to serve.

## EDUCATION

### Vaping in Schools

 by Claudia Lorena Silva



(Photo illustration by Corrie Boudreaux/El Paso Matters)

In Texas, possession of vape devices with even the smallest amounts of THC – the active ingredient in marijuana – is a felony. In a four-part series, education reporter Claudia Silva reported that the number of El Paso teens facing such felony charges tripled to almost 700 between 2021 and 2022, and continued to rise in 2023. Silva's series explored solutions to the problem and provided parents with critical information they needed to know.

## UTEP put on 'warning' status by its accrediting commission

  by Ramon Bracamontes and Daniel Perez



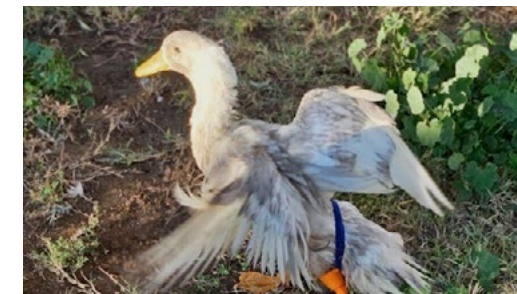
The University of Texas at El Paso on July 6, 2023. (Corrie Boudreaux/El Paso Matters)

Editor Ramon Bracamontes and higher education reporter Daniel Perez broke the news that the University of Texas at El Paso received a warning over its accreditation status because regulators raised concerns about information provided by UTEP. It was the second time in five years that UTEP had faced such action. The last time UTEP was warned – in 2018 – the action was not covered by the media and the community was never told. Perez is the only reporter in El Paso focused on higher education issues.

## EDUCATION

### Poppy the Duck

 by Claudia Lorena Silva



(Courtesy Stick House Sanctuary)

Silva, our K-12 education reporter, showed how El Paso STEM instructors were working to design a 3-D printed leg for Poppy, a duck who had lost the appendage after it was wrapped in fishing line. The story was a reminder of the generosity and creativity of El Pasoans.

## AUG. 3 WALMART SHOOTING

### 'He's here with me:' Walmart shooting survivor honors late father at quinceañera

 by Priscilla Totiyapungprasert



Memo hugs Karina closely as they dance to the song "You've Got a Friend In Me" during her quinceañera celebration. (Corrie Boudreaux/El Paso Matters)

Guillermo "Memo" García was grievously wounded in the Aug. 3, 2019, mass shooting, and succumbed eight months later. Reporter Priscilla Totiyapungprasert spent months with the family as they prepared for the December quinceañera of daughter Katrina. The story by Totiyapungprasert and photos by Corrie Boudreaux explored the pain the family suffers more than three years later, and how they've rebuilt their lives.

# Only at El Paso Matters

One of our guiding principles at El Paso Matters is to focus on topics that other media in El Paso aren't getting to. At the end of 2023, we had **the only two reporters** among El Paso news organizations focused on education, the only environment reporter, the only immigration reporter, and the only health care reporter.

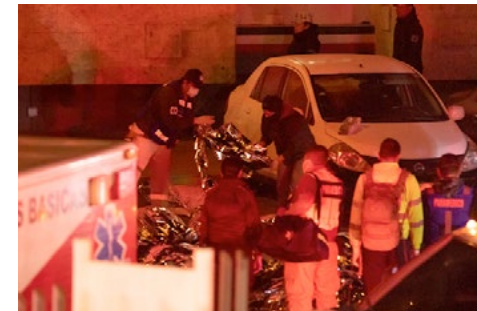
We are the only news organization in El Paso that consistently provides voter guides during elections. In 2023, we provided guides in English and Spanish, in print and online. These guides allow voters to compare candidates' stances on issues, helping them decide how they want to vote. El Paso Matters never makes recommendations on how voters should cast ballots. Our mission is to provide voters with election information so they can decide for themselves.

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## Collaborative Journalism

From our beginning in 2020, El Paso Matters has relied on partnerships and collaborations to enhance our journalism, reach larger audiences, and bring important work from other media to our audience. The most important partnership has been the Puente News Collaborative, which **brings together El Paso and Juárez news organizations** to report on the region's most important issues.

Our partners at La Verdad produced gut-wrenching coverage of a fire that killed dozens of migrants at a detention center near the Juárez side of Paso del Norte Bridge.



