

LATINO AMERICAN COMMISSION

ESTABLISHED IN 1972 | FALL 2012 NEWSLETTER | WWW.LATINOAC.NEBRASKA.GOV



Mission Statement: The mission of the Latino - American Commission is to serve as a voice in the Nebraska State Government for Latino Americans/ Latinos.

Vision Statement: The vision of the Latino - American Commission is to empower the Latino Community through a pro-active approach to issues that affect their access to educational, political, economical and social opportunities in Nebraska.

2012 Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration

The 6th Annual Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration took place on Friday, October 5, at the Capitol Building in Lincoln, Nebraska.

The Commemoration, sponsored by the Nebraska Latino – American Commission (NLAC), Southeast Community College and Wells Fargo, began with a ceremony in the Capitol second floor Rotunda at 3:30 p.m. where traditional South American music played by Oscar Rios Poirieth welcomed an audience of 300 people.

“This was a widely attended and highly successful Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration,” said Dr. Spindola. “We had students, educators and community leaders recognized from Lincoln, Omaha, Schuyler, Columbus, Lexington and Scottsbluff; we feel that Hispanics across the entire state of Nebraska was represented today.”

Governor Dave Heineman signed the Proclamation marking Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 as Hispanic Heritage Month in Nebraska. Opening Remarks were given by Jorge Ernesto Espejel Montes, Consul of Mexico in Omaha. A special award was given to First Lady Sally Ganem for her many years of service and contribution to education for all Nebraska students in all grade levels.

The Keynote Speaker was Dr. Juan N. Franco, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln (UNL), who emphasized the importance of an education, and the difficulties that can be encountered without it.

“I was born in the middle of nowhere and my father told me in order to make money I needed to get up early, work hard and find oil. Now this is Nebraska, so you may not find oil, but the first two still work,” said Dr. Franco, who is originally from Texas.

This year was the first Commemoration where award recipients were nominated by the public. The Humanitarian Award was given to Jose Soto, Vice President for Access/Equity/Diversity at Southeast Community College for his lifelong dedication to promoting the Latino community. After being nominated by his students, the Inspiration Award went to Dr. Sergio Wals, a political science and ethnic studies assistant professor at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL) for mentoring and raising awareness among issues affecting the Hispanic and im-

migrant community with his students. The Organization Award was granted to Justice for our Neighbors, a non-profit that provides free immigration legal services, education and advocacy to all immigrants. The Event Award went to the organizers of Festival Hispano with the City of Columbus for educating the public-at-large and promoting Hispanic heritage to thousands of people on a large scale.

“I was born in a hard-working family in Mexico City, with a diverse cultural heritage from different regions of Mexico,” said Dr. Sergio Wals to the audience. “My grandmother, the mother of my mother, was illiterate; she couldn’t read or write. My grandfather, the father of my mother, could only finish third grade. My mother had to stop studying, too, so she could get a job and help feed her siblings from a very young age. She was a full-time working Mom. My father also had two to three jobs at a time, so my brother and I could have access to high quality education and to have a better life than theirs. This probably sounds familiar to most of you. You call it the American way. I think there is something more universal to it, but I still love and embrace the label. My story, though short, is already another story of this American dream, and I thank deeply the State of Nebraska for having welcomed me and for letting me live this dream among you.”

The event concluded with the recognition of the winners of the Hispanic Heritage Month Essay Contest, which was open to students in grades 6 to 12 with the theme “My Local Champion,” asking for students to write about an individual who has made them proud of their Hispanic heritage or inspired them with Hispanic culture. The essays were judged by a blind jury of 13 teachers, businessmen, and community leaders from across the state.

Out of 192 entries from 17 schools, the winners in the high school division were, from first through third place: Terrisita Klemm of Scottsbluff High School, Maria F. Hernandez Galeana of Omaha South Magnet High School and Kevin Tobias of Lexington High School.

All of the students attended the ceremony with their families and teachers. The first place winners read their essay to the audience while the “champion” from their essay stood beside them.

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Lazaro Arturo Spindola
NLAC Executive Director

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Staff Assistant

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A Message from the Executive Director

Hello and Feliz Navidad,

By the time you read this we will be approaching the new year, and the supposed end of the world. The entire "end of the world because the Mayan calendar ends" is an example of the lack of knowledge and misunderstandings many people have regarding another culture. While many in the world are worried, those who have actually read about the calendar or are knowledgeable of Mayan culture are looking forward to this historic change in the Mayan calendar cycle, or Baktun. December 21, 2012 marks the end of the 13th Baktun, and the beginning of a new Baktun. I have read that many hotels in Mexico, especially near Mayan pyramids, are full this week just for people of all ethnicities, nationalities, and religions to observe this rare occasion.

This is a cause for celebration, not fear.

The Commission is also entering artistic projects, with our Nuestra Nebraska Photography Exhibit being the first photo exhibit since the 1990s that we have undertaken. Be sure to send us your photographs, it could make it in the exhibit and travel throughout the state for several years. This is the first of several artistic projects we are working on, but just because we are working with art does not mean we are not paying attention to the legislation. We are working on legislation dealing with human trafficking, racial profiling and more. We are ready for January 9, 2013.

