

# Peace News

2010 Annual  
La Oportunidad Newsletter



## Latino Youth Peace Conference “Opens Minds” to the Power of Art & the Importance of Peace

In May of 2010 La Oportunidad was proud to host it's 10th Annual Latino Youth Peace Conference which was held at Augsburg College and attended by over 150 youth. The Conference was planned, in it's entirety, by a committee of local Latino youth. Their hard work and creative skills were visible in every aspect of the conference.

The theme, “Mind Opening Scenes: Artes Visuales”, exposed youth to the power that art can have as a method for expressing ones self, ideas, beliefs, and/or culture to others both within and outside of one's own community.

During small group sessions the youth discussed the ways that art has been used to promote the idea of peace throughout history. Then in workshops with local Latino artists they were given the chance to become involved in the creative process.

Workshop presenters: Ricardo Levins Morales, Deborah Ramos, Juana Berrio, Caroline Kent, Betto Limon, Ernesto Cuevas, Marcelo Araujo, and Victor Yepez, did an excellent job of guiding the youth through the artistic process and giving them the chance to express their own voice by creating both individual and group projects.

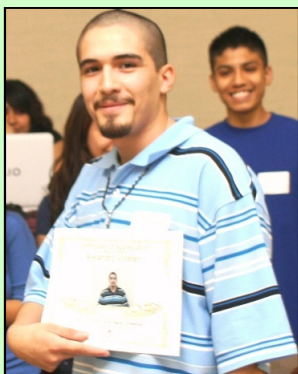
As always, the conference was a great success. All of the participating youth had a great time and many are already planning on attending the Peace & Leadership conference in 2011.



## Local Latino Youth make Peace a Cultural Priority



Isaul, a 1st year member, was introduced to the Committee by his sister, who urged him to join. Since he had been a part of La Oportunidad's Youth Program in middle school he knew that it would be a fun opportunity and so he said yes and joined up. He has only been to a few meetings so far but he is already surprised at how comfortable he feels speaking up and being a part of the group. He hopes that being on the Committee will help him as he applies for future jobs and to get into college.



**Alejandro Villafan**  
2010 Latino Youth Peace  
Conference Intern

As school started up this past fall so did the Latino Youth Development & Leadership Committee at La Oportunidad. Every year this group gathers together to plan the Latino Youth Peace Conference for over 200 youth, teachers, mentors and community leaders from all over the metro and outlying suburbs.

The Committee is comprised of 5-8 high schoolers who have either been involved in La Oportunidad's programming during elementary or middle school, or were personally invited to join by a current or past committee member. Acting as a facilitator and staff liaison is Maureen Springer, one of La Oportunidad's Latino Youth Program Coordinators.

It is the Committee's responsibility, among many other things, to choose the theme for the annual Conference. Each person on the committee suggests themes that they think would both promote peace in the community and be relevant to today's youth. As a whole the committee votes and the theme with the most votes is chosen.

For 2011 the Committee has made an important decision to change the conference title to the Latino Youth Peace & **Leadership** Conference. They feel this more accurately describes the affect they hope this conference has on the everyday lives of the youth who participate.

What do the youth who are members of the Committee have to say about their experiences? They find the work challenging, but always fun. As one committee member said, "We get to do good work with friends. It's great!"



2010 Latino Youth Development & Leadership Committee



Stephanie, a 2nd year member of the Committee and current vice-president, was first involved with La Oportunidad as a mentee in the "Lideres del Mañana / Leaders of Tomorrow" Mentoring Program. She decided to join the Youth Committee because she wanted to do something that would help others in her community. Her decision to serve a 2nd term on the committee was based on how much she feels the confidence and leadership skills she is gaining will help her in her future endeavors.



**Maureen Springer**  
Latino Youth Program Coordinator  
& Youth Committee Liaison





## “El Camino” Summer Program brings smiles in 2010

In the summer of 2010, La Oportunidad accomplished yet another successful summer program! The summer program was held at Green Central Park School in Minneapolis. We also had the opportunity to work with parents and students from other schools including: Lyndale, Whittier and Bancroft.

During the week, the children participated in activities based on the weekly theme. On Fridays, the summer program offered field trips to different locations. We visited a water park, Hyland Park in Bloomington, Como Zoo, Calhoun Lake, and a Fossil Hunting Park. Thirty-six students participated in the El Camino program regularly during the week, and during the Friday field trips we numbered around sixty.

The theme for the activities this summer was: *Traveling through time!* We did activities related to different time periods such as: Independence Day, Dinosaurs, the Wild Wild West, Peace out to the 60's, and Back to the Future. The kids had a great time and learned a lot by doing different projects in class, listening to music and visiting a park to find some dinosaurs' fossils for the Dinosaurs Day activity.

Once again, La Oportunidad's collaboration with Minneapolis Community Education was a successful and valuable experience. Most importantly, it offered us the chance to expose its programs to more families. Also, it was very rewarding to offer the kids a fun summer program at no cost, where they had the opportunity to learn, enjoy and socialize with other kids.

All of us at La Oportunidad are eagerly looking forward to more smiles in 2011.



## A Special Team of Volunteers: Our Board of Directors!

A very special team of volunteers who also play a leadership role at La Oportunidad is our Board of Directors. They work closely with the Executive Director to set strategic goals and oversee all aspects of the organization including strategic planning, budgeting, and fund development.

Each board member goes through a comprehensive recruitment process which includes application and orientation/training. One of the main requirements of applicants to the board is to have demonstrated their strong commitment to our organization as a volunteer, collaborator, and/or supporter.

