



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HISPANIC CHAMBER BOARD ELECTS NEW OFFICERS

PORTLAND, OR. On Tuesday, July 21, 2009, the Board of Directors of the Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber (Hispanic Chamber) elected new officers for the upcoming year. Jerry Montañez-Petty was elected Chair of the Board of Directors. Montañez-Petty is the Human Resources Manager, for the Department of Community Services for Multnomah County. Montañez-Petty, an attorney, has worked in a variety of positions in both the public and private sector. His experience includes working in Washington D.C. for Congressman James Hansen, House Ethics Committee; Senator Orrin Hatch, Senate Judiciary Committee; and the office of the US Trade Representative. "I am honored to serve as Chair of an organization that is working with all members of the community to support the economic advancement of Latinos in Oregon. The Hispanic Chamber's work results in increased income for Latino households, increased education opportunities for Latino students and contributes to the livability of all Oregonians. I will work to expand opportunities for Latino businesses and increase scholarship opportunities for Latino students."

Other officers elected are: Vice Chair, Henry Alvarez, Community Representative; Secretary, Melissa Bobadilla, Attorney, Aguilar and Bobadilla, P.C.; and Treasurer, Bertha Ferran, Mortgage Consultant, Windermere Mortgage Services.

Other members of the board also elected are: Cecily Quintana, Quintana Galleries; Humberto Reyna, Reyna-Moore Advertising; Isaac Dixon, Providence Health & Services; Francisco Garbayo, Regence BlueCross BlueShield; Daniel Herrera, American Family Insurance; Bernie Kronberger, Wells Fargo; Eduardo Norell, Norell Design; and Jeff Young, W.B. Adams Insurance. Honorary Board Members are: Enrique Antonio Romero Cuevas, Consul General, Mexico and Serge D'Rovencourt, Honorary Consul of Guatemala.

Background:

The Hispanic Chamber was established in 1994 and is now the largest Hispanic Chamber in the Northwest and one of the 6th largest chambers of any type in Oregon. Unlike other “business” chambers, our mission is to “*work with all members of the community to support the economic advancement of Latino businesses*”. As a result, the focus of the Hispanic Chamber is to serve the Latino community while working with the greater community.

Hispanic Chamber Programs:

The Hispanic Chamber conducts a variety of programs which include: technical assistance for new and existing Latino and other small businesses, scholarships for Latino students throughout Oregon, a year long Latino Leadership Program conducted by university faculty and private sector organizations; an Annual Trade Show, business workshops, industry training programs; and business luncheon/dinner events.

Needs of the Latino Community

Latinos in the U.S. and Oregon reflect demographic characteristics that contribute to barriers that prohibit their economic advancement compared to the general population: lower levels of education and lower earning capacity resulting in higher poverty rates.

Population:

The 2004 census estimated that there are over 379,034 Latinos in Oregon that represent 10.2% of the state’s population. Latinos are the largest ethnic minority in the state that grew 236% percent between 1990- 2006. Oregon Latinos are also one of the fastest growing Latino populations in the United States.

The following are key indicators of the status of Latinos in the U.S.:

- Latinos in the U.S. earn \$38,679 compared to \$50,740 for the general population (2007 US Census).
- The poverty rate for Latinos in the U.S. is 21.5%, up from 20.6% in 2006 compared to 13% for the general population.
- 60% of Hispanics 25 and older had a high school education in 2007 compared to 80.4% for the general population.
- 13% of the Hispanic population 25 and older had a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2007, compared to 24.4% for the general population.

Businesses:

In the U.S., there are 1.6 million Latino businesses (2002 US Census), employing 1.5 million persons and generating \$222.0 billion in business revenues.

In Oregon, there are over 6,000 Latino businesses that reflect the national trends and are concentrated in three main sectors: retail (restaurants and small stores), construction and services (professional and personal services).

Economic Status:

Although the number of Latinos is growing, Latinos are lagging behind other Oregonians economically as well as in important Oregon benchmarks, such as high school and college completion, eighth grade reading and math skills, high school dropout rates, health insurance coverage, prenatal care, poverty and home ownership. In many cases, Hispanics are farther behind non-Hispanics now than they were a decade ago¹.

