

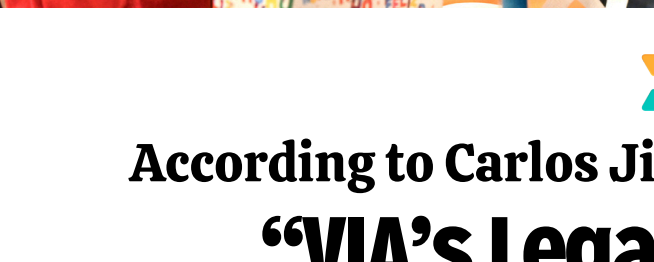


## VIA Hosts Its Eighth Annual Christmas Dinner and Toy Drive

This year, the Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA) organization hosted its eighth consecutive Christmas Dinner and Toy Drive, an event that has become a symbol of solidarity and hope for the migrant community in New York City.

VIA's Christmas Dinner brings the most authentic flavors of Venezuelan cuisine to life. The menu includes hallacas, pan de jamón (ham bread), ensalada de gallina (Venezuelan Chicken Salad), torta negra (Black Cake), rice pudding, and attendees to warm memories of their roots. This year, the organization served 300 meals and distributed 200 toys to children, bringing joy to families in need during the holiday season.

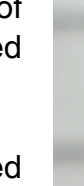
Niurka Meléndez, co-director of VIA, emphasized the impact of this initiative, which began in December 2017. "On average, we've delivered over 2,100 meals and more than 2,500 toys over the years. This is a day filled with emotions and one of our most iconic activities, and we are incredibly proud to see how those who were once beneficiaries are now part of the team making this beautiful event possible."



Meléndez highlighted that the event is more than just a celebration: "It's an honor to see that those who have received this gesture of solidarity want to pass on that same joy to the new migrants arriving in New York. VIA is truly a multiplier effect when things are done from the heart."

VIA's Christmas Dinner and Toy Drive is a powerful reminder of how unity and empathy can transform lives. This event not only nourishes bodies but also lifts spirits, reaffirming VIA's commitment to the migrant community and its mission to build a future filled with opportunities and hope.

For more information about this initiative or how to collaborate, visit [VIA's website](#) or follow them on social media.



## According to Carlos Jiménez, Asylum Seeker: "VIA's Legal Videos Are a Blessing for Migrants"

Carlos Jiménez arrived in New York two years ago, like many other Venezuelan migrants, carrying a mix of uncertainty, dreams, and the desire to build a better life. What began as a move in search of greater opportunities became a migration journey filled with challenges but also discoveries. His story is one of resilience, learning, and the power of community resources, particularly those offered by VIA.

Upon arriving in the United States, Carlos faced the same reality as thousands of asylum seekers: disorientation, lack of information, and the inability to afford legal representation. His first days were spent in a shelter as he sought guidance from local organizations. His life took a turn during a resource fair, where he encountered Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA)—a moment Carlos describes as "a blessing."

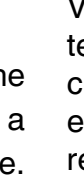
"From day one, VIA helped me understand that the process was long but not impossible. The volunteers showed me the path others had already taken," Carlos recalls. Thanks to VIA's free audiovisual resources, he achieved something remarkable: he filed his asylum application without needing to hire a lawyer. To do so, he downloaded a tutorial video from VIA's YouTube channel that explained how to complete the asylum application.

### Learning and Taking Action: The Power of VIA's Free Resources

Carlos began watching VIA's educational YouTube videos, in which immigration attorneys and experts who collaborate with VIA (\*) provide step-by-step explanations for completing immigration applications and accessing humanitarian protection programs in the United States. Wasting no time, he used New York City public libraries to access computers and the internet, gathering all the information he needed.

"I spent entire days at the Fifth Avenue library watching the videos and taking notes. It was a long process, but every video on VIA's channel gave me clarity. When I had everything ready, I attended VIA's in-person legal orientations to ensure I didn't make any mistakes," Carlos explains. His efforts paid off: he successfully submitted his asylum application on time, received confirmation of initial approval, completed fingerprinting, and, after 150 days, used another VIA tutorial video to apply for his work permit and Social Security number.

"Everything is in the videos. You can even do it from your phone. VIA makes it possible for any migrant, even without resources, to start their immigration process correctly," Carlos emphasizes.



## VIA Launches New Website Built on Innovation and Functionality to Serve Migrants

In an effort to strengthen its mission and commitment to the community, VIA is excited to announce the launch of its redesigned website. This project, led by Ronald Rosales as the driving force behind the reengineering initiative, and funded by The WES Mariam Assefa Fund, supports this VIA's effort.marks a significant milestone in the organization's digital evolution. With a focus on innovation, accessibility, and functionality, VIA aims to provide an online platform that reflects its identity and fosters deeper connections with its audience.



### A Cohesive and Modern Design

A cornerstone of the project was the establishment of a Design System, ensuring a consistent and professional visual experience. According to Rosales, "A design system not only enhances the aesthetics of the site but also ensures that every user interaction is intuitive and seamless. This was essential to achieving our accessibility goals."

Understanding the need to centralize information, VIA has introduced a new resources page. "We focused on creating a space where users can find all the organization's essential content, from YouTube videos to Instagram posts, in one place. This simplifies the user experience and reinforces the utility of the website," Rosales explained.

