



LATINOS UNIDOS OF IOWA, INC.,
is a 501(c)(e) nonprofit organization. Newsletter co-editors: Lena Robison & Lee Searles. Spanish translation: Ann Morris. Web: www.latinosunidosofiowa.com. Email: iowaLatina@aol.com

MISSION STATEMENT: "We are a diverse organization that promotes a united community, positive change, and achievement."

Fourth-Quarter Newsletter, 2006

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- ✚ Scholarship
- ✚ Library
- ✚ Food & Dinner
- ✚ Resource Fair
- ✚ Special Events

Thoughts for 2007: Looking Back & Looking Ahead

The year 2006 has been an interesting & sometimes hectic one. Latinos Unidos has undertaken considerable examination of its future & goals. One result is an expanded view of our roles in central Iowa Latino communities. We hope that you will join us in creating & fulfilling these roles.

We end the year with several notable events. Veridian Credit Union has given Latinos Unidos an Inclusive Community Grant of \$1,000 for our resource fairs. We were able to donate a gift card to a needy family in the Des Moines area & cash to the Hispanic Ministries of St. Mary's Church in Marshalltown. Our new mission statement, under the logo above, is official, & we are continuing the revision of our by-laws & constitution.

To get the year started, YOU can help us with an individual, family, or organizational membership in Latinos Unidos. By agreement of the Officers & Board, we will begin collecting memberships from January to March for current members. New members are welcome to join at any time. However, the membership year will be the same as the calendar year, January to January.

The first business meeting of the new year, on January 11th, is a crucial one. We have activities to begin planning: a conference, two resource fairs, applications for postsecondary scholarships, fundraisers, participation in festivals & job fairs, & much, much more. In addition, we must consider changes to the by-laws that update the job descriptions of officers, the handling of potential conflicts of interest, & the notification of contributors & sponsors regarding the tax-deductible nature of their support. We may want to plan a Latinos Unidos Board & Officers retreat for late January or early February to accomplish everything.

The membership forms (in English & Spanish) will arrive shortly by email. Feel free to print more than one & distribute them among associates & friends who will support our mission & activities.

Our Board members, Officers, & general members continue to be active in community efforts of all kinds. Discussions are under way with existing & potential sponsors about collaborative community-building work. We are talking with leaders in various agencies & organizations about ways to work together to address the needs of Hispanics/Latinos in Iowa. Latinos Unidos is stepping up to become another source about community & regional events & opportunities.

Inside This Issue: Recent & Upcoming Latinos Unidos Events

- Veridian Credit Union's Inclusive Community Grant
- Events, Opportunities, & Resources
- **Special Feature:** "Thoughts on 'Latino' versus 'Hispanic' and Issues of Diversity," by Alex Piedras
- "A Little History Lesson: Spanish Speakers in Early North America North of the Rio Grande," by Lee Searles

Latinos Unidos Events & News

General Business Meetings in 2007

Latinos Unidos will hold its monthly business meetings on the second Thursday of each month, at 6 pm in the conference room of Building 3, Des Moines Area Community College's Urban Campus. Urban Campus is located at 1100 7th St. near the Holiday Inn and old Roberts Dairy property. The first meeting of the year is on January 11th. Our thanks to Mary Chapman, Vice President of Community & Workforce Programs at DMACC, for making this space & time available to us. Please plan to attend, especially if you are a Board Member or Officer. We have much to get ready for in the new year.

Membership Dues

You should receive an email in the next few days with membership forms attached to it. The forms at the Web site are out of date now, and we do not have a knowledgeable person to take them off or put the new forms up. We hope to make this change very soon.

Please note that the dues have changed for 2007. For individuals, the amount is \$15 per year. The family rate is \$25. Organizational memberships cost \$75. The changes are the first in several years, and they reflect the increased costs that Latinos Unidos faces in delivering its activities and programs. Thank you for being understanding about this.

In addition, the membership year now runs from January 1 to December 31 of each year. It has become confusing to keep track of who has paid dues when each individual's year begins on the date of payment. This will also make it easier for us to send out notices. We hope that you won't mind paying an overlapping membership if you already paid after January, 2006. If this presents a hardship, please let us know, & we'll try to accommodate your need.