Photos from La Verdad

We also shared important reporting from the El Paso Times on a record number of deaths among migrants trying to cross the border in the El Paso region.



Photos from El Paso Times

El Paso Public Libraries was a key partner in two initiatives in 2023. They hosted author meetings as part of our El Paso Matters Book Club, and also distributed voter guides for May elections.





## Women in *JOURNALISM*



Photos from Microsoft Journalism Hub

At El Paso Matters, our reporting team is majority women – providing stories from unique points of view that connect with the public we serve.

More than half of El Paso County residents are women. Many want to read stories that relate to them without perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes.

Corrie Boudreaux, Elida S. Perez, Cindy Ramirez, Claudia Lorena Silva and Priscilla Totiyapungprasert exemplify more than diversity and inclusion in the newsroom. Their reporting on government accountability, education, health and immigration is unwaveringly tough – but approached with an empathy that takes into account the human factor in any story.

They provide relatable and empathetic perspectives on a variety of topics, including reproductive rights, birthing options, sexual harassment in the workplace, representation in government and the LGBTQ community.

Priscilla, for example, in the last year wrote about the city being without a health director for more than a year and about area birthing centers and services offered to the transgender community. In reporting about the city’s new police chief, Elida focused on how the department leader plans to address what many describe as a hostile workplace for women. In her dual role as reporter and assistant editor, Cindy leads content planning, ensuring stories are diverse and reflective of our demographics.

As news influences policy, it is imperative that our reporting presents women’s needs and views.

At a time when newsrooms often fail to reflect the communities they serve, our team of women reporters are helping give women and other underrepresented groups a voice.



# Celebrating El Paso Authors

The El Paso Matters Book Club launched in February 2023 and we have so much to celebrate:

**NEARLY**

**1,000**

subscribers to the book club newsletter

**OVER**

**50**

attendees at each bi-monthly book club gathering hosted at El Paso Library branches across the city

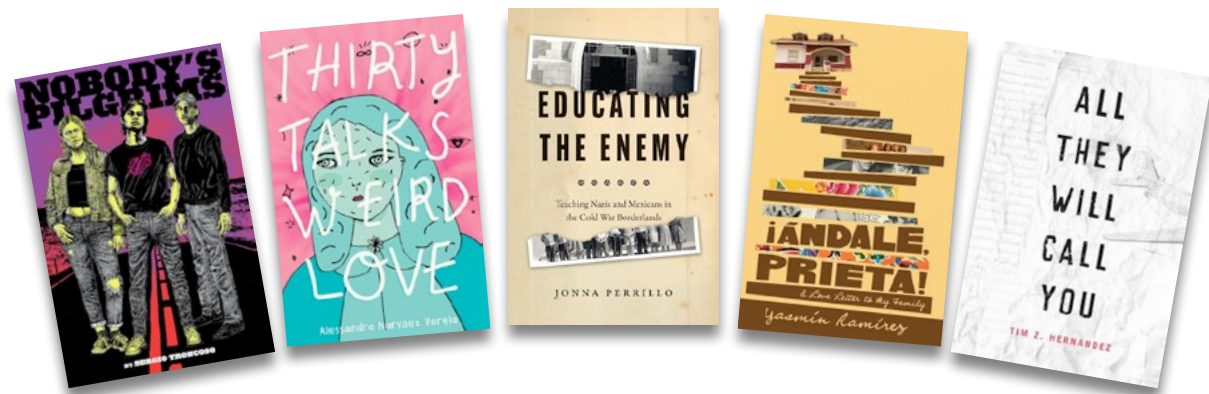
**MORE THAN**

**300**

El Paso Matters Book Club books sold by Literarity Book Shop. Owner Bill Clark donated the proceeds of those sales to El Paso Matters

We started the El Paso Matters Book Club to highlight and showcase local authors and celebrate what makes El Paso unique. Our book club brings readers exclusive author interviews and book reviews. Our bi-monthly book club gatherings, consistently drawing over 50 attendees, have created a space for meaningful conversations and connections, and have fostered a deeper connection with the city we call home. Throughout our first year, we have become a community united by a shared love for local books and their authors, a profound appreciation for reading, and a genuine care for the heart and soul of El Paso.

