

League of Women Voters of Lane County 2002

LATINO NEIGHBORS

LATINO POPULATION IN LANE COUNTY

The demographics of Lane County are changing. The Latino population of Lane County has more than doubled in the past 10 years, and Latinos now comprise 4.6% of Lane County's population. A partial breakdown of data shows increases of 124% for Eugene, 181% for Springfield, and 400% for Junction City (now about 30 families), and 250% for Cottage Grove. These figures may represent a large census undercount due to the lack of reporting by unregistered workers reluctant to be a government data bank.

While the 2000 census reports approximately 15,000 Latinos in Lane County, unofficially, the generally accepted number is closer to 30,000, according to Carmen Urbina, Executive Director at Centro LatinoAmericano. The Oregonian (May 10, 2001) reported "...four in five Hispanics in Oregon are of Mexican descent. Eight percent of the state's total population is Hispanic." Twenty percent are five years old or younger.

Who comprises the Latino community? It is a varied population. The Latino community ranges from migrant farm workers (initially single young men) to second- and third- generation Hispanics who are fully integrated into the local community. Among these are professionals who are employed in education, social services, health-related positions, the arts, politics, business, and agriculture. The majority comprises young families with mothers in the home, children, and working men.

Most Latinos initially came to Lane County with the hopes of improving their economic position and living conditions. Limited English, education, and useable work skills interfere with their entry into the job market. Landscaping, tree farming, planting and harvesting crops, working in canneries and restaurants, and jobs found through word of mouth and temporary employment agencies often are entry points. Usually benefits are not provided.

Some Latino leaders emphasize that the goal of Latinos should be acculturation rather than assimilation. Acculturation is the process of adopting the cultural traits or social practices of another group. Assimilation -- the "melting pot"-- implies losing one's personal cultural identity. The committee has attempted to gain understanding of the Latino community by focusing on social services, health services, and education and by conducting interviews with leaders in those areas of concern.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Currently there is a wide variety of services for Latinos, but many are threatened by both budget cuts and the fast-growing Latino population.

Juvenile concerns

were specifically addressed by Maria Thomas and José Luis Alonso. Thomas is Youth

Advocacy Coordinator at the Serbu Juvenile Center, working with youth of color, who make up 11% of juvenile offenders. Approximately half of the 11% are Latinos.

Alonso directs the Latino Youth and Parent Intervention Program, a 16-month research-based, grant-supported program to determine best intervention practices for Latino juveniles in the justice system. It promotes culturally and linguistically appropriate interventions with the whole family to influence juvenile offenders to follow their parole requirements and avoid incarceration.

Both Thomas and Alonso focus on the problems of Latino youth such as use of drugs, shoplifting, fighting, and dropping out of school. A number of factors contribute to problems of Latino youth:

- Lack of culturally and linguistically trained school staff to work with students and families;
- Discrimination by staff and peers;
- Lack of programs for these youth.

Cultural Awareness Training

is required of all City of Eugene employees. Diversity training has existed in the police department for over 10 years. A joint police/community task team was formed in the fall of 2000 to analyze data on racial profiling.

Latino Coalition

is a voluntary advocacy group, which responds to issues such as racial profiling, school problems, racism in the newspaper, and mistreatment in the workplace. Usually problems are brought to the board by individuals asking for assistance. The group sponsors meetings with Latino families to socialize, discuss issues of concern, and share successes.

Head Start

serves 726 children in Lane County, 20% of whom are Latino. Of 174 Latino families, 160 have Spanish as a primary language. There is an effort to ensure that Spanish-speaking staff are at all sites, and that all informational publications are in both Spanish and English.

Centro LatinoAmericano

(Centro) began in 1972 as an agency called Chicano Affairs, and all of its current funding is grant based. It serves 1,500 to 1,800 clients a month:

- 90% are Mexican monolingual speakers;
- 90% of these are from rural Mexico;
- most have had three or fewer years of schooling and live in poverty;
- 55% of the children are elementary school age, and 20% are five years of age and under.

