



centro
Hispano
DANIEL TORRES



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hispanic center

Spanish Speaking Council of Howard and DeWitt County, Inc.



A Message from the Executive Director:



Leading with Passion & Purpose

What a difference five years can make.

Back in 2010, the Centro Hispano was an organization that was navigating rough waters. The organization with the best of intentions wanted to be all things to all people but found itself overextended. The nation was dealing with a financial tsunami that negatively affected most nonprofit organizations trying to raise funds and the community need for help and services at the same time continued to rise. It was the perfect storm that for most organizations were difficult to navigate.

Yet the Centro Hispano persevered. Over the next 5 years the organization took ownership of the challenges it faced head on, made strategic decisions to strengthen accountability, enhance efficiencies, and build relationships to better meet the needs of families seeking our help.

The Centro Hispano story is one we are excited to share. Learn about the ways we are making a positive impact through Advocacy, Education, and Engagement. There is a renewed sense of purpose within the organization that is contagious. We invite you to get to know us, work with us, and support us in engaging and strengthening families.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Toledo". The ink is black and the signature is written in a fluid, personal style.

Michael Toledo
Centro Hispano Daniel Torres

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Hispanic Center is to support and enhance the acculturation of the Latino population in the Greater Reading area through collaborative initiatives designed to enable individuals to improve their quality of life and the quality of life in their communities.

Clarity Drives Confidence. Confidence Drives Commitment.

The Hispanic Center of Greater Reading, which has served the Latino community for forty-nine years, is the primary agency which supports that growing population's many needs through collaborative initiatives designed to enable individuals and families to improve the quality of their personal and communal lives.

Latinos are now the majority of Reading's population and they are a highly diverse group, representing many Latin American countries, ethnic groups, and faith communities. Although many Latinos are recent arrivals, others have been here for generations and are now taking significant leadership roles utilizing knowledge and skills acquired through the Hispanic Center.

Every day, the Hispanic Center's core programs serve more than three hundred members of this population, whose access to existing resources is either restricted or curtailed by language and cultural barriers, lack of information and transportation, and current biases and myths.

Despite the financial challenges and the uncertainty with foundation, agency, and government support, the revitalized professional and lay leadership has worked tirelessly to restore the Center to financial stability and balance, and to ensure the quality and effectiveness of its programs. The Hispanic Center continues to serve as a cultural and linguistic intermediary for other social service and government agencies, whose own service to the Latino community and the region as a whole would be adversely affected by the loss of Center assistance and coordination.

Our central goal is to continue the focus on our programs that engage and strengthen families, and we have implemented frequent and systematic assessments of our administration and services in order to achieve our goals. We constantly evaluate our core mission statement and seek to better serve the Latino community by

- Establishing partnerships with area school districts to research better ways to serve the educational needs of our children and parents.
- Helping to foster healthier and more secure families and individuals.
- Fostering and advocating leadership and responsibility for the Latino and general communities by the growing number of Latino professionals and entrepreneurs.
- Encouraging civic engagement by and for the Latino community.

There are many operational and programmatic costs which will never be covered by the generous grants and donations that the Hispanic Center already receives. In order to achieve our goal of continuing to create effective and sustainable programs, we need for you to become both active participants and financial supporters of our work. We look forward to having the opportunity to share our vision with you, answering any questions you may have, and enlisting your support in our work.

Hispanic Center Core Programs

INFORMATION & REFERRAL ADVOCACY PROGRAM

For over forty-nine years, this program has provided direct referrals to social service agencies that provide assistance with completing applications, advocacy, translation/interpretation, and notary services. The triage area of the Center, in which clients are assigned to members of our staff, is funded by the United Way of Berks County. **Last year we provided over four thousand information and referral sessions.**

CASA DE LA AMISTAD (FRIENDSHIP HOUSE) SENIOR CENTER PROGRAM

Since 1988, Casa De La Amistad has been a community center for adults over fifty-five years of age, striving to prevent the crippling psychological and physical effects of isolation. Funded through the Berks County Office of Aging, this program utilizes a holistic approach and offers services such as individual case management, group activities, health classes, computer classes, exercises and culturally-appropriate nutritional daily meals. **Last year we served over forty thousand meals to our seniors.**

HIGHER EDUCATION INITIATIVE & SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

This program, which is a collaboration between the Hispanic Center and the five area colleges (Kutztown University, Penn State Berks, Alvernia University, Albright College, and the Reading Area Community College), provides culturally and linguistically appropriate services for parents and students who seek guidance and support in navigating the college application process. **Over 300 families have been served over the last 5 years.** We also have an endowment managed through the Berks County Community Foundation that offers scholarships for Latino students in Berks County who are pursuing post-secondary education.

HELPLINK FINANCIAL STABILITY INITIATIVE

In partnership with the United Way of Berks County, we assist individuals and families in finding the benefits, programs, and local resources needed to cope with difficult economic circumstances. We also help low-to-moderate income individuals and families become financially stronger by providing free tax preparation services and information on the Earned Income Tax Credit. **Last year the Hispanic Center completed over three hundred forty-seven tax returns for our clients, resulting in refunds of over \$450,000.**

STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INITIATIVE

In collaboration with Berks Women in Crisis, we work to educate and raise awareness in the Latino community on domestic violence, increasing access to support services for victims of domestic violence in a manner that is culturally and linguistically appropriate.

Centro Hispano
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