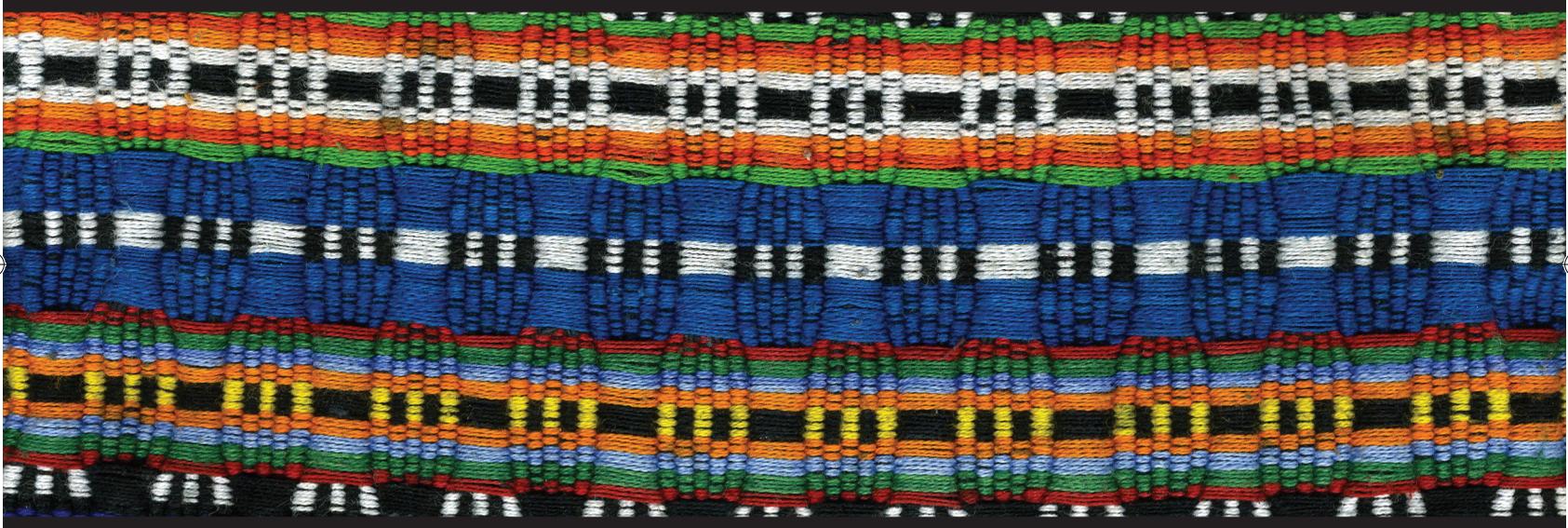


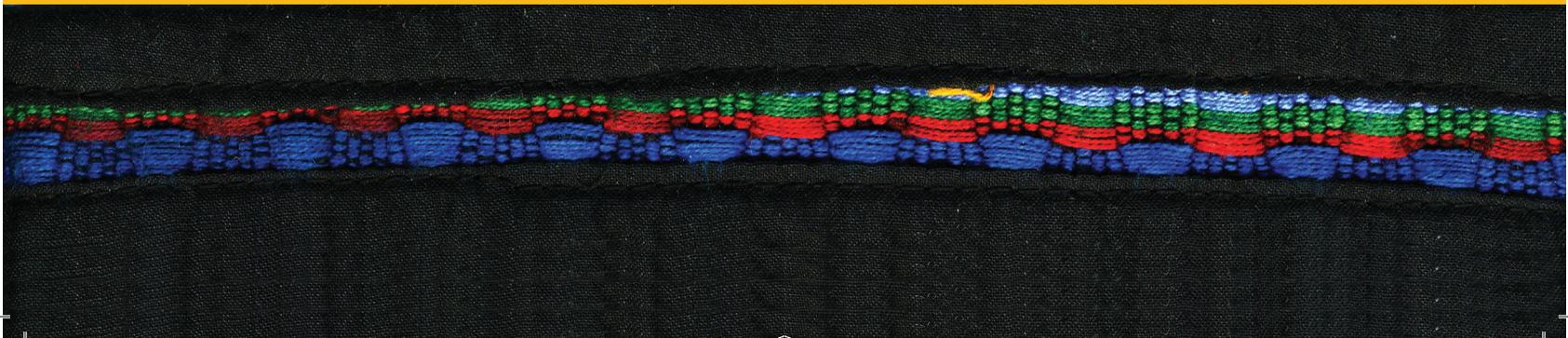


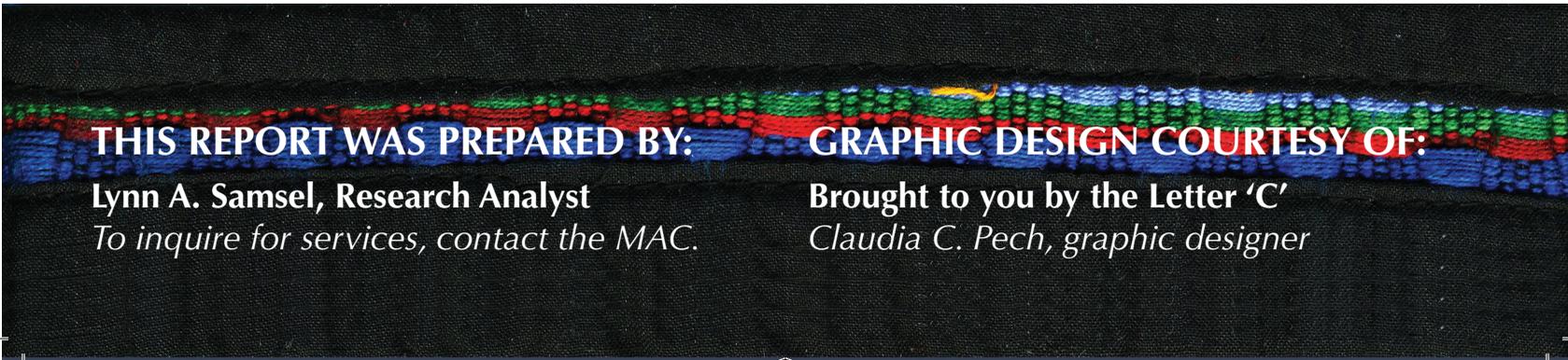
Successes and Dreams
Sueños y Logros



The Biennium Report of the
Mexican American Commission

2007 & 2008





THIS REPORT WAS PREPARED BY:

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To inquire for services, contact the MAC.

GRAPHIC DESIGN COURTESY OF:

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Claudia C. Pech, graphic designer



Dear friends and supporters,

It is my pleasure to introduce the biennium report on behalf of the Mexican American Commission. This report was thoughtfully put together to showcase our accomplishments of the past two years, and also to display our goals moving forward.

Since its creation in 1972, the Mexican American Commission has diligently served the needs of Hispanics/Latinos in Nebraska. Yes, for over 37 years the commission has been a strong advocate in the fields of education, employment, health, housing, public policy, and civic participation.

Now as a 21st century agency, we must look ahead to the new realities of the Nebraska Latino communities, and the challenges they face. It is our goal to continue developing and implementing sustainable programs which will allow us to meet and conquer these challenges successfully.

With commitment and innovative ideas, the Mexican American Commission will continue to embrace diversity at all levels, and will also strive to provide more opportunities for Hispanics/

Latinos to participate in the *Good Life* of Nebraska.

Thanks for your support,



Angel Freytez

Acting Director

Mexican American Commission



**MEXICAN AMERICAN
COMMISSION
COMMISSIONERS:**

NORMA DE LA O (Secretary)
South Sioux City

CHANDRA DIAZ-DEBOSE
Lincoln

ALEX MORENO (Vice Chair)
Gering

YOLANDA NUNCIO
Grand Island

DORA OLIVARES (Chair)
Gering

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THERESA PALACIO
Norfolk

GINA PONCE
Omaha

JOSE SANTOS
Governor's Representative
Omaha

STAFF

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Legislative Efforts

The Commission has a mandate to evaluate existing programs and proposed legislation concerning Hispanics/Latinos; to increase public awareness of issues affecting Hispanics/Latinos, and to encourage the Governor and the Legislature to develop programs to deal with these issues.



Acting Director Angel Freytez testifies before the Judiciary Committee (February, 2009).

DID YOU KNOW...

- ... that MAC has been invited to speak at the twenty-seventh annual United States Hispanic Leadership Institute conference in March 2009?
- ... that this conference is the premier Hispanic Leadership conference in the nation, with over 6,500 people expected to attend?
- ... that MAC will address legislative issues affecting Hispanics/Latinos, as part of a panel on state commissions?

LOOKING FORWARD

We hope to conduct a study to define emerging issues affecting Nebraska Hispanic/Latinos. The study would include an update on demographic information, to inform legislators about population and other changes among their Hispanic/Latino constituents. Based on the study, we would propose new legislation to address the issues arising from the report. This will, we hope, broaden the public perception of the Commission as an organization that impacts legislative actions.

“The Commission has worked with Senators and legislative staff in supporting and opposing bills that could have either a negative or positive effect on our communities.”

— **Commissioner Yolanda Nuncio,**
Mexican American Commission

Education

The Commission has a mandate to gather and disseminate information on problems and programs concerning Hispanics/Latinos, and to serve their needs, especially in the field of education and other areas.

DID YOU KNOW...

... that 40 percent of the Hispanic/Latino population in the United States is made up of Hispanic/Latino youth 19 years and under?

... that Hispanic/Latino student enrollment in Nebraska K-12 schools has increased 142 percent in the last ten years?

... that the high school dropout rate for Hispanic/Latino students has fallen 10 percent in the last five years?

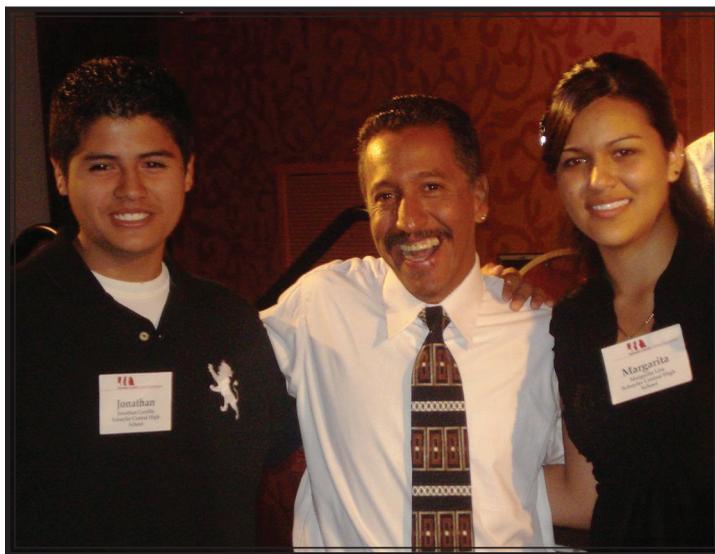
LOOKING FORWARD

We want to increase participation in educational opportunities in communities across the state, and develop leadership through educational summits and training opportunities. We also want to publicize scholarship opportunities for student conferences and seminars.

We will work hard to increase student and parent involvement in the Hispanic/Latino Educational Summit and the Youth Leadership Conference, and to increase student participation in Commission activities.



October 2007—More than 600 students attended the IV Latino Educational Summit in Lincoln, NE.



Richard Santana, 2008 Latino Educational Summit's Keynote Speaker, shares time with high school students.

“The EducationQuest Foundation appreciates how the Mexican American Commission has helped us identify ways to effectively relay important college planning information to Spanish-speaking parents and students in Nebraska.”

— **Tricia Dunn,**
Director of Media Relations, EducationQuest Foundation

Outreach

The Commission has a mandate to develop, coordinate, and assist public and private organizations, and to coordinate and assist the efforts of state departments and agencies to serve the needs of Hispanics/Latinos in the state.

DID YOU KNOW...

- ... that the Latino Outreach Consortium includes Applesseed Center for Law in the Public Interest, the Nebraska Departments of Labor and Insurance, Legal Aid of Nebraska, the Latino Outreach Office, El Centro de las Americas, and the Nebraska Equal Opportunity Commission?
- ... that over 1,500 people have benefitted from our outreach events in the last two years?
- ... that we have made presentations in Columbus, Fremont, Grand Island, Lincoln, Scottsbluff, Schuyler, South Sioux City, and West Point?