Challenges faced by this community include poverty, lack of English language and literacy skills, lack of proper immigration status, and the difficulty in gaining access to services and finding employment. Many of the Latinos in the Oregon come from poor, rural areas of Mexico and Central America, where there are low levels of formal education and deep-seated distrust of government and government services. Many are also unfamiliar with the social and economic institutions of modern, urban society in the United States. They confront barriers to health care, legal services, and steady employment.

Further, as a group, native and foreign-born Latinos often lack a financial cushion to sustain them in hard economic times. They tend to earn less. 25% of Oregon's Latino families live below the federal poverty level, according to the 2007 American Community Survey, compared with 9 percent of non-Latino white families. In Oregon, the median income of a Latino family was \$34,600, compared with \$57,700 for the total population.

The percent of Latinos that earned over \$35,000.00 or more was 26.3% vs. 53.8% for non-Hispanic Whites. The percentage of Latinos in managerial or professional occupations is 14.2% vs. 35.1 % for non-Hispanic Whites.

According to the Pew Hispanic Center, during this national recession, Latinos workers are overrepresented in the industries most battered by the economy, such as Oregon nurseries, construction, manufacturing, retail, and leisure/hospitality. Latinos can have more difficulty finding new employment than other groups, because of poor English skills and low education. The pressure to find a job can also push workers into dangerous or unfair working conditions.

Latino homeowners are also at greater risk of foreclosure. At all income levels, Oregon's Latino borrowers received risky subprime loans, according to a 2008 analysis by the Oregon Center for Public Policy. Subprime loans have higher interest rates, which frequently are adjustable over time. The loans were made to people who could otherwise not afford buying a house. The analysis showed that more than half of Latino middle-income borrowers received subprime loans in 2006, compared with 25 percent of whites. The report showed the same trend for low to moderate, and higher-income Latinos.

¹ *Oregon Benchmarks: A Progress Report on Oregon's Racial and Ethnic Minorities* November 2002.
<http://www.econ.state.or.us/opb/parity/RE2002.htm>

Education:

As the Latino population increases in Oregon, education remains a key issue. Nationally and locally, Latinos have the highest dropout rate. In Oregon, 13% of Latino students leave high school early compared to 6.3% for all Oregonians.

Despite the high drop out rate, the number of Latinos attending college has shown increases, but the percentage of Latino students attending college is still less than the general population (20% for Latinos vs. 37% for the general population). An article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* identifies family income as a major obstacle to Latino college success.

Thirty years ago, the rate of Hispanic men with four or more years of college experience nearly doubled that of women, but this has changed. In 2008, a third of all college-age Hispanic women were enrolled in college, compared to just 21 percent of college-age Hispanic men, according to the Center for American Progress Action Fund.

In 2008, the US Census Bureau reported that the average salary earned by workers with a high school diploma is \$31,286 while those with a bachelors degree earned \$57,181.

Given the high drop out rate of Latinos and the low level of graduation from college, compared to the general population, Latinos continue to lag in their family income compared to the general population.

25% of the nation's kindergartners are Hispanic, evidence of an accelerating trend that will see minority children become the majority by 2023.

Youth:

The Latino population tends to be more youthful than other racial/ethnic groups. 34.8% are under the age of 18 years, compared to 25.7% of the entire U.S. population. Latino youth will continue to play an important role in the Oregon's economic potential. Unfortunately, Latino youth are faced with many barriers to the development of their potential:

The National Council de la Raza (NCLR) conducted a study in Oregon in 2006 and found:

- 7 in 10 young Latino children have mothers with low levels of educational
- More than one half young Latino children's mothers do not speak English well
- Three quarter of young Latino children reside in low income households
- Two-thirds of young Latino children have at least one parent born outside of the United States, even though the children may be US citizens

The Human Rights Watch, in 2002 found:

- A disproportionate number of Latinos in the justice system
- Latino youth continue to be unjustly targeted for police stops, arrest, detention, transfer to adult court, and harsher sentencing.

The Center for Working Families found that many Latino youth work as a way to participate in and contribute to the family economy. Many of the working Latino youth are from Latino immigrant families. As a result, these young Latinos were devoting their time and energy working instead of studying or saving for college and ascending into the middle class.

For more information about the Hispanic Chamber programs and events interested persons can visit the Hispanic Chamber's website at www.hmccoregon.com. The public is welcome to attend events and can RSVP by calling 503-222-0280, or e-mailing to: nevarez@hmccoregon.com