Our book selections spanned a diverse range of perspectives and voices, including:



**Nobody's Pilgrims**  
by Sergio Troncoso

**Thirty Talks Weird Love**  
by Alessandra Narváez Varela

**Educating the Enemy: Teaching Nazis and Mexicans in the Cold War Borderlands**  
by Jonna Perrillo

**¡Ándale, Prieta!**  
by Yasmin Ramirez

**All They Will Call You**  
by Tim Z. Hernandez



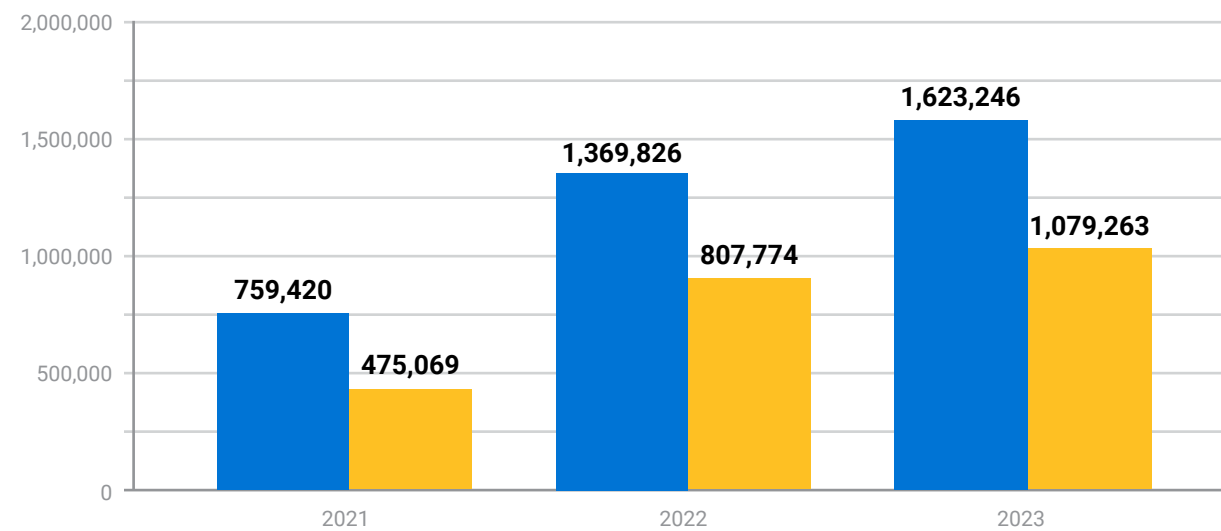
## OUR NEXT CHAPTER

In 2024, we will continue our literary journey across the city by visiting even more El Paso Public Library branches. We also plan to collaborate closely with the creative writing departments at El Paso Community College and the University of Texas at El Paso by hosting writing workshops that are open to the public.

# Audience growth

**Audience growth at elpasomatters.org since 2021**

■ PAGE VIEWS ■ USERS



In a year when local news organizations across the country saw sharp declines in audience, El Paso Matters saw strong growth in 2023. The number of times our stories were read online **almost doubled** compared to 2021. More and more people are becoming aware of our work, and we're filling a critical need in the region's news and information ecosystem.

