



February 2007

LA VOZ

La Alianza Hispana's Newsletter



Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Warmth. In the dead of winter, warmth is what we crave. Warmth can be associated with a place—for me, I think of the beaches in Puerto Rico! Perhaps it's associated with being at home with family sheltered from the harshness of the cold and darkness, or maybe it's simply an act of kindness—the kindness of friends, community and even strangers.

In our February issue of *La Voz*, we are pleased to profile Linda Medina, a La Alianza volunteer and former workforce development program participant. Linda is a Latina leader who is reconnecting with the community that once offered her life-changing support. Her La Alianza experience was rooted in kindness, respect and a vision of a better future. Now she wants to offer others the same kind of support.

In February, La Alianza received a grant from MassHealth and Commonwealth Care Enrollment Outreach Project which endeavors to create healthcare access for uninsured and underinsured residents in Massachusetts. La Alianza will be helping to enroll 1,200 uninsured Latino Massachusetts residents in the MassHealth and Commonwealth Care Health Insurance Program. Latinos are the most uninsured racial/ethnic group in the US and are most affected by factors that lead to being uninsured.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Health, 17.3% of Latinos in Massachusetts do not have health insurance. The majority of Latinos served by La Alianza are uninsured or underinsured. La Alianza is pleased to play an important role in linking Boston's Latino community to health care access.

We are also pleased to announce that John Hancock has provided start-up funding for our *Mujeres Adelante* program. This new initiative responds to the unique challenges that young Latina women in the Department of Youth Services (DYS) system face. Using the modality of peer groups and leadership, the program is designed to promote positive youth development utilizing a family-based approach. Our experience has shown us that family-oriented community-based intervention models are particularly effective in strengthening families with children of all ages, reducing risk factors and promoting resilience among youth and families.

As Linda, the volunteer featured in this article notes the services she and her family received at La Alianza had a life-long impact. As a result, she has blossomed into a role model and leader in Boston's Latino community and has returned to La Alianza to share her skills, her compassion, and her vision for a strong and supportive community.

La Alianza strives to provide the vital services that help our community realize their dreams. We are a place where people and their ideas grow.

Warm regards,



Janet Collazo

It's my time to return to La Alianza and give back
Volunteer Profile



In 1970 she arrived in Mission Hill from Caguas, Puerto Rico in the arms of her mother. Linda Medina was an infant when her mother was told to visit a place called La Alianza Hispana—described, at the time, as a group of neighbors who organized a self- help alliance for Latinos. This group was largely made up of volunteers and they worked out of a Roxbury store front. Linda recalls, "Back then, La Alianza was a very important place for every newcomer and longtime Latino resident in Roxbury and Dorchester. It was home. It was community. It was opportunity."

Learning English at La Alianza Hispana provided opportunities for Linda's mother and her family. "My mother told everyone about La Alianza. She referred so many people to La Alianza's English classes and connected many families to the advocacy and support services offered at the time," said Linda. In fact, Linda's mother was one of the first alumnae of La Alianza's flagship Adult Education Program.

In 1995, Linda returned to La Alianza as an adult. She was without a job, was a single mother, and was trying hard not to be reliant on public assistance. "It was a critical time in my life. After being laid off from my job, my health benefits ran out, and I was so worried about what would happen to me and my daughter. I needed to get a new and different job, but at the time, I thought my skills were very limited," explained Linda.

In order to make ends meet, Linda went on public assistance and was enrolled in a workforce division of the Massachusetts Welfare Program. Though this support helped with day-to-day living, it limited her ability to earn a living wage. Linda struggled to find a job that wasn't just a paycheck, but a job that had the possibilities of being a true career path. She was committed to working hard and knew she needed guidance in navigating a way to sustainable employment.

"When I met with La Alianza's workforce development coordinator to review my skills and experience, he recognized marketable job skills in me and helped me plan a pathway to a career that would be rewarding. He helped me prepare two resumes; one to find a job to solve my immediate crisis and the other to gain employment in a field I really wanted to work in. And guess what, that's exactly what happened—I took a temporary job and within 3 months I was working in a position that was an excellent stepping stone to where my career is today," declared Linda.

Today Linda is a student at the University of Massachusetts/Boston Management Program. In addition, she was admitted to the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy's Latino Leadership Opportunity Program, a national program that engages Latino students in research activities and related leadership trainings.