Centro focuses on enabling and empowering clients to improve their lives in various ways:

- Los Unidos provides a structured group home (22 beds) for males which includes casework services and chemical dependency treatment;

- Los Niños provides parent education, crisis intervention, and case management for families with children ages 0-6 years;
- Jobs Program assists with resumes, employment expectations and responsibilities, and links clients with employers;
- Medical Clinic provides preventive and primary health care, assists with transportation and translation, enrolls clients in the Oregon Health Plan, and makes medical referrals;
- Crisis intervention assists families with transitional housing and makes referrals to community agencies;
- Healthy Start offers support and education to first-time parents;
- Other programs include Spanish AA meetings, tax preparation through AARP, parenting classes, sewing classes, and English Language Learner (ELL) classes.

Local family resource centers

provide information and support to Latinos and others. They assist with after-school programs, parenting classes, and referrals to food and clothing banks and other agencies. The LWV committee visited two of the 10 centers in Lane County.

Cottage Grove

has a grant to provide free English classes for adults twice a week with 25-30 participants attending while their 30 children participate in educational activities. Last year the center served 486 -- approximately one-third of whom are Hispanic. The staff estimates that 15 local Hispanics have citizenship and are registered to vote.

Junction Cit

y Latino families are typically headed by men, mostly farm workers with large families. Fewer than 10% of the resource center's clients are Hispanic. The local Baptist Church teaches ELL for adults, has a Spanish service, and is a distribution site for Food for Lane County.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Understanding the medical system and options that are available for access to good health care are especially challenging for families in a new country and new culture. This summary highlights some medical facilities and services which are most frequently used by low-income, uninsured Latinos.

The Oregon Health Plan

provides health care to documented residents and families who qualify financially. The upper limit is 175% of the Federal Poverty Level. Undocumented residents may receive only emergency services, including obstetrical care at time of delivery.

Four public hospitals

exist in Lane County: Sacred Heart in Eugene, McKenzie Willamette in Springfield, Peace Harbor in Florence, and Cottage Grove Hospital. A major impact on all of them has been the increased numbers of Spanish-speaking patients. A significant challenge for hospitals, and frustration for Latino patients with limited English, is access to adequate interpretative services. Hospitals receiving federal funds are mandated to provide translation. The reality is that often these services are not available. Both Sacred Heart and McKenzie Willamette Hospitals use

AT&T telephone translation and interpreting services. This service is viewed by patients as inadequate for most urgent situations.

Sacred Heart Hospital

recently has hired one full-time interpreter for the day shift. Several clinical areas such as the diabetic clinics at McKenzie Willamette and Sacred Heart Hospitals and the obstetrics services at Sacred Heart provide all services, classes, and tours in Spanish.

Sacred Heart Medical Center funds or helps to support a number of medical clinics:

- The prenatal clinic offers maternity services to women who have no insurance or means to pay. Its clientele is 80% Latina. Women are seen throughout their pregnancies. Deliveries occur at Sacred Heart Hospital, assisted by prenatal clinic midwives backed up by obstetricians. There are approximately 140 deliveries per year of Latina women.
- Healthy Tomorrow Well Child Clinic is run by a half-time certified nurse practitioner backed up by Peace Health Medical Group (PHMG) physicians. Complete medical outpatient care is provided for children 0-6 years. Ninety percent of the 1,500 office visits per year are Latino children. The Children's Miracle Network also participates in funding.
- Volunteers in Medicine Clinic (VIM) opened in February 2001. It relies on retired and practicing medical professionals and community volunteers to serve qualified low-income individuals who have no access to regular health care. Services are free. Thirteen percent of those seen are Latino, and the percentages are increasing.

Centro

sponsors a medical clinic, which provides general medical care. It is staffed by Maria Maldonado, a bilingual certified nurse practitioner. She also keeps office hours at PHMG and works a half day in Creswell.

WIC -- Women, Infant and Children Nutrition Education Program

provides nutrition education and food supplements to at-risk pregnant and nursing women and children 0-5 years. Fourteen percent of their caseload is Latino.

Creecer de Birth to Three

is a parent-education and support program in Spanish for Latinos, sponsored by Birth to Three. Four groups, comprising mostly Mexican immigrant parents, meet weekly in Eugene and Springfield, interact, and receive practical information about community resources and parenting.