Board & Officer Nominations

The Latinos Unidos fiscal year, which differs from the membership year, runs from March 1 to February 28 (or 29, in leap years) each year. This is also the term of service for Members of the Board and Officers. The current Board and Officers are listed on page one, in the lefthand box. At this point, only one person has expressed an interest in stepping down: Barbara Quijano Decker, who is President of Mercy College of Health Sciences. All other members of the Board and Officers can be considered nominated for their present posts, unless they notify Lena Robison or Lee Searles.

Committees for 2007

Another important item for business on January 11th concerns the various committees for the year. The committees, as listed on page one, are Scholarship, Library, Food & Dinner, Resource Fair, & Special Events. Members of the Judging Subcommittee for scholarships have already been determined, with Ewa Pratt (DMACC) as the very capable chair. We welcome Jessica Tellez (University of Iowa) as a new judge for 2007. We will need volunteers to send out funding requests, follow up with new & existing sponsors, & plan for the awards night.

Board Member Jerry Tormey has taken the lead during 2006 on the Library Committee, with capable help from Coralee Turner (Grand View College). Their work has included fund raising, event organizing, & meetings with library administration to make book selections. They would welcome new faces to continue this important community outreach project.

The Food & Dinner committee...

Thank you to Nicole Bleckwehl for taking charge of the Resource Fair in 2006. Nicole is very busy with work, and I'm sure she would like others to step up and help her, or even relieve her, of this responsibility for 2007.

For Special Events, we do not want to let the new year escape without a Latinos Unidos conference. This year's conference is especially vital, given the changes in how we want to participate in the larger community & the changes & ideas from the strategic planning process. We need some hardy, reliable, & thoughtful people to work on a Conference Subcommittee, as well as plan for other events such as a booth at the Latino Heritage Festival.

Inclusive Community Grant from Veridian Credit Union

On the warm, unwinterlike morning of December 26, 2006, Vice President Lee Searles drove to Ankeny to receive a grant check from Veridian Credit Union. Latinos Unidos had applied to Veridian for the grant to help with our Resource Fairs in 2007. The picture below shows Ankeny Branch Supervisor Mary Cochran awarding the check to Lee Searles.

According to Veridian's grant description, the Inclusive Community Grant "targets programs that celebrate and raise community awareness of traditionally excluded groups or cultures." These programs may include educational classes, school programs, public plays or shows, and resource materials.

The major impact that this grant will have is for Latino businesses & organizations that would like to have a booth at one or both Resource Fairs in 2007. In the past, some organizations have excluded themselves because they were unable to pay the booth fee and also unwilling to accept free space. Besides the costs of space and supplies, the grant allows Latinos Unidos to provide booth fee waivers. We encourage managers & owners of small businesses & the staff of organizations that are Latino-owned & operated, or that serve significant communities of Latinos, to apply for a waiver and come to the fairs.

One year ago, Veridian changed its name from John Deere Community Credit Union. The credit union has a history that extends back to 1934. Once it served only employees of Deere & Company, but in 1984 became a community financial organization, owned by its members & serving thirty-two counties in Iowa.

In addition to the Inclusive Community Grant, Veridian sponsors three other grants, with deadlines on four different dates throughout the year. The other three grant programs are the Health, Welfare, & Safety Grant, the Culture & Arts Grant, & the Youth Education Grant. For more information, visit Veridian's Web site at http://www.veridiancu.org/about_us/community.asp.

All of us who make up Latinos Unidos extend our warm thanks to Mary Cochran, Public Relations Specialist Kelly Van Hove, and the members of Veridian Credit Union for helping us provide a vital service to some of the many New Iowans.



If you have an idea for something you'd like to see in an upcoming issue of the Latinos Unidos Newsletter, please contact any of following: Lee Searles, 515-979-6457, lsearles@att.net. Ann Morris, morrisad6812@msn.com. Lena Robison, IowaLatina@aol.com, 515-279-6840.

