

# COMMUNITY NET NEWS

FALL 2006



## Executive Director's Letter Leading by Example

When the seeds of the Latino Coalition were first planted three years ago, who could have anticipated how quickly this fledgling alliance would take root and grow?

Now the LC is responsible for distributing millions of dollars in federal sub-grants to more than 60 faith-based and community groups, strengthening the programs they operate and building their capacity to operate those programs more effectively.



In the past, most of the grassroots groups we support had no access to federal funding or to the kinds of expert technical assistance that the LC provides. Nor did they receive much recognition for the valiant work they perform day in and day out.

We hope to change that. We want to tell you about these groups — about the impact they are having and about the lives they touch. And we want to describe the ways that we at the LC are not just assisting their efforts, but drawing inspiration from their examples of leadership.

Help4Kidz in Phoenix is one such organization. It was founded by an extraordinary woman named Eve Nunez, who turned personal tragedy into a powerful force for good.

In 1995, Pastor Eve's teenage son Frankie was diagnosed with inoperable brain cancer. What Frankie wanted most was to leave a legacy of hope for other young people facing an uncertain future,



## The Human Face of Success

How do you measure success? Those of us who oversee grant-funded programs tend to focus on statistical evidence—things like recidivism rates and skill attainment levels.

But success also has a human face. It's reflected in the daily victories that our clients manage to achieve, changing their own lives for the better. On the pages that follow, we highlight four stories about that kind of success. They come to us from the dedicated staff at two of our grantee agencies, Denver Inner City Parish and Voices San Diego.

and Pastor Eve fulfilled his wish by forming a charitable foundation in his name.

Today the Frankie Nunez Foundation supplies equipment and counseling to disabled children through Help4Kidz. It also offers mentoring and job training to adolescents through its new Help4Teenz program.

With funding from the LC's Department of Labor - "Reclamando Nuestro Futuro" grant, Help4Kidz has been able to expand the services it provides to at-risk and adjudicated youth in the Phoenix area. And with the training Pastor Eve has received at the LC's Capacity Building Academy, she has been able to modernize her organization's operations and improve its overall management.

"Thanks for all your help," she recently wrote us. "The RNF grant has

been instrumental in moving Help4Kidz from a loosely defined organizational structure to one that is well defined, with sound written policies."

Just as young Frankie inspired his mom to work so tirelessly on behalf of her community, Pastor Eve's example inspires us to work even harder on behalf of Help4Kidz and similar groups around the country.

With this inaugural issue of *Community NetNews*, we are launching a vehicle for introducing you to more unsung heroes like Pastor Eve. At the same time, we hope this publication will become a forum for sharing your ideas about the needs of our communities and how we can best address them together.

We invite your participation and we value your feedback.

Richard Ramos

# Success Stories

## Denver Inner City Parish

*Founded in 1960, Denver Inner City Parish is a nondenominational agency providing medical, psychosocial and educational assistance to Denver's Westside community. Participants in the organization's Project ReNew, supported by the Latino Coalition's "Reclamando Nuestro Futuro" grant, receive vocational training and other supportive services.*

### "A Reason to Go On"

When Jasmine came to Project ReNew last February, she had just given birth to a baby boy and was relying on public assistance. She had dropped out of school and her employment options were severely limited.

But Jasmine is blessed with an unusually positive attitude and she was clearly motivated to improve her life.

At the Center for Work Education and Employment, Jasmine found the resources and support she needed to complete her GED. She has learned the full suite of Microsoft Office applications and is now enrolled in a program to become a medical assistant.

Jasmine wrote an essay about the progress she was making, describing the importance of good life choices.

That effort earned her a \$100 prize and a Certificate of Excellence award at the Latino Coalition Celebration.

"The support I got from Project ReNew gave me the reason to go on studying and working hard," she said.

Now Jasmine is determined to become self-sufficient, and she is on track to complete her medical/clerical certification soon.



### Constructing a Future

David came to Project ReNew in April. He was a high school dropout, but he had well-defined goals and he was eager to learn a trade.

David was referred to Mile High Youth Corps, a partner agency in the Latino Coalition.

There he completed a successful interview and was invited to participate in YouthBuild, a program that provides apprenticeship training and paid employment opportunities in the construction industry.

Now David is getting on-site job experience, and he will be certified by OSHA guidelines in construction work.