Dental care

is available for all children enrolled in Head Start, the Whitebird Dental Clinic, and the Children's Dental Clinic at Churchill High School. The Churchill clinic sees about 250 school children a year. Forty percent are Latino. Limited emergency dental care is available through the Healthy Tomorrows Clinic.

EDUCATION<

Several Lane County school districts provide specific programs for Latino students.

Eugene School District 4j

has districtwide diversity training, mandatory for administrators and optional for teachers. A computer-tracking system has been implemented to record all incidents of teasing and bullying. Dropout rates and test scores also are tracked. The student handbook is written in Spanish, and just this year directional signs in Spanish appear in the administration building. While the district mandates ELL programs for students, no formal ELL programs are provided for parents. The North Eugene area has the highest Latino population in the district. Colin Kelly Middle School serves Latinos with an after-school study program called "Ganas," which has a Spanish-speaking, bicultural teacher. A bilingual liaison helps Latino students during school hours and also makes home visits. At River Road Elementary/El Camino Real school, where many former Whiteaker students attend, 38% of 300 enrollees are Latino, and six staff are fluent in Spanish.

Springfield School District

has hired three minority liaisons who link schools, parents, and the community. The district also hosts both diversity training for employees and a student multicultural club at Thurston and Springfield High Schools. Bilingual aides assist students as they learn English. A nine-week pre-identification process is implemented before an ELL student can be referred for special education services. A grant from the University of Oregon College of Education has provided computers to 30 ELL high school students, who receive lecture notes, originally in English, computer-translated into Spanish. A multicultural diversity committee, composed of district employees and SAFER -- Springfield Alliance for Equality and Respect -- members, meets regularly. In some schools Latino and Anglo parents read to students in English and Spanish. Also, there is a scholarship available for a bilingual assistant to pursue an ELL licensure program.

Bethel School District

has a tracking system for harassment complaints and an oversight committee composed of Latino parents. A Latino family outreach monthly meeting grew out of the district's ELL adult program.

Junction City School District

has a full-time, non-Spanish-speaking certified ELL teacher who works daily in the middle and high school. A part-time uncertified Spanish-speaking assistant works in two elementary schools.

Cottage Grove School District

has two full-time and one part-time ELL teachers, one of whom assists Latino high school students with homework.

ESD -- Lane Education Service District

offers a migrant workers' program which supplements instructional services to children of migrant workers in cooperating school districts. Programs include an after-school Homework Club with a bilingual speaker at Kelly Middle School, a four-week summer school, accident insurance, and a Latino fair in Springfield each spring. The fair provides activities for children and workshops for parents about school issues, including how parents can participate to promote their children's success in school.

BARRIERS AND NEEDS

A Latino youth study began in 1998 when more than 20 Latino high-school students received stipends to develop a survey of Latino students and parents regarding their experiences in school and in the community. Latino community leaders, Centro, and the Latino Research Team from Oregon Social Learning Center (OSLC) mentored these students in survey techniques and data analysis. Some results are included here.

Students

- Some Latino students have never gone to school before and, therefore, need to learn school rules, behaviors, and expectations;
- Some students report unwelcoming school experiences and harassment from other students;
- Very few school employees are of color or speak Spanish. Latino students have no role models and do not see positive reflections of themselves;
- Some gangs of Latino students are emerging.

Families

- Many parents do not speak English, and their children become interpreters;
- Not enough positive relations exist between schools and families. More Latino family involvement in schools is needed;
- Schools need to recognize and honor Latino holidays.

Staff

- Diversity training for administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers is inadequate and often is not mandated.
- Too few Latino persons are employed by the district.
- Increased awareness of teaching methodologies is needed for students from different cultures; more training in cultural awareness is needed for those studying to be teachers and administrators.

Special Education

- District 4-J has no bilingual special education teachers.
- Improved strategies are needed for assessing and identifying ELL students, as some are mistakenly referred to special education because of language barriers.

In conclusion, those interviewed shared the same objectives: increase and improve services to Latino students to help ensure their academic and social success. This will be accomplished by allocating more funds to hire and retain more bilingual staff and administrators who are competent in multicultural education and by building partnerships between Anglo and Latino communities.