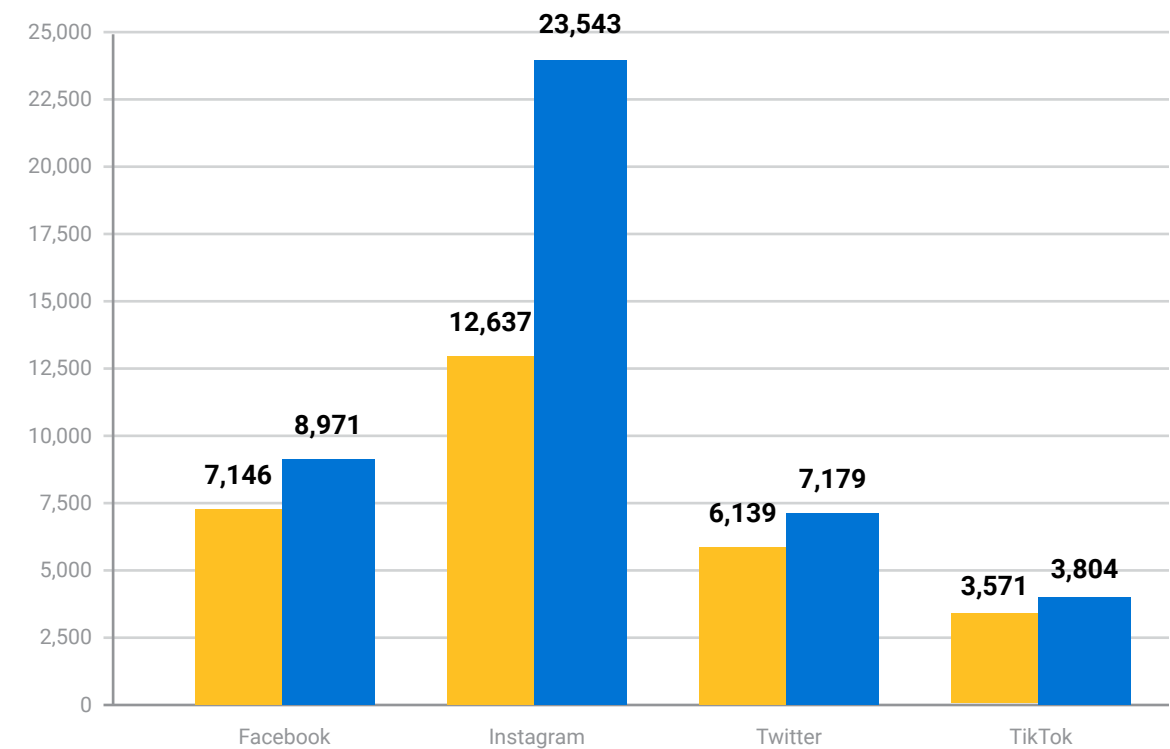
Readership on elpasomatters.org grew by **18%** in 2023 compared to the prior year.

## SOCIAL MEDIA:

We use social media channels to extend our reach. We let El Pasoans know about our stories, but we also engage with them for feedback and story ideas. In 2023, El Paso Matters significantly increased our reach on Instagram to 584,200 unique users in 2023, a 232% increase from the previous year.

**Total followers**

■ 2022 ■ 2023



# Supporting El Paso Matters

Top donors to El Paso Matters since our incorporation in 2019. Thank you for your support!

## \$1,000,000 and Above

American Journalism Project,  
a one-time grant to build  
sustainable business  
practices

## \$500,000 - \$999,999

Emerson Collective

## \$250,000 - \$499,999

Arnold Ventures  
Microsoft

## \$100,000 - \$249,999

Center for Gender  
and Reproductive Equity  
El Paso Community Foundation  
Inasmuch Foundation  
Meta Journalism Project  
(formerly Facebook  
Journalism Project)  
Open Campus Media

## \$20,000 - \$99,999

Council on Regional Economic  
Expansion and Educational  
Development  
El Paso Electric Company  
Feeding America

## \$20,000 - \$99,999 (cont.)

Kasco Ventures  
Martha Hood and Will Jewell  
Meadows Foundation  
Miami Foundation via the  
Institute for Nonprofit News  
NewsMatch program  
Rapoport Foundation  
Report for America  
Richard Castro  
Sam Legate  
WestStar Bank  
Woody and Gayle Hunt  
Family Foundation

## \$10,000 - \$19,999

Brooks Family Foundation  
Gwen Pulido and Raymond Telles

## \$5,000 - \$9,999

Ann and Charles Horak  
David and Jeryl Marcus  
Deborah Kastrin  
Google Journalism Emergency  
Relief Fund  
Jack and Carroll Maxon  
Jason and Hallie Kosena  
Johanna Barr  
Kelly Tomblin  
Laurie Paternoster

