

## OUR HISTORIA IN CITY HEIGHTS

**Latinos y Latinas En Acción (LLEA)**, a project of **Mid-City CAN** (Community Advocacy Network), supports Latinos in using their collective voice effectively and increasing Latino involvement in all levels of community-decision making and civic participation. LLEA has been in existence since 2002, as a grassroots effort led by concerned parents, residents and teachers of the City Heights community. Over the years, it has become a three-hour meeting held every Monday throughout the year.

Success through *coalition building* is evident in all areas. Through the efforts our work is focused in four initiatives: *Education Consortium*, *Movilizando el Voto Inmigrante*, *Human Rights Committee*, and *Universidad Popular*.

- *Education Consortium of San Diego County* is a coalition directed by the ACLU that advocates for educational equity in low-income communities. The Consortium's main goal is to ensure that all students meet the "A-G" requirements, which are courses required for admission to the UC and CSU universities.
- *Movilizando el Voto Inmigrante* is a campaign in which LLEA collaborates with California Partnership, a coalition of community grassroots organizations throughout the state of California. Over the last three years LLEA members have walked precincts in City Heights before, during and after electoral campaigns with the goal of identifying potential immigrant voters and engaging them in dialogue about issues facing the Latino community in City Heights. During the November Presidential elections we turned out more than 2,500 City Heights voters who were key in a historic success for people of color in this country. Si Se Puede!
- *Human Rights Committee Latinos Unidos* is a community-based effort to document the human rights abuses from San Diego Police and the Border Patrol. This committee is a member of Raza Rights Coalition of San Diego, "an alliance of independent Chicano Mexicano/Raza Latino-Americano organizations and individuals united to defend and elevate the human rights and dignity of our people." Through this collaboration we support Mecha organizations in the high schools and at SDSU, and cooperate in the organization of marches and protests of the people in order to make a strong voice for change.
- *Universidad Popular* In collaboration with teachers and professors from local schools and universities, LLEA instituted Universidad Popular to develop the leadership and political foundation of the twenty core leaders of LLEA who are leading this year's Universidad Popular and Latinos Unidos. Three modules have been completed and the fourth is to be launched in May of this year, on the Economy. The first module, taught by our partners at America Friends Service Committee focused on human rights. The second module, conducted by local teachers, faculty from Springfield College and staff of CSU San Marcos' Latino Research Center focused on the US Educational system and how it affects low-income Latino children. The third module was based on civic participation.

## GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY BASE

We are grounded in advocacy-based curriculum, which we have created alongside community partners for over 30 core members, and approximately 500 families. These trainings include Universidad Popular, human rights/legal observers, media advocacy, and undoing institutional racism trainings. Our members are also advocates in the San Diego schools collaborative, and simultaneously volunteer in schools in the community as leadership of parent groups and organizations that support bilingual education. Our members attribute their ability to plan, implement and structure events in local schools because of the direct empowerment from participating in LLEA.

## FOCUS ON OUTCOME AREAS- RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE

During the last six years, LLEA has evolved from a centralized single-issue group structure committee into a burgeoning organization comprised of diverse partners, addressing a variety of issues, and employing multiple grassroots community organizing strategies.

We believe that our role during the 9-month planning process will continue to strengthen community based efforts due to our force as community advocates of immigrant rights, educational justice, and public health issues affecting all City Heights residents. Specifically, we have established the Networking Council in Spanish (La Red Comunitaria) a monthly meeting that provides an opportunity for community residents and representatives from private and public organizations, faith communities, schools, and businesses to get to know each other, identify issues impacting their lives, and develop strategies and actions that will improve their neighborhoods. Attendees are participants from Latinos y Latinas en Acción, community residents, community leaders, business representatives, faith based community members and service providers. La Red Comunitaria is both an area of expertise for our organization and a resource available as a forum open to agencies, organizations and the Latino community in particular, regarding the 9-month planning process.

We are committed to the ten outcomes and believe we can contribute directly to outcomes #3, #6 and #10. We can contribute to the health of health and family focused human services (outcome #3) due to our collaboration with Tobacco Free Mid-City Project in which 8 of our members have the experience as health advocates (Promotoras) and are trained to conduct house meetings, presentations and legislative visits in which they inform and involve residents and inform political officials about our campaign to eliminate second hand smoke in multi-unit housing. In collaboration with California Partnership, Supportive Parents Information Network, Rosa Gutierrez from La Maestra Clinic and a member of SDOP, and Tobacco Free Mid-City these Promotoras have conducted legislative visits to Dennise Moreno- Ducheny, Mary Salas, Kristine Kehoe, Susan Davis, Toni Atkins and the City of San Diego Commission. In these visits the Promotoras promoted Universal Health Care, and end to Calworks cuts and healthy housing free of second hand smoke.

We believe that a healthy youth development is the result of healthy families, schools and communities and believe that this can only happen through concerted resident participation. To meet this end, we have supported the empowerment of the children of LLEA members and helped form the Latino Youth Council. While they are an independent group of youth they have also grown parallel with us in focus areas and trainings. We are also committed to supporting small group formations such as Mecha clubs and the Cesar Chavez Club at Monroe Clark Middle School, to encourage youth to become culturally and civically involved in their school sites. We will continue to involve clubs like the Cesar Chavez Club in increasing immigrant electoral power through this 9-month process and the Mobilizando el Voto Inmigrante campaign.

*Strategic Use of media (outcome #10)* LLEA has developed strategic uses of media by both identifying existing media sources as well as developing our own in order to advance our message to our target audience. Our members have been invited to be monthly guests on a local Spanish language radio show to talk about LLEA and issues having an impact on the Latino community in City Heights. Previous to this many of our members had no media experience, but through this experience on the radio show and the media advocacy trainings that we have provided, their comfort level with public speaking has increased considerably. We also have our independent quarterly newsletter, which circulates locally.

#### REPRESENTATIVE OF DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

City Heights, while an extremely diverse community is comprised of a relatively large Latino presence; 52 percent of the community is Latino (Community Health Atlas-Mid-City San Diego). City Heights also has a high concentration of low-income households; the median household income is \$19,393 (The City of San Diego). Therefore our core constituency is Latinos residing in City Heights who face economic challenges. We are also representative of first and second generation Mexicanos.

Latinos y Latinas en Acción

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