CONCLUSION

When we began our study, we knew that the demographic data revealed a significant increase in the Latino population both locally and statewide. Our goal was to increase our knowledge and understanding of the growing Latino community. Along the way we met many dedicated and caring professionals and volunteers. Their insights into the struggles and achievements of the Latino community were invaluable to us.

We hope that we have been successful in sharing not only their important information but also their enthusiasms and frustrations, as well as their hopes and expectations for this vibrant segment of our society.

Basic needs for the Latino population include jobs, clarified legal status, housing, food, and education. Some of the intangibles are freedom from stereotyping, profiling, and discrimination. Latinos wish to live in a society which is culturally aware of its neighbors and is respectful and accepting of Latinos as individuals. Success has many faces. It may mean going on to college. It also may mean possessing the skills and self-esteem necessary to take advantage of multiple options. Success depends upon a supportive environment which promotes reaching one's full potential. Success needs to be an achievable expectation for all students. Success for Latinos was described as "being able to keep our culture -- being able to stay true to our beliefs and lifestyle."

Mentorship was repeatedly mentioned as essential for both children and adults. Among other things, mentorships can help to raise self-confidence, increase the comfort level in new situations, and reduce isolation.

We hope this report and discussions in League units raise awareness of our diverse community, made richer by the presence of our Latino neighbors.

CONTACTS AND SOURCES

1. CentroLatino Americano, Carmen Urbina, Executive Director
2. Community Learning Center, South Lane School District. Staff: Ana Maria Dudley, Lesly Canales, and Lillian Canales
3. Cottage Grove High School, Brian McCasline, Vice Principal and Michelle Hilton, ELL teacher
4. Crecer de Birth to Three, Thelma Barone, Parent Educator
5. Eugene 4J School District, George Russell, Superintendent of Schools; Anselmo Villanueva, Minority Community Liaison and Assistant Superintendent of Schools
6. Family Resource Center, Cottage Grove, Peggy Lintula, Program Coordinator, 21st Century grant
7. Family Resource Center, Junction City, Jill McReynolds, Coordinator
8. Fiesta Latina, Rebeca Urhausen, Coordinator
9. Head Start of Lane County, Annie Soto, Executive Director
10. Healthy Tomorrows Well Child Clinic, Charlotte Writer, certified nurse practitioner
11. Human Rights Program, city of Eugene, Greg Rikhoff, Manager
12. Junction City School District, Kris Bratton, full-time ELL teacher
13. Kelly Middle School, Rosemary Villanueva, part-time ELL teacher, 4J
14. Lane Education Service District, Paul Weill, director of migrant program

15. Latino Coalition, Michael Samano, Coordinator of Multicultural Studies at LCC and president of board
16. Latino Youth and Parent Intervention Program, JoséLuis Alonso, Director
17. Latino Youth Project Survey, Charles Martinez, research scientist, Oregon Social Learning Center
18. McKenzie Willamette Hospital, Nancy Hayner, Manager medical staff
19. Medical Clinic at Centro LatinoAmericano and Latino Medical Access Program, Peace Health, Maria Maldonado, certified nurse practitioner
20. The Oregonian, "Oregon Surge Has Mexican Roots," by Steve Suo, May 10, 2001
21. Parent Partnership, Cottage Grove, Ana Maria Vahrenwald, Hispanic Family Services
22. Peace Health, Sister Barbara Haase, Access Coordinator
23. Planned Parenthood, Kitty Piercy, Public Affairs Director for health services of southwest Oregon
24. Prenatal Clinic, Carolyn Walwyn, Patient Manager
25. SAFER -- Springfield Alliance for Equality and Respect -- Marian Malcolm, Program Consultant
26. Serbu Center, Department of Youth Services, Maria Thomas, Youth Advocacy Coordinator
27. Springfield School District, Charlie Beck, Director of Secondary Education
28. United States 2000 Census
29. United Way, Marian Beck, Director of Community Investment
30. VIM -- Volunteers in Medicine -- Jo Ann Lozar, Development Coordinator
31. WIC -- Women, Infant and Children Nutrition Education Program, Connie Sullivan, Coordinator

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