Mario Duarte, a well-known community leader, joined our Board most recently. He is currently a Partner of Latino Communications Network. All other board members have been providing their dedicated service to our Board for several years; they are: Linda Freemon, Board President (ev3), Alex Gonzalez, Board Vice-President (Thrivent Fi-

nancial for Lutherans), Maria Ramirez-Johnson, Board Secretary (Retired teacher from Mpls Public Schools), and Bill Nelson, Board Treasurer and Co-Founder of La Oportunidad (Volunteers of America). Board members represent diverse fields and areas of expertise.

Our organization also counts with a group of Advisory Board members. Current members serving in this capacity are: Sandra Vargas (Minneapolis Foundation), Pamela Barragan (St. Paul Police Department), and Katherine Fitzsimmons (Farmer's Hat Productions).

On behalf of the families we serve, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to this fantastic team as well as past board members for their contributions and commitment to our organization and the community!

## Volunteer Spotlight: Daniel Perez

Before applying for a Master of Social Work degree at the University of Minnesota, I knew I needed to prepare myself for working in a multicultural environment and increase my multicultural competency. One of my colleagues told me about the great work La Oportunidad does for and with Latino families in the Twin Cities. Therefore, I decided to join this organization by volunteering as a co-facilitator of the Latinos Ending Abuse Program (LEAP).

LEAP has been a terrific experience for my personal and professional growth. Co-facilitating LEAP provided me with key knowledge about the principles of domestic abuse and its effects on children and the family unit. I also observed and learned that cultural identity and racial socialization play an important role in perpetuating intimate partner violence in the Latino community. Luckily, LEAP does an excellent job of teaching Latino men how to eradicate domestic violence in their relationships, families, and communities.

What was most satisfying for me, both personally and professionally, was seeing clients change in attitudes and beliefs. Before arriving to La Oportunidad, most of our male Latino clients saw physical, verbal and emotional abuse as "normal" and as a necessary mean to gain power and control in their relationships. However, by the end of the 15-week program, they recognized that any type of abuse is neither the answer nor the appropriate way to deal with problems. Most importantly, clients expressed how knowledge gained through LEAP would help them repair fractured relationships and start healthy new ones. Witnessing clients' change in attitudes and beliefs towards abuse are powerful memories I will treasure forever.



*Daniel Perez has volunteered with the LEAP (Latinos Ending Abuse) program since October 2010.*





## 2010 Ameriprise Holiday Gift Drive

The holidays can be a very hard time for many of our clients and their families. Money is tight and more often than not rent, bills, and food, have to take priority over presents. This is why for the past several years, La Oportunidad has partnered with Ameriprise Financial for their annual Holiday Gift Drive, which donates presents to families in need all over the Twin Cities.



The holiday season of 2010 was yet another great year for this wonderful program. La Oportunidad signed up a total of 46 families, which included 145 children, and the presents were delivered to La Oportunidad's main office in the second week of December. We were so overwhelmed by the number of bags, filled to the brim with brightly wrapped gifts, that we had to use an empty room next door to store them until the families could come to pick them up.



As each family came to pick up their presents we asked them to take a photo and create a card to thank Ameriprise Financial. We look forward to many more collaborations with this great program in the holiday seasons to come.

**THANK YOU AMERIPRISE!**



## Thank You to all the Wonderful Volunteers and Mentors who served in 2010.

- Karla Anzures
- Astrid Aolleren Shaw
- Nicole Baker
- Becca Bicanich
- Ben Cascio
- Megan Craig-Casmer
- Lani de Luna
- Emily Egan
- Tarah Fedenia
- Itioliar Gates
- Graciela Gorman
- Natalie Hanson
- Kelly Harrington
- Alex Heide
- Caitlin Hirschberger
- Heather Huckstadt
- Amber Johnson
- Calida Kimmet
- Anne Knuaff
- Alyssa Kohn
- Adriana Lein
- Stacey Lillebo
- Marisol Lopez Ibañez
- Carlos Lumbi
- Christy Lund
- Jessica Martinez
- Yadira Martinez
- Connor McIntee
- Ashley Menard
- Carolyn Milburn
- Jessie Moe
- Isabel Morales
- Rodrigo Mota
- Georgina Nuñez
- Erin O'Flaherty
- Nicholas Orth
- Jessika Peredia Rodriguez
- Daniel Perez
- Heather Perez
- Ross Peterson
- Emily Poucher
- Lindsay Prowizor
- Blanca Raniolo
- Martha Rigby
- Bridget Smith
- Jenna Storey
- Elizabeth Thomson
- Emmet Timmons
- Stephanie Tomczyk
- Fiorella Torres
- Lucia Trinidad
- Alison True
- Anna Vangsness
- Alejandro Villafan
- Jose Luis Villaseñor
- Stephanie Vogt
- Katie Walker
- Becca Wynia
- Yessica Zuñiga

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## Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends of La Oportunidad:

As we concluded 2010 and welcome a new year with its opportunities and challenges, we would like to express our deepest appreciation to our internal and external constituents for joining us in our mission of championing the development of Latino individuals and families to create a strong, peaceful community!



In this issue of Peace News, we would like to share some of our highlights during 2010 and invite you to continue to support the important work we do in our community!

If you would like to join in our efforts, please contact me at 612-872-6165 or [eloisae@oportunidad.org](mailto:eloisae@oportunidad.org).

Mil gracias! Eloisa.

*Eloisa Echavez*



La Oportunidad, Inc.

*Championing the development of Latino individuals and families to create a strong, peaceful community.*

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