Another major addition to the site is the complete archive of newsletters. This new page not only organizes all past editions but also makes subscribing effortless with an intuitive button. Rosales remarked, "The goal was to connect more directly with our community, ensuring anyone can stay informed with just one click."

The redesign of the News Section prioritizes content organization and relevance. Articles are now displayed chronologically, allowing visitors to stay informed about the latest events and projects. "We wanted users to not only read our news but also feel up-to-date with the real-time impact we're making," said Rosales.

Recognizing the importance of facilitating community support, the donations page was completely optimized. Rosales stated, "Redesigning the donations page was crucial. Our focus was on eliminating barriers so that anyone interested in contributing could do so quickly and easily."

A renewed commitment to the community VIA's website redesign represents not only a technological leap but also a renewed commitment to the community. The enhancements reinforce VIA's mission to be a reliable and accessible resource, providing an online experience designed to connect, inform, and create impact.

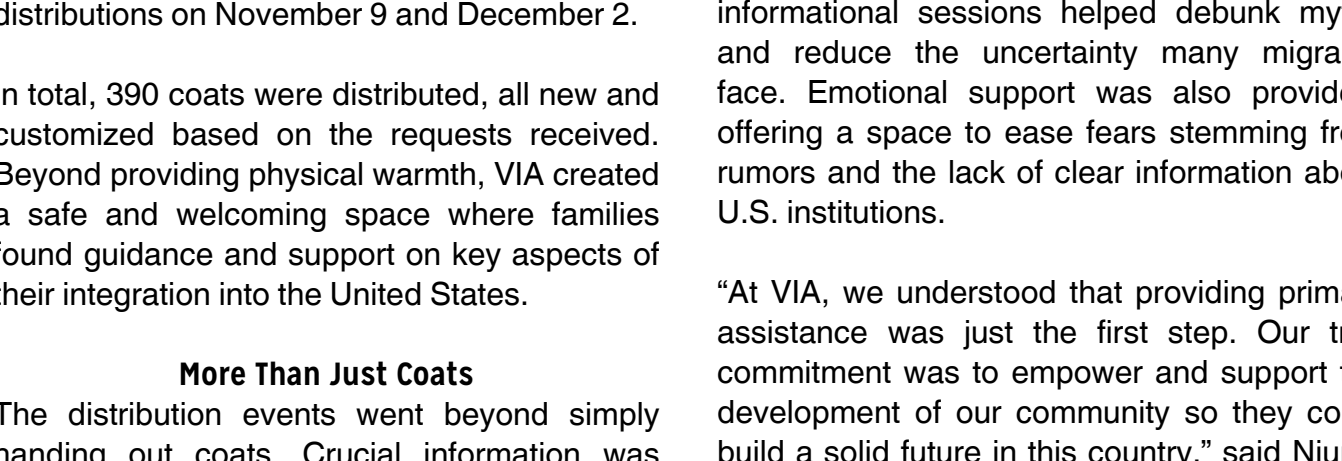
"This project was a collaborative effort that reflects our vision as an organization. We want every user to feel that this site was built with them in mind," concluded Rosales.

Explore VIA's new website at [www.vianyc.org](#).

(\*) A set of reusable components, patterns, style guides, and principles that help maintain visual and functional consistency across digital products or design projects.



## 2024: VIA, A Year of Achievements and Support for the Migrant Community



In a year marked by global and local challenges, Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA) has proven that commitment and solidarity can transform lives. Under the leadership of its co-directors and co-founders, Héctor Arguinzones and Niurka Meléndez, VIA closes 2024 with a track record reflecting a profound and sustained impact on migrant and refugee communities in the United States.

Throughout the year, VIA organized a total of 200 events aimed at providing support, information, and a sense of community to those navigating the difficulties of displacement. Among these initiatives were 77 legal events that helped over 5,500 participants understand their rights and explore paths to safety. Additionally, 57 English classes benefited 300 individuals, equipping them with tools for better integration and confidence in a new language.

### 2024: A Year of Growth in Emotional Support

Emotional support remained a priority for VIA, with 35 "Peer Support" activities providing a safe space for 565 beneficiaries. These activities strengthened emotional resilience and fostered meaningful connections among individuals with shared experiences.

In parallel, VIA celebrated the cultural richness and joy of the community through 11 cultural and recreational activities, bringing together 528 attendees in events filled with a sense of belonging and hope.

Dialogue and awareness about forced migration are also prominent in VIA's agenda this year. Through 24 forums and panels, over 900 participants joined discussions that amplified diverse stories and emphasized the need for inclusive solutions to the challenges faced by migrants, especially those fleeing oppressive regimes like Venezuela's.

### VIA Expands Its Reach Through Digital Content

VIA's impact extended beyond in-person events. The organization broadened its reach through digital platforms, connecting with over 3.9 million people on Instagram and building a community of more than 20,000 followers. The 36 new videos published this year garnered 113,500 views on YouTube, delivering vital information and inspiring stories to thousands of viewers.

For Héctor Arguinzones, these achievements are more than just numbers: "Every activity we carry out is a reminder that we are not alone in this mission. Every person we help reaffirms our belief in resilience and human potential."

Niurka Meléndez highlighted the transformative role of the community: "At VIA, we build bridges that connect dreams with realities. We are the support network people need to start anew."

2024 is a testament to VIA's unwavering commitment to its mission, showcasing how compassion and community can drive meaningful change.

