

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHT ✨



Adults who are a part of El Valor's programs celebrated the group's Valentine's Day celebration in 2019. Photo courtesy of El Valor.

By Katrina Pham

For over 50 years, [El Valor](#) has served children and adults with disabilities. The Pilsen-based social service nonprofit, whose name means “courage,” offers English and Spanish programs for children and adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities that are not easily found in the city.

El Valor will host a “Celebration of Life” to honor its community for people with diverse needs this Friday. The annual Valentine's Day event will bring its community together with a live DJ, dancing, Loteria, arts and crafts, and food.

“The celebrations hosted at El Valor are a chance for them to be themselves and celebrate their uniqueness in a safe and welcoming environment with their peers,” said Executive Director Jillian Gonzalez.

El Valor was founded in 1973 by Guadalupe Reyes, who wanted to fill the gap

in services for people with intellectual disabilities like her son. Fifty years later, El Valor offers programs for adults with intellectual and physical disabilities to learn and practice occupational and everyday skills such as cooking, gardening and job training. They also staff six homes with around-the-clock care for adults with disabilities.

But programs like these are hard to come by. Chicago faces a shortage of services available for people with developmental or intellectual disabilities. More than 12,000 people with developmental or intellectual disabilities were on the waiting list to receive state services last year, according to [CBS News](#). Gonzalez explained that the wait for services can be longer for Spanish-speaking adults.

For the hundreds attending the Valentine's Day party, the celebration is a welcome opportunity to share their appreciation and love for El Valor's community.