LOOKING FORWARD

We intend to strengthen and grow our current outreach events, such as the Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration, the Binational Teachers Exchange Program, the Día de los Muertos celebration, and our community-level outreach programs. We will also continue existing relationships with agencies and establish new partnerships with other agencies.

We hope to establish the State-Wide Outreach Program to increase our capacity, and to provide more opportunities for Hispanics/Latinos to participate in community discussions. The State-Wide Outreach Program would also provide opportunities for staff development, development of new electronic and graphic ways to record meetings and events for future viewing; and marketing of the Commission via website, newsletters, and participation in pertinent events and activities.

“The Nebraska Mexican American Commission, one of the oldest commissions established in approximately 20 states, has served as a model for similar entities in other states that have been created by Executive Order of the Governor or through legislation.”

— Dr. Juan Andrade, Jr.,
President, United States Hispanic Leadership Institute



June, 2008— In this photo, Acting Director Angel Freytez gives a presentation to community members of South Sioux City & surrounding areas. This event was part of a series of community outreach events made possible through MAC's partnership with the Latino Outreach Consortium (LOC).



February 2007— Commissioner Theresa Palacio, right, promotes reading activities for kids during an outreach event in Norfolk.

Media

The Commission has a mandate to gather and disseminate information, conduct hearings and conferences, and stimulate public awareness of Hispanic/Latino issues by conducting a program of public education.

DID YOU KNOW...

- ... that the Mexican American Commission is the only state agency with its own television program?
- ... that this program, Diversity TV, will celebrate its one-year anniversary in March 2009?
- ... that hits on our website increased 56 percent in the last two years?

“Diversity TV is a dream come true, especially because there are so few Hispanic/Latino media outlets available in Nebraska.”

— Angel Freytez,
*Acting Director,
Mexican American Commission*

LOOKING FORWARD

We plan to enhance our communication platforms to increase our information dissemination capacity, including: updating and reconstructing our website and adding web conferencing capacity; continuing to produce our radio and television programs and purchasing editing software; and redesigning our newsletter.

We also want to further develop our own media outlets, increase our use of other media avenues, and implement a new marketing and positioning strategy to publicize the Commission and its services. This includes expanding the distribution network for our newsletter.



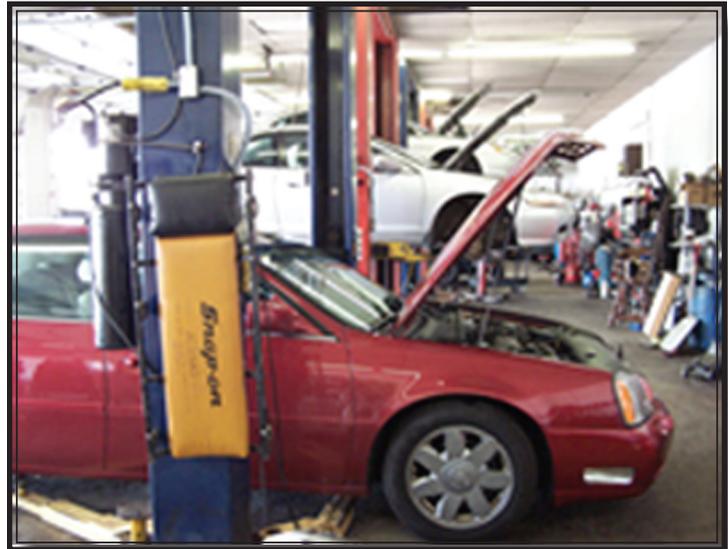
August, 2007—CNN's Glenn Beck interviews MAC's Angel Freytez about a well-publicized case better known as the Kaweah fraud.

Economic Development

The Commission has a mandate to propose new programs, and to conduct training programs for community leadership and service project staff.

DID YOU KNOW...

- ... according to the Office of Latino/Latin American Studies at the University of Nebraska-Omaha,
- ... that in 2006, immigrant spending was worth \$1.6 billion in total production to Nebraska's economy?
- ... that this spending generated around 1,200 jobs for the state?



More economic development initiatives will definitely benefit our state's economy.

LOOKING FORWARD

The Commission would like to establish and strengthen relationships with business-oriented organizations such as the NBDC, the Hispanic Chambers of Commerce, and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. We want to collaborate in developing bilingual, bicultural economic development outreach material to benefit Hispanic/Latino entrepreneurship in Nebraska.

In terms of new programs, the Commission's economic development agenda for the next two years includes a pilot project for International Commerce. In this project, the Commission would offer technical assistance to state agencies regarding free trade agreements between the State of Nebraska and Latin American countries. For instance, MAC has approached the Agricultural Trade Officer at the Nebraska Department of Agriculture to discuss assisting in potential trade agreements between America and Venezuela.

“It is important to increase Latino entrepreneurs' awareness of services available for them. The Mexican American Commission was an excellent partner with the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) for our seminar.”

— **Marisol Rodriguez,**
*Director of the Lincoln
office of the NBDC*



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The Mexican American Commission: Legislative Authority and Structure

The Mexican American Commission was created by law as an independent state agency in 1972 (NEB. REV. STAT., Chapter 81, Section 8.262 to 8.271 of 1972). The commission works with public and private agencies and state government to serve Nebraska's Hispanics/Latinos in education, employment, health, housing, and welfare.

There are nine commissioners appointed by the governor to three-year terms. The governor's designee serves as an ex officio member. The commission appoints an executive director, and meets quarterly.

Current commissioners are: Norma De La O (Secretary), Chandra Diaz De-Bose, John Leon, Alex Moreno (Vice Chair), Yolanda Nuncio, Dora Olivares (Chair), Ramon Otero, Theresa Palacio, and Gina Ponce. Jose Santos is the Governor's Representative. Cecilia Olivarez-Huerta is Executive Director of the Commission; Angel Freytez is Acting Director; Dora Lima is Staff Assistant.

OUR VISION:

"To empower the Hispanic/Latino community through a fully funded, fully staffed pro-active Mexican American Commission that advocates for and provides services in the areas of education, social, economic, and political opportunities in Nebraska and globally."

OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

"The Mexican American Commission serves as a link between the Nebraska state government and the Hispanic/Latino community. We assist our constituents through advocacy, empowerment, and referrals."

OUR GOALS:

- 1) Identifying major socio-economic issues that affect the Hispanic/Latino community;
- 2) Enhancing our communications and media platform to better serve our community;
- 3) Developing leadership through educational summits and training opportunities;
- 4) Increasing participation in educational opportunities and community services; and
- 5) Proposing and supporting pro-diversity legislation.

Introduction

Commissioner Dora Olivares, chair of the Mexican American Commission, says: "The Commission strives to advocate for all Latinos in Nebraska and give voice to those who need to be heard." In these pages you will read of the many ways the Mexican American Commission has carried out this mandate and others.

Commissioner Theresa Palacio says:

Working together for community is like how a bridge closes the gap between two sides of a river. We are highly involved with our communities because we want Latinos to also have Nebraska's 'Good Life'.

This report presents some of the activities, events, and partnerships that the Mexican American Commission (MAC) has been involved with from January 2007 – December 2008. Join us as we celebrate our successes and share ideas, plans, and dreams for the future.



Legislative Efforts



Legislative Accomplishments

Commissioner Yolanda Nuncio reflects on MAC's legislative work:

As demographics continue to change and our Latino community continues to grow, the need for the Commission continues to also grow. The Commission has worked with Senators and legislative staff in supporting and opposing bills that could have either a negative or positive effect on our communities. We played an important role in testimonies and outcomes in legislative bills that affect the Latino community. We developed a good relationship with different Senators and were able to work closely with them around issues within the Latino community. In addition, we have sponsored reports and studies that show the quality of life and the status of education of Latino children in Nebraska.

The Nebraska Legislature is a responsive body, reflecting the current concerns of its constituents. As such, the topics under discussion in the Unicameral change with the times. What does not change is the commitment of elected representatives and their staffs. At the Mexican American Commission, we share that enduring commitment to public service. We therefore seek to serve by building sustainable avenues for advocacy, while also responding to the issues of the day. Listed here are the Commission's legislative activities for 2007-2008.

- **Monitoring legislative sessions and committee hearings;** tracking progress of bills and appropriations bills; maintaining contact with Legislative Analyst and Budget Office Analyst.



Executive Director Cecilia Huerta speaks with Senator Gwen Howard during the Senators' breakfast, March 2008. This event was hosted by the Mexican American Commission in conjunction with other state agencies.

- **Coordinating multi-agency meetings with senators** and staff about proposed legislation.
- **Holding formal discussions with Senators** Avery, Aguilar, Schimek, Wallman, White, McDonald, McGill, Ashford, Karpisek, Engel, Hansen, Fulton, Chambers, Petersen, Howard, Friend, Flood, Kruse, Dierks, Dubas, Laughtenbaugh, Louden, Nantkes, Wightman, and/or their staff.
- **Testifying before Legislative Committees.** During the 2007 and 2008 Legislative sessions, Commission staff testified on the following bills and resolutions:

COMMITTEE	BILL	ISSUE
HHS	LB326	restrict benefits to legal immigrants
HHS	LB267	increase poverty limits for eligibility
TTC	LB266	driving certificates for non-U.S. licensees
REV	LB784	sanction employers who hire undocumented workers
AGR	LB860	removes fingerprinting requirement
GMV	LB871	name change for Mexican American Commission
JUD	LB963	verification of legal status before benefits are granted
HHS	LB1124	mobile home health and safety standards
REV	LB1071	excise tax on wire transfers
JUD	LR224	Nebraska law enforcement agreement with ICE

For example, Commission staff worked with Senator Schimek to discuss issues regarding immigration-related bills and resolutions. Discussions were held with the Judiciary Committee and other members of the Legislature. A press conference was held at the Capitol with members of the Hispanic/Latino and African-American communities denouncing the bill. LB963 was heard in the Judiciary Committee, with many proponents

and opponents. After much discussion and debate, the bill was killed in committee.

Commissioner Dora Olivares comments: “One of the most important of MAC’s achievements was the defeat of many bills that were put in front of the Legislature last year that were based on fear and ignorance.”

- **Providing Resources to Senators.** The Mexican American Commission prepared a report given to senators in January 2007: Nebraska 2007: Population, Economy, and Policy Concerns. This report was created to be a resource for Nebraska legislators, informing them about Hispanic/Latino population changes, economic contributions, and policy concerns. The report is available through the Mexican American Commission’s office. The Commission continued responding to information requests throughout the past two years.
- **Coordinating efforts with community groups** to help defeat the City of Fremont’s Ordinance 3139, intended to prohibit harboring, hiring, or renting to undocumented immigrants in the city. Acting Director Freytez co-hosted and participated in several radio interviews to inform and educate listeners about this proposal.
- **Participating in community meetings throughout the state.** Commissioners Santos, Nuncio, Olivares, and Moreno participated in Senator Ashford’s community meetings regarding LR362, the interim study to examine issues relating to illegal immigration.
- **Planning educational efforts on immigration.** Acting Director Freytez met with Senator Schimek and other pro-Hispanic/Latino advocates to develop and implement proactive strategies to better educate Nebraskans about immigration-related concerns. The group decided that attempts to educate current and potential law makers on immigration issues would be worthwhile.
- **Working on voter registration** through community events and media outreach. Acting Director Freytez organized and hosted a voter registration drive in Omaha, together with local Hispanic/Latino and non-Latino businesses. We also celebrated “*El Día de la Raza*” with the South Omaha community, which responded positively. With technical assistance from Radio Lobo’s Lenin Parra, Acting Director Freytez developed a Public Service Announcement (PSA) to encourage Hispanics/Latinos to register to vote. The PSA played on Radio Lobo for several weeks before the November 2008 election.
- **Raising public awareness of legislative, civic, and educational issues through the media.**

Acting Director Freytez participated in a radio interview on “Radio La Luz-1420 AM,” a new Spanish-language

radio station from Omaha. The interview was held to enhance public understanding of the Commission’s mission and its programs, and to speak about current legislative initiatives.

