

The Hispanic Liaison responds to community needs

During these challenging times for immigrant communities, The Hispanic Liaison is actively addressing the needs that local immigrants and leaders identified as their priorities -- information, education, direct services and advocacy.

The Siler City-based non-profit re-opened last summer with Ilana Dubester, the founding executive director, returning to lead the organization. She had served as director from 1995 until 2008.

The Hispanic Liaison worked with UNC's Latino Migration Project to conduct a Hispanic Community Needs Assessment in Chatham to identify important issues and concerns, and get feedback from Hispanics, other community members, local agencies and law enforcement. "The assessment confirmed that the types of services that we have provided for over 21 years are still very much needed," said Dubester. "We are grateful for the UNC Latino Migration Project, local agencies and the Hispanic community for helping us identify priority issues. We included their recommendations into our three-year plan for the organization."

The community assessment process engaged nearly 200 individuals and 16 local agencies through focus groups and a bilingual survey for Hispanic/Latino residents. A PDF version of the summary results can be downloaded from www.hispanicliaison.org/history-vision.

Hispanic community members were most concerned about access to public transportation, lack of access to drivers' licenses, and their lack of relationship with law enforcement. They also expressed a desire for The Liaison to advocate with and for the

community, help with community integration, offer information about resources, increase access to services, provide trainings to improve their ability to participate in civic life, organize “know your rights” workshops, offer civic education and leadership development for youth and adults, create spaces for community conversations, and serve as a Hispanic cultural center.

The agency focus group had representatives from 16 local organizations, the school system, CCCC, health providers, social services and law enforcement. They described The Hispanic Liaison as “a valuable information center that connects Hispanic/Latino residents to services, has trust with the community, and offers opportunities for civic engagement, especially for first-generation immigrants.”

Agency leaders also reported that the organization “helped to increase community awareness and had improved the lives of the children of first-generation immigrants, many of whom are now adults with children of their own.” They recommended that The Liaison continue offering a “safe and trusting place” for Hispanic/Latino residents and provide opportunities for civic engagement, particularly for first-generation immigrants who may be unfamiliar with local culture and laws. In addition, they wanted the organization to serve as a “two-way bridge between Hispanic/Latino residents and other communities and institutions in Chatham County.”

“Our positive impact is visible and tangible,” said Dubester. “We have helped thousands of adults, youth and children adjust to life in the U.S., access the services they need to succeed, and affirm their rights. We are working diligently to grow and strengthen the organization to continue to promote an equitable, just and inclusive society for all.”

The Hispanic Liaison is launching a new Youth Leadership Development and Civic Engagement program for Latino high school students in Chatham County. To support the cause or learn more, visit our new bilingual webpage at www.evhnc.org.

The Hispanic Liaison is located in downtown Siler City at 200 N. Chatham Ave and helps Latinos in Chatham, Alamance, Lee and Randolph counties. Its mission is to foster intercultural understanding and to empower Hispanics to overcome the challenges they face and make their voices heard in the community. For more information, contact Ilana Dubester, Executive Director, at ilana@evhnc.org or call 919.742.1448.