

Summer 2016

La Oportunidad Inc.



Serving the Twin Cities since 1987



La Oportunidad and Hennepin County Library celebrated Children's Day

On April 23rd, the Hennepin County Library celebrated El Día del Niño (Children's Day) in their East Lake building in cooperation with La Oportunidad. This event benefitted the El Camino students, who participated in this celebration accompanied by their parents. The students joined Mexican dances performed by the folkloric dance group "Mexico Lindo", who put together an amazing show for everyone.

During the event, participating parents were introduced to the resources available at the library and were reminded of the value of checking out books and reading to their children. Also, pieces of art created by El Camino students were displayed during the month of April as part of Children's Day activities.

El Camino (The Path) is a weekly after school and summer program for Latino children ages 5-11. This bilingual program promotes cultural education and develops life skills that encourage positive attitudes and behaviors in the areas of self, family and community. Programs build positive relationships and pride in cultural roots.

La Oportunidad and Hennepin County Libraries have been committed to promoting the value of reading and connecting families and their children to books, languages and cultures for more than two years.



Latino Youth Leadership Conference

Our 16th Annual Latino Youth Leadership Conference took place on Friday, May 20, 2016 at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. This year's conference theme was "De Donde Vengo y Adonde Voy" (where I'm from and where I'm going). This year's theme allowed youth to share their stories of where they came from as well as explore their hopes, goals, and dreams for the future. Through 12 unique interactive workshops and activities, participants focused on getting closer to their roots and gained knowledge about other cultures. Conference participants also enjoyed a powerful and energetic message from national keynote speaker David Edward Garcia and performances from Ecuadorian folkloric dance group Juventud Latina and bboy crew Phaze II followed by a dance and a resource fair. What makes this conference so unique is that it is fully planned by a leadership committee of 20-30 Latino high school students who meet weekly for eight months.

261 youth and 72 adults attended this year's conference representing over twenty different schools. 86% of youth participants expressed an increase in cultural pride and connection, 75% expressed and increased capacity for leadership, and 88% reported an increase in skills, knowledge, and/or positive attitudes in at least one of the following areas: self, relationships, education, and/or community. Our conference wouldn't be possible without the support of our sponsors: Augsburg College, Youthprise, Medica Foundation, Mall of America, McDonalds, and East Minneapolis Exchange Club.

Experience from a youth conference participant, Jenny Rodriguez:

I attended the 16th Annual Latino Youth Leadership Conference at Augsburg college. I was unsure as to what my experience would be before the conference, but afterwards I was excited about my newfound knowledge of my culture, along with a new outlook on my future.

Going to the Latino Youth Leadership Conference gave me more confidence to practice my Spanish as well as confidence in who I am and where I come from. I not only met Latino students from other High Schools, but I met Latino students who attended Chanhassen High School. The speaker communicated a message that is crucial for Latino students like myself to hear. Which was, despite financial disadvantages, not having a stable home, or having parents who don't encourage success in education; it's the student who can decide as to how these disadvantages affect them. He went onto explain that although we may not decide or chose where we come from, we the Latino youth can chose as to what we would like to do in our futures.

I wish I had been able to participate in the event my Freshman and Sophomore years of high school, I hope that many more Latino students who attend the Middle schools and High schools in the district are able to attend future Leadership Conferences.



Youth Program Participant & Volunteer Spotlight:

Erik Garcia

Erik Garcia is a member of the Youth Planning Committee for La Oportunidad's annual Latino Youth Leadership Conference. Erik is 18 years old and recently graduated from Minneapolis South High School and will be studying at Minneapolis Community and Technical College this fall. He initially became involved with the planning committee after attending the Latino Youth Conference



his sophomore year. He said he had heard about the conference during his first two years of high school and had always wanted to attend. After attending, he decided he wanted to be a part of the group that planned the conference. When asked why he wanted to help plan the conference, he said he wanted other youth "to take something away from [the conference], especially the young kids – I'm aiming for them." This was Erik's second year on the planning committee and he decided to take on a bigger leadership role by co-facilitating one of the workshops. Erik says that he was motivated both by a desire to step outside of his comfort zone and do something challenging along with a desire to positively influence other youth. He had been hearing from counselors at school about the difficulty of getting kids engaged and he wanted to get them thinking about making good decisions, surrounding themselves with positive influences, and their life after graduation.

The workshop he co-facilitated used art and a social justice lens to explore the conference theme of "de donde vengo y adonde voy" (where I'm from and where I'm going). Participants worked together to create a group mural and share images and stories from their past, present, and future along with that of the larger Latino community. Erik reports that through his experience facilitating the workshop he was able to develop skills as a presenter and facilitator as well as learn both how to be more outgoing and to step back to let others step up.

Erik's plans for the future include studying for two years at MCTC to complete his generals and then transferring to Augsburg college where he would like to study either social work, nursing, or mechanical engineering. He plans to continue to motivate and inspire younger youth through volunteering and mentoring younger peers at La Oportunidad and his former high school. Erik said that if he could give a message to other Latino youth it would be: "Don't give up on your dreams. Don't be discouraged by others. There are no borders to what you can do. There's always a way to get to what you want to do or be. Porque sí se puede."

Erik will be featured as a guest on an upcoming episode of the television show En Familia about youth leaders. En Familia (Among Family) is La Oportunidad's Spanish-language television show for the Latino community in Minnesota <https://oportunidad.org/programs/television-program/>



Benefiting the Entire Family and Community!

La Oportunidad's diverse programming helps Latinos of all ages achieve success. Latino children and youth are provided culturally enriched education that promotes positive attitudes and fundamental life skills. Teens and young adults develop leadership skills, explore cultural identity and plan for education and future careers. Programs for Latino parents deliver positive techniques to enhance parenting skills, maintain a stable home life and support their children's education. Other programs for Latino adults offer assistance in domestic abuse intervention and prevention. Specific programs include:

El Camino (The Path) — Grades K-5

Youth Leadership — Grades 6-12

Padres — Parents

Jóvenes Profesionales/Young Professionals

Early Literacy

Latinos Ending Abuse Program

To learn more about La Oportunidad and our programs,
visit our website, Facebook page or give us a call at 612-872-6165



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Our Website

Check out our website, www.oportunidad.com, to find information about our staff, programs, accomplishments and more. You can also access our 2015 annual report online, which has a fresh new look this year! Take a look and learn more about La Oportunidad.

Facebook

Want to stay caught up on everything going on at La Oportunidad? Check out our Facebook page to get program and organization updates, receive invitations to special events and activities and see who else likes what we do!

www.facebook.com/laoportunidadinc

Help Support La Oportunidad

If you'd like to help us make the Twin Cities a stronger and more peaceful community, take a look at our website's donation page, <http://oportunidad.org/donate/>, where you will find information regarding donations, sponsorships and our matching program. We wouldn't be able to do what we do without the help of our generous sponsors and donors. Please contribute!