In May, David's case manager from Project ReNew attended his YouthBuild Promotion Ceremony, where he received a perfect attendance award.



*David receives congratulations on his perfect attendance award from Jeremy Martinez, Project ReNew program coordinator.*

# Changing Lives

# Voices San Diego

*A local project of Victory Outreach, Voices San Diego works with at-risk and adjudicated youth in the National City area of San Diego. The group's vocational training and life-skills programs are supported by the Latino Coalition's "Reclamando Nuestro Futuro" grant.*

## A New Design

Less than a year ago, J was in serious trouble. He had been hanging out with local gang members and had brushes with the law.

J's parents were broken-hearted. They said he was a "good boy" who had fallen in with the wrong crowd.

Upon meeting J, we felt truly moved by his mild manner and humble spirit. We believed in our hearts that he was ready to change his path.

J did not disappoint us. He appeared for his first scheduled appointment right on time, and he has not missed a single appointment since. He even shows up early—to tell us about his progress and to get a good seat for the graphics class he attends.

J told us that when he first enrolled in that class, he didn't even know how to turn on a computer. Now he is a key contributor to our monthly newsletter and he designs silk-screen patterns for his own T-shirts. He is also well on his way to earning his GED.

## Graduation Day

A month after she was referred to Voices San Diego, Angelica wrote, "I am from a family filled with drugs and gangs. At a young age, all I knew was visiting my father who is a heroin addict in jail. My mom was always crying at home and struggling to pay bills and the rent."

Angelica was desperate to break her methamphetamine habit. "When I found out I was pregnant I was happy, only to find out they were going to take my baby away because he was born addicted," she wrote. "I could only feel sadness and pain to give birth and not be able to hold him, my baby I love so much. I could not even be a good daughter and now I could not be a good mother. I felt I lost everything."

At Voices San Diego, Angelica and her boyfriend Pedro embarked on a journey of rehabilitation and renewal together.

"All we knew before was the neighborhood, but now we are learning to present ourselves as young adults," she said. "We both come to life skills classes, learning job readiness and communication

skills. We also come to the drug and alcohol NA meetings and, most important, relapse prevention."

She enrolled in the Metro Program, completing all the requirements to graduate from high school.

Now Angelica's hard work and determination are truly paying off. Pedro and she were married in a beautiful ceremony, attended by family and friends. The courts have restored custody of their young son to her. And in June, she proudly donned her cap and gown and received her high school diploma!



*Enrollees in the Sparc Media Program learn computer skills and job preparedness. The program is sponsored by Life Development Institute, a Latino Coalition grantee in Denver.*



*Participants in the City Life Program of Denver Area Youth for Christ.*

# Building the Capacity of Grassroots Groups

The Latino Coalition is one of 44 intermediary organizations selected by the federal Administration for Children and Families to provide capacity building assistance to local faith-based and community groups through the Compassion Capital Fund.

The LC's grant, in the amount of \$978,551, is being used to help groups that work with Latino youth in Los Angeles, Denver, Phoenix, Hartford, Portland, Ore. and Bakersfield, Calif. The project is called Equal Sides Everywhere (ESE) and its cornerstone is our Capacity Building Academy—a series of hands-on workshops designed to strengthen organizational competence in areas such as fundraising, strategic planning, and governance.

For many of the participants in this training, it's an opportunity to step back and, for the first time, think about issues like organizational growth and stabilization. Our goal is to provide the framework for that kind of thinking, and the tools necessary to make these groups' operations more secure and their programs more sustainable.

That's what "capacity building" is all about—improving the systems and procedures that allow an organization to pursue its mission well.

For some groups, this process starts with basic questions about identity and legal status. For example, is the group incorporated as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt entity? Should it be?

The answer to that question isn't necessarily clear-cut. For small neighborhood groups that never intend to do much in the way of fundraising, grant-seeking or advocacy, the paperwork and tax filing burdens may not be worth the effort. For most organizations, however, it's a crucial first step on the road to nonprofit legitimacy and effectiveness.

Other subjects covered in Academy workshops include:

**Grantsmanship.** The emphasis here is on program planning—producing the kinds of clear, coherent plans that grant-makers want to invest in. Many grassroots groups are already doing amazing work addressing community needs. By learning to explain their programs in well-crafted proposals, they're better positioned to keep those programs running.



doing a big job, it's hard to go it alone. But productive collaboration doesn't simply happen—it needs to be carefully planned and executed. We focus on proven techniques for sharing resources, setting goals and defining roles among partner agencies.