Events, Opportunities, & Resources

- The December 12 detentions at the Swift packing plants have drawn criticisms and praise. No matter how one might feel about undocumented immigration, the raids have torn families apart. If you want to support the remaining family members, send a donation to Hispanic Ministries, St. Mary's Church, 12 W. Linn St., Marshalltown, IA, 50158. The phone number is 641-753-7815. Checks should be payable to "Hispanic Ministries." A recent call to St. Mary's Church indicated that money is needed for basic living expenses, such as rent, bills, and groceries, because the ICE detentions often removed a primary income earner from the family.
- Thursday, Jan. 4, 10 am to 3 pm: Iowa Career Expo, Polk County Convention Center, 5th & Grand, Des Moines. Over 60 employers will have booths and tables at the Expo. The Web site, www.iowacareerexpo.org, lists the employers. Bring your resume to present. The Expo will have free resume advice & presentations by employers.

Events, Opportunities, & resources, continued

- The final scheduled meeting of the New Iowans Policy Task Force is on Wednesday, Jan. 3, from 10 am to 2 pm in the North Central Conference Room, 4th Floor of the Lucas State Office Building, 321 E. 12th St., Des Moines. Members of the public are welcome to observe the Task Force. The primary goal is to craft recommendations for identification and drivers' licensing for New Iowans who arrive from other countries. The need stems from public safety concerns. More information is at the Task Force Web site, www.governor.state.ia.us/policy/newiowans/index.html.
- VP Lee Searles had the pleasure of attending an Open House of LUNA, Latinas Unidas por un Nuevo Amanecer (Latino Women United for a New Dawn). LUNA is located at 515 28th St., Suite 105, Des Moines, & it offers a wide variety of support services & activities for women who are the victims of domestic violence. The organization is looking for members of its Community Group, volunteers to help with translation, office work, childcare, phones, & activities, & people to receive basic training to work with its clients. LUNA can be reached at 515-271-5060. Its 24-hour bilingual Crisis Line is 1-866-256-7668.
- The College Planning Center has moved to 160 S. 68th St., Suite 1101, West Des Moines. The College Planning Center offers bilingual financial counseling for high school students & students already in college to help plan for expenses. There is a satellite office in Cedar Rapids at 1100 Blairs Ferry Road NE, Suite 104 (next to the SuperTarget).

The CPC also has information about grants & scholarships. If you or someone you know will attend a college-level institution in the Fall of 2007, the CPC can help with applications, deadlines, and scholarships that match your interests and talents. For more information, call or email Juan Garcia, Bilingual Outreach Representative, at 515-273-7166 or toll-free at 1-877-CPC-IOWA, extension 7166.
- The Hispanic College Fund offers college scholarships to Hispanics/Latinos, along with internship opportunities, leadership development activities, and other resources. The deadline for scholarship applications is March 15, 2007. An application and other information can be accessed at the HCF's Web site, www.hispanicfund.org.
- The Planning Committee for the 9th Strengthening & Valuing Latinas & Latinos Conference (the "Latino Conference") will meet in January. Watch for announcements by email, or contact Lee Searles at lsearles@att.net for information. If you want to contribute to the Planning Committee or one of its subcommittees, you are very welcome. Last year's conference was a resounding success, with Los Angeles Times reporter Sonia Nazario, author of *Enrique's Journey*; presentations on Mesoamerican cultures & heritages; & a Day of the Dead processional.
- The CCI Homebuyers' Club meets on the third Tuesday of each month, beginning Jan. 16th from 6 to 9 pm, at the CCI office, 2005 Forest Ave., Des Moines. There is a small fee to join. These are educational meetings, not sales events. Participants benefit from the expertise of professionals & other home buyers, & they may qualify for special loan programs. Free childcare is provided. Contact the Des Moines Citizens for Community Improvement, 515-255-0800.
- Tuesday, Jan. 16th, 9:30 to 11:30 am: Blood Sugar & Diabetes Screening at the Neighborhood Health Initiative, 1907 Carpenter, Des Moines. The screening is conducted by the Polk County Health Department. Call the Polk Health Department at 515-286-3798 or Boursy Quang at the Neighborhood Health Initiative, 515-309-4795, for more information.
- The 2007 Iowa Culture & Language Conference takes place on Feb. 13 & 14 in the Polk County Convention Complex, 501 Grand, Des Moines. Details about the conference & registration materials are available at www.iowa.gov/educate/diverse-learners/our-kids.html. Questions can be directed to Mary McGuirk, mmcguirk@nwaea.k12.ia.us or 1-800-352-9040, extension 6090.