Acting Director Freytez participated in the radio show “*Conexión con la Comunidad*” (“Community Connections”) on Radio Lobo 97.7 FM (Omaha). He shared the program with Veronica Guzman from EducationQuest. They spoke about EducationQuest’s KnowHow2GO campaign to improve access to higher education, and about this year’s election process.

Acting Director Freytez participated in a TV interview on “*La Voz Latina*” (“Latino Voice”) (Channel 22) in Omaha. With moderator Luis Ortiz (TV Host) and Gloria Sarmiento from Nebraska Appleseed (a public interest justice center), we discussed the election process. We also discussed important topics like Amendment 424 (Affirmative Action) and state senate races.



Acting Director Angel Freytez, right, accompanied by Gloria Sarmiento (Appleseed) and Luis Ortiz, TV moderator, during the “La Voz Latina” TV show in Omaha. The show educated the Latino community on the 2008 election process.

- **Participating in the Nebraska Minority Justice Committee**, a state-wide collaboration between the Nebraska State Bar Association and the Nebraska Supreme Court. Its mission is to adjust racial disparities and ensure equal access to justice. Discussions at full and subcommittee hearings over the last two years have concerned drivers’ license data; survey of ethnic and racial jury representation; protection orders; translations and translators; probation study; and failure-to-appear policy. The issue of safety standards for mobile homes and parks was also discussed.

- **Representing the Commission and the State of Nebraska** at the Annual Meeting for State Commissions on Hispanic Affairs in Chicago, Illinois. Acting Director Freytez led a discussion on Nebraska's 2008 legislative results and the City of Fremont's proposed Ordinance 3139. Participants discussed how to tactically approach the issue of state and local anti-immigration policies. The meeting's agenda also included discussion of the 2010 Census, in-state tuition laws, No Child Left Behind, voter registration, and the Regional Leadership Conferences held by the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI).
- **Presenting Commission information to senators.** The Mexican American Commission, along with the Nebraska Equal Opportunity Commission, the Commission on Indian Affairs, the Commission for the Blind, the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the Commission on the Status of Women, co-sponsored an informational breakfast for senators, and a lunch for senators of the Judiciary Committee. Each agency presented an outline of its mission and activities.

A NOTE ON IMMIGRATION

Immigration is an issue that deeply and directly affects many people in Nebraska's Hispanic/Latino community. The Mexican American Commission has long considered immigration policy to be a federal matter, since that is where it is dealt with and legislated. We have been asked to testify on state legislative issues that touch on immigration, such as LB326 and LB963, and we are happy to do so.

We realize that immigration is becoming more of a concern for Nebraska's state and municipal governments, due to recent shifts in industry, employment, and demographics. We also must acknowledge a rising tide of anti-immigrant sentiment in parts of the state.

While we continue to believe immigration policy is a federal issue, the Mexican American Commission stands ready to assist in any meetings, research, testimony, or policy discussions regarding federal, state, and/or municipal responses to immigration concerns. We can help by providing current and accurate information, and clarifying economic and cultural contexts. We are available to serve as interpreters and translators. Our goal is to facilitate open, thoughtful dialogue among all parties on this critical issue.

Legislative Agenda for 2009—2011

The Commission's legislative agenda for 2009-2011 carries on the theme of being responsive in the moment, and building sustained pathways for advocacy. This agenda consists of four goals.

GOAL 1:

Conduct a study to define emerging issues affecting Nebraska Hispanics/Latinos. This information will help the Commission in prioritizing efforts to help the Hispanic/Latino community, and serve as an important new resource for legislators.

One emerging concern is the increasing use of children as interpreters in business exchanges. Residents of 70% of Hispanic/Latino households in Nebraska speak a language other than English at home. Many times children are the only ones who speak English. We have received an increasing number of calls from people whose children are interpreting for them in a wide range of matters. Children typically help translate for family members during school and medical visits, but more and more people are trying to do business with non-English-speaking adults via children.

In our opinion this practice should be outlawed. Children have no understanding of medical, educational, or contract terminology, and should neither be used nor relied on to

translate such information. Obligations entered into, or discussions held, on the basis of a ten-year old's understanding should not legally bind foreign-language speaking adults who do not understand English. An investigation of the scope of this problem could lead to new legislation being proposed on behalf of our constituents and all other non-English-speaking Nebraska residents.

Activities to Achieve this Goal

Use media outlets for opinion research; hold community meetings with Commissioners across the state; and review pertinent publications from other state and federal agencies.

GOAL 2:

Broaden the public perception of the Commission.

Many Hispanics/Latinos first encounter the Commission when seeking help with individual issues. While we are happy to serve in an ombudsman role and provide direct services, we have a broader charter. We need to be perceived as an organization impacting the major legislative issues affecting Hispanics/Latinos in Nebraska.

Activities to Achieve this Goal

Continue civic and legislative outreach efforts to communities throughout Nebraska; gather information on best practices from other agencies involved in legislative issues;

and use our expanding media platform to highlight the Commission's legislative efforts.

For instance, this year we are closely following several bills introduced in the 2009 session, especially:

COMMITTEE	BILL	ISSUE
BUS	LB563	Reduce misclassification of employees as contractors
JUD	LB34	Require employment eligibility verification using E-Verify
JUD	LB403	Require verification of lawful presence to receive benefits
JUD	LR9	Law enforcement / Homeland Security agreements to task Nebraska agencies with immigration enforcement

GOAL 3:

Propose new legislation. The Commission intends to take a more pro-active stance by getting involved in the legislative process at an earlier stage. For instance, our 2007 report on Hispanic/Latino policy concerns gave rise to two pieces of proposed legislation in 2008. MAC and its commissioners were involved last year in the LR362 interim study.

We believe that new legislation is needed to address continuing concerns over racial profiling in traffic stops. When LB593 went into effect on January 1, 2002, it outlawed racial profiling in traffic stops and required law enforcement to record and report statistics on traffic stops. However, it did not provide for penalties. Since LB593 passed into law, reporting

requirements have been only sporadically obeyed. A large number of agencies have submitted all mandated reports, but some agencies have never complied with the reporting requirements. Since 2002, there has been a 23.2% decline in the number of reporting agencies, with no penalties for noncompliance.

Twenty states have enacted laws against racial profiling. Many of them go beyond reporting requirements by including penalties for breaking the law, and mandating sensitivity training programs. In Nebraska, we can't even get compliance for merely reporting traffic stop data. In order to remove the perception of unjust racial profiling, we believe a new look at the matter is warranted, especially since large disparities exist in certain areas across the state.

Activities to Achieve this Goal

Complete the study mentioned in Goal 1; continue investigation of emerging issues such as state standards for interpreters and fraud prevention in labor contracting; and work more closely with senators representing districts with growing populations of Hispanics/Latinos (especially Districts 5, 7, 9, 17, 23, 35, 36, and 48).

GOAL 4:

Add to our network of local, state, and national coalitions and partnerships. It is imperative for the Commission to form new relationships with public and private organizations which serve minority groups, and to actively participate in events within our existing network.

Activities to Achieve this Goal

Strengthen ties with Hispanic/Latino Commissions and Agencies in other states (i.e. our Memorandum of Collaboration with the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute); form working partnerships with new entities (such as our state-wide City Library initiative); and utilize electronic media and web conferencing technology for cost-effective networking.



Education



Education Accomplishments

The Mexican American Commission places a high priority on its involvement with education. The Commission serves as a resource for educators and schools, and as an encouraging voice for Hispanic/Latino students. The Commission can help legislators and program administrators to broaden their understanding of cultural trends, such as the changes underpinning current demographic shifts.

For instance, the Nebraska Department of Education recently reported that the number of Hispanic/Latino students in pre-school through twelfth grade (P-12) has increased 142.32 % in the last ten years (1998—2008). As shown in the table below, almost 25 % of Nebraska’s student population is now minority (Hispanics/Latinos and non-Latino minorities combined).

A DECADE OF CHANGE: HISPANIC/LATINO STUDENT ENROLLMENT				
	1997 –1998	2007 –2008	CHANGE IN NUMBERS	CHANGE IN PERCENT
# Latino students P – 12th	15,469	37,486	22,017	142.32 %
# Total students P – 12th	291,585	290,770	-(815)	-(0.28 %)
Latino students as % of total P – 12th	5.3 %	12.9 %		
Non-Latino minority students as % of total P – 12th	9.0 %	11.6 %		
All minority students as % of total P – 12th	14.29 %	24.52 %		

SOURCE: Nebraska Department of Education 2007—2008 State of the Schools Report: A Report on Nebraska Public Schools; www.reportcard.nde.state.ne.us

The state-wide high school dropout rate for Hispanic/Latino students has decreased over the last five years. It fell from 41.7 percent in the 2002-2003 school year to 31.3 percent in the 2006-2007 school year, according to the “Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education 2008 Progress Report.”

The Mexican American Commission is actively involved in several education-related initiatives, and will continue strong programming efforts in collaboration with other agencies to further improve graduation rates. Some of these activities are highlighted here.

HISPANIC/LATINO EDUCATIONAL SUMMIT

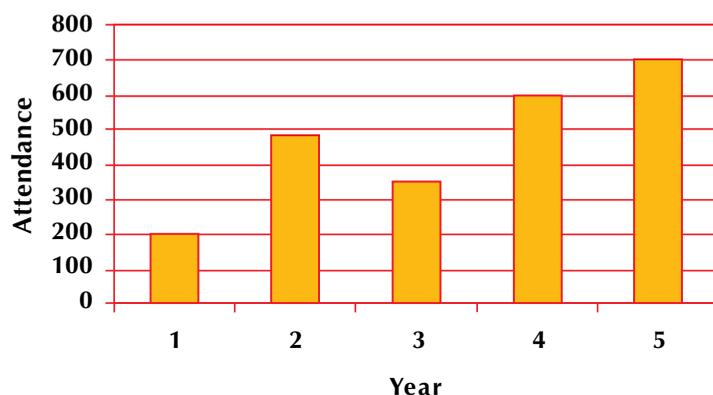
To serve this growing population and its teachers, the Commission has partnered with the Nebraska Department of Education to present a Hispanic/Latino Educational Summit for each of the past five years. The purpose of the summit is to increase awareness of Hispanic/Latino student achievements, to showcase resources available to support student success, and to share new research and ideas.

Attendance and participation have increased at this event, from 200 at the first summit in 2003 to over 700 in 2008. Over the last five years, more than 2,300 attendees have learned about new educational strategies, how to overcome barriers to learning, the importance of staying in school and going on to higher education, and success stories of educational achievement.

In October 2008, the fifth annual Hispanic/Latino Educational Summit, “La Raza Cósmica—Proud to be Latino,” was held in Omaha. Sessions included “A District’s Success Story,” with Gering Public Schools sharing its success with the Reading First program; “Steps to College,” offering tips for college preparation; and “Collaborating in the Global Economy: Education Counts!” which shared the vision of the Nebraska P-16 Initiative.

The Nebraska P-16 Initiative is a coalition of state organizations in education, business, and government dedicated to improving student success rates at all levels, preschool (“P”) to college (“16”). The vision of the Nebraska P-16 Initiative is “to provide all Nebraskans with the educational foundation they need to prosper and have a high quality of life in this new era.” Governor Heineman and the Nebraska Education Leadership Council support Nebraska P-16.

Annual Attendance Hispanic/Latino Educational Summit



The Mexican American Commission works with the P-16 Initiative's senior partners, which include the University of Nebraska, the Nebraska Department of Education, and the EducationQuest Foundation. Tricia Dunn, the foundation's Director of Media Relations, said:

EducationQuest Foundation appreciates how the Mexican American Commission has helped us identify ways to effectively relay important college planning information to Spanish-speaking parents and students in Nebraska. We look forward to continuing our relationship with the Commission as both of our organizations strive to help more Latino students pursue postsecondary education.

The Commission's Chair, Dora Olivares, has participated in P-16 committee meetings and seminars over the last two years. She has been involved in education for twenty years, and is the assistant principal at Gering High School. Commissioner Olivares is a member of the EducationQuest Foundation's Advisory Council, and a newly elected board member of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), a national professional development and advocacy group for educators. Commissioner Olivares joined the Executive Board for Conflict Resolution in 2008. She also served as a board member of the Scottsbluff/Gering United Chamber of Commerce from 2001—2007. She has served on the Mexican American Commission since 2003, and became its chair in 2008. The Commission's executive director Cecilia Olivarez-Huerta was active with the P-16 Initiative in 2007.