PACE candidates in an orientation & training session at La Alianza Hispana

"Now it's my time to reconnect with La Alianza in a different capacity—I want to serve as a volunteer and give back to the community that supported me when I needed help," affirmed Linda. For the next three months, Linda will serve at La Alianza by developing management strategies for PACE (Partnership Automotive Career Education) a workforce development program that helps bridge the gap between Latinos and vocational and post secondary training.

Linda summarized by saying, "I believe in La Alianza and appreciate that it has always been an open door to me and my family. When I was young, La Alianza was a catalyst of important social change and I really respected the people that worked there. As an adult and a parent, it is exciting to know that I can contribute to supporting others who need a helping hand and I have an important role to play in the La Alianza family."

La Alianza Hispana is seeking volunteers. If you are interested in direct services volunteering, please contact :Rosa Bastian at 617-427-7175 Ext. 279. If you are interested in helping La Alianza fundraise, please contact: Johanna Richwagen at johannarichwagen@gmail.com

Janet Collazo Selected For The National Hispana Leadership Institute



La Alianza board member Frank Sepulveda and State Representative Jeffrey Sánchez with Janet

Recently our interim executive director, Janet Collazo, was selected to participate in the National Hispana Leadership Institute's (NHLI) 2007 Executive Leadership Program. The Institute's vision is to "create positive global change through personal integrity and ethical leadership."

NHLI is the premier leadership development program for Hispanic women in the United States. Founded in 1988, NHLI provides a comprehensive four-week program, which includes one week at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and

another week at the Center for Creative Leadership. Two additional weeks of training are held in California and Washington, D.C. The program prepares selected Hispanic women who have demonstrated leadership at the local level for positions of national influence and public policy impact.

A national recruitment effort solicits applications from the best and the brightest Hispanic women in the U.S. Only twenty-two women are selected every year. They represent diverse professions, ages, geographical areas, and subgroups within the Hispanic community. Janet Collazo was selected because of her community service record, which includes: serving as the Deputy Director prior to her appointment as Interim Executive Director at La Alianza Hispana; serving as Director of Finance for ¿Oíste?, a Massachusetts Latino political organization; Director of Finance & Administration; and Director of the Family & Community Development Team for ROCA, a nationally recognized youth empowerment agency in the Boston area. As a community leader, Janet served on the organizing committee for the 2004 Democratic National Convention's Latino Party which honored the 2004 DNC Chairman, Governor Bill Richardson (NM) and has provided pro bono help to nonprofit organizations by setting up IT and financial accounting systems. She is committed to empowering Latinos in Boston and offers personal financial management workshops in Spanish.

The NHLI was incorporated as a nonprofit corporation in 1989 and has developed a diverse base of corporate and foundation supporters. The board of directors is comprised of 17 national Hispanic leaders, corporate executives, and NHLI alumnae.

"I am so grateful to be one of the 22 Latinas participating in the 2007 National Hispana Leadership Institute. I look forward to building strategies for Latina leadership, both on local and national levels. The Institute not only facilitates individual leadership, it shines a light on the fact that Latinas have an important role to play in the future of our country."

To date, over 480 distinguished Hispanic women have graduated from the national program. NHLI's Impact Study indicated that because of the training, our alumnae enhanced and diversified their leadership styles; learned models for understanding and

influencing public policy; increased their understanding of Hispanic demographics and future demographic trends; improved their team building and networking abilities; and gained an understanding of how to effect positive change that will benefit the Hispanic community.

New Medical Insurance for Uninsured



MassHealth & Commonwealth Care, are launching a new Massachusetts health insurance program for uninsured adults over the age of 19. This affordable program offers a full range of benefits.

What is covered?

- Overnight hospital stays
- Check-ups and physicals with your regular doctor
- Medical care from a specialist in a doctor's office, community health center or hospital
- Visits to the emergency room
- Vision care
- Prescription drugs
- Mental health and substance abuse services
- Also, dental coverage is available to people with income below the federal poverty level.

**For more information please join us at :
La Alianza Community Information Session**

Saturday March 3rd, 11:00-1:30 pm

**La Alianza Hispana
409 Dudley Street
Roxbury, MA 02119**

617-427-7175 ext. 230 or jmartinez@laalianza.org

There will be additional information sessions in future months.

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