



LULACnews

Winter 2017



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LULACnews

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A Message From the President

Dear LULAC Members,

Thank you for your support of LULAC. As the nation's oldest and largest Latino civil rights organization, we value the work that our members undertake in advocating for Latinos from within their local communities to the halls of Congress. Now more than ever, we must remain committed to our advocacy efforts to ensure that the Latino community continues to have access to the best avenues for progress and mobility. This year, as we celebrate 88 years of successfully improving the lives of Latino Americans, let's continue to uphold our past triumphs while proactively working toward ensuring the best future of the Latino community.

Thanks to efforts by our LULAC members, 2016 proved to be one of the most memorable on record. LULAC volunteers registered thousands of Latino voters across the country, and successfully mobilized them on Election Day to produce the highest Latino voter turnout in history. LULAC education and health programs are serving thousands of individuals and providing them with important enrichment opportunities that ensure that our students are living up to their highest potential and our citizens are living healthy lifestyles. In our efforts to close the digital divide in Latino communities, new *Empower Hispanic America with Technology* centers opened in various communities across the country.

As we prepare to celebrate our Legislative Conference and Awards Gala, we look forward to providing LULAC members with the unique opportunity to meet with federal agency leaders, Members of Congress, and policy experts to advocate for the issues that benefit our communities. At a time of great uncertainty, it is important that we remain vigilant and hold our leaders accountable for the issues that matter. We will continue to fight for the best educational opportunities for our children, statehood for Puerto Rico, quality healthcare for all, and comprehensive immigration reform.

Critical to our efforts will be involving the next generation of LULAC leaders to continue the advocacy efforts modeled by our founders 88 years ago. Held concurrently with the Legislative Conference each year, the Emerge Latino Conference will bring



some of the brightest Latino college students to attend policy briefings and leadership trainings in Washington, D.C. Students will take their knowledge directly to Capitol Hill and meet with members of Congress and advocate for the policies that benefit their communities.

It is my hope that we leave the Legislative Conference having impressed upon our lawmakers the importance of addressing the policy priorities of the Latino community. As the largest minority group in the nation, it is imperative that our leaders hear the needs of our community and implement the policies that not only benefit Latinos—but all Americans.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger C. Rocha Jr." in a cursive script.

Roger C. Rocha
LULAC National President



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SEAWORLD HOSTS FAR WEST REGIONAL CONFERENCE





*By: Edna Degollado,
LULAC National Civic Engagement Coordinator*

Last year, LULAC Youth arrived in San Diego, California for the inaugural Far West Regional Youth Conference. The two-day conference was hosted at SeaWorld, thanks to a generous partnership that allowed over 80 youth members to attend workshops led by LULAC's Education and Youth Programs staff, the LULAC National Youth Board, and SeaWorld's Education and Conservation Department.

The students participated in workshops that focused on building self-confidence, leadership, and teamwork, while simultaneously informing them on the importance of preserving marine habitats and nature conservation. LULAC led a leadership development session that challenged conference participants to classify qualities that define effective leadership. Through a series of interactive tasks, students were tasked with incorporating these qualities into their own leadership styles, allowing them to grow as leaders in their classrooms and communities.

During the advocacy workshop, participants

LULAC Youth from across California came to SeaWorld for interactive leadership training in a fun environment.

identified issues they were passionate about. In a heartfelt discussion, the students discussed lack of access to extracurricular activities, police violence, and homelessness as just a few of the many issues facing their communities. In addition to the leadership development, the sessions allowed LULAC youth members to see the concerns of their peers in other cities and provided them with the opportunity to build connections across the region.

Following the workshops, SeaWorld's Education and Conservation Department took the students on a special night tour where they participated in educational activities at various park exhibits. Students fed bat rays, visited fish tanks, learned about shark anatomy, and had many other experiences during the special night program.

On the second day of the conference, attendees spoke with a SeaWorld marine biologist and veterinarian about an average day working with animals and the various veterinary procedures and facilities found at SeaWorld.



Participants learned about careers in marine biology by participating in a behind-the-scenes tour of SeaWorld San Diego.

The conference closed with a presentation by Francisco Castañeda, a member of the San Ysidro Community Planning Group and organizer for the Center on Policy Initiatives (CPI). The Center on Policy Initiatives is a San Diego-based think tank that advocates for economic justice and strong local communities in the San Diego area. Castañeda is the youngest member to be elected to the planning group and a former Policy and Legislation intern at LULAC National. He talked about his organizing work at CPI, and explained the important role that youth play in advocating for their communities. He encouraged the students to get involved in their communities and develop a deep understanding of what they need to be successful. Castañeda ended with a call to action and explained to the youth that it is never too early to become a leader in your community.

After a couple of days of informative workshops and inspiring speakers, LULAC youth left the conference ready to make change in their communities. Although already leaders in their schools, churches, and community organizations, the conference allowed participants to further hone their leadership skills and apply them in a variety of different circumstances. LULAC will continue to invest in its youth to ensure that all are adequately prepared to be the future leaders of our communities, states, and nations. ■



SeaWorld staff provided first-hand knowledge of marine biology through interactive science labs.





LULAC & CITIBANK PARTNER TO HELP YOUNG LATINOS BECOME FINANCIALLY FIT



LULAC and Citibank partnered to help young Latinos learn about financial literacy and apply these lessons to their daily financial transactions. Together, LULAC and Citibank are closing the financial literacy gap in the Latino community through hosting multiple workshops in communities with high Latino populations. The workshops focus on budgeting, saving, and credit management skills and provide young Latinos with the necessary tools to plan for their financial future. Over 90 percent of participants reported that they learned valuable information during the workshop they attended. To evaluate your financial management skills, take the Pocket Smart Financial Fitness Quiz.

Financial Fitness Quiz

Answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

1. I have a checking account and/or savings account.	YES	NO
2. I have the equivalent of at least three months of living expenses saved up to cover emergencies.	YES	NO
3. I am aware of the total of my monthly living expenses and I have enough money each month to cover it all.	YES	NO
4. I pay all of my bills in full every month.	YES	NO
5. I have a plan (budget) for spending and/or saving, which I review and follow every month.	YES	NO
6. I have written financial goals with a date and dollar cost (ex. I will save \$10,000 for a new car within 2 years).	YES	NO
7. I keep organized financial records and can find important documents easily.	YES	NO
8. I save regularly for long-term financial goals, such as education, a house, or retirement.	YES	NO
9. Less than 20% of my monthly take-home income goes to my credit cards, student loans and car payments.	YES	NO
10. I pay my credit card in full to avoid interest charges. (If you don't have a credit card circle 'Yes').	YES	NO
11. I compare prices for major purchases by checking at least three sources.	YES	NO
12. I contribute to my employer's or my personal retirement fund.	YES	NO



13. I am aware of how much I need to save each month to retire at the age I would like to and continue to live comfortably.	YES	NO
14. I have life insurance (at least enough to cover funeral expenses).	YES	NO
15. I have health insurance.	YES	NO
16. I have a will.	YES	NO
17. I have checked my credit report within the last year.	YES	NO
18. I review my cash, debit, and credit spending and review my expenses every month.	YES	NO
19. I am saving at least 10% of my income each month.	YES	NO
20. I regularly read about improving my personal finances and how to make informed and responsible financial decisions.	YES	NO

How did you score?

Give yourself five (5) points for each “Yes” answer. Give yourself zero (0) for each “No” answer.

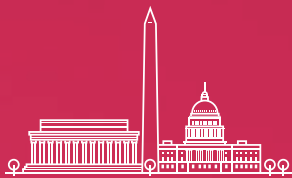
0 to 20 points: Financial Disaster. You could be headed for financial trouble. Get your spending under control immediately and put your credit cards away. You need all the help you can get, but don’t despair! It’s never too late to take the first step towards improving your finances.

25 to 40 points: Financially Flabby. You are headed for financial difficulty. Now is the time to take action to improve your money management skills.

45 to 60 points: E for Effort. Good effort. You are doing a fair job of managing your finances and have taken some steps in the right direction. Review the statements you answered “No” to and see how you can incorporate those actions into your financial plan.

60 to 75 points: Almost there. You are definitely on the right track financially. Keep an eye on your budget/savings plan and your financial priorities. You’ve done a good job so far, above average, so you can only improve from here on!

80 to 100 points: You’re in Great Financial Shape. You are in terrific financial shape! Your hard work has paid off, and your personal financial plan is healthy and thriving. Keep up the great work!



LULAC CELEBRATES 87 YEARS AT THE LULAC NATIONAL CONVENTION IN WASHINGTON, DC

By: Geoffrey Nolan,
LULAC National Communications Associate

LULAC kicked off its 87th annual national convention and exposition in Washington, D.C. last July. Held at the Washington Hilton Hotel, LULAC members traveled from all over the country to experience five full days of workshops, an expo, visits from leading government officials, and Latino entertainment. In the face of vitriolic campaign rhetoric that sought to pit Americans against each other, LULAC members gathered to celebrate the diversity that truly makes America great. Instead of building walls, LULAC members worked together to build policy solutions to some of the most pressing issues facing the Latino community.



The annual Federal Training Institute provided important leadership and diversity seminars to hundreds of federal employees in the Washington, D.C. area.



U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) spoke with students about the importance of civic engagement and creating change in their communities.

Washington, D.C. was chosen as the host city due to the political importance of the 2016 election. Unlike any campaign in modern memory, Latinos bore the brunt of unprecedented attacks that questioned their work ethic, their honesty, and their patriotism. Latino immigrant families received a disappointing decision from the U.S. Supreme Court of DAPA and expanded DACA and their voting power has been under attack from state legislatures seeking to break up their political power. With so much at stake, LULAC members convened on Washington to show government leaders that the Latino population is watching and listening and is ready to resist any policies that unfairly target Latinos.

Unlike any convention in recent memory, the 2016 Convention counted on the participation of two presidential candidates, six cabinet secretaries, and a host of other elected officials and Latino entertainers.

After meeting with some of LULAC's youth leaders, Democratic Presidential Candidate Bernie Sanders spoke



LULAC National President Roger C. Rocha, Jr. honored veterans who have proudly served our country at the Defenders of Freedom Breakfast.

at Wednesday's Partnership Luncheon on many of the economic issues facing the Latino community including income inequality. In addition, Sanders addressed the negative rhetoric characterizing the campaign.

"It's the job of the next President to bring Americans together—not tear them apart," he said to raucous cheers and applause from the audience.

The following day, Democratic Presidential Nominee Hillary Rodham Clinton spoke at the Unity Luncheon. After being introduced by a DREAMer student and Collegiate LULAC member from the University of Texas-Austin, Clinton outlined her vision for America while emphasizing the importance of making sure that America works for everyone—no matter their race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender. In line with the unity theme, Clinton directly addressed the controversy surrounding statements made by then-Republican Presidential Candidate Donald Trump about the Latino community.

"You are not intruders," she said. "You are our neighbors, our colleagues, our friends, and our families. You make our nation stronger and more creative. We have got to say with one voice that Latinos are a vital part of the American experience."

In addition to Secretary Clinton and Senator Sanders, other high-profile speakers included Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julián Castro, Secretary of Education John King, Secretary of Labor Tom Perez, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Energy Dr. Ernest Moniz, U.S. Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy, Federal Trade Commission Chairwoman Edith Ramirez, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, Actress Rosie Perez, Actress Diane Guerrero, and Actor Edward James Olmos.



Democratic Presidential Nominee Hillary Rodham Clinton spoke on some of the most pressing issues facing the Latino community.

LULAC also hosted its annual Federal Training Institute during the convention, providing important leadership and development training to hundreds of federal employees. The Federal Training Institute is one of LULAC's most successful programs and focuses on addressing the lack of diversity in the federal government. By working in partnership with federal agencies, LULAC is ensuring that the federal workforce of the future will be as diverse as the population that it serves.

With so many issues facing the Latino community members had the opportunity to attend various workshops featuring leading policy experts, academics, nonprofit leaders, and corporate executives. Hundreds of convention participants attended panels focusing on immigration, health, education, and civic engagement. In addition to the workshops, convention attendees could also enjoy the free expo featuring a variety of interactive exhibits from corporate sponsors, nonprofits, universities, and federal agencies.

The convention finished on Saturday with a free concert for the community and convention participants. Those who attended enjoyed the music of salsa legend Gilberto Santa Rosa and A.B. Quintanilla and the Kumbia Kings All Starz with an opening set by local talent Jason Cerda. After almost a week in Washington, DC celebrating the achievements of LULAC and the Latino community, LULAC members returned to their local communities reinvigorated to advocate for their communities and ensure that the Latino voice is heard at the national level.



Salsa star Gilberto Santa Rosa and A.B Quintanilla performed at the Concierto Voces Unidas to hundreds of convention attendees.



The LULAC Women's Commission renewed its commitment to women's empowerment by honoring exemplary LULAC women for service in their communities.



U.S. Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch emphasized voting rights in her speech at the Presidential Awards Banquet, urging LULAC members to protect the right to vote in their communities.



U.S. Secretary of Labor Tom Perez energized the crowd at the Women's Luncheon with a passionate speech on increasing access to economic opportunity for the Latino community.



Convention participants attended panels and briefings on some of the most important issues facing the Latino community including immigration, healthcare, education, civic engagement & technology access.



Presenting Sponsor Toyota brought their popular interactive Toyota Corolla to celebrate its 50th anniversary. The expo featured exhibitions from leading corporations, government agencies, and nonprofits looking to display their services to the Latino community.



The U.S. Postal Service unveiled its latest commemorative stamp featuring Jaime Escalante in a special ceremony featuring U.S. Secretary of Education John King and actor Edward James Olmos.



30TH ANNIVERSARY

Improving the literacy skills of 10,000+ students since 1986

LNESC is celebrating 30 years of Young Readers! The Young Readers Program was launched as a national initiative 1986 to improve reading skills amongst kindergarten through second grade students. Since then, it has evolved into an effective intervention for raising the reading levels of academically challenged children, while also drawing parents into a literacy development framework that brings benefits to the entire family. Highly interactive and family-oriented, the year-long program strengthens young student's literacy and instills a love for reading, at the same time improving their communication, writing, and comprehension skills.

"I'm a parent of a second-language student. He had a speech delay problem. I've seen him improve in speech and grammar after Young Readers. I've seen him improve in just wanting to read more. Every Monday and Wednesday, he comes home really happy, talking about he learned something new, how he was excited that they did a little play. It's more than reading - this is helping kids reach their goals. They're happier about school. All of us are low-income students, so this helps a lot. Thank you!" – YRP Parent

Thank you to current partners Target and Proctor & Gamble for supporting Young Readers!



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Citizens for coming together and striving for a Better World.



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Rosendo Cruz

Public & Government Affairs Manager, ExxonMobil

ExxonMobil

By: Geoffrey Nolan, LULAC National Communications Associate

As a young boy growing up in McAllen, Texas; Rosendo Cruz's father always told him, "Whatever you do, do it 'con ganas.' If you do this, you'll go far." Doing things 'con ganas,' or with a lot of heart, became a model for how Cruz lived his life, and is something that he attributes to his successful rise from a child of humble beginnings in the Texas Rio Grande Valley to a decades-long career in corporate America at ExxonMobil.

Born to Mexican immigrants who settled in McAllen, Cruz enjoyed a family life that put a high value on education. His father, a construction worker, and his mother, a factory worker, never obtained college degrees, yet Cruz was taught the value of a college education by his parents from a very young age.

"My father always said, 'Once you have an education, nobody can take that away,'" says Cruz. "He saw education as the equalizer, the way that we could gain access to a better life."

The focus on education propelled Cruz to success in high school, where a math teacher named Mr. Ramirez quickly recognized his talent and challenged him further. Seeing that Cruz excelled in math with a natural talent, it was Mr. Ramirez who first encouraged him to be an engineer. Cruz had never considered the field of engineering until Mr. Ramirez opened his eyes to all of the career opportunities that existed outside of McAllen. Mr. Ramirez was Cruz's first mentor, an experience he credits with informing his decision to attend college and pursue engineering.

With the full support of his parents, Cruz went to the University of Texas at Austin to study engineering. Although his parents didn't even know what engineering was, they gave their blessing for him to study in Austin, even though it meant forgoing a potential paycheck that could come from him entering the workforce in McAllen.

"My parent's friends were incredulous as to why my parents would send me to school instead of keeping me in McAllen to work and contribute to the household finances," says Cruz. "But my parents believed in me; and believed that by having an education, I wouldn't

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WITH 8 OUT OF 10 FUTURE JOBS BEING STEM-RELATED, IT IS ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS TO GET LATINO CHILDREN EXCITED ABOUT MATH AND SCIENCE.

have to do the back-breaking work that they had done their whole lives. They wanted better for their children."

At UT Austin, Cruz excelled in his studies and joined the Society of Hispanic Engineers (SHPE). For the first time in his life, he saw Latino students in leadership positions and achieving success. He looked up to many of the older students for guidance.

"I saw a connection between what Mr. Ramirez inspired me to do as a high school student and what my SHPE colleagues were showing me," he says. "Both were driving me to realize my full potential, and I began to understand the importance of mentorship."

Cruz's studious mentality paid off, and in his sophomore year, he accepted an internship at ExxonMobil. After a successful summer, the internship turned into a co-op position for the next two years, and ExxonMobil provided him with a full scholarship for his remaining two years of school.

Since his first internship with ExxonMobil, Cruz has remained with the company for 24 years and has held fourteen assignments. Cruz attributes his success to the lessons he learned growing up in McAllen, including the passion instilled in him by his father to always do things *con ganas*.

"I've always tried to go above and beyond what is expected," he says. "You're never done with anything. You can always do more to make it better."

Cruz's extensive career with ExxonMobil has afforded him many assignments, ranging from engineering design to operations management. However, his last ten assignments have focused on developing relationships with the community through public affairs.

One of ExxonMobil's latest diversity initiatives that Cruz is particularly passionate about involves encouraging more Latino students to pursue STEM careers. As part of his job, Cruz visits schools across the country to inform students of the benefits of studying STEM subjects and the opportunities that higher education can afford them.

"For many of these students, it's huge to see Latinos in these positions of leadership," he says. "With 8 out of 10 future jobs being STEM-related, it is absolutely critical for teachers and parents to get Latino children excited about math and science."

Cruz sees ExxonMobil's partnership with LULAC as critical to this effort. Cruz recognized that the Latino community has the talent; it just needs a pipeline to these careers. Two years ago, Cruz helped start a scholarship program administered through the LULAC National Education Service Centers, Inc. (LNESEC) that is given to high school students attending universities for STEM-related careers. The first national winner, Stephanie Diaz, attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and will be interning with ExxonMobil this summer.

"The value of our partnership with LULAC is that LULAC has access to these talent pools across the country," he says. "ExxonMobil can capitalize on this and engage with local councils to provide Latino students with opportunities to pursue STEM careers."

When describing his commitment to continuing these efforts on behalf of ExxonMobil, Cruz reflects on a meeting he had with the Past LULAC National President Rosa Rosales and the poignant call to action that she gave him. In a meeting over *pan dulce* in San Antonio, Texas, Rosales turned to Cruz and told him, "You've done well and you've been successful, now go back and help others."

By helping ExxonMobil invest in Latino youth, Cruz is doing just that, creating opportunities so that all Latino youth will one day have the opportunity to pursue the most vibrant careers in the nation and realize their full potential. ■

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN THE LATINO COMMUNITY

By: Cristina Sandoval, LULAC National Workforce Development Programs Coordinator

Living in today's digital age requires almost constant connectivity. College applications, job postings, and paying utility bills are almost exclusively offered online. As the Internet becomes more of a necessity, an alarming digital divide continues to grow among low-income Americans. The digital divide refers to the lack of access to affordable Internet found in many low income communities. Without Internet access, many of these families don't have access to certain job applications and children can't access online resources that are critical to furthering their education. The digital divide further contributes to the "homework gap" where children lacking broadband resources often do not have the necessary tools to complete their homework. However, the digital divide isn't just a buzzword; it's a reality—especially in the Latino community. According to the Pew Research Center, only 56 percent of Hispanics had high-speed internet access at home in 2013.

In order to ensure that Latinos have the tools necessary to succeed in the digital era, LULAC is working to close the digital divide with its *Empower Hispanic America with Technology* (EHAT) initiative. Since 2004, the initiative has established community technology centers (CTC) with access to free broadband in underserved Latino areas. CTCs focus on providing community members with internet access and computer and internet training courses. In addition, CTCs empower their users to use the Internet to complete school work and access college resources, financial aid searches, job training, job searches, money management resources, English language courses, and citizenship preparation courses. Some centers have special offerings including STEM workshops for local youth and resume building workshops for those applying for jobs.

The success of the initiative is due in large part to our nonprofit organizations and corporate sponsors that are dedicated to bridging the digital divide by bringing critical resources to Latino communities across

the nation. A total of 65 technology centers have been launched since 2004 across 26 different states including Puerto Rico. To date, the EHAT initiative has touched the lives of 1.6 million people and continues bringing valuable resources to the Latino community.

Just this year alone, LULAC has refreshed a total of 10 existing centers by providing brand new state-of-the-art technology that includes new computers, printers, broadband resources, and Microsoft Office. In addition, a total of 5 new CTC's have been launched this year to expand the EHAT network. LULAC remains committed to bridging the digital divide and providing the Hispanic community with access to technology that reflects their interests and needs. To find an EHAT center near you, please visit

www.LULAC.org/EHAT. ■



At EHAT tech centers, members of the community can access online GED preparation, apply for jobs, and receive online homework help.



LULAC WOMEN'S COMMISSION ANNOUNCES PRIORITIES FOR 2017

By: Lourdes Galvan, LULAC National Vice President for Women

After hosting an exciting Women's Conference in Los Angeles, California and inducting new LULAC Women leaders into the Hall of Fame at the 2016 National Convention, the LULAC Women's Commission is enthusiastic about improving the lives of Latinas this upcoming year. In 2017, the Women's Commission is thrilled to highlight the issues that we have identified as critical for the success and progress of Latinas.

Latinas are beating the odds and are quickly becoming an influential constituency. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Latinas will make up one-third of all women in the United States by 2060. As our community grows, it is critical that we have a place at the table so that we have a say in the policies that allow our community to move forward.

We have the civic duty to shape our country's economic and political climate and improve the quality of life for not just our community—but for all Americans. Our roles as leaders in our homes and communities make us ideal agents of change, and by giving us the opportunity to fully participate in national politics, we can bring our unique perspectives to the advocacy arena.

The LULAC National Women's Commission will ensure that as the Latina population increases, our community will become more visible and our influence will become greater. The LULAC Women's Commission fully understands that Latina voices are critical to shaping policies and programs that positively affect Latino communities. For the upcoming year, the Women's Commission resolves to address the following issues.

Education—Latinas continue to lag behind other groups in educational attainment. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, Latinas have the lowest educational attainment levels among women. This translates to a lack of representation in many of the most lucrative careers, including those in the STEM field. In addition to advocating for higher education enrollment rates and retention rates, high educational standards in elementary and secondary education must be a priority. This will ensure that more Latinas are not only attending college at higher rates, but are adequately prepared for its academic rigors.

Employment—Latinas continue to make gains in the workplace, but still face employment barriers that negatively impact their economic security. A major pay gap still exists between men and women and the gap is even more pronounced for Latinas. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Latinas only

make 55 cents for every dollar paid to a white man for the same job. Despite the pay gap, Latina-owned businesses are the fastest growing in the country. In order to support more innovative Latinas and facilitate their entry into the economic sector, the Women's Commission will continue to advocate for equal pay policies and programs that encourage more Latinas to participate in the economy.

Media Representation—Latinos continue to remain grossly underrepresented in English-language media. In television and movies, Latinos are often represented as criminals and cheap labor while Latinas are relegated to sex objects and maids. Part of the issue is the lack of diversity in the development stages of media programs. Latino screenwriters, producers, and directors are vastly outnumbered by non-Latinos, and this affects how they're portrayed on television. Steps like the inclusion of Melissa Villaseñor in the cast of *Saturday Night Live* are positive first steps towards addressing these issues, and the Women's Commission will advocate for entertainment that accurately reflects the Latino experience in the United States.

Political Representation—The Latina voice is severely underrepresented in political representation at all levels of government. According to *LatinasRepresent*, out of the 8,236 seats in state and national political office, only 109 are held by Latinas. Only one Latina has served as a U.S. Governor, one Latina has served as a U.S. Senator, and only nine Latinas currently serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. When Latinas are left out of the decision-making process, the policies created may not accurately represent the needs of our community. The LULAC Women's Commission will actively support initiatives that help more Latinas overcome the barriers preventing them from seeking elected office, and will actively encourage more Latinas to consider running for public office.

None of these policies will ever come to fruition if our community continues to stay home on Election Day. As state legislators attempt to diminish our voting power, we are doing an extreme disservice to our community and disenfranchising ourselves when we remain silent. More Latinos get into public office when Latinos vote and more issues that Latinos care about become a reality when we make our voice heard. For the upcoming year, the LULAC Women's Commission is encouraging all Latinos to register to vote and get involved in their communities. Together, we can harness the power of the Latino vote and make a difference in federal, state, and local elections.

ADVOCATING FOR A LIFE OF DIGNITY

LULAC Council #22914 brings disability awareness and advocacy to the organization.

By: Richard Couder,

President, LULAC El Paso Special Needs Council #22914

Throughout its 88-year history, LULAC has advocated for the equal rights of Latinos living throughout the United States. Latinos are a diverse group of people representing different countries, cultures, races, and religions, and as we have progressed since our founding in 1929, we have expanded our definition of civil rights to include a variety of different issues including immigration, labor, and LGBT issues. Thanks to the efforts of El Paso Special Needs LULAC Council #22194, we are expanding our advocacy efforts to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive equitable access to education, employment, and healthcare; and are given the opportunity to fully participate in our society. Thanks to their hard work, LULAC passed a resolution in support of individuals with intellectual developmental disabilities that calls on LULAC to promote opportunities for education and employment for Americans with disabilities and raise awareness on the challenges that they face in their everyday lives.

The El Paso Special Needs Council formed as a result of the limited opportunities available to Americans with disabilities and the lack of initiative on behalf of our government to actively address many of their daily struggles. We live in a world of constant contact with individuals with disabilities and are eyewitnesses to the challenges and issues that they face trying to live the life they desire. As caregivers, family members, and allies, we feel the struggles of our loved ones with disabilities and are frustrated by the very limited opportunities offered in education, employment, healthcare, housing, and transportation. It is important to understand that a person's disability not only impacts their life, but those of their loved ones as well.

An estimated 18.7 percent of the population living in the United States or nearly 1 out of 5 people has a disability according to the broad definition of disability reported by the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau. That percentage translates to approximately 56.7 million people with approximately 13.2 percent of those identifying as Hispanic or Latino as reported by the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).

Upon looking at a variety of disability definitions, our council settled upon a definition that defines a disability as *any hindrance to a person's communicative, cognitive and/or physical abilities which occurred either at birth or later in life and negatively impacts one or more major life activities*. It's often difficult to come up with a concise definition for what is a disability because of a wide-range of already existing ones, yet when analyzing many of these definitions, there are some common characteristics and overlap.

Although our council primarily focuses on individuals



The El Paso LULAC Special Need Council #22914 advocates for the well-being of individuals with disabilities and their full participation in all aspects of our society.

with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD), we believe that many of the challenges and issues encountered by individuals with I/DD are also faced by others with different disabilities. Our goal is to highlight the challenges in education, employment and healthcare that individuals with I/DD face as well as outline recommendations made by our council for improving the quality of life and opportunities available to all persons with a disability.

Educational Challenges: One can't deny the power of education to transform the lives of individuals. In addition to the standard K-12 education, higher education opens even more doors of opportunity, including more career options. Families of children with disabilities want the same opportunities for their children, yet what is a family to do when their child is born with an intellectual and developmental disability that severely limits their educational opportunities? Realistically, the goals and aspirations that a family has for a child with I/DD will be different. Families are often more focused on where to obtain information and services that can be utilized to help their child maximize their future opportunities. The National Center for Education reports that in the 2013-2014 school year, "the number of children and youth ages 3 -21 receiving special education services was 6.5 million or about 13 percent of all public school students in the United States." Of those, 12 percent identify as Hispanic or Latino.

In order to help ease the anxieties and obstacles that these families face, we must ensure that our schools and communities become more accommodating of individuals with disabilities. Awareness is the foundation of effectively advocating for children with disabilities. Families must be aware of their parental rights so that they can advocate for their children. Schools and administrators must be aware of the challenges associated with state assessments and the lack of future educational and career opportunities for students with disabilities so that they can actively work to remedy many of these issues.

Employment Challenges: For the vast majority of individuals, the career and professional choices we made were left to our own choosing, based on our interests and education. However, many of the same opportunities and choices are simply not available to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). According to The Arc, the nation's leading advocate for all people with I/DD, "the majority of adults with I/DD are



After working in the El Paso area for years, LULAC Council #22914 expanded its advocacy to the national level by passing a resolution at the 2016 LULAC National Convention in Washington, D.C. to expand LULAC's advocacy efforts to include individuals with disabilities.

either unemployed or underemployed, despite their ability, desire and willingness to work in the community." The ARC also comments that "on average, workers with disabilities face significant gaps in pay and compensation compared to workers with no disability." In August 2016, the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) reported that of individuals ages 16 and over in the United States, only 19.8 percent of people with disabilities were employed in comparison to the 68.8 percent of people without disabilities.

Beyond a lack of job opportunities for the disabled, there also exists a clear gap in earning potential. The median earnings of a person with a disability is equivalent to nearly 68 percent of those without a disability according to the 2014 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey. Important measures must be taken to address this issue by increasing access to job training programs that are inclusive of individuals with disabilities and raising awareness among employers on how to best work with someone with a disability. With more inclusive job training programs and improvements in the employee-employer relationship for employees with disabilities, we firmly believe that the employment and wage gap between employees with disabilities and those without will be bridged.

Healthcare Challenges: Health is fundamental to improving the livelihood of individuals with disabilities. Improving the health and healthcare of individuals with a disability is critical to their success in all aspects of their life. Health is central to exercising all other rights and becoming



LULAC Council #22914 encourages all LULAC councils to begin advocating for more opportunities for individuals with disabilities in their communities to ensure equal opportunity for all.

a productive member of society. Right now, individuals with disabilities and their care providers must navigate a complicated healthcare system to ensure that they are receiving the best care so that they may take advantage of life's opportunities. Action must be taken to reduce the long waiting periods for Medicaid waiver programs to ensure greater accessibility for individuals with disabilities so that they can be relieved from the financial burdens that may accompany their healthcare options. In addition, we must ensure that medical providers are equipped with the best mechanisms for detecting intellectual disabilities in order to allow families to plan for and seek the services that they need for their child. With such an important impact on other issues, it is necessary that we continue advocating for the best care to ensure that individuals with disabilities can access as many opportunities as possible.

Moving Towards Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Americans with Disabilities: It will be a long arduous journey, but we will continue the fight for equal rights for those with disabilities. Anyone—regardless of their abilities—deserves the opportunity to improve their quality of life. In order to resolve these issues, we are urging LULAC councils to take up the issue of disability advocacy in their local communities, at the state level, and at the federal level. This will ensure that those who are making the policy decisions that affect our lives are aware of the challenges that individuals with disabilities face. This can take the form of starting an issue-oriented LULAC council supporting disability awareness, or starting a Committee for Persons

with Disabilities at the National, State, and District level within LULAC. We urge all members to take an active role in identifying strategic partners in their communities who serve those with disabilities and connect these organizations with individuals who need their help. By starting at the grassroots level we can successfully build an agenda that we can bring to federal and state leaders who are making the decisions that affect our loved ones. As a result, we can effectively promote awareness among LULAC councils and give them the confidence that they need to successfully move forward in their advocacy efforts concerning those with disabilities.

It is imperative that we take the first step in building awareness of the challenges and concerns that people with disabilities face in trying to live the life they desire. As members of one of the largest minority groups in the United States, it is our duty to provide a voice for the millions of our brothers and sisters with a disability who are seeking a better life. With the support of the LULAC membership, we can ensure that individuals with disabilities will be given the opportunity to pursue a life that we all seek.

To get involved, contact the El Paso Special Needs LULAC Council #22194 President Richard Couder by email at LULACCouncil22194@outlook.com. ■



Pfizer Doubles Income Eligibility Limit to their Patient Assistance Program to Benefit Even More Patients in Need

Pfizer has been helping patients gain access to the Pfizer medicines they need for more than 25 years, and the company has stepped up that effort by doubling the allowable income level for its patient assistance program, so that even more patients in need could be eligible to receive their Pfizer medicines for free.

Since November 2015, Pfizer increased the income limit from 2 times the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to 4 times the FPL (adjusted for family size) for more than 40 medicines offered for free through its patient assistance program. That means that a single person earning at or below \$47,520 per year or a family of four earning at or below \$97,200 per year could qualify for free medicines from Pfizer. Pfizer's action is in response to the ongoing challenges patients face in paying their out-of-pocket costs for their prescription medicines.

"We have listened to patients and acted quickly to significantly expand the eligibility of our patient assistance programs. While patient assistance is not a permanent solution, it is a necessary step for helping to solve some of the high co-pay issues that some patients face," said Sally Susman, Executive Vice President, Corporate Affairs at Pfizer.

Through its Pfizer RxPathways® initiative, Pfizer connects patients, including those with health insurance and those without, to a range of Pfizer programs to help them gain access to Pfizer medicines. These programs include

- Patient assistance programs that provide Pfizer medicines for free to those who qualify
- Savings program that provides savings ranging from 35% to 50% off the retail price on Pfizer medicines for uninsured patients, regardless of income

- Insurance support services for select Pfizer medicines to help patients understand the coverage offered through their insurance plans
- Co-pay cards for those with private/commercial insurance and information on alternate sources of help, like independent co-pay foundations
- Referrals to other industry resources that may help if it is discovered that a patient is not taking a Pfizer medicine

In the last five years alone (2011-2015), Pfizer helped more than 2 million uninsured and underinsured patients across the United States receive over 25 million Pfizer prescriptions for free or at a savings, making it the most comprehensive program of its kind.

Pfizer trusts that the expansion of the income limit for its patient assistance program will help bridge the gap for patients in need while the healthcare system continues to build into one that provides good coverage, for all patients. "The real solution is to have a system that provides patients with access to innovative new treatments their doctors prescribe and insurance plans with good coverage," added Susman.

There are currently over 60 medicines available for free through Pfizer RxPathways. This change affects those medicines that previously had income limits of 2 times the FPL – about 40 medicines in total. The other medicines – mostly oncology and specialty medicines – already had income limits at or above this level.

Patients, healthcare providers, and patient advocates can visit www.PfizerRxPathways.com to learn more about Pfizer's programs, including eligibility criteria and how to apply, as well as to download applications or program brochures. ■



Since its inception in 2008, Adelante America has served over 12,000 participants.

Adelante America Program Empowers Young Latinos

By: *Geoffrey Nolan*, LULAC National Communications Associate

LULAC prides itself on its extensive record of positively impacting the lives of Latino youth across the country. Whether it is providing thousands of dollars in scholarship money, or providing a safe place that offers internet connectivity to Latino communities, LULAC is at the forefront of ensuring the educational success of Latino students. Since its inception in 2008, *Adelante America* has provided leadership training to thousands of Latino students looking to expand their educational horizons. Combining academic counseling, leadership training, and access to extracurricular activities, *Adelante* participants leave the program empowered with the tools necessary to succeed in higher education and beyond.

Thanks to generous funding from AT&T, *Adelante America* has served over 12,000 youth. Youth participants have often been the first member in their families to attend a high school in the United States. A majority of *Adelante* programs are based in rural communities with low literacy levels. Many of these participants cite the program activities as major turning points in their academic careers. Before participation in the *Adelante* program, many students may have never even considered pursuing higher education opportunities. Thanks to the exposure offered by the *Adelante* Program, many are now eager to do better in school, take on leadership roles, and focus on achieving the best possible future. Weekly sessions are interactive and allow for students to learn from role models in various professions. Students travel to city council chambers, meet with local business leaders, learn from health professionals and visit interactive STEM learning facilities across the country. Program sites host guest speakers from diverse industries to speak to students about their career paths. LULAC recognizes that it's important for students to meet Latino role models who can share their stories of adversity and inspire students to pursue careers that many thought were unattainable.

Learning beyond the classroom has been an integral part of *Adelante*. With the program, students travel to universities and leadership conferences outside of their communities. For many of our

students, this is the first time they are away from home and for many the first time they step foot on a college campus. Through these visits, students gain confidence and realize that they are fully capable of succeeding at top colleges across the country.

One of these exemplary students is Hernan Chavez, a 17 year old senior at San Benito High School in Hollister, California. Although born in the United States, Chavez was raised in a family of immigrants from Michoacán, Mexico who settled in Gilroy, California. Living in a low-income neighborhood offered few opportunities for educational development, and as a young middle school student, Chavez succumbed to many of the peer pressures to fit in, often putting his education on hold.

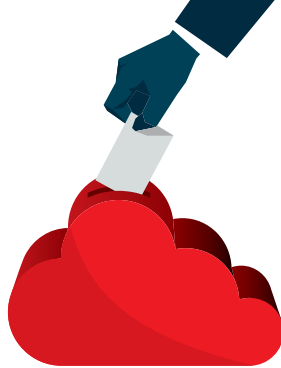
"I started to hang out with the wrong group of people," he says. "My grades suffered, I was getting into trouble at school and with the law, and I was disobeying my parents. I let my peers and society control what I had become."

Chavez credits his move from Gilroy to Hollister as the pivotal moment that helped him turn his life around. As a student at Pinnacle Community School in Hollister, Chavez was introduced to teachers and students who motivated him to succeed. While at Pinnacle, Chavez was introduced to LULAC through participation in the *Adelante America* program. As someone who takes great pride in his Latino heritage, Chavez jumped at the opportunity to participate in the program. Through participating in the leadership development and academic counseling of the program, Chavez was able to transfer to San Benito High School for his senior year.

Chavez wasted no time getting involved in a host of extracurricular activities while still obtaining stellar grades. He is a member of the STEM Club and the Wrestling Team, among other activities, and still finds time to read and maintain good grades.

"I am extremely proud of how far I've come," he says. "I'm looking forward to all that I can accomplish during my senior year."

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NEW ‘OPORTUNIDAD’ APP BRINGS CIVIL RIGHTS INTO THE DIGITAL AGE

By: Geoffrey Nolan, LULAC National Communications Associate

For 88 years, LULAC has advocated for a better livelihood for Latinos. LULAC members fought against the segregation of Mexican-American students in California, started the prototype for the Head Start program, and fought for more egalitarian voter laws to curb discrimination against Hispanic voters in the Southwest. Today, LULAC remains the oldest and largest membership based Latino civil rights organization in the nation, and members across the country continue to advocate for the best interests of their communities.

To bring its history of advocacy into the digital age, LULAC unveiled the *Oportunidad* app, a new mobile app that will allow the organization to reach more Latinos who rely primarily on their smart phones for critical resources. Thanks to the generous support of Verizon, *Oportunidad* users can access important immigration, civic engagement, economic empowerment, and health resources conveniently from their Android or iOS mobile device and tablet. In order to reach the highest number of people possible, *Oportunidad* is fully bilingual, with resources offered in English and in Spanish.

“With such high levels of smart phone usage in the Latino community, this app is critical to bringing important legal resources and civil rights information to Latino communities in one easily accessible, centralized place,” said LULAC National Executive Director Brent Wilkes.

Smart phone usage rates are increasing among the general population. According to data from the Pew Research Center,

smartphone users are now utilizing their phones to look up important information on health, education, and government resources. According to responses of smartphone users interviewed in the survey, 62 percent have researched a health condition, 40 percent have looked up government content, and 30 percent have researched educational content from their smartphone within the last year. In fact, 13 percent of Latinos identify as ‘smartphone dependent’ and rely on their device as their only source of internet connectivity.

In order to expand outreach to a burgeoning population, LULAC developed the *Oportunidad* app to make resources more accessible and allow Latinos across the country to gain access to important information on civic engagement, immigration, economic empowerment, and health.

Oportunidad’s civic engagement resources are designed to provide smartphone users with access to important resources that help them exercise their right to vote and empower their community. Users can look up voting laws in their state, voter registration deadlines, and the necessary documents needed for casting their ballot. In states that allow online voter registration, users can register to vote through the app in partnership with Rock the Vote. LULAC councils, community organizers, and app users will be able to incorporate the app into voter registration drives, canvassing efforts, and Election Protection efforts to combat voter suppression at the polls.

Immigration continues to be one of the most important issues facing the Latino community, and LULAC designed immigration content to help inform users of relevant

13%



of Latinos identify as 'smartphone dependent' and rely on their device as their only source of internet connectivity.

(Source: Pew Research Center)

verizon



immigration law and simultaneously connect them to immigration service providers in their local communities. LULAC partnered with Immigration Advocates Network and ProBonoNet to develop original content to best serve the Latino immigrant community. Users can learn the basics of immigration law and find important links to government documents to help begin the immigration process. In addition, they can also encounter important information about their rights as immigrants, including important information for those living without documentation.

With many horror stories of so-called *notarios* who pose as immigration attorneys and submit false paperwork, robbing immigrants of savings, LULAC understands the importance of connecting individuals with safe, reliable help in their communities. With *Oportunidad*'s 'Find Help' feature, users can look up numerous reliable immigration attorneys in their communities. Thanks to a partnership with ProBonoNet's extensive legal database, users can look up pro bono services based on their geographic location or zip code. Users can differentiate between various legal services such as asylum cases, DACA application help, and naturalization. In places where there are not many options for help, users can locate the nearest LULAC council and learn more about reliable community resources from their representatives.

As part of its commitment to civil rights, LULAC understands that empowering Latino families with economic security will allow them to provide for their families and communities in a more fulfilling way. For *Oportunidad*, LULAC adapted its successful Pocket Smart financial literacy curriculum to a mobile format where users can learn some of

the best ways to manage their money from the convenience of their mobile device. Users can access important information on saving, budgeting, and credit and learn how to protect themselves against fraudulent services such as payday lending and pyramid schemes. In addition, users have access to important information regarding the healthcare options available under the Affordable Care Act and can enroll online through the healthcare.gov website.

Oportunidad came about thanks to the long-term partnership between LULAC and Verizon.

"The development of the Oportunidad app highlights Verizon's passion for helping communities leverage technology to address real world concerns," said Emilio Gonzalez, Executive Director of Strategic Alliances, Verizon. "This innovative and comprehensive app allows Latinos across the United States access to vital resources that foster civic engagement, connect them to quality healthcare and help simplify the complex immigration process. We proudly affirm our position as a trusted partner and resource for the Latino community, and look forward to helping expand the role of technology in improving communities nationwide."

As we move toward a more digital-based society, LULAC looks forward to meeting the civil rights challenges of the future through continuing to develop innovative ways to reach more people. Through these efforts we can ensure that no barriers remain to individuals having the best tools at their disposal to fight for their civil rights. ■

The Unseen Victims of Flint, Michigan:

Undocumented Latinos and the Water Crisis

By: *Mark Salay*, LULAC National Communications Intern



These days when Juani Olivares sees her nephew, she knows something has been taken away from the two-year-old. He speaks much slower than someone his age should, and at one point, mysterious rashes likened to eczema appeared on his skin. He and his five siblings might be suffering from even more unknown side effects.

Like the other children of Flint, Michigan, where parents and children were unknowingly poisoning themselves with lead from the city's drinking water for months, these types of symptoms were not unusual — it was normal.

Although the plight of the city's residents has been well documented, the Flint water crisis has left an even more detrimental impact on the Latino population, who for the longest time, were the last ones to know they were being poisoned. With no bilingual information provided from officials at the earliest part of the crisis, the Spanish-speaking community of Flint was left to scramble for clean water, many fearful that their immigration status might be at risk if they reached out to authorities.

The story of Flint's Latino population illustrates the horrors Latinos nationwide face when it comes to environmental safety and the helplessness felt when there is no response from the government.

From Connecticut to California, Latinos face disproportionate dangers from environmental degradation, often living precariously close to power plants, factories and highways. Lacking the means to move, and in many cases the language skills or immigration status to protest, they are at a higher risk

for developing asthma and respiratory ailments. According to a report from the Clean Air Task Force, LULAC, and the National Hispanic Medical Association, the effects of climate change are already hitting U.S. Latinos hard as more than half of the population lives in California, Texas, and Florida, three states dealing with massive drought, heat waves, and rising sea levels.

By now the tragedy of Flint's water crisis has been widely reported and explained. In 2014, an unelected emergency manager switched the city's water source from the Detroit system to Flint's corrosive river water, a penny-pinching move made to relieve the finances of the poverty-stricken city.

Residents quickly noticed the murkiness and bad smell of the river water. While the city denied anything was wrong, ten people died in an outbreak of Legionnaire's disease, kids began developing itchy skin rashes on their limbs and faces, and residents began bringing bottles of brown water to meetings.

Bacteria, chemicals, and lead — which can affect the development of children's brains and nervous systems — in the water was reiterated by officials to be drinkable. It took until January 2016 for Governor Rick Snyder to finally acknowledge the problem and declare a state of emergency, 10 months after the switch.

Latinos make up nearly four percent of Flint's official population although approximately 1,000 are not included in the figure because they are undocumented, says Olivares.

"They pretty much all live in poverty," Olivares said. "They work crazy hours in restaurants, but they don't get much pay."

Flint's undocumented population also faces an additional risk to the unsanitary water: deportation because of their unauthorized status.

Most residents knew to stay away from the tainted water for months, dating back to last October; however, when Olivares went knocking door-to-door one year ago in Flint's predominantly Latino east side as chair of the Genesee County Hispanic/Latino Collaborative, she noticed an alarming pattern. There had been no attempt to notify immigrant families about the lead in the water.

"I started asking some of the families that I work with, and they were like, 'No we didn't receive anything and if we did it was in English and we just threw it away,'" Olivares said. "Some of them didn't even know what lead was. I had to explain and give them knowledge about something they had no idea about."

Many on the east side do not speak English, so when flyers and information were distributed, the city's failure to print material in Spanish left many members of the community unaware of the water contamination. The human impact of letting residents continue drinking the corrosive water has been nearly fatal.

One young mother and her infant tested for lead levels of 29 because the mother, unbeknownst to her, continued to drink from the water and breastfed during her pregnancy. Anything above a lead level of 5 in children requires testing and monitoring, and the baby began having seizures before learning to talk.

As awareness among those living in the east side grew and bottled water distribution centers began popping up to bring some reassurance to Flint, the undocumented community's fear of being deported heightened even more as a new threat moved into town.

For a week, residents were required to show identification to access bottled water and filters, a problem for many of Flint's undocumented residents. Even after the governor called for an end to the practice; advocates reported that it persisted, with distributors still demanding identification for filters. According to Olivares, Flint's undocumented chose to forgo clean bottled water and filters because they feared they would be harassed for identification at fire stations and other water distribution centers.

Unfortunately, the problem worsened as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents began invading vulnerable areas, residents say.

"Not (only) have I heard, I've seen them," Olivares said. "Just

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Despite having finished his time with the *Adelante* program, Chavez remains active in his local LULAC chapter. He credits LULAC with helping him succeed during his time at Pinnacle Community School and awakening his passion for education and self-development.

"In my eyes, LULAC is one of the greatest organizations because of its commitment to helping Latino students," he says. "As part of San Benito LULAC council #705, I am proud of all of the amazing activities that we facilitate to help serve the Latino community."

In addition to his community service projects, Chavez is quick to mention the relationships he has developed through LULAC and how they continue to motivate him to constantly be a better person. He hopes that he can be a role model to other youth from similar backgrounds.

"I know that everyone has the ability to make a difference in the world," he says. "I was just a kid who was running out of luck. All I needed was a little motivation, the right support, and the guidance to find my inner strength. Now it's my turn to help out those kids who need it the most." ■



Below: Adelante! students participate in enrichment activities that expand their creativity and leadership skills. Above: Hernan Chavez and LULAC National President Roger C. Rocha Jr.



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like when I'm going from one meeting to another, I've seen them driving through downtown Flint or heading to the east side. In the beginning they were going to the grocery store, and I wouldn't be surprised if they just parked there."

Fear of deportation prevented undocumented immigrants from opening their doors to volunteers handing out safe drinking water because the crisis coincided with nationwide raids carried out by ICE in the beginning of January that detained 121 individuals. Eleven people from Michigan were detained during those raids, but it is not known if they lived in Flint.

Despite reassurance from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) alleging there would be no raids in Flint because of the crisis; for people on the east side, fear of being undocumented overshadowed health concerns as the effort of accessing clean water while remaining hidden from ICE agents proved difficult to navigate.

But Latino residents there were denied more than just clean water. As true in most places, including Flint, health coverage is not extended to undocumented residents. When the state government approved the Medicaid expansion in March for residents exposed to the water, it did not request to waive the legal status requirement, leaving many undocumented children and expectant mothers without access to care.

One young girl tested for a lead level of 50, but because she was undocumented, no doctor or hospital would treat her. After reaching a lead level of 45, hospitalization is needed to test for functioning kidneys and brain development. To this day, Olivares doubts the girl has received the necessary treatments or tests.

"No child should be going through that just because you are not a legal citizen or legal resident," Olivares said. "It's just wrong; they're

human beings and they should have the same treatment as anyone else, especially through a crisis like the one we're going through."

Flint is not an isolated episode. Very often, low-income minority communities have no one else to rely on for protection except government institutions, which can often fall short when addressing needs for places of low political clout.

What the Flint water crisis has exposed is the alarming level of environmental issues minority communities face, not just in Flint, but across the country. Latinos can face discrimination with every breath and every sip of water they take.

The Flint experience has brought environmental racism to a new level of awareness among the general public. When the public thinks of Latino issues, immigration reform takes up much of the conversation; environmental problems and their disproportionate danger to Latino lives are rarely discussed.

Little attention is given to the fact that half of all Latinos live in the country's most polluted cities and are exposed to toxins like lead all the time. According to a 2016 study from the Center for Effective Government, places like Los Angeles County, Chicago, and Houston, all places with large Latino populations, have numerous sites that produce chemicals and can potentially cause Latinos significant harm if there is a chemical release and no secure evacuation plan. Latinos have a 60 percent higher chance of living in fenceline zones — areas extremely close to dangerous chemical facilities — than the United States as a whole, and low-income Latino children are also more than twice as likely to live in these zones than white children living above the poverty line.

The predominantly Latino neighborhood of Fair Haven, Connecticut is separated by a chemically infested river from an abandoned coal power plant that closed two decades ago. Like Flint,



Fair Haven is also a low-income area where residents on average earn less than 36,000 dollars, and Latinos and African Americans earn one-third less than white locals. The neighborhood's low-income Latinos still rely on fish from the river to feed their families despite it being contaminated with asbestos and PCBs, which cause cancer.

The Center for Effective Government, a nonprofit which works towards more transparency in executive agencies, reviewed more than 12,500 U.S. industrial facilities that report to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and identified Connecticut as one of the many places that has a disproportionate amount of environmental hazards near Latino and black neighborhoods. The center's report called on the EPA to increase its protection of communities like Fair Haven; however, even the EPA can be complicit in ignoring environmental concerns in low-income communities of color.

The nonprofit news organization Center for Public Integrity found that the EPA's civil rights office received hundreds of complaints against local and state agencies in the past 22 years from poor African American and Latino communities, but has never once filed a civil rights violation.

In Puerto Rico, more than 80 percent of landfills do not follow safety regulations set by the EPA. Of the landfills, 22 of the 27 spread throughout the island fall outside of normal safety guidelines, going without proper equipment to stop toxins from running into local waters, but the EPA has not taken action to address the problem for decades, simply stating in 2011, "landfills in Puerto Rico have not always been closed in accordance with the minimum federal and state regulations."

Five communities just last July sued the agency for taking longer than a decade to decide whether or not to proceed with

its investigation of possible environmental discrimination in those communities. The EPA also drew sharp criticism for not pressuring state officials in Michigan fast enough to help people in Flint.

With greater risk of living next to power plants, roadways, factories and other hazardous spaces that emit pollutants, the consequences of ignoring these environmental issues is visible in how Latino children are at higher risk of dying of asthma than non-Latino whites, and Latino workers, especially immigrants, work in agricultural and construction jobs that expose them to toxic chemicals all the time. All of this while nearly one in three Latinos are without health insurance.

Olivares will never be able to trust her city's water again or any other city's public water again. Her nephews rely on bottled water for everything from showering and brushing their teeth, to washing their faces. She says officials ask people in Flint to flush their water 15 minutes before using it, but she has little confidence that will do anything to take away the death-ridden chemicals from the water. She is staying in Flint to fight, until the entire undocumented community has all the services they need.

"The undocumented residents cannot just get up, pack up, and go somewhere else to find a job. It's not that easy," Olivares lamented. "They're pretty much stuck here, and a lot of the residents are stuck in the same boat. They just don't have the funds to just get up and leave."

Flint is a story of a community coming together to seek justice while families were torn apart by institutions meant to protect them. It reminds us that when unresolved problems go ignored, it eventually reaches a breaking point. For Latinos, when no solution is provided to environmental degradation, poverty, immigration reform, it can only be a matter of time until the next Flint crisis arises. ■



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ENSURING HEALTHY OUTCOMES FOR THE LATINO COMMUNITY





By: Geoffrey Nolan,
LULAC National Communications Associate

For the fourth consecutive year, LULAC hosted the *Latinos Living Healthy: Feria de Salud* in Los Angeles, California. Held at the historic Olvera Street in downtown Los Angeles, the feria focused on the importance of living a healthy lifestyle.

Central to the feria's mission was to address the health disparities currently facing the Latino community. Latinos are disproportionately affected by high rates of diabetes, obesity, and other chronic illnesses. According to the CDC, HIV rates are also increasing among LGBT Latinos and are up 87 percent since 2005.

The Feria de Salud offered free health services including screenings for blood pressure and osteoporosis as well as vision exams, dental check-ups, flu shots, BMI, and HIV tests.

In addition to the health services, attendees were treated to a variety of interactive activities that focused on the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices. Chefs provided cooking demonstrations on how to make healthier versions of traditional Latino meals, and


Page 32 - The Feria featured free entertainment from local folkloric groups celebrating Latino culture at the health fair. Page 33 - Top Left: Mexican Regional singer Noel Torres fired up the crowd with a free performance at Olvera Street. Top Right: Participants learned about healthy lifestyles through cooking demonstrations and samplings of healthy products. Bottom Left: LULAC volunteers were on-site registering voters to turn out the Latino vote on Election Day. Bottom Right: To stress the importance of exercise, participants gathered for a Zumba session in Plaza Olvera.

Zumba instructors led participants in a dance workout that promoted the importance of exercise.

Members of the community were also invited to take advantage of the free entertainment. Throughout the day, attendees enjoyed performances from local folkloric dance groups and Los Angeles-based band Cuicani. Regional Mexican singer Noel Torres closed out the feria with a rousing concert.

LULAC has taken the traditional Latino festival and turned it into a day of family fun focused on healthy eating and living. To date, LULAC has successfully organized *Latinos Living Healthy Feria de Salud* events in Puerto Rico; Washington, DC; and Texas.

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A photograph of three children lying on their backs on a lush green lawn. The child at the top is a girl with long dark hair, wearing a bright blue t-shirt with a sequined heart on the chest. The child in the middle is a girl with long brown hair, wearing a blue button-down shirt. The child at the bottom is a boy with short dark hair, wearing a red and white collared shirt. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The text 'The things you care about are the things we care about too.' is overlaid on the left side of the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

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LA TINO TECH SUMMIT

Inspired Youth to Follow Their Dreams



Page 36 - Participants heard from leaders from tech companies like Electronic Arts (EA), GE, and AT&T. Page 37 - Top Left: Students gathered to learn about STEM careers and discussed some of the barriers young Latinos face when breaking into the tech industry. Top Right: Panel discussions focused on entrepreneurship, employee resource groups, and strategies for acquiring careers in the tech industry.

Technology companies need to diversify, and tech summits such as the one hosted by LULAC and Latino Institute for Corporate Inclusion (LICI) provide a great first step. Specifically, tech summits provide a much needed insider's perspective to a community that is presently on the outside looking in. By way of these types of forums, Latinos are left with real insight on how to get a job in Silicon Valley. This effort serves to benefit both the student, who will have an opportunity to work in a great field, and the tech company, which, by diversifying, will be better able to understand and meet the needs of a diverse consumer base.

An example of the benefit of this approach can be seen in the inaugural Latino Tech Summit. The technology summit held in Silicon Valley left a crowd of young talented Latino students motivated to remain committed to their studies in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math. Over 600 young student and Latino tech professionals participated in the two-day summit where students were encouraged by the country's leading tech executives to work through challenges, including academic and otherwise, and rely on their passion and commitment to the field. In addition, the summit's workshops and forums provided young Latinos with the opportunity to learn more about an industry that is often not accessible to them.

It is no secret that the tech industry tends to hire graduates from Stanford and M.I.T. with impressive GPAs. The industry is aware of the extremely rigorous curriculum of an engineering degree and is willing to consider other factors when recruiting new talent. The recruiters who participated in the tech summit drove the point that talented young people with a passion in these fields should not give up despite academic challenges. The notion that talent will naturally rise to the top is not new to Silicon Valley. In fact, the country's most notable tech giants, including Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Microsoft Co-Founder Bill Gates, both left Harvard before graduation.

As part of its mission, LULAC helps ensure that the Latino community has access to a range of resources and information that help enrich their lives and advance professional opportunity. Latinos are increasingly pursuing degrees in STEM that facilitate the development of the necessary skills to work in the tech industry, and it's important that these diverse candidates are seriously considered for positions in U.S. tech companies. LULAC will ensure that future tech summits continue to share effective strategies to recruit, retain, and develop Latino talent so that the tech industry workforce reflects the diversity of the consumers who use their products ■



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