**Evaluation.** Program evaluation is a critical process that is easily misunderstood and often neglected. In this workshop, participants learn how to gather the data necessary to verify a program's impact and measure its real outcomes.

**Marketing.** Public relations, media campaigns, and other forms of outreach can seem like luxuries to small nonprofits caught up in the daily struggle to deliver

services on a shoestring budget. This training shows why effective marketing is in fact a necessity, and how greater visibility can lead to increased funding.

**Enterprise Development.** With "earned income," an organization can shore up its bottom line by generating unrestricted revenue. We examine both the risks and the opportunities in creating nonprofit business ventures.

To avoid a one-size-fits-all approach, the LC conducted detailed needs assessments before devising this curriculum, tailoring it to the stated needs of participants.

One major benefit for attendees has been the opportunity to network and to learn from each other's experiences. Already, they've begun forming collaborative relationships, laying the groundwork for joint projects in the future.

At the conclusion of the current workshop series, participants will be eligible to attend the "Touching Lives, Transforming Communities" national conference, slated for February 5-7, 2007. The conference will include an in-depth proposal writing workshop for those organizations ready to apply for grants.

In addition, all participants will be invited to showcase their own programs at the conference and attend briefing sessions about best practices for gang prevention and intervention.



*The LC's Capacity Building Academy offers training in fund development, strategic planning and management.*

# Lessons Learned

## The Value of Volunteers



Reviewing our list of lessons learned from the first two years of the Latino Coalition's "Reclamando Nuestro Futuro" project, a recurring theme involves the vital role played by our grantees' volunteers.

Here is some of what we've learned:

- **Volunteers must be interviewed.** A thorough interview will reveal what motivates people to help and what they have to offer. It's an opportunity to assess their skills, interests and talents.
- **Volunteers must be screened.** Any organization that works with youth should conduct background checks on all prospective volunteers. Due diligence demands nothing less! The process tells a volunteer—as well as the community—that we truly care about the young people we serve. Their well-being is our top priority.
- **Volunteers must be placed appropriately.** In order for volunteers to be productive and to feel successful, there needs to be a good fit between their expectations and their assignments. When a mismatch occurs, the result can be a disillusioned volunteer or, even worse, a disillusioned youngster.
- **Volunteers should not be case managers.** Case management requires a degree of accountability that volunteers cannot be expected to sustain. It's a function that should be reserved for employees of the organization.

- **Volunteers can be excellent role models.** The right volunteers make great mentors and tutors, especially for youths who need more individualized attention than an overworked case manager can provide.
- **Volunteers can be a big help with clerical tasks.** These include answering phones, keeping attendance records, and coordinating activities. When a willing volunteer performs these administrative tasks, professional staff can devote more time and attention to clients.
- **Volunteers need training, too.** Volunteers are more effective and they feel more engaged when they understand what, why, and how they can help. Regular, structured "mini-trainings" offer an opportunity to impart new skills.
- **Volunteers deserve recognition.** The work they do should be rewarded with letters of commendation or other tokens of appreciation. At the very least, they should get a note of thanks for a job well done. And they should never be taken for granted!

By donating their time and talents, volunteers contribute much to our success. And even though volunteers receive no compensation, their work has real monetary value to the organization. One reason for this is that volunteer labor comprises a

substantial part of the in-kind match used in applying for grants.

Specialized services donated "pro bono" by doctors, psychologists, accountants or lawyers may be calculated according to the rates that those professionals charge for comparable services on a paid basis. (To find out prevailing pay scales in your own community, check the data at [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com).)

As for more general volunteer services (such as clerical help, administrative support, tutoring assistance, etc.), many grant-seekers rely on the hourly dollar figure calculated every year by Independent Sector ([www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org)). It is derived from a formula based on the average hourly wage published in the annual Economic Report of the President.

Independent Sector's most recent calculation, for 2005, was \$18.04 per hour.

For an organization that has lots of volunteers performing many hours of service, those matching dollars can definitely add up. So be sure to keep accurate time sheets for all your volunteers, just as you do for your paid employees.

# *SAVE THE DATES!*

February 5-7, 2007

The Latino Coalition's  
First Annual National Conference

“Touching Lives, Transforming Communities”

Pacific Palms Conference Center  
Industry Hills, CA 91744

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