It has been a busy year and a great year. We look forward to 2013.

Happy Holidays and have a Happy New Year!

Lazaro Arturo Spindola
Executive Director

NLAC Board of Directors



The NLAC Board of Directors Election of Officers took place at the Nov. 10, 2012 Quarterly Meeting at Creighton University in Omaha. The newly elected officers, seated, are, from left to right: Vice-Chair Chabella Guzman of Scottsbluff, Chair Yolanda Nuncio of Grand Island, and Secretary Chandra Diaz-De Bose of Lincoln. The Commissioners standing are, from left to right: Leticia Rodriguez of Madison, Ramon Otero of Lexington, Gisella Munoz of Bellevue, Jose Santos of Gretna and Ralph Hauke, M.D. of Omaha. Not present is Commissioner Norma de la O of South Sioux City. The officers terms will expire in November 2013.

Open Call For Statewide Latino Photo Exhibit

The Nebraska Latino American Commission in collaboration with Rockbrook Camera invites the youth of Nebraska to participate in the Commission's first statewide photography exhibit.

The exhibit is titled, "Nuestra Nebraska / My Nebraska" and is open to students of all backgrounds and ethnicities currently enrolled in a middle school or high school (grades 6 -12) or currently attending a college or university in Nebraska.

Students are asked to submit photographs that show Latinos in Nebraska in everyday life as family, friends, neighbors, students, athletes, teachers and members of the community. There are many misconceptions and stereotypes about the Latino community and this exhibit will educate the public on the daily life of their Hispanic neighbors. There is a high chance that students have already taken photos that fit the criteria. If a student has a photo taken at a football game, a social gathering such as a birthday party, holiday photos, or just fun pictures taken with friends, they are welcome to submit these photographs to the Commission. Latinos do not have to be the sole ethnic group in the photo; it can also be a multicultural photo with many people.

Entry Requirements:

- Must be submitted in digital format as a JPEG
- Submitted photographs must be 300 dpi resolution or 5400 x 6300, at least a 10 megapixel camera
- Photographs must include Latinos within the image but do not have to be the only ethnicity represented within the photo
- Student must be willing to provide an interview and have their photo taken upon winning
- The student must be currently enrolled in a Nebraska school,

college or university

- Entrants may submit up to three photographs
- The photograph must be taken in Nebraska and taken by the entrant
- Images must be family-friendly: no nudity, offensive imagery or acts of violence

"My Nebraska / Nuestra Nebraska" is not only an opportunity to show the public a glimpse into the Latino community, but is also a way to encourage photography with students and present an opportunity for youth to display their work in museums and art galleries across the state.

Students are asked to send their photographs and a detailed paragraph of 75-100 words explaining why they took this photo and what the image means to them. If a student's photo is selected, they will be interviewed for a biography to accompany their photo in the exhibit. This is a traveling photography exhibit that will be displayed to the public throughout the state for several years in museums, art galleries, public buildings, and cultural centers. The deadline is January 9, 2013, at midnight.

Cash awards will be given for the following placement:

- Grand Prize: Kodak Easy Share Camera
- 1st Prize: \$150
- 2nd Prize: \$75
- 3rd Prize: \$50

To submit photographs or for questions, please contact Jasel Cantu at the Latino-American Commission at (402) 471-2791 or via email at Jasel.Cantu@Nebraska.gov.

NLAC Staff Named Employee of the Year

NLAC is pleased to announce Dora Lima, NLAC Staff Assistant I for the Commission for the past six years, was named an Employee of the Year 2012 by the Nebraska State Government.

Employees and Supervisors/Managers of the Year are nominated by their Agency, Board, or Commission's Director or Board members.

"I am very excited and honored to receive the award," said Lima. "I am thankful to Commissioner Nuncio and Arturo Spindola for nominating me."

Lima's nomination stated:

"Dora has worked for the Commission since 2006. She has worked through three Director's and between those Directors she has been the 'cement that has kept the Commission together'. She has staffed the office when she was the only employee and served the 10 Commissioners for whom she worked. Dora helps the Commission by helping coordinate the quarterly meetings, arranging transportation, reserving hotels, re-



Dora Lima

serving facilities making community contacts and taking the meeting minutes. Dora is bilingual and is able to take calls and listen to concerns from clients that call our office. Dora has many other duties and responsibilities for the Commission, but Dora is important to the Commission because of her commitment to the Commission and to the community that we serve. We are lucky to have her as an employee and she truly deserves to be recognized as our Employee of the Year."

A total of 108 employees were recognized for their professional excellence at a ceremony held on October 24, 2012 in the State Capitol Rotunda.

"We are very proud of Dora," said Director Arturo Spindola. "She has worked very hard and deserves

this distinction."

Honorees receive an award, an Admiralsip, have their photo taken with the Governor, and are invited to attend a reception in their honor at the Governor's Residence immediately following the ceremony.