Several of the commissioners work with local schools in their area, speaking at youth rallies, meetings, seminars, and training sessions. Commissioner Theresa Palacio said, "It's one of our most important mandates, telling youth to stay in school, get an education, and go on to higher education." Two more events that help this message spread are the Latino Youth Rally and the Multicultural Conference. The cities of Scottsbluff and Grand Island have both hosted these events over the last two years, with attendance ranging from 200-400 for each event at each location. The Multicultural

Coalition produces these events, with aid from sponsoring agencies and groups such as the Mexican American Commission.

Financial Support: The Mexican American Commission supported several events in 2007-2008, giving \$800 for a scholarship to the 2007 Heartland Latino Leadership Conference and \$500 to that conference in 2008. The 2007 University of Nebraska-Kearney Hispanic Leadership Conference was given \$800 for honoraria. The 2008 Multicultural Youth Conference at Western Nebraska Community College received \$500 from MAC, as did the Latino Youth Rally in Grand Island. Latinas Unidas in Scottsbluff received \$300 from MAC.

Commissioner Olivares says:

The Commission's sponsorship of the Scottsbluff Multicultural Leadership Conference allows us to sow seeds of hope to our youth who want to attend college. The money we raise allows us to provide top notch Latino professionals to serve as role models and teach our youth skills they will need to succeed after high school. Total attendance at this conference ranges from 250 to 300 students. It is very gratifying to be able to provide an opportunity for expanding the horizons of our Panhandle youth.

Commissioner Nuncio comments on two of these activities that occurred in Grand Island:

The commission has helped to provide funds to both the Latino Youth Rally and the Multicultural Conference. We have seen growth in both of these conferences over the years. It is important to recognize that they are aimed towards different audiences. The Latino Youth Rally provides the opportunity for high school students to learn about different opportunities, careers and processes to help them have their dreams and then reach for them. We have had excellent speakers, both local and national. Students have participated from Crete, Grand Island, Wood River, Kearney, Hastings, Lexington, Schuyler, and other surrounding communities.

The Multicultural Conference is geared towards the total community, especially the business community. Again we have experienced growth over the years and the conference is always rated very high in satisfaction by the attendees. Our speakers have been nationally recognized speakers in addition to local and state presenters. I am very thankful that the Commission has supported our community by helping with small monetary grants.

BINATIONAL TEACHER EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Supporting teachers is another key area of the Commission's involvement with education. We are proud to join the Office of Migrant Education (Nebraska Department of Education) in support of the Binational Teacher Exchange

Program (BTEP). The main objective of this program is to improve the education of migrant children who travel between the United States and Mexico. Currently 27 states participate in this program; Nebraska has participated since 1998.

From Mexico's visiting teachers, Nebraska's teachers learn about the Mexican educational system so they can better understand their students. From visits to Mexico, they also learn about the students' cultures, lifestyles, and learning communities.

Cultural education is another aspect of the Commission's work. Through events that celebrate our cultures, we strengthen ties to our Hispanic/Latino heritage. We also educate those who come from other cultures, increasing appreciation for all involved. Two major cultural celebrations were held in 2007 and 2008: the Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration, and a celebration of Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) at the Sheldon Museum of Art in Lincoln.

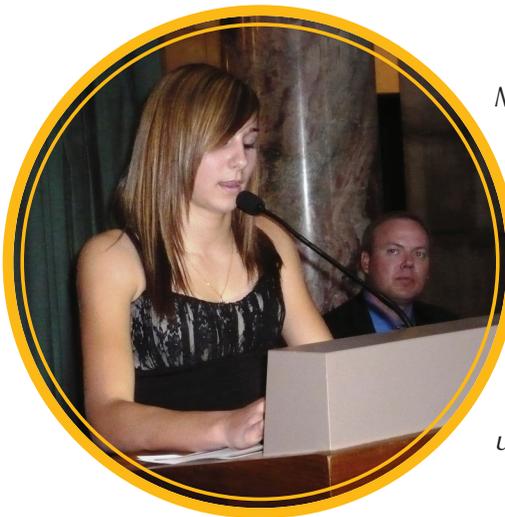
HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

National Hispanic Heritage Month began in 1988, when then-President Ronald Reagan declared a new national observance to celebrate the histories, cultures, and contributions of those whose ancestors came from Mexico, Central and South America, Spain, and the Caribbean. The 30-day celebration begins on September 15 because that is the anniversary of independence for Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on September 16 and September 18. Columbus Day (*Día de la Raza*) occurs on October 12, near the end of the observance, which is October 15.

Hispanic Heritage Month has been proclaimed a state celebration since 2001 by Governors Johanns and Heineman. Across Nebraska, communities gather to celebrate with

parades, awards, and fun activities throughout the month. For instance, Commissioner Ramon Otero has participated in the Hispanic Heritage Celebrations in Lexington, Nebraska in 2007 and 2008. The 2008 event also featured him speaking at a voter registration drive.

In 2007, the Mexican American Commission and the Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration Planning Committee held the first annual state commemoration event in the rotunda of the Capitol building, with the theme of "Embracing Diversity." The celebration included music, a parade of country flags, the state proclamation, a keynote address by a guest speaker, and a presentation of awards to individuals, organizations, a family of the year, and a humanitarian. The highlight of the celebration was the presentation of awards to student essayists from middle and high school. The 2008 celebration, "My Hero: Making a Difference to the Future of Latinos," added a presentation of student films. Over 250 people attended the 2007 celebration; more than 300 enjoyed the party in 2008.



Page Tenski, from Morton Magnet Middle School gets recognized as the first place winner of the 2008 "My Hero" essay contest for Hispanic Heritage Month. Pat Nilsen from the carpenter's union listens to the winning essayist.

Día de los Muertos

In the same spirit of sharing our culture and heritage, the Mexican American Commission, in partnership with the Sheldon Art Gallery and many community agencies and advisors, hosted the first *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) celebration at the Sheldon Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden in Lincoln, Nebraska. *Día de los Muertos* is a holiday to celebrate, pray for, and remember family members and friends who have died.



Former Commissioner Olga Olivares receives Lincoln's 2008 Mayor's Choice Award on behalf of the "Día de los Muertos" planning committee. The Mexican American Commission helped put together two outstanding editions of the *El Día de los Muertos* celebration in 2007 and 2008.

The event on October 27, 2007 included a community *ofrenda* (altar), a play, and music and dance groups. *Ofrendas* can be built in homes or in cemeteries, and include offerings to the deceased of favorite food and drinks, photographs, the traditional water, salt, and bread, and more. The altar stayed on display through the fourth of November.

The second annual *Día de los Muertos* event was expanded to a two-day celebration at Sheldon on October 31 and November 1, 2008. In addition to music and entertainment, the Great

Hall of the museum was filled with papier-mâché sculptures, paper cutouts (*papel recortado*), and artworks by local students. These decorations and displays remained on view through November 23. A traditional *ofrenda* was built to give visitors a way to honor their loved ones. The days were filled with music, dance, artmaking, and joy for the hundreds who attended these events.

Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration Award winners are as follows:

Essay Awards	Year
Nichole Gómez (Morton Magnet Middle School) “Embracing Hispanic Diversity”	2007
Tim Kalantjakos (Burke High School), “A Commendable Uprising”	2007
Page Tenski (Morton Magnet Middle School) “Jessie Sisneros”	2008
Luz Lopez (Lexington High School) “My Latino Hero”	2008
Individual Recognition	Year
Father Damien Zuerline	2007
Sergio Sosa	2007
Cindy Gonzalez	2008
Gloria Sarmiento	2008
Ricardo Ariza	2008
La Familia Award	Year
Olga Olivares and Family	2007
Juana and Andrés Cervantes Family	2008

Humanitarian Award	Year
DiAnna Schimek, Nebraska State Senator— District 27	2007
Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF)	2008
Organization Recognition	Year
Radio Lobo – 97.7 FM	2007
Nebraska Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	2007
Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest	2007
Office of Latino/Latin American Studies of the Great Plains (OLLAS)	2007
Center for Legal Immigration Assistance	2008
Latino Research Initiative of UNL	2008
Latino Youth Rally of Western Nebraska Community College	2008
NAF Multicultural Human Development Corporation	2008

The winning high school essay from the inaugural Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration Celebration in 2007 is reprinted here.

A Commendable Uprising by Tim Kalantjakos

Our hands sit comfortable on our desks, crossed and white and soft from lack of manual labor. Their hands are calloused, strong, and eventually arthritic from work. We preach equality and freedom. They just try to get by, without even a whispered objection. We use our parents like bank cards, while they have tight-knit families consisting of people who actually love each other. “They” are our neighbors. The most honorable quality of these neighbors of ours is they gladly embrace and appreciate all that, for some reason, we take for granted.

It is no secret that the relatively recent surge of Mexican immigrants has created a sizeable controversy here in America. As human nature so predictably dictates, many of us react with hostility. There is a murmur of dissent among us. This primordial call to defend our territory could prove to be the biggest blindfold over our eyes. That blindfold is a hindrance that we cannot allow to block our vision any longer. For when our eyes open, and we can behold the wonders of the beautiful Hispanic culture, we may finally embrace who are rightfully our brothers.

I was born overseas and moved to America, so I have the privilege of being able to see through our Hispanic populations’ perspective, to an extent. The process of moving to America, depending on where the traveler is from, can prove to be very exciting or frightening. Regardless of whether it is exciting or frightening, it’s certainly becoming a challenge from many of those

from Mexico. We all know that our system has kinks, as will every one after it, but does it merit becoming an isolationist society? It is beyond my scope, sadly, but sooner or later something radical is going to be done about our policy on immigration. I only hope that it may be as subtle and sophisticated as building a wall between our countries.

Our culture wouldn’t be as nearly as eclectic as it is today if it weren’t for the presence of Latinos. They have greatly enriched our art, music, sports, movies, and food as well as many other things. What’s more impressive is that they still maintain their identity to the fullest, as they bond, not blend in, with us. It becomes clear that these are people who are highly adaptable and courageous—much like our early settlers, who Latinos resemble in many aspects.

Our Hispanic/Latino Population thrived in a place that, at one time, was completely foreign to them. It is remarkable how they have gone so far in such little time. This moving to another country and starting fresh there is such an abstract idea for many of us, it’s hard to even know what we would set out to do. And for those Hispanics and Latinos who have been here a long time, it’s nice to see that they are not corrupted by our way of life; our politics. There is no doubt that their growing presence in America has expanded our threshold of understanding.

By honoring those who carry on today in the spirit and tradition of our ancestors, we continue to build heritage for future generations.

Education Agenda for 2009—2011

Building on the connections and achievements of the last two years, the Commission's Education Agenda focuses on three goals.

GOAL 1:

Increase awareness of and participation in educational opportunities and services within communities.

Activities to Achieve this Goal

Create a model program for increasing parent involvement in technology (the program at Lexington High School, for example); continue participation in the P-16 Initiative; and facilitate relationships between college recruiters and the Hispanic/Latino community.

GOAL 2:

Develop leadership through educational summits and training opportunities.

Activities to Achieve this Goal

Increase student and parent involvement in the Hispanic/Latino Educational Summit and the Youth Leadership Conference; increase student participation in Commission activities; and publicize scholarship opportunities for student conferences and seminars.

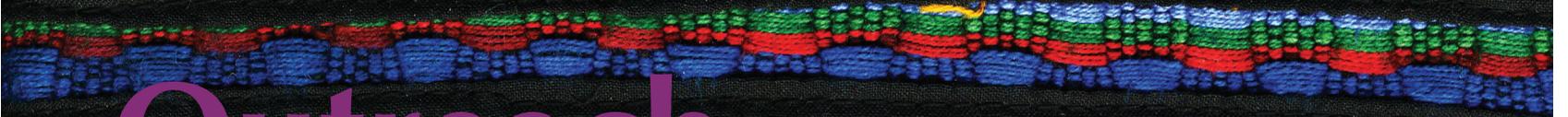
GOAL 3:

Establish partnerships with city libraries across Nebraska to promote our state-wide diversity campaign.

