



Julia Cusatis, the daughter of Italian and German immigrants, was born in Waukesha, Wisconsin. After raising her son in North Carolina, she moved to New Mexico in 2019 to join La Plaza de Encuentro Gathering Place—an adult education center engaging Latinx immigrant adults in skill building, leadership development, and economic opportunity—as its Director of Development. Drawn by the vibrancy of the community and the organization’s mission, Julia quickly rooted herself in Albuquerque and in the work of advancing social and economic justice alongside immigrant families.

At Encuentro, Julia leads a comprehensive development and communications strategy that sustains a growing \$2.1 million organizational budget. She and her team oversee grant writing, individual donor relations, major gifts, institutional partnerships, and signature special events. Her approach is grounded in her love of

people, relationship building, and thoughtful storytelling—values she names as essential to her success and to the culture of Encuentro.

In 2021, Julia spearheaded a successful capital campaign that resulted in the purchase and renovation of Encuentro’s first building at 907 4th Street SW in the historic Barelas neighborhood, along with a pledge to fully pay off the mortgage. With the support of state legislators allocating capital outlay resources and two national funders providing critical matching grants, Encuentro is now moving forward with plans to build a Home Health Aide Training Center on the property’s South Lot. As the nation’s fastest-growing workforce, home health care demands culturally rooted, immigrant-led training programs like Encuentro’s nationally recognized HHA program—paving the way for quality jobs, living wages, and dignified care for elders.

Julia holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, a master’s degree in Education from NC State, and a postgraduate certificate in Training and Development. Her 30+ year career spans higher education, hospitality, experiential learning, consulting, and organizational development, unified by a commitment to creating spaces of belonging and advancing equity, inclusion, and racial justice. She is passionate about building meaningful connections, strengthening community, and deepening her Spanish-language skills while living in the Land of Enchantment.

250-word version

Julia Cusatis, the daughter of Italian and German immigrants, was born in Waukesha, Wisconsin. After raising her son in North Carolina, she moved to New Mexico in 2019 to join La Plaza de Encuentro Gathering Place—an adult education center engaging Latinx immigrant adults in skill building for social and economic justice—as its Director of Development.

At Encuentro, Julia leads a comprehensive fundraising and communications strategy that supports a growing \$2.1 million budget. She oversees grant writing, individual donor relations, major gifts, and signature special events, grounding her work in a deep love of people and the power of strong relationships.

In 2021, she spearheaded a successful capital campaign that enabled the purchase of Encuentro’s first building at 907 4th Street SW in Albuquerque’s historic Barelas neighborhood, as well as a pledge to pay it off entirely. With the support of state legislators providing capital outlay funding and two national foundations offering matching grants, Encuentro is now planning the development of a Home Health Aide Training Center on the property’s South Lot. This expansion will strengthen the organization’s nationally recognized, immigrant-led HHA program—helping advance quality jobs, living wages, and dignified elder care in one of the nation’s fastest-growing workforces.

Julia holds degrees from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and NC State, along with a postgraduate certificate in Training and Development. Her 30+ year career spans higher education, hospitality, experiential learning, and organizational development. She is passionate about building connections, strengthening community, and deepening her Spanish-language skills while living in the Land of Enchantment.

150-word version

Julia Cusatis is the Director of Development at La Plaza de Encuentro Gathering Place, an adult education center supporting Latinx immigrant adults in building skills for social and economic justice. Originally from Waukesha, Wisconsin and the daughter of Italian and German immigrants, she moved to New Mexico in 2019 after raising her son in North Carolina.

At Encuentro, Julia leads a diversified fundraising and communications strategy that sustains a \$2.1 million budget through grants, donor engagement, major gifts, and special events. In 2021, she led a successful capital campaign that secured the purchase of Encuentro’s first building in Albuquerque’s historic Barelas neighborhood. With support from legislators and national matching funders, plans are now underway to build a Home Health Aide Training Center on the adjacent South Lot—expanding the reach of Encuentro’s nationally recognized, immigrant-led HHA program.

Julia holds degrees from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and NC State and is passionate about building connections, strengthening community, and deepening her Spanish while living in the Land of Enchantment.