



LATINO CENTER OF THE MIDLANDS

WINTER 2015



PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH, ADULTS AND FAMILIES TO FIND THEIR PATH TO A BETTER DESTINO (DESTINY).

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2014: A YEAR OF GROWTH AT THE LATINO CENTER OF THE MIDLANDS



Pictured from left to right: Tania Moreno, Carolina Quezada, and Arturo Mejia. Ms. Moreno and Mr. Mejia were Destino 2014 keynote speakers.

We are so grateful to our funders and supporters for their continued vote of confidence in our mission and in our approach to service delivery. This last year, we witnessed increased program capacity as we are serving more youth at two additional high schools and more adult students through adult basic education. Our numbers grew by 57% in the Pathways to Success program and by 17% in the Adult Basic Education program.

2014 was also a year of continued focus on our three-year strategic initiatives that were adopted in the fall of 2012. We are very happy to report that our increased staff team is directly linked to our focus on offering expanded services to more youth and adults who need educational support services and assistance with basic skills building.

This year, our focus will once again fall on strategic growth and building on the success from last year. As you read through some of our 2014 highlights featured in this newsletter, I encourage you to make a donation to our center today. Your support allows us to continue to fulfill our mission of promoting the self-sufficiency and self-determination of Heartland Latino families and community by providing bilingual, high quality social, educational, economic and advocacy services.

We look forward to keeping you informed of our progress this year!

Carolina Quezada, Executive Director

New Board Members, Program Directors and Staff Join The Latino Center of the Midlands

In 2014, Latino Center of the Midlands (LCM) welcomed three new board members to the leadership of the organization. Carlos Cabrera Escalier (Holland Basham Architects), Pedro Salazar (Baird Holm, LLP) and Nick Rodriguez (Cox Communications) will assist with moving the Latino Center of the Midlands forward in its strategic initiatives. Equally significant is the hiring of two

new program directors, Raul Munoz (Adult Basic Education) and Melissa Mayo (Pathways to Success). They will each oversee the planning and implementation of program activities as well as establish and strengthen relationships with other organizations. Also, other new staff in the Adult Basic Education program include Niuris Mirabal (GED and Pre-GED), Armando

Allende (GED and Computer Literacy), and Alicia James (ESL and Computer Literacy). We also welcome three new Student Advocates to the Pathways to Success program: Carmen Chagolla (Brian High School), Mahatma Largaespada (Bellevue West High School), and Melvin Ramirez (South High School). Welcome to the LCM family!

Omaha Employers and Universities Connect with ABE Adult Learners



The Latino Center of the Midlands' (LCM) Adult Basic Education (ABE) program provides Spanish-speaking adult learners with GED, Pre-GED, Basic Literacy, Computer Literacy, and English as Second Language (ESL) instruction. We believe that by providing a high-quality, basic adult education program to immigrant, Spanish-speaking adults, we are helping them overcome barriers to employ-

ment and other goals that affect their quality of life. In keeping with this goal, the ABE program partnered with Lyman-Richey, Workforce Solutions, Omaha Steaks and Job Source USA to conduct a job fair on October 29, 2014. Over 33 ABE students participated in the job fair. Additionally, ABE staff met with the Kiewit Corporation and Valmont Industries during the year to discuss the opportuni-

ty that training programs in the trades (construction, welding, etc.) offer the adult learner. As a way to expand educational opportunities for these adults, an education fair was hosted by the ABE program on July 29, 2014. UNO, Bellevue University, MCC, and Peru State College were among the institutions of higher learning that participated in the event.

Impacting Destinos (Destinies): CSTA Program Helps Mother Reunite with Daughter After Six-Year Separation

Fabiola came to Latino Center of the Midlands (LCM) in 2011 asking for support in applying for a U-Nonimmigrant Visa (U-visa for victims who have suffered mental/physical abuse) because her husband had taken her oldest daughter, a U.S. national, to live in Mexico without her consent. For three years, the LCM Community Services and Technical Assistance (CSTA) program

worked very closely with Fabiola and assisted her by sending emails, faxes, letters and making phone calls to many U.S. and Mexican government agencies to assist in recovering her daughter. These agencies included the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Mexico, and the Institute for Women in Veracruz, Mexico. On December 20, 2014, Fabiola received an early Christmas

present: she was finally reunited with her daughter after six long years of separation. Fabiola credits the support from the LCM in making the reunification process possible. Her daughter is attending school for the first time and is being connected to other support services in the community to help her integrate to her new family and community.



Engaging Students and Families to Address Absenteeism in the Bellevue and Omaha Public Schools Districts



diverCITY mural created by P2S students with the support of the Nebraska Arts Council and Nebraska Cultural Endowment.

Every child deserves the opportunity to achieve their goals and become a thriving, productive citizen in our community. Regular school attendance is a significant factor in making that a reality. Chronic absenteeism is found to be one of the strongest predictors of dropping out of high school – stronger even than suspensions and test scores (Byrnes & Reyna 2012). Chronic absenteeism is different than truancy in that it is based on total days of school missed, including both excused and unexcused absences, whereas truancy is defined as the frequency of unexcused absences.