Activities to Achieve this Goal

Collaborate on increasing local library resources (bilingual books and speakers, for instance); strengthen existing programs (i.e. Read Aloud and the Children's Festival); and promote awareness and successes.

Outreach



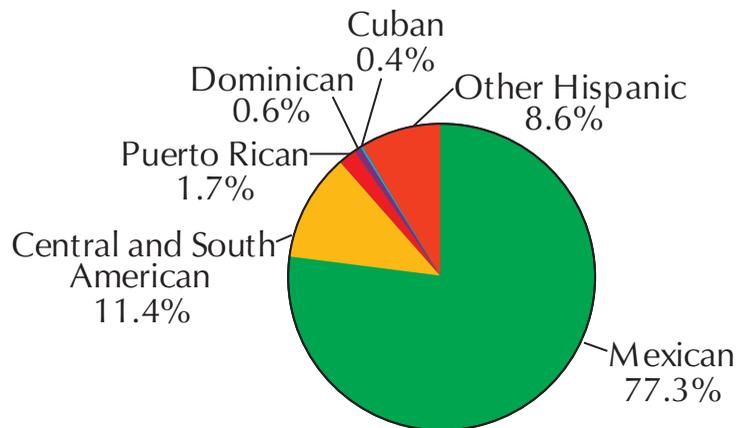
Outreach Accomplishments

The Mexican American Commission's mission is to serve as a link between Nebraska state government and the Hispanic/Latino community at large. In truth, there are as many distinct Hispanic/Latino communities as there are distinct parts of the state. To carry out our mission of assisting our constituents, we must reach out through diverse means. We must also reach out to the government with the fruits of our efforts, the knowledge we gain of the challenges that remain and the opportunities that are opening to Hispanics/Latinos living in Nebraska. Our outreach efforts are two-fold: out to our constituents and out to our government: legislators and agencies who affect the lives of all Nebraskans.

MAC Commissioner Jose Santos says:

First, to enhance the wellbeing of the local community and cities throughout the state, one must become aware and knowledgeable of the community needs and desires. Secondly, participate and/or support programs and projects with an understanding of cultural differences, taking advantage of the strengths found within the Latino culture. Thirdly, form alliances and network with government agencies and community based entities to promote and ensure that the community population has equal access to, and opportunities for education, adequate health services, housing, employment, justice and the pursuit of happiness!

Nebraska Hispanic Population, by Ethnic Subgroup: 2003



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2003 American Community Survey

OUTREACH TO HISPANICS/LATINOS

Our mission is to assist our constituents through advocacy, empowerment, and referrals. To do that, we must make ourselves known. In 2007 we strengthened our outreach efforts by creating a pilot program known as the Latino Outreach Consortium. The objective of this consortium was to bring



Members of the Latino Outreach Consortium reach out to the Latino community of South Sioux City (June, 2007). From left to right, Blanca Ramirez (NEOC), Rodrigo Gamboa (Legal Aid Of Nebraska), Martha Hettenbaugh (VITA), Gloria Sarmiento (Appleseed), Jose Santos (MAC Commissioner), and Angel Freytez, Acting Director (MAC).

together a group of agencies and organizations to meet a common goal: improving access to information and services for the Hispanic/Latino communities in Nebraska.

Since its inception in 2007, the Latino Outreach Consortium has made outreach presentations in the cities of Columbus, Fremont, Grand Island, Lincoln, Scottsbluff, Schuyler, South Sioux City, and West Point. Participating agencies and organizations include:

- Mexican American Commission
- Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest
- Nebraska Attorney General's Office: Latino Outreach Office
- Nebraska Equal Opportunity Commission
- Nebraska Department of Labor
- Nebraska Department of Insurance
- Legal Aid of Nebraska
- El Centro de las Americas

Additional collaborative outreach efforts come by way of invitation, when the Commission is invited to participate in programs put on by other agencies and organizations. Sometimes our participation comes in the form of service delivery, such as when we are invited to serve as interpreters. Most of the time, we are invited to make our traditional outreach presentation on services available through the Commission and other state agencies.

A brief summary of Consortium and other outreach events follows.

2007 – 2008 Outreach Events

02/07	Children's Day Festival	Norfolk, NE
07/07	Free Dental Clinic	Norfolk, NE
07/07	Gangs and Guns Symposium	Columbus, NE
07/07	Una Conversación Comunitaria	Lincoln, NE
10/07	Gangs Seminar	Madison, NE
02/08	Children's Day Festival	Norfolk, NE
04/08	Immigration Clinic	Grand Island, NE
06/08	A Rights Orientation	South Sioux City, NE
06/08	Visiting Teachers from Mexico	Lincoln, NE
07/08	Consulado Móvil	Grand Island, NE
09/08	Latino Outreach Program	Fremont, NE

Details of Outreach Events:

2/11/07 Children's Day Festival Norfolk, NE

This festival to promote reading and other healthy activities for children is sponsored by Read Aloud Norfolk. The Commission sponsors an information booth at the fair, presenting bilingual and Hispanic/Latino publications.

07/07-08/07 Free Dental Clinic Norfolk, NE

Creighton University held a Mission of Mercy event in Nebraska, providing free dental care to nearly 1,800 people at the Heartland Events Center in Grand Island. Angel Freytez served as an interpreter for the event.

07/21/07 Una Conversación Comunitaria Lincoln, NE

This workshop ("A Community Conversation") offered key information to community residents. Speakers from the Nebraska Equal Opportunity Commission, Legal Aid, the Office of the Attorney General, and the REALTORS Association of Lincoln addressed issues such as workplace and housing discrimination, free legal services, how to avoid becoming a victim of fraud, and buying a home.

07/25/07 Gangs and Guns Symposium Columbus, NE

The Platte County Attorney's Office, supported by the East Central Health District and the U.S. Attorney's Office (Dis-

trict of Nebraska) held a symposium titled: "A Community Response: Gangs and Guns: Identify, Intervene, Prevent." Speakers included Theresa Palacio, MAC Commissioner and DHHS Service Coordinator.

10/15/07 Gangs Seminar Madison, NE

This seminar featured guest speakers from the Omaha After School Alliance, the Watchful Eye Foundation, South Omaha Boys and Girls Club, the Nebraska State Patrol, and the South Sioux City Police Department. Commissioner Theresa Palacio gave the Welcoming Address, and said one highlight of the event for her was "how both Latinos and non-Latinos worked together to save our youth."

02/08 Children's Day Festival Norfolk, NE

The Commission sponsored an information booth for the third consecutive year at this festival to promote children's literacy and offer free family fun.

04/02/08 Immigration Clinic Grand Island, NE

Hundreds of people attended the Immigration Clinic sponsored by the Grand Island Multicultural Coalition, Lutheran Immigration Services, and the office of Senator Ben Nelson.

The purpose of the clinic was to assist people with immigration questions to get help from immigration officers from the Office of Homeland Security. Specialists from Lutheran Immigration Services were available to help people practice for the Naturalization/Citizenship test. Angel Freytez served as interpreter at this event.



06/07/08 A Rights Orientation South Sioux City, NE

This program sponsored by the Nebraska Equal Opportunity Commission (NEOC) had speakers from Nebraska Appleseed, NEOC, Nebraska Department of Labor, the Mexican American Commission, Legal Aid, and VITA, a tax assistance program. Labor issues, employment discrimination, free legal services, housing issues, and taxes were discussed. Acting Director Freytez gave a presentation on state agency services.

06/18/08 Visiting Teachers from Mexico Lincoln, NE

The Nebraska Department of Education and the Mexican American Commission prepared this half-day celebration at the State Capitol to honor visiting teachers from five states in Mexico. These teachers were participants in the Nebraska Binational Migrant Education Teacher Exchange Program (BTEP). They toured the Capitol, were welcomed by the

Governor's Office and the Mexican Consulate, and received recognition certificates and awards.

07/26/08 Consulado Móvil Grand Island, NE

The Consulado Móvil, or Mobile Consulate, was held by the Mexican Consulate's Office in Omaha, with support from the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in Grand Island and Wells Fargo Bank. The Consulate's Office came to Grand Island to help people with identification papers and passports; they also invited Nebraska Appleseed, the Mexican American Commission, and VITA to participate. There were hundreds in attendance.

09/28/08 Latino Outreach Program Fremont, NE

This program in Fremont featured member agencies of the Latino Outreach Consortium, which was started by the Commission in 2007. Speakers from NEOC, MAC, Nebraska Appleseed, and VITA talked about how to receive help with discrimination, legal issues, and taxes. Acting Director Freytez spoke about the Mexican American Commission's services and its mission to serve as a voice for Hispanics/Latinos.

MAC Commissioner Norma De La O gave highlights of events she was involved with on the eastern side of the state: the Siouxland *Cinco de Mayo* celebration, with over 3,000 in attendance, awarded four \$1,000 scholarships; the Siouxland Leadership Banquet occurred during Hispanic Heritage Month, and recognized three Latina leaders from the area; and an event at the Gomez Rodeo had over 600 people, including representatives from the Mexican Consulate in Omaha.



Acting Director Angel Freytez, right, presenting the 2008 Organization Award to Max Graves, Program Director of the Center for Legal Immigration Assistance (CLIA). Other CLIA staff pictured are (from left to right) Fred Wegelin, Olga Olivares, and Gabriela Machado.

OUTREACH THROUGH MEMBERSHIP

Some of the Commission's mandates are: to share and exchange resources with other agencies on behalf of the populations served; to keep current on new developments; and to generally act as an information clearinghouse. One way we accomplish this goal is to participate by membership in

local, state, and national organizations. The Commission is an active member of the following committees and/or groups in Nebraska:

- **Nebraska P-16 Leadership Council Meeting and Communications Committee**
- **Nebraska Minority Justice Committee and Access to Justice Subcommittee**
- **Latino Outreach Consortium**
- **Latino Educational Summit**
- **Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration**
- **Independent (non-code) Agency Meeting**
- **Binational Teacher's Exchange Program**
- **Día de los Muertos**
- **Standing Bear Celebration Committee**
- **World Day on the Mall**
- **Documentary Film Project "Madison County"**
- **The Nebraska Restaurant Association and the National Restaurant Association**

Commissioner Santos offers:

I can assure you that as a commissioner of MAC, I actively participate in community outreach in collaboration with: Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), U.S. Department of Labor, State Equal Opportunity Commission, State Attorney General, Nebraska Workforce Development/Department of Labor, Nebraska Appleseed Center, Mexican Consulate and community faith based entities. Collectively, [these agencies] have significantly contributed in increasing the level of understanding of "Individual Rights" for Latinos in Nebraska.

In addition to these groups and other state agency partners, the Mexican American Commission has developed relationships with national and other state organizations. Together we share best practices and stay current on rapidly developing issues in other states and across the nation. Such cooperation in legislative affairs, leadership development, civic engagement, and public policy increases the exchange of information among participating organizations. By leveraging the combined wisdom and experience of these agencies, we are able to cost-effectively bring new ideas to the aid of Nebraska's Hispanic/Latino population.

Well-established national groups such as the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the Mexican-American Legal Defense Fund (MALDEF), the Puerto Rico Legal Defense, and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) are key allies. They bring a wealth of information, especially about national and federal issues. NCLR, for instance, "works with and through affiliated organizations to strengthen Latino families and communities and thus, help strengthen this nation." The Commission has a memorandum of understanding with NCLR.



Annual Meeting for State Commissions on Hispanic Affairs in Chicago, Illinois (August, 2008). From left to right, Cesar Moreno (USHLI), Ezra Escudero (Ohio), Norman Colon (Pennsylvania), former HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros, Cindy Benavides (Virginia), Angel Freytez (Nebraska), Jose Luis Gutierrez (Illinois), Steve Cisneros (Kansas), and Juan Andrade (President of USHLI).

The Commission has a memorandum of collaboration with the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI) and eleven other state councils and commissions that deal with Hispanic/Latino affairs. The purpose of this collaborative effort is to establish strategic and legislative direction to advise, improve, and/or bring awareness to the social issues and public affairs that affect Hispanic/Latino communities.