## \$5,000 - \$9,999 (cont.)

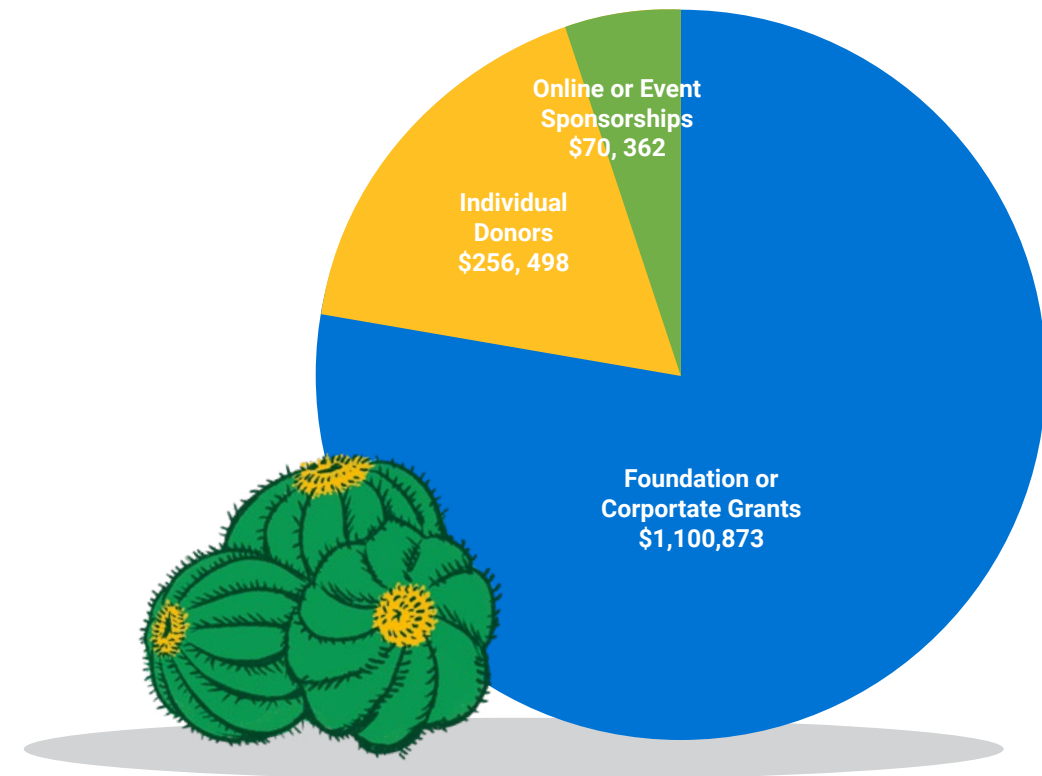
Lenfest Institute for Journalism  
and Local Media Association  
Simone Cox  
Steve Ortega  
Solutions Journalism Network  
Ted Houghton  
Walmart Foundation  
Walton Family Foundation

## \$2,500 - \$4,999

Danny and Marie Olivas  
Ebetuel 'Beto' Pallares  
Ed Escudero  
Eliot Shapleigh  
Elsa Borrego  
Eric Pearson and Julie  
Summerford Pearson  
Kassie and Joey Ckudre  
Laura Rodriguez  
Ogechika Alozie  
Rebecca and Alan Krasne  
Richard and Bobette Lange  
Rosalinda Natividad  
Sandra Almanzan  
Steve and Angie Tures  
Susan Melendez  
Tracy Yellen  
Western Heritage Bank

## El Paso revenues by source, 2023

FOUNDATION OR CORPORATE GRANTS INDIVIDUAL DONORS ONLINE OR EVENT SPONSORSHIPS



## El Paso Matters by the numbers:

**1,000**

Over **1,000** individual donors since our founding in 2019

**366**

Added **366** new donors in 2023

**33&20**

Our number of individual donors increased by **33%** between 2022 and 2023, and the amount received from individual donors increased by more than **20%**

**28&3**

Donors came from **28** states and **3** countries in 2023

**IMPACT QUOTES:**

As an El Pasoan, I really feel that news reporting should be local and connected to what (is) happening on the streets and be factual. El Paso Matters gives me what I'm looking for in all regards. Please, keep up the great journalism.

- Carl J.

It is essential that the rest of the US and the world receive accurate and timely news about the border.

- Emily W.

El Paso Matters gives me insightful news I can't get anywhere else. I rely on it to keep me informed of local issues.

- Elinora P.

High-quality local journalism is incredibly important to communities, but it is increasingly difficult to find. I'm aware that contributions keep localized journalism afloat and want to give where I can.

- Miguel A.



Make your gift to El Paso Matters by scanning this QR code with your phone's camera app.

## El Paso Matters Local Sponsors

In 2023, we hired Bill Pitchkolan as our Business Development Director to implement new opportunities for businesses to reach El Paso Matters' audience with advertising and sponsorships. This growing revenue stream will provide additional funding for El Paso Matters' journalism and mission.