Events, Opportunities, & resources, continued

- The Iowa Conference of the United Methodist Church will hold a Lobby Day/Moral Witness for Children at the Iowa State Capitol on Jan. 23rd. Contact Inez Dawes, Advocate, at 515-974-8908 or by email at advocate@iaumc.org for details about this event.
- The Spanish-language Web site La familia habla (“The Family Speaks,” www.lafamiliahabla.org) has resources for parents, youth, and other adults on issues of sexuality.

Special Feature: Thoughts on “Latino” versus “Hispanic” & Issues of Diversity

Hello. My name is Alex Piedras. I work at Grand View College, a private college in Des Moines. A big share of my work is to organize cultural events for the College and promote dialogue about diversity. Many people ask me what I mean when I say “diversity.” The reply is simple: it is everything that makes us unique. Diversity is more than the ethnicity, race, language, and culture of a person. It also includes gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, whether one has a disability, and many other things that make us different from others.

It’s important that we recognize how much these other kinds of diversity are found among Latinos. And because we are already talking about Latinos, it’s important to clarify that the word “Latino” is the most inclusive label for all those who claim an origin in a Latin American nation, including Brazil, the Caribbean region, and those that have always lived in what is now the United States. Many southwestern states of the U.S. were once part of Mexico. The term “Hispanic” was created by the government of the United States to categorize many of us who are actually very diverse. This word also has served as the basis for discrimination, in that it ignores the fact that many of us have native ethnic identities, and it only recognizes our Spanish heritage.

Transitioning back to the theme of diversity, among Latinos we can see every possible manifestation of diversity. Some of us are Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, and non-believers; some of us are youth, adults, and seniors; some, rich, middle class, and with limited resources; our language has different variations and pronunciations; we can be people who have disabilities; and the colors of our skin vary from dark, like the baseball player Sammy Sosa, to very white like Cristina Salaregui. It’s important to recognize our diversity and appreciate it, and to consider more than ethnicity, race, language, and culture. After all, we belong to just one race, the human race.



Alex Piedras is the Director of Multicultural and Community Outreach at Grand View College in Des Moines. Alex is an active supporter of Latinos Unidos and many other community initiatives. His work at Grand View includes working with the campus Diversity Club. He can be reached by email at apiedras@gvc.edu. Grand View’s Multicultural Program Web page is at <http://www.gvc.edu/asp/audience/audience.aspx?pageid=53&aid=1>.

A Little History Lesson: Spanish-speakers in early America north of the Rio Grande river

If someone were to say “the Great American Desert,” many of us would think immediately of the Sonoran, Mojave, or Painted Desert in Mexico & the U.S. Perhaps the stark scenery of Death Valley or southern Utah comes to mind. You may have seen a Western movie with cowboys, Indians, sand, & waterholes.

Before 1865, “the Great American Desert” referred to the area now called the Great Plains, consisting of part or all of the states of Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, & North & South Dakota, as well as parts of the Canadian provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, & Manitoba. The Great Plains were considered to be uninhabitable by earlier explorers, fur traders, & settlers because water was scarce & people of European descent had not yet learned how to survive in this area. Even Spanish explorers, accustomed to semi-arid climates in Spain, found the region inhospitable.



Two scenes like those early Spanish speakers may have found north of the Rio Grande. *Left:* The 700-foot valley of Canyon de Chelly, Arizona. *Right:* The mesa-&-valley terrain of Mesa Verde, Colorado. Both are sites of prehistoric cliff dwellers whose descendants met early Spanish in the Southwest.



The earliest nonnative explorers of the Great Plains & desert Southwest were Spanish conquistadors who came from New Spain. In 1536, four survivors of the Narváez expedition to what is now Florida wandered into northern Mexico, surprising the Spanish residents. Narváez had set out in search of “Apalachee,” a land rumored to have abundant gold. The survivors fueled rumors about the Seven Golden Cities of Cibola, which were supposed to have more yellow metal than Cortés & Pizarro had found in the Aztec (México) & Inca empires. One of these men, Cabeza de Vaca, reported seeing bison, which were called *vacas* (“cattle”). One wonders if his name (“Head of Cattle”) came from his experiences.