States in this coalition include Delaware (the Governor’s Advisory Council on Hispanic Affairs), Idaho (Commission on Hispanic Affairs), Indiana (Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs), Kansas (Hispanic & Latino American Affairs Commission), Minnesota (Chicano Latino Affairs Commission), Nebraska (Mexican American Commission), Ohio (Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs), Pennsylvania (the Governor’s Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs), South Carolina (Commission for Minority Affairs), Utah (Hispanic/Latino Advisory Council), and Washington (Commission on Hispanic Affairs).

Dr. Juan Andrade, Jr., USHLI President, comments on our collaboration: State commissions, like the Nebraska Mexican American Commission, and the Chicago-based United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI), a nonprofit national organization, work hand-in-hand in providing leadership development opportunities for the Latino

community. The Nebraska Commission is a vital and integral part of USHLI’s leadership development work throughout Nebraska, in cities and communities including Lincoln, Omaha, Grand Island, Kearney, North Platt and Scotts Bluff. The Nebraska Commission has helped

INCOMING CALL ACTIVITY AND VOLUME, 2007 – 2008			
CODES	2007	2008	TOTALS
1 Gather and disseminate information, conduct hearings and conferences on problems concerning Hispanics/Latinos	120	84	204
2 Education, Employment, Health, Housing, Welfare, and Recreation	286	360	646
3 Develop, coordinate, and assist other public other public and private	38	200	238
4 Propose new programs concerning Hispanics/Latinos	12	0	12
5 Evaluate existing programs and proposed legislation concerning Hispanics/Latinos	0	0	0
6 Stimulate public awareness of the problems of Hispanics/Latinos	0	0	0
7 Conduct training programs for community leadership and service project staff	1	0	1
8 INS Assistance	50	32	82
9 MAC Activities	337	317	654
10 State agency Cooperation	232	293	525
11 Accounting, Personnel, Budget, and Benefits	20	35	55
12 Miscellaneous*	152	106	258
TOTAL INCOMING CALLS	1,248	1,427	2,675

* Miscellaneous includes requests for address, fax number, P.O. Box; hang ups; wrong number; and unknown.

identify young Latino students for paid scholarships and internships and helped organize Latino Nebraskans, representing all sectors of the Latino leadership community, to attend USHLI's annual national conference.

The Nebraska Mexican American Commission, one of the oldest commissions established in approximately 20 states to ensure that the needs of the Latino community are known and understood by policy-makers and that state agencies respond adequately to the needs of the Latino community, has served as a model for similar entities in other states that have been created by Executive Order of the Governor or through legislation, enabling tens of thousands of Latinos to be better served, included in the governmental process, and represented throughout the years.

OUTREACH THROUGH DIRECT SERVICES

People often call us with problems they need help solving. We refer them to government and private agencies as appropriate. We are also involved in providing direct services. The types of referrals and services we have provided over the last two years are listed below, based on calls placed to the Commission by or on behalf of those looking for services.

Total call volume increased 14.3 percent from 2007 to 2008. The Commission took 1248 calls in 2007 and 1427 calls in 2008, for a total of 2675 calls. Three categories represent over two-thirds of total calls. Calls regarding MAC activities (Code 9) were 24.4 percent of the total. Calls about education, employment, health, housing, welfare, and recreation (Code 2) were 24.1 percent of the total. Calls for state agency cooperation (Code 10) were 19.6 percent of total call volume.

Calls under Code 3 (develop, coordinate, and assist other public and private organizations) represented 3 percent of total calls received in 2007. In 2008 those calls represented 14 percent of total calls. This category had an increase of 426 percent in call volume from 2007 to 2008. We expect this trend to continue as we continue to build alliances and networks so that we can reach and assist more people.

OUTREACH FOR CONSUMER WARNINGS: MEXICAN AMERICAN COMMISSION ISSUES FRAUD ALERTS

Two national scams made their way to Nebraska in 2007—2008, targeting the state's immigrant population. Both scams involved promises of "legitimate" identity documents: one through membership in a fictitious "Indian tribe," and one through the purchase of papers claiming to be "international driver's licenses." The Commission warned consumers about these fraudulent schemes on local and national media.

Fraud Alert:

The Fictitious "Kaweah Tribe"

In 2007 a man named Malcolm Webber perpetrated fraud on thousands of undocumented immigrants throughout the Midwest and several other states. Webber claimed to be the chief of an imaginary tribe, the "Kaweah Indian Nation." He sold 'tribal memberships' to undocumented workers, claiming these papers would protect them from deportation and eventually grant them U.S. citizenship. Webber's cruel hoax was strengthened by his using unsuspecting churches to make his approach.

In Nebraska, Webber's workers and their "enrollment forms" appeared in Fremont, Grand Island, Kearney, Lincoln, and Schuyler, among other cities. The fee for enrollment was \$300 and up. Some people reported paying up to \$1,200 for their family's enrollment. Acting Director Freytez told a reporter that in addition to losing their hard-earned money, people who fell for the scheme were now also afraid that their participation would be held against them as they continued to pursue legal residency through traditional channels.

As the situation in Nebraska became known, Mr. Freytez issued a fraud alert warning. In an August 2007 press release, the Mexican American Commission warned the Hispanic/Latino community and the general public against Webber's scam. The Commission had received confirmed reports of approaches made in Spanish churches in several Nebraska cities. Acting Director Freytez estimated that 1,000 - 2,000 Nebraskans fell prey to the scheme and signed up before word could get out. In addition to the press release and coverage in the Lincoln Journal Star and Omaha World Herald, the fraud alert was also posted on the Commission's website, www.mex-amer.state.ne.us. Mr. Freytez also appeared on CNN's Glenn Beck show on August 21, 2007, warning about the fraud.

The Kansas Attorney Generals' office filed a lawsuit against Webber; the Texas Attorney General's office joined the complaint. Nebraska's Attorney General declined to join the lawsuit, stating that it was a federal matter. Webber was indicted; he was convicted in a jury trial in the District of Kansas Federal Court in August 2008. In December 2008, Webber was sentenced to five years in federal prison.

Commissioner Yolanda Nuncio commented, "One of the biggest successes we had was the exposure and final conviction of the man [Webber] who was selling supposedly legal status to the undocumented."

Fraud Alert:

The Fictitious "International Driver's Licenses"

In April 2008 the Mexican American Commission warned the Hispanic/Latino community about an "International Driver's License" fraud run by a Texas company (Centro de Identificaciones, Inc.). Spanish-speaking communities in the cities of Grand Island, Lincoln, and Omaha were targeted with newspaper advertising and flyers telling immigrants they could buy an "international driver's license" for \$225. The

company claimed these ‘licenses’ would allow purchasers to buy, sell, register, and insure vehicles; and to drive legally.

According to sources at the Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles, legitimate international driver’s licenses can only be issued by government entities or their agents, not by companies. People who buy fake documents put themselves at risk if they present the documents during a traffic stop, according to the Federal Trade Commission. They also lose whatever fee they paid for the useless ‘licenses.’

As soon as the problem was confirmed, the Mexican American Commission put out a press release warning of the scam, and posted the same warning on the Commission’s website. In addition to coverage in the Lincoln Journal Star and Omaha World Herald, several other newspapers, radio

stations, and websites carried the press release and short interviews with Acting Director Angel Freytez. Three days later, the Texas Attorney General’s office filed charges against the business owners. The Nebraska Attorney General said only that he was “monitoring the situation,” and would refer any information to the Texas Attorney General’s office.

It is discouraging to see scams like these operating in Nebraska, especially because they take advantage of people’s hopes and fears. We need to be diligent in warning against these predators and their consumer frauds. At the same time, we are grateful to have a network of media and agency connections that helps us get the word out when necessary. We are glad that many people were warned away from these frauds in time.

Outreach Agenda for 2009—2011

Our constituent population is growing rapidly. So is our need for resources to have the capacity to be of service. In looking forward, we seek to strengthen existing programs and establish new and sustainable outreach programs. Our outreach goals for 2009—2011 include the following.

GOAL 1:

Serve as a more effective advocate for the Hispanic/Latino population in Nebraska.

Activities to Achieve this Goal

Identify and clearly delineate Commission positions on key issues affecting our constituent population; provide opportunities for Hispanics/Latinos to participate in discussions on community issues; assist constituents by addressing their issues and concerns, using appropriate resources and channels; propose legislation as needed.

GOAL 2:

Continue to serve as a comprehensive source of information regarding the issues and contributions of Nebraska’s Hispanic/Latino population.

Activities to Achieve this Goal

Maintain an information clearinghouse; update newsletter mailing list and e-mail lists; increase website activity and media development.

GOAL 3:

Strengthen the Commission in its role as a collaborative agency with state government (Governor, Legislature, state agencies), municipalities, and local, state, and national private organizations.

Activities to Achieve this Goal

Increase awareness and knowledge of the Mexican American Commission and its mandates; increase contacts for and

interactions with legislators; develop partnerships for the sponsoring and planning of conferences, task forces, and advisory committees and boards. For example, Acting Director Freytez has requested that the Commission be included as a member of the Communications Committee for the Nebraska P-16 Initiative. His media expertise will help the initiative’s marketing campaign while simultaneously raising the Commission’s profile.

GOAL 4:

Enhance the capacity of the commissioners and staff to accomplish our mandates and achieve our mission.

Activities to Achieve this Goal

Request and receive funding for a State-Wide Outreach Program to increase our capacity and resources; conclude the strategic planning process started in 2008; provide opportunities for staff development via educational seminars, classes, and conferences; continue developing new electronic and graphic ways to document meetings and events, so they may be shared beyond the moment; market the Commission via website, newsletters, and participation in pertinent events and activities.

GOAL 5:

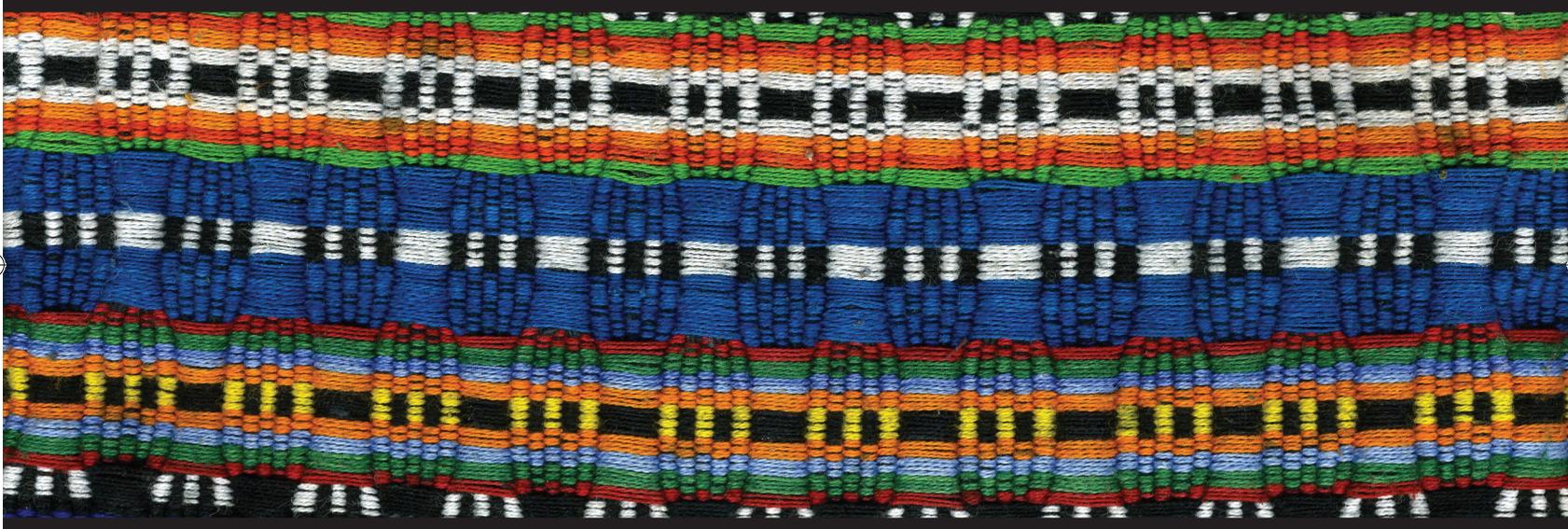
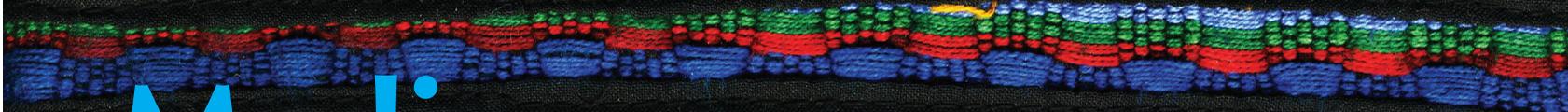
Strengthen and grow current outreach events.

