



Pete Ricketts
Governor

STATE OF NEBRASKA

Latino American Commission
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TENTH ANNUAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH STATE COMMEMORATION

LINCOLN – The 10th Annual Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration took place on Friday, October 7, at the Capitol Building in Lincoln, Neb.

The Commemoration, hosted by the Nebraska Latino American Commission (NLAC) was sponsored by McDonald's, Southeast Community College, U.S. Bank, Wells Fargo and community leader Jane Shanahan, began with a ceremony in the Capitol second floor Rotunda at 3:30 p.m. The event observes Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 as Hispanic Heritage Month in Nebraska and recognizes students and community leaders for their role in helping the Latino population.

Six Nebraska students, four community leaders and one non-profit organization were honored for their impact on serving the Latino community.

NLAC Director Dr. Lazaro Spindola served as emcee and welcomed the audience of over 100 people to the Capitol Building. Porfirio Martinez, Deputy Consul representing the Consulate of Mexico, provided Opening Remarks in Spanish sharing the overall influence of Latin America to the United States.

Senator Patty Pansing Brooks (District 28) presented the State Proclamation observing Hispanic Heritage Month in Nebraska. She shared how important it was to be civically engaged by voting, contacting elected officials and running for office.

The Keynote Speaker this year is Griselda Aldrete, President and CEO of Hispanic Professionals of Greater Milwaukee. An alumni of the University of Nebraska-Omaha, Aldrete is a former investigative reporter and criminal justice instructor at Bryant and Stratton College and Concordia University. She is a current proponent of Latinos in corporate business, and serves on many boards promoting Latinos in Milwaukee. She was recently selected as a U.S. Delegate for the British American Project and named one of Wisconsin's top 48 most powerful Latinos.

She told the audience that everyone sitting before her, especially Millennials, had a duty to give back to their community, emphasizing to use their right to vote in November.

This year was the fifth Commemoration where award recipients were nominated by the public. Adrian Sanchez, Chair of the NLAC Board of Directors, presented the four awards: Lisa Guill received the Humanitarian Award for her commitment, leadership and volunteer work for the Latino and immigrant communities of Lincoln; Brenda Romero, Ph.D., Director-Spanish and Interpreting Program at the College of St. Mary in Omaha, received the Inspiration Award for helping Latina/o students succeed and instilling cultural pride; the Latino Employee Network of Union Pacific received the Organization Award for helping the Latino community and students of Omaha; and the Event Award was given to Jose and Linda Garcia of Omaha for educating the public about Dia de los Muertos / Day of the Dead with workshops, classes, exhibits and presentations for many years.



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The event concluded with the recognition of the winners of the Hispanic Heritage Month Essay Contest, which was open to all students in grades 6 to 12. As a theme, students were asked to write about the importance of civic engagement amongst themselves and the Latino community. The essays were judged by a diverse jury of 25 teachers, civil rights activists, and community leaders from across the state.

The first place winners were invited to read their essay to the audience.

Out of 149 entries from across the state, there were six winners in places first through third. The winners in the high school division were, from first through third place: Martin Ruiz of Lexington High School, Iliana Avalos of North Platte High School and Liz Lauby of Lexington High School.

“Certainly the best part about being a young Hispanic who is civically involved is that it’s a learning experience that will help us in the future. Involvement with school, community service, and voting will all be worthier it later. Being a young Hispanic who is involved teaches individuals like me many useful life skills like leadership. Engaging with the community will help me later when I complete college and come back to my hometown. I hope to make changes and give back to the community using what I’ve learned,” wrote Ruiz.

In the middle school division, the winners were, from first through third place: Aaron Kutty of Omaha's Brownell-Talbot Middle School, Jimena Juarez of Lincoln's Mickle Middle School and Anirudh Mazumdar of Lincoln's Lux Middle School.

“I think that civic engagement is relevant and important to Hispanic Heritage Month because everyone, no matter who you are or where you come from, whatever language you speak or what religion you practice, everyone deserves to have a voice in the community that they are a part of,” wrote Kutty.

The first place essays were published on McDonald’s tray liners and are available at each McDonald’s restaurant in the state. Each essay is available in its entirety on the Commission website at www.latinoac.nebraska.gov/.

For more information, please contact the Latino American Commission at 402-471-2791.

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Note: Photos Available.