In 1539 a Franciscan friar, Marcos de Niza, apparently sighted a Zuñi village in what is now the US state of New Mexico. The viceroy of New Spain, Don Antonio de Mendoza, selected Francisco Vázquez de Coronado to take an expedition of 336 Spaniards & 1,000 central Mexican natives northward in search of the Seven Cities. Coronado’s group left in 1540 & returned in 1542, but was disappointed to find only the adobe dwellings of the Pueblo Indians in the desert Southwest.

While in the Zuñi area, Coronado received word of the Land of Quivira, even wealthier than the Cities of Cibola, & still further to the north. After a trip to the Grand Canyon, Coronado’s force moved eastward to northern Texas, then northward to “Quivira,” most likely central Kansas. They did not discover the gold that they coveted. It seems that several Indian groups didn’t want the Spanish around & simply told them that gold was to be found *más allá*—“farther on.”

After Juan Rodríguez de Cabrillo’s sailing voyage up the coast of what would become California (1542), northern New Spain was colonized for its silver. In 1598 Juan Oñate followed two earlier trips in the 1580s across the Rio Grande.

After that, the Spanish presence was established with missions, conversion of many Indians to Catholicism, & miners, ranchers, & traders. Natives were often forcibly employed under the Spanish *encomienda* system, in which they remained in control of their lands but were made to pay heavy tributes to the colonial authorities. In 1680, several Pueblo groups revolted against the Spanish presence, only to be subdued a few years later.

From Santa Fé (now state capital of New Mexico), the Spanish projected their control over the Great Plains & Southwest by way of the fur trade. This brought them into competition with the French, who were moving into the same area to trap beaver & other valuable fur animals. For several decades, French trappers benefited by working for the Spanish viceroy, until France was able to declare the Mississippi & Missouri River basins as its own colony, named “Louisiana.”

Eventually this area was purchased by the U.S. (1803) & explored by Meriwether Lewis & William Clark. Spanish cultural influence was mainly limited to the Southwest: the future states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, & to some extent Colorado. In part this was because of the climate of the Plains & the lack of reliable water, except in the major rivers.

It is to this Southwest region that some Latinos refer when they say that “we didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us.” Today many native Navajo, Totonco O’odham (Pima-Papago), Apache, Hopi, & Puebloan children learn Spanish at home, along with their native language, because of the arrival of explorers, traders, missionaries, & others from further south. The descendants of the early Spanish still live in the Southwest & southern Great Plains. As they did in the rest of Latin America, they also began families with native people. Religious conversion, the introduction of trade goods, forced labor, & the fur industry all brought important changes from Hispanic sources. Native people who speak Spanish as one of two or three first languages, the presence of Catholic missions, place names, & people of mixed Spanish & native heritage are all legacies of this colonial past.

Well, this history lesson wasn’t so little. Still, I hope you found it interesting. *Photos & summary by Lee Searles*

**A Very Special Thank-You & Happy New Year
To Our Sponsors & Volunteers in 2006:
You Make Our Work Possible**

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Veridian Credit Union
Viento del Tropic

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Wells Fargo Financial

Clemen Wilcox, Lang
Younkers

*If for some reason your name & organization aren't listed above, please accept our humble apologies!
We have tried to include everyone, but it seems likely that our memories are not perfect. Accept an
extra special thanks from Latinos Unidos.*

Special Events of 2006

“Celebrate Learning” Event, Des Moines Public Library
CISHRM Diversity Fair, Des Moines Botanical Center
Latinos Unidos Information Booth, Latino Heritage Festival
Latinos Unidos Resource Fair, HOLA Center
Latinos Unidos Scholarship Awards, Catholic Pastoral Center
Robert D. Ray Ambassador Award, to Barbara Quijano Decker
YWCA & Bankers Trust Women of Achievement Award, to Lena Avila-Robison

Happy New Year!