Activities to Achieve this Goal

Conduct the Third and Fourth Annual editions of the Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration, including the Essay Contest; continue support of the Binational Teachers Exchange Program, Día de los Muertos, and community-level outreach programs; maintain existing partnerships and strengthen relationships with other key agencies, such as the National Rural Network, the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Secretary of State’s Office, the Arts Council, and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.



Media



Media Accomplishments

The Commission uses various media to deliver on all its mandates, and especially to carry out its functions of serving as an information clearinghouse, raising public awareness, and contributing to public education efforts regarding issues affecting Nebraska's Hispanic/Latino community.

During the last two years the Mexican American Commission registered over a hundred media mentions, the most important of which are:

CNN (United States), The Washington Times (United States), New York Times (United States), La Gente (Nicaragua), Terra.com (Mexico), Vanguardia.com (Mexico), Seattle Times (United States), Newstin (Spain), Tribune Business News (United States), Wichita Eagle (United States), Omaha World Herald (United States), El Tiempo (Colombia), Lincoln Journal Star (United States), Deseret News (United States), Daily Review (United States), Houston Chronicle (United States), The Oklahoman (United States), San Jose Mercury News (United States), The Sun News (United States), The Commercial Appeal (United States), Univision (United States), El Nuevo Herald (United States).

The highlight of our recent media activity was the debut in March 2008 of our new television program, "Diversity TV." This bilingual television show provides a new platform for the Commission to reach all Nebraskans. The Mexican American Commission is the only state agency to produce and air its own weekly television program.

Additional media accomplishments include the Commission website, our newsletter, radio and TV appearances, press releases, and public service announcements.



Angel Freytez interviews Mayor Chris Beutler for Diversity TV.

DIVERSITY TV

Diversity TV was launched on March 14, 2008 as a bilingual television program dedicated to exploring and promoting diversity from different points of view. The one-hour program covers a wide range of topics, including education, culture, community affairs, housing, immigration, legislation,

health, and more. For instance, Diversity TV provided media coverage for the 2008 celebration of Día de los Muertos at the Sheldon Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden in Lincoln.

Diversity TV is an initiative of the Mexican American Commission, working in partnership with Time Warner Cable, which broadcasts the program in Columbus, Crete, Lincoln, and Seward. The partnership includes a diverse set of community groups and volunteers. One exciting feature of the program is that audiences are encouraged to participate in its production via e-mail, phone, fax, mail, and live participation.

As we near the one-year anniversary of its first broadcast, General Producer Angel Freytez reflects:

Diversity TV is a dream come true, especially because there are so few Hispanic/Latino media outlets available in Nebraska. For the last year, we've been able to showcase the news and accomplishments of the Hispanic/Latino community. We look forward to expanding our signal to other cities across Nebraska.

Diversity TV is broadcast Wednesday evenings from 11:30 pm - 12:30 am and Friday afternoons from 4:00-5:00 pm on your local community access channel. For more information on Diversity TV, please contact the Mexican American Commission at (402) 471-2791, or e-mail us at mac.diversitytv@nebraska.gov.

OUR WEBSITE

The Commission's website address is: www.mex-amer.state.ne.us. Operating for over five years, the website offers a variety of resources to viewers, including a list of upcoming meetings and events. The minutes of the Commission's quarterly meetings are available for review, as are electronic versions of our newsletter. There is also a list of research reports and other publications generated by the Mexican American Commission.

The site features links to more than 25 organizations and agencies that offer legal, economic, and social assistance. It also includes a comprehensive list of Nebraska's Spanish-language and/or bilingual radio stations, TV stations, and newspapers.

For the month of January 2007 there were 4,644 hits on the website, with 149 hits per day on average. In January 2009 there were 7,241 hits on the website, with 233 hits per day on average. This is an increase of 56 percent for the two-year period.

OUR NEWSLETTER

The Mexican American Commission Newsletter goes out to a mailing list of constituents, partnering agencies, and interested parties. It is published throughout the year as a

public information service; free subscriptions are available on request. We currently print 6,000 copies per issue, and usually produce four issues a year.

Contents typically include a letter from the Commission's Director, feature articles on legislation and other important issues, reports of past events, information about upcoming events, and a calendar of future events. Feature articles have included racial profiling, warnings about scams targeting immigrant communities (fake 'tribal' papers, 'inter-national' driver's licenses), the Nebraska's legislative process, the Latino Educational Summit, Hispanic Heritage Month, and the debut of Diversity TV.

OTHER MEDIA CHANNELS

The Commission takes every opportunity to utilize other media outlets in publicizing events, information, and re-

sources. In 2007 and 2008, interviews and appearances were made on Radio La Luz-1420 AM (Omaha), Radio Lobo 97.7 FM (Omaha), La Voz Latina (TV Channel 22, Omaha), CNN's Glenn Beck Show, and local newspapers, including the Lincoln Journal Star and Omaha World Herald. We do a monthly show on Radio Lobo 97.7 FM (Omaha). Legislative initiatives, the election process, voter registration, higher education, and consumer fraud warnings were some of the topics covered. Press releases and public service announcements (PSAs) were distributed to these and many other media outlets.

Executive Director Olivarez-Huerta and Acting Director Angel Freytez have made presentations on these and other Hispanic/Latino advertising and media resources. They also provided technical assistance for a documentary film.

Media Agenda for 2009—2011

The primary objective of our media agenda for the next two years is to enhance our communication platforms to increase our information dissemination capacity and service to Nebraskans. We seek to further develop our own media outlets and to increase our use of other media avenues. By investing in electronic capacity, we can increase our cost-effectiveness and use those savings to continue outreach to those who do not have access to computer technology. For instance, through new technology such as web conferencing, our participation in national organizations and conferences can be increased without incurring some travel costs and other expenses.

Applying the results of our strategic planning process, we want to implement a new marketing and positioning strategy to publicize the Commission and its services. We also want to continue developing our network of media contacts and resources.

Electronic Media

Our website needs reconstruction, including an updated graphic design, the addition of multimedia elements (flash player, pod-cast, and Skype capability), and content enhancements (sign up box, forums, legislative blogs, online surveys, and e-clips). We would like to incorporate new software for improved e-mail efficiency (Outlook Express), and add voice recognition software.

A Web conferencing system would let us use the site to attend online webinars, conduct weekly e-learning conferences, and conduct online video conferences. We also want to leverage our new TV program by including its content as an electronic publication, Diversity E-News.

Radio

We plan to continue developing and airing radio PSA campaigns. We will produce the second and third seasons of "Community Connection with Sergio Robles and the Mexican American Commission," a monthly live production on Radio Lobo 97.7 FM (Omaha). We want to begin production of "Good Life Radio," a weekly bilingual talk show on KZUM 89.3 FM. We want to establish a "think globally, act locally" radio series.

Television

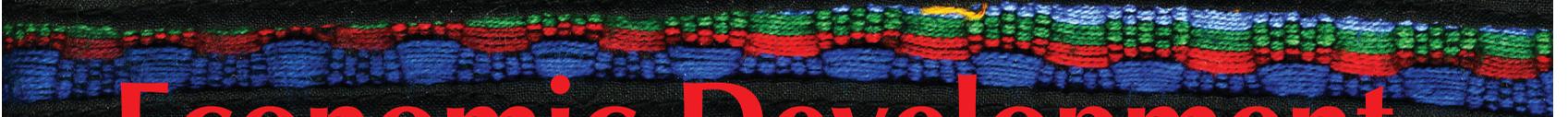
We plan to produce the second and third season of Diversity TV. With the goal of building sustainable outreach, we hope the next two years will see the expansion of Diversity TV across Nebraska. We're exploring the possibility of a new project, adding Diversity TV to Channel 57 (Tu Visión, Omaha). We'd like to purchase editing software to allow for in-house editing and to assist in pre- and post-production for our Diversity TV PSA series on Channel 57. We also want to continue the second part of our project to produce an informational DVD for state Senators.

Print Publications

Our newsletter has served us well, but we would like to create a new design for it. We want to continue establishing new distribution sites (hair salons, supermarkets, banks, mini-stores, etc), and be able to increase printing from 6,000 to 9,000 copies per quarter.



Economic Development



Economic Development Accomplishments

Small business is widely regarded as an agent of change for state and local economies. The economic impact of Hispanic/Latino-owned businesses in Nebraska continues to grow along with the Hispanic/Latino population. By helping our constituents gain access to business development resources, the Commission contributes in a small way to a bigger share of Nebraska's "good life" for all its residents.

BUSINESS TRENDS

An awareness of business trends among Hispanic/Latino-owned businesses may help legislators and others begin to understand the huge economic development potential residing in Nebraska's Hispanic/Latino communities.

Nebraska experienced a 37 percent increase in the number of Hispanic/Latino-owned businesses in the five years from 1997 to 2002. There were 1,437 firms in 1997, with sales and receipts of \$141,000,000. Five years later in 2002, there were 1,966 Hispanic/Latino-owned businesses with sales and receipts of \$434,000,000. That's an increase in sales and receipts of \$293,000,000—a 207 percent growth in five years. As of 2002, Hispanic/Latino-owned Nebraska businesses accounted for up to five percent of all firms in Nebraska. (Source: *US Census Bureau 2002 Survey of Business Owners; 1997 Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises*)

Alberto Salinas appreciates the support and assistance provided by the Mexican American Commission. His newly created magazine, "Mi Gente Latina," is already making a difference in the Latino community of Lincoln.

The United States Hispanic Leadership Institute's (USHLI) 2008 Almanac of Latino Politics says that Nebraska's 207% Hispanic/Latino business growth ranks first in the nation. The report adds detail about the economic impact of Nebraska's Hispanics/Latinos:

In 2002 there were 378 Latino businesses with 2,862 paid employees and an annual payroll of \$63 million. Latino purchasing power in Nebraska was \$2 billion in 2004, and is projected to increase to \$3.3 billion by 2009.

USHLI's Almanac also notes that nearly 40 percent of Nebraska's Hispanic/Latino population is under eighteen years of age. These minors have nearly all of their earning life still ahead of them. Additionally, over 52 percent of Hispanic/Latino households are owner-occupied. (Source: *Almanac of Latino Politics (2008), United States Hispanic Leadership Institute, accessed at: www.uskli.org/research/almanac*)

In 2006, immigrant spending resulted in \$1.6 billion worth of production to Nebraska's economy; this spending generated around 12,000 jobs in the state. If Nebraska were to lose its Central and South American immigrant labor force, total state production would fall by \$11.4 billion, or by about 7.9 percent. If 75 percent of the jobs vacated by immigrant labor were replaced by domestic labor, this would result in \$3.366 billion in lost production and 19,518 jobs would disappear. (Source: *Office of Latino/Latin American Studies (OLLAS) at the University of Omaha, "Nebraska's Immigrant Population: Economic and Fiscal Impacts," published in 2008.*)

BUSINESS SEMINAR

Responding to this growth potential, in November 2008 the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) organized and presented the first seminar in Spanish about how to start a successful business. In this two-hour seminar, thirteen Spanish-speaking attendees learned about tools and resources available to start a business. Marisol Rodriguez, Director of the Lincoln office of the NBDC, said:

"The Mexican American Commission was an excellent partner for NBDC in this event, providing advertising and encouraging Latinos to participate. The Latino community is growing within the state of Nebraska along with its impact on the state's economy; this is why it is important to increase the Latino entrepreneurs' awareness of services available for them. Continuing collaboration and communication among service providers guarantees this flow of information within the Latino community."

NBDC Director Rodriguez further commented: "One of NBDC's clients is the owner of a Mexican restaurant in Lincoln, who started his business in 2005. With the help of the NBDC, the business owner was



able to reduce expenses. This NBDC client has been able to create and maintain an excellent reputation among his customers. His restaurant has become the main preference for catering services and is growing in popularity as a meeting place for state employees and different business owners in the Lincoln area. In spite of the recent economic downturn, the business owner is committed to his enterprise and continues to provide excellent Mexican food to the Lincoln community.”

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The Commission also supports the efforts of the Heartland Latino Leadership Conference (HLLC), which brings companies and individuals together to discuss business leadership, marketing to, and networking with Nebraska’s Hispanic/Latino community. HLLC’s goal is to develop the skills necessary for effective working relationships among community professionals and businesses; scholarships to emerging Hispanic/Latino leaders help achieve this goal. The Commission has served as a sponsor and currently provides a scholarship through the conference.

Economic Development Agenda for 2009—2011

Nebraska’s Hispanic/Latino residents have great potential to add to regional economic growth throughout the state. Much of Nebraska’s Hispanic/Latino population growth is occurring in rural areas, where new businesses are greatly needed. The Commission envisions a dual role in assisting economic development efforts among our constituents: to continue serving as an information and networking resource between entrepreneurs and agencies who can help them; and to explore new avenues for increasing commerce.

In terms of networking, the Commission would like to establish and strengthen relationships with business-oriented organizations such as the NBDC, the Hispanic Chambers of Commerce, and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. We also want to collaborate in developing bilingual, bicultural economic development outreach material to benefit Hispanic/Latino entrepreneurship in Nebraska.

In terms of new programs, the Commission’s economic development agenda for the next two years includes a pilot project and a new strategic alliance.

International Commerce Pilot Project

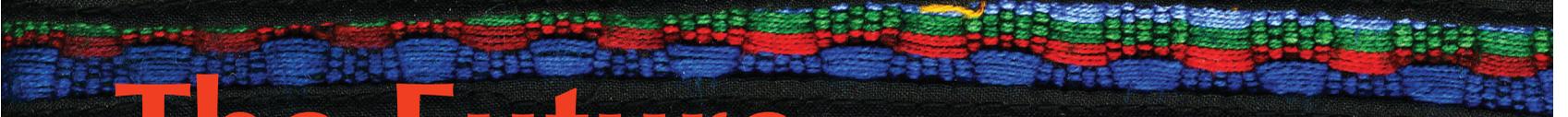
We envision a pilot project that would offer technical assistance to state agencies regarding free trade agreements between the State of Nebraska and Latin American countries. This project is part of our “think globally, act locally” campaign that intends to provide economic solutions to all Nebraskans.

Hispanic Economic Development Initiative

Under this initiative, the Commission would reach out to several key agencies that currently assist businesses. We would establish a strategic alliance with the Center for Rural Affairs to promote the creation of new businesses throughout rural Nebraska. We would also establish a partnership with the Juan Diego Center in Omaha to promote the creation of new commerce and e-commerce businesses. The Commission would provide technical assistance for this program.



The Future



The Future

Nebraska has experienced a 41.7 percent increase in its Hispanic/Latino population from April 2000 to July 2007. There are now more than 134,000 Hispanics/Latinos living in the state. Metropolitan Nebraska (Douglas and Lancaster Counties) experienced a 49.6 percent increase for the period, while Non-Metropolitan Nebraska (all other counties) experienced a 32.6 percent increase. The top ten counties with the largest number of Latino residents are (in order): Douglas, Lancaster, Hall, Sarpy, Scotts Bluff, Madison, Platte, Adams, Saline, and Lincoln. Eight of these top ten counties are classified as rural, meaning the largest town in the county has less than 10,000 residents.

(Source: *Annual Estimates of the Population Sex and Race for Counties (Table 14)*, U.S. Census Bureau, Released 8-7-2008)

Between 1990 and 2006, the Hispanic/Latino population more than doubled in thirty-four states. Nebraska ranked tenth on that list, with a 252.3 percent increase of its Hispanic/Latino population. The city of Omaha ranked thirteenth on a list of cities with population over 250,000 where Hispanic/Latino growth exceeded 275 percent. Omaha had a 312.8 percent increase in Hispanic/Latino population from 1990 to 2006. The Hispanic/Latino population in Nebraska is growing at a rate 20 times faster than the general population from 1990 – 2006, and they account for 49.1 percent of the state's population growth.

(Source: *Almanac of Latino Politics (2008)* (pages 2-11, pages 317-319), *United States Hispanic Leadership Institute*, accessed at: www.uskli.org/research/almanac)

To reach these new residents, our outreach efforts must become more cost-effective and more widespread. Hispanics/Latinos have huge economic growth potential in the businesses they build, the jobs they create, and the money they spend locally on goods and services. Nebraska has a burgeoning Hispanic/Latino population, and the Mexican American Commission needs to grow with the population. We plan to build on our strengths, and focus on moving toward a future that addresses the realities of the population and the socio-cultural shifts Nebraska is experiencing.

Our discussion of the future begins with the vision statement we presented at the beginning of this report. Our vision is:

To empower the Hispanic/Latino community through a fully funded, fully staffed pro-active Mexican American Commission that advocates for and provides services in the areas of education, social, economic, and political opportunities in Nebraska and globally.

Our future actions as a State Commission depend in large measure on the fate of our budget request. If we are fully funded, we hope to achieve the things listed here.

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA:

As a Commission we have a mandate to collect facts and statistics, and to make special studies of conditions and problems pertaining to Hispanics/Latinos in the state. Accordingly, we would like to conduct a new study to define emerging issues affecting Nebraska Hispanics/Latinos. The study would include an update on demographic information, to inform legislators about population and other changes among their Hispanic/Latino constituents. Based on the study, we would propose new legislation to address the issues arising from the report. This will, we hope, broaden the public perception of the Commission as an organization that impacts legislative actions.

EDUCATION AGENDA:

We want to increase participation in educational opportunities and services in communities across the state; develop leadership through educational summits and training opportunities; increase student and parent involvement in the Hispanic/Latino Educational Summit and the Youth Leadership Conference; increase student participation in Commission activities; and publicize scholarship opportunities for student conferences and seminars.

OUTREACH AGENDA:

We also have a mandate to serve as a central agency and advisory board for the mutual exchange of ideas and information on Hispanic/Latino issues. To fulfill this mandate, we want to establish a State-Wide Outreach Program. The goals of this outreach program are consistent with our mandates to serve the needs of Hispanics/Latinos, especially in the fields of education, employment, health, housing, welfare, and recreation.

The State-Wide Outreach Program has the following objectives: increase cultural awareness and understanding; develop and apply leadership skills; develop communication skills to facilitate community involvement; encourage development of volunteers; broaden the education program about Nebraska government; and develop economic development material for Hispanic/Latino entrepreneurs.

This new program would increase our capacity and resources; provide opportunities for Hispanics/Latinos to participate in discussions on community issues; and help us to better assist our constituents. Having our own outreach program would give us more time to tell people about the Commission's events and services, and time for speakers to treat issues more in depth. Based on our own numbers, about 90 percent of individuals served through our current outreach programs know little or no information about a vast majority of state agencies.

We would continue to strengthen and grow current

outreach events (Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration, Binational Teachers Exchange Program, Día de los Muertos, and community-level outreach programs); strengthen existing relationships with agencies; and establish new partnerships with federal, state, and local governmental agencies.

MEDIA AGENDA:

Efforts in the media area would help us fulfill our mandate to keep current on latest developments nationwide, and disseminating information about those studies and programs. We want to enhance our communication platforms to increase our information dissemination capacity, including: updating and reconstructing our website and adding web conferencing capacity; continuing to produce our radio and television programs and purchasing editing software; and redesigning our newsletter, establishing new distribution outlets for it, and increasing the print run from 6,000 to 9,000 copies per issue.

We also want to further develop our own media outlets, increase our use of other media avenues, and implement a new marketing and positioning strategy to publicize the Commission and its services.



From left to right:
Radio Lobo 97.7 FM: Edgar Monsivais (Radio's Program Director), Angel Freytez (MAC) and Sergio Robles (Radio's Dir. Public Relations)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENDA:

We want to assist economic development efforts among our constituents by serving as a networking resource between Hispanic/Latino entrepreneurs and agencies who can help them; and by exploring new avenues for increasing commerce, especially in rural areas. The Commission would like

to establish and strengthen relationships with business-oriented organizations such as the NBDC, the Hispanic Chambers of Commerce, and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. We want to collaborate in developing bilingual, bicultural economic development outreach material to benefit Hispanic/Latino entrepreneurship in Nebraska.

In terms of new economic development programs, our agenda includes a pilot project and a new strategic alliance. Our International Commerce Pilot Project would offer techni-

cal assistance to state agencies regarding free trade agreements between the State of Nebraska and Latin American countries. Under the Hispanic Economic Development Initiative, the Commission would establish a strategic alliance with agencies such as the Center for Rural Affairs and the Juan Diego Center to promote the creation of new businesses and e-commerce businesses throughout Nebraska. The Commission would provide technical assistance for this program.

Conclusion

This biennium report has shown the many ways in which the Mexican American Commission has been active in 2007-2008. The Agenda sections have offered our plans for future events and growth in our capacity to serve. Depending on budget approval for 2009-2011, we hope to bring you news of many more exciting events and activities in our next biennium report. We invite you to celebrate our successes with us, and help us dream of how much more we can achieve together in the future.

We conclude this biennium report with a peek at some early events in 2009, followed by a list of publications available from the Commission. Please contact us if you have any questions, or wish to request information or publications.

2009: OFF TO A GOOD START

Diversity TV:

In honor of Black History Month, Diversity TV covered the state celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This memorable event took place on January 16, 2009 in Lincoln at the State Capitol Rotunda. More than 150 people gathered to celebrate the life and achievements of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Diversity TV filmed and aired the program, "The 2009 Martin Luther King Jr. State Commemoration: Embracing the Rewards and Challenges of the Future" after the event, for those who could not attend in person.



The Asamblea Latina (January 2009):
 From left to right: Rebecca Gonzales, Marty Ramirez,
 Angel Freytez (Speaker), Olga Kanne, Eva Sohl and
 Miguel Carranza.

Outreach: Asamblea Latina:

We are pleased to report that our first outreach event for 2009 occurred on January 24, 2009. Over 60 people gathered in Lincoln for Asamblea Latina, a day-long conference on a number of issues. People came from Fremont, Lincoln, Madison, Norfolk, Omaha, and South Sioux City.

After speeches on building and maintaining unity, a Community Panel interacted with attendees on topics such as education, finance and credit, housing and renter’s rights, language and communication issues, and hate crimes and racial profiling. The afternoon was devoted to a discussion of civic participation and current and future legislation. Speakers addressed local issues, state and federal legislation, and how

to participate in the legislative process, including committee hearings. There were speakers from the community, Nebraska Appleseed, and the Mexican American Commission.

Latino Outreach Consortium Event:

On January 25, 2009 MAC and other Consortium members held an outreach meeting at Dios Es Amor Church in Schuyler, Nebraska. This was a mobile consulate meeting with Guatemalan Consulate General Alfredo Vasquez Rivera. Mr. Rivera presented information to about 140 Guatemalans in attendance. He noted that there is an increasing number of Guatemalan nationals in Omaha and statewide in Nebraska. His visit was sponsored by the Guatemalan Consulate in Denver, Colorado. Publications

Publications

These reports are available through the Mexican American Commission Office:

- Educational Achievement and the Successful Integration of Latinos in Nebraska: A Statistical Profile to Inform Policies and Programs (OLLAS Special Report No. 1).
- The Educational Status of Hispanics in Nebraska: A Statistical Profile, Volumes 1 & 2
- Hispanics in the Nebraska Justice System
- The Influence of Micro and Macro Forces on Agriculture and Migration: A Case Study of Hispanic Meatpackers in West Point, Nebraska
- Report of the Task Force on the Productive Integration of the Immigrant Workforce
- The Integration of the Hispanic/Latino Immigrant Workforce Final Project Report
- Latina Women’s Health in the State of Nebraska
- Latino Directory of Public and Private Services in Nebraska
- Latino Leadership Program for Nebraska: Feasibility Study and Recommendations
- Nebraska 2007: Population, Economy, and Latino Policy Concerns
- Our Treasures: A Celebration of Nebraska’s Mexican Heritage / Nuestros Tesoros: Una Celebración de la Herencia Mexicana de Nebraska
- Successes and Dreams (Sueños y Logros): The Biennium Report of the Mexican American Commission 2007–2008

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