Hispanic Heritage Month Continued

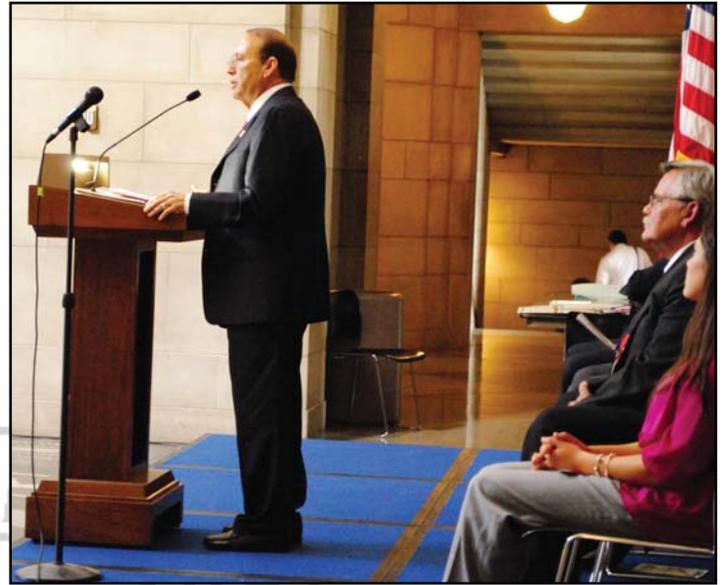
In the middle school division, the winners were, from first through third place: Kai Johnson of Beveridge Magnet Middle School in Omaha, Jessica Valora of Schuyler Middle School and Natasha Guico of Schuyler Middle School. Kai Johnson wrote about mariachi instructor Marcos Mora in his first place winning essay.

NLAC Director Dr. Arturo Spindola gave closing remarks. Various performances were given by local artists including Sangre Azteca, Cecilia Sandoval and her daughter Frida, Alicia Hernandez and the brothers of Sigma Lambda Beta fraternity from UNL at a reception immediately following the ceremony in the Capitol Building's first floor café and courtyard. Latin-American food was served to more than 400 people including homemade desserts offered by the Multicultural Club of North Star High School.

While children danced in brightly colored folklorico and mariachi costumes, Governor Heineman brought First Puppy Snickers to the café to mingle and play with the children.

If you would like to share an idea for the 2013 Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration, or would like to nominate an individual or organization for an award, please call Jasel Cantu at (402) 471-2791 or email Jasel.Cantu@Nebraska.gov.

(Top) Keynote Speaker Dr. Juan N. Franco, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln (UNL), addresses the audience on the importance of an education. (Left) First Lady Sally Ganem meets Jessica Valora and Natasha Guico, the second and third place middle school winners in the Hispanic Heritage Month Essay Contest. (Bottom right) Governor Dave Heineman meets Inspiration Award recipient Dr. Sergio Wals, a UNL political science professor. (Bottom center) Miss Nebraska Junior Sweetheart Emily Hernandez sings the national anthem. (Bottom right) Governor Dave Heineman takes photographs with Terrisita Klemm, high school first place winner in the Hispanic Heritage Month essay contest, along with her teacher Patricia Sulu who was the "champion" in the winning essay.



2012 Hispanic Heritage Month First Place Essays

An Unforgettable Woman

By: Terrisita Klemm, Grade 12, of Scottsbluff High School

Someone who has promoted Hispanic Heritage and gives the image of a leader in the community is Mrs. Pat Sulu. She was the department head for the Spanish department and the third and fourth year Spanish teacher at Scottsbluff. Unfortunately for us, she left and went to a different school district, but she has forever left her mark on the school and its' students. Mrs. Sulu was my teacher, but I have never sat in her class as a member of her classroom. However, she probably would say that I would always be welcomed.

She would always make her presence known, and showed a radiance of example. She would be like that dream person of a good person. Someone who had integrity, responsibility, and stepping out of the line-of-duty to go beyond that. She would show her responsibility through helping out a student or teacher in need. One of the times I remember her showing responsibility was when my teacher was late or absent from class, and she had to deal with the responsibilities of a parent at those moments. She would just show up and help by taking over temporarily. She would sometimes come and help the substitute teacher who usually knew little to no Spanish. She would always be so respectful, and would talk to you as if you are an equal.

Mrs. Sulu's integrity was something that would always blow my mind away. She would always go to community events, at least all the events I went to. I always remember her being there in a corner surrounded by the Spanish-speaking parents translating for them about was being said. She also helped with the TEAMS program, which was designed to help those students who will probably be the first person in their family to go to college and the importance of being college bound. She would always be helping someone.

Mrs. Sulu had done many things that were beyond the line of duty, at least for a teacher. She has done many things, here are a couple of them, one of which happened to be an amendment to the law on the requirements in the Spanish curriculum. She helped the students in her class make culture another one of the huge things that you should be taught in more abundance than what was required at the time. That she and her students were able to amend the law with their teamwork, this is just one of the things, which showed the bonds she formed with her students.

Another thing that my memory recalls was this story, which I thought, was very amazing. I heