

Peace News

Winter 2009
La Oportunidad Newsletter

Connecting Latino Youth and their families with Educational Resources for School Success

For over three years, La Oportunidad has been working on a joint collaboration with Hennepin County, La Escuelita, and other community partners, called the Latino Youth Development Collaborative. As a part of the LYDC, La Oportunidad has played a leadership role in the planning and implementation of several educational events called Education Connect, which took place in Hennepin County. The events were established by the LYDC to provide information to Latino youth and their families about the various educational resources that are available in their community which directly contribute to school success. In collaboration with Richfield High School, Andersen Open Schools, the Latino Family Resource Fair, and other community partners, La Oportunidad was able to bring these educational fairs for Latino families.



At Richfield High School (on January 22, 2009), we focused on bringing various programs which offered after school activities so youth and their parents were aware of the extra curricular opportunities that youth could take advantage of at their school. At Andersen Open Schools (on April 23, 2009), we focused on summer programming and invited various agencies that offered a wide range of programs for youth to enroll in educational enrichment opportunities during summer vacation. At the Latino Family Resource Fair -- otherwise known as La Feria (on August 8, 2009), we held a focus on higher education and highlighted high schools in the community. There were over 65 educational programs, organizations/institutions in total at all three Education Connect events and about 800 participants (youth and their families). We are proud of the success of these events and the impact they are having in the educational success of our Latino youth!

15th Annual La Feria Latino Resource Fair Provides Resources and Fun for the Latino Community

This year marked the 15th anniversary of the Annual Latino Family Resource Fair, (La Feria) which was held on August 8 at the Midtown Farmer's Market. Partnering with Metropolitan Health Plan in collaboration with the Midtown Farmers' Market, La Oportunidad hosted an exciting, free event, attracting 1,500 community members.

Community members were able to learn about issues such as education, health care resources and social services from the 108 groups gathered at the fair. Fairgoers were also able to enjoy family entertainment, music, clowns, children's activities and food provided by Taco Taxi and local farmers. Viva Venezuela, Taquirari Boliviano and Tinku Boliviano were a few of the featured musical groups that kept people dancing and spirits high throughout the untimely weather that day.



Regardless, La Feria was a great success that was made possible by the help of generous sponsors. La Oportunidad would like to thank Medica Foundation, La Invasora, Blue Cross Blue Shield of MN, Clear Way MNSM, Ucare, Hennepin County Community Services Arca and Latino Youth Development Collaborative for their wonderful support.

Message from the Executive Director

Dear community member:

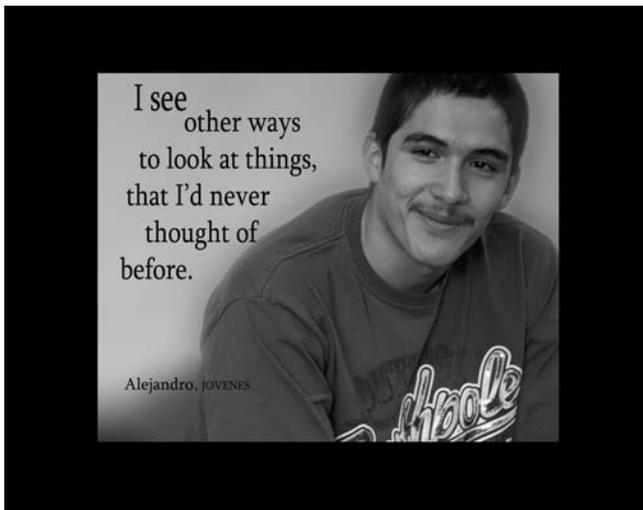
Despite the state of the economy, we were able to experience yet another successful year. We thank those who continued to support the important work we do to create a stronger community. In response to the challenges the economy is presenting for nonprofits, La Oportunidad is seeking to establish new or strengthen partnerships with individuals, institutions, the philanthropic community, and corporations/businesses. Our community partners support our work through grants, donations, sponsorship, in-kind donations, employee and matching donations, volunteerism, and valuable insights and ideas. Whatever support you may provide will make a difference in the lives of the hundreds of Latino children, youth, and families that we serve.

In this issue of our Peace News, I am very excited to share some of our success stories. These types of stories are the ones that continue to fill us with joy, pride, and motivation so that we can continue to strive for our vision of a community in which Latinos –whether long-term residents or new arrivals – thrive and contribute to the strength of the greater community!

If you would like to join in our efforts, please do not hesitate to contact me at 612-872-6165 or eloisae@oportunidad.org.

Mil gracias! Eloisa.

Eloisa Echavez



Peace News is the newsletter of La Oportunidad. La Oportunidad’s mission is to champion the development of Latino individuals and families to create a strong, peaceful community.

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“Paz y Panqueques” (Peace and Pancakes), a Generous Gift of Peace

La Oportunidad was recently selected to receive a generous donation of the lovely children’s book “Paz y Panqueques”, (Peace and Pancakes) by the author, Anne M. Picard. This is an inspirational example of how community members can support our organization. Ms. Picard is a local educator, writer, artist, poet, and spiritual mentor. Her passion is building peace. *Peace and pancakes* is her first book written and illustrated for children. In *Paz y Panqueques*, she shares the message and belief that “All parts of creation are precious and vitally connected. In the process of peace building, we learn to respect ourselves, our neighbors, and all creatures on our planet.”



Following the story of Grendle, a young dragon, and with the help of a stack of pancakes, this book will entertain children of all ages while teaching timeless lessons about patience, communication, and understanding. The beautifully illustrated book also comes with a CD, allowing children to listen along as the adventure unfolds.

La Oportunidad is pleased to invite you to support our organization’s work by purchasing a copy of this book. For only \$30 (\$25 actual value of the book + \$5.00 shipping and handling), you can receive your copy of *Paz y Panqueques*. The 48-page, full color, hard cover, Spanish-language book and CD will arrive at your home by U.S. mail. Or if you prefer, you can stop by our office to purchase the book for just \$25 (you save the shipping and handling charges). Your purchase will be used to provide direct support La Oportunidad’s programs. Give a child in your life this gift of peace while supporting our work to create a stronger community!

Volunteer Spotlight

Before my senior year at the College of Saint Benedict, I wanted to step out of my comfort zone and expand my perspective. After studying the Spanish language and Latin American culture for over five years in various educational and international settings, I wanted a chance to see and experience a local Latino organization right in my backyard. La Oportunidad and my internship experience with La Feria Latino Family Resource Fair provided this experience as well as an opportunity to develop my communication skills and grow as a human being connected to a new community. I was able to gain a different perspective and learned how to problem solve in a positive, encouraging environment. I could not have imagined the feeling I experienced when the rain stopped and La Feria began. I was able to see my hard work paying off and a supportive staff coming together to make La Feria the successful event it always is. This professional and fun internship experience opened my heart and mind to think differently about what I want to do in my future; it made me believe the possibilities are endless.



-Submitted by Laura Kinowski

El Camino Promotes Peace Through Art



La Oportunidad office the following Friday for the fourth chair, raising an additional \$13.

By raffling the chairs, El Camino found a way to spread their message of peace further than if the chairs for had been kept for themselves. The two chairs that the St. Paul's youth donated will be at Bancroft School and Green Central School, spreading the message of peace amongst other students. The money raised by the raffles was given to the Sabathani Community Center's food shelf. This was a great opportunity for the students to learn about caring for and serving the community! Spread the message of peace!

This summer the kindergarten, first and second grade El Camino students painted "Peace Chairs/Sillas de paz," a project inspired by the leadership group of young artists at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in the Phillips Neighborhood. Three middle school youth from this group, along with their pastor Patrick Hansel and their youth leader Erin Anderson introduced the project to El Camino at Bancroft School. The youth explained painting the chairs as a way to put something beautiful into their neighborhood which is victim to graffiti and local gangs. As a gift, the youth donated two of their own peace chairs to the El Camino group, serving as inspiration for the creation of their own chairs.