According to the 2012 report, *"The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools,"* the evidence indicates that it is how many days a student misses that matters, not why they miss them. In other words, the impact of missing school occurs if a student misses due to suspension, illness, skipping, caring for a family member, or any other reason.

continued from page 2...Engaging Students and Families



P2S students from Bryan High School and South High School.

It is because of these different reasons that the Pathways to Success (P2S) program incorporates a multi-faceted approach to improving absenteeism rates in the Bellevue and Omaha Public Schools Districts. Student Advocates provide school-based services, lunch and learn activities and afterschool programming to students in an effort to improve their school attendance and academics.

A special focus is placed on parental engagement and P2S provides monthly Family Nights to encourage school participation, parental advocacy, and the integration of the family unit. Currently, 103 students and their families are benefitting from the P2S program at Bryan High and South High Schools. Services were expanded to Bellevue West High School in 2014 to serve a growing Latino population. Further expansion is being explored at new school sites due to growing demand for services in the community.

Latino Center of the Midlands Engages in Strategic Planning with the Omaha Public Schools and Supports Local Bond Issue

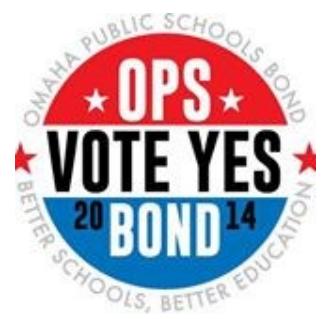
To help Omaha Public Schools' (OPS) leadership identify the district's new strategic direction, a steering committee and various workgroups were established to provide assistance in developing a five-year strategic plan. The Latino Center of the Midlands (LCM) was invited to participate in both the steering committee and in a workgroup. A series of proposed outcomes and

strategic principles were identified and the OPS Board of Education voted to approve its plan in March 2014. Additionally, the LCM encouraged clients and students to complete assessments regarding the recommended facilities capital plan. LCM was also a vital supporter of the bond aimed at providing over \$400 million in funding to fix OPS in the next 7 to 8 years.

LCM participated in a series of forums to educate the community about the bond initiative. OPS received 60% of voter support. This request was the biggest in state history and the district's first attempt at a voter-approved bond measure since 1999. A Citizen's Bond Oversight Committee (21 members) will oversee the implementation during the next phase of the process.

We are happy to announce that our LCM Executive Director, Carolina Quezada, is one of the 21 members selected to be part of this Oversight Committee.

For more information, email cquezada@latinocenterofthemidlands.org



The Growth of the Region: The Significance of Heartland 2050



The Latino Center of the Midlands has been a part of an effort aimed at developing a plan for the development of the region. This U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funded planning process, titled Heartland 2050 (H2050), has, as its objective, the production of a plan that will spur the growth of Omaha and its surrounding counties. After over a year of convening

various partners and industries in the region, the steering committee finally approved a draft vision document that will be submitted to HUD for implementation. The guiding principles of this approved vision document include: Equity, Efficiency, Inclusivity, Local Control & Regional Benefit. As Latino Center of the Midlands, we will continue to be a part of this effort

to move forward with implementing strategies that are inclusive of all communities. To learn more about Heartland 2050 or to get involved visit:

www.heartland2050.org
or call (402) 444-6866.

LATINO CENTER OF THE MIDLANDS MISSION STATEMENT

To promote the self-sufficiency and self-determination of Heartland Latino families and community by providing bilingual, high quality social, educational, economic, and advocacy services.



Supporting the mission of the Latino Center of the Midlands is easy!

Online donations accepted through PayPal on our website:
www.latinocenterofthemidlands.org/get-involved

You may also mail your check payable to the Latino Center of the Midlands to:
Latino Center of the Midlands
Attn: Donor Relations
4821 S. 24th Street, Omaha, NE 68107

LATINO CENTER OF THE MIDLANDS STAFF ROSTER

Executive Director
Carolina Quezada

Administrative Services Coordinator
Silvia Velez Leon

Communications and Donor Relations Associate
Juliana Garza

Community Services and Technical Assistance (CSTA)
Socorro Adrada, CSTA Specialist
Reyna Valleccillo, CSTA Specialist
Rosana Perri, Receptionist

Adult Basic Education (ABE)
Raul Munoz, Program Director
Armando Allende, Computer Literacy/GED
Leticia Crisman, Literacy
Alicia James, ESL/Computer Literacy
Niuris Mirabal, GED/Pre-GED
Octavio Sordo, GED

Pathways to Success (P2S)
Melissa Mayo, Program and Evaluation Director
Carmen Chagolla, Student Advocate, Bryan High School
Salvador Hernandez, Noble Youth/Ollin Facilitator
Mahatma Largaespada, Student Advocate, Bellevue West High School
Melvin Ramirez, Student Advocate, South High School



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Upcoming Events

Save the Date!



Destino 2015

Annual Fundraising Dinner

Monday, July 27