Businesses such as Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso, Mission Chevrolet, Visiting Angels and Copenhagen Imports are supporting El Paso Matters and connecting to audiences they want to reach. Several nonprofit organizations such as the Rio Grande Cancer Foundation and Basketball in the Barrio, ran successful fundraising campaigns with El Paso Matters during the El Paso Giving Day event.

Partnerships can take a creative turn. A conversation with the owner of Aurellia's Bottle Shop and Brewhouse, Justin Gibson, culminated in a Mexican-American lager brewed specifically for El Paso Matters. A public launch of the beer was held in October and was well attended. The beer was sold at Aurellia's and retail outlets in El Paso, including Whole Foods, and Aurellia's donated the profits to El Paso Matters. This project resulted in funds for El Paso Matters, some good PR and a positive relationship with a up-and-coming young business owner in the community. And it produced a really good beer.

In 2024, El Paso Matters will increasingly use events to expand the reach of our journalism. Our sponsors will help make this growth possible.



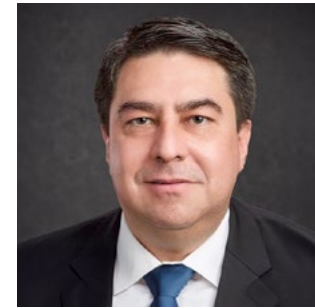
# Board of Directors



**Bill Clark**  
Co-Owner  
Literarity Book Shop



**Cindy Conroy**  
AVP, Director Community Outreach  
WestStar Bank



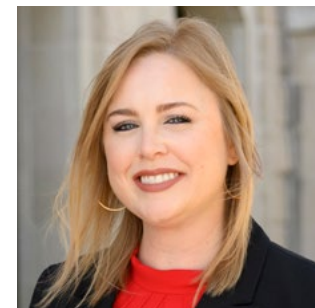
**Ralph Espinoza**  
Vice President, Divisional Controller - Business Services  
Franklin Mountain Management, LLC



**Martha Hood**  
Retired Controller  
Volunteer, Medical Center of the Americas Foundation



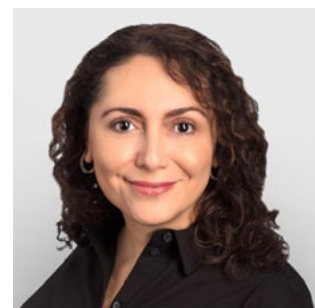
**David Marcus**  
Partner  
Marcus, Fairall, Bristol + Co., PLLC, Certified Accountants



**Veronique Masterson**  
Assistant Vice President for Marketing and Communications  
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso



**Robert Moore**  
Founder and CEO  
El Paso Matters



**Gwen Pulido**  
Senior Assistant General Counsel  
Cribl, Inc.

# Looking Ahead to 2024

**El Paso faces a number of crucial transitions in 2024.** The City Council will choose a new city manager. El Pasoans will elect a new mayor, because Oscar Leeser has served the maximum two terms allowed by the City Charter. We'll also elect a new sheriff and one new state representative, because incumbents chose not to run.

**Elections start with party primaries on March 5, with runoffs in many races likely coming a few weeks later.** The general election in November will see Texans voting for a U.S. senator. In El Paso, Republicans have contested only a handful of local races, so most of the local partisan contests will be settled in the primaries. But El Pasoans will elect City Council members in four districts, in addition to the mayor's race. Runoffs could come in December. It will be a long election year.

**El Paso and the border likely will play a major role in the 2024 presidential election campaign.** One key goal of El Paso Matters is to provide accurate and contextualized reporting because national reporting on the border often is incomplete or inaccurate. And Texas has passed a number of new laws that aim to reshape two centuries of immigration being the constitutional domain of the federal government. Our reporters will focus on immigration and border security issues this year.

**As we diversify our revenue streams to build a sustainable news organization, El Paso Matters will offer sponsorship opportunities to local businesses and organizations that help pay for our journalism and connect those organizations with our audience.** We also will pursue funding from a new national program called Press Forward that has promised to make \$500 million available over the next five years to support local journalism. We believe El Paso Matters is well positioned to compete for grants from this and other national funders. If we can grow our revenue from local and national donors, we anticipate being able to add several new journalists in 2024 to enhance our service to El Paso.