Following the 2009 summer program's theme, "Step into the Community," El Camino used the chair project to promote peace in the community and to make the community a more beautiful place to live. First, the kids took pictures of things that already make the Bancroft neighborhood beautiful. Many of the photographs taken were of flowers, but students also captured beauty in families sitting together outside, signs of peace displayed on neighbors' lawns and in other scenes around the Bancroft area. Finally, the students painted four metal chairs with messages and images of peace, love, family and flowers!

In July, El Camino organized a small raffle for three of the peace chairs at Bancroft's neighborhood festival, raising \$14.95. A separate raffle was held at the



Thank You to Our Wonderful Volunteers and Mentors!

- Jim Albrecht
- Elizabeth Anderson
- Felicia Anderson
- Nicole Baker
- Bill Buenzli
- Denise Buenzli
- Jean Craig
- Megan Craig-Casmer
- Kriselda Cuellar
- Tiffany DeLeon
- Beth Dierker
- Evidio Domingo
- Stephanie Drake
- Emily Egan
- Joe Eiden
- Christine Espinoza
- Rafael Harrington
- Kari Haugh
- Heather Huckstadt
- Christine Jasken
- Rocio Julian
- Laura Kinowski
- Anne Knauff
- Laura Knowles
- Amanda Koenjbehany
- Alyssa Kohn
- Josey Landrieu
- Sarah Leonard
- Stacey Lillebo
- Cherice Mahal
- Koley Malcom
- Molly Malone
- Jessica Martinez
- Carolina Melguizo
- Laura Mellem
- Brian Millar
- Alejandra Morales
- Jazmine Moreno
- Anabel Moreno
- Mike Nelson
- Rachel Novacek
- Emily Oaks
- Griselda Orozco
- Emily Palkert
- Kathrine Papke
- Jessika Peredia
- Vickie Peterson
- Rebecca Pottebaum
- Lindsay Prowzor
- Daniela Quevedo
- Jackie Rahkola
- Jennifer Reidy
- Jack Ries
- Hector Santamaria
- Raissa Schnitzius
- Paola Serrate
- Lilia Serna
- Bridget Smith
- Ana Sutton
- Emmett Timmons
- Sara Tomczyk
- Stephanie Tomczyk
- Alec Torigan
- Lucia Trinidad
- Anna Vangsness
- Sandy Velazquez
- Valerie Villafan
- Stephanie Vogt
- Becca Wynia
- Silvia Yaurincela
- Andrew Zaragoza
- Rob
- Jameson
- Jason
- Ashley
- KP
- Ashanti
- Edger
- Alondra

***En Familia* Showcases Young Leader**

Honoring the challenges she faced to become a leader among family, friends and in her own life, Kidsia Medina, a recent high school graduate and member of our Latino youth group at Armstrong High School, was showcased on *En Familia* this past June.

En Familia, which is co-sponsored by La Oportunidad, is the only weekly Spanish television program for the Latino community in Minnesota.

Kidsia has been a part of the La Oportunidad community since she was in seventh grade at Sandburg Middle School. Over the years, Kidsia has shown a great deal of strength in the face of many challenges. Among these has been accepting people for who they are, discovering true friends and letting go of her anger.

Working through these struggles as she neared the end of her high school career, Kidsia found herself improving her grades and attendance in class, trying to be-



come get into college. At this time, she also found out that she was pregnant.

Kidsia decided not only to have her child, but to also finish high school. With this accomplishment, she would become the first in her family to graduate from high school. On top of being a student, she was faced with the challenges of an expecting mother, such as childbirth, receiving child care while attending school and dealing with the social stigma of being a young Latina mother in high school.

Kidsia now has a beautiful son that is over a year old, and became the first one in her family to graduate from high school June 4, 2009.

I have been able
to express myself
peacefully
and have been able
to help others
do the same.

Valerie, JOVENES



Portraits from La Oportunidad's
20th anniversary celebration project,
Reflections of Peace.

Me ha ayudado
a ser
paciente
con
mi
familia
y
valorarlos
mucho
más.

Lucina, PADRES



[La Oportunidad] has helped me to be more patient with my family and value them more.



La Oportunidad, Inc.

*Championing the development of Latino individuals
and families to create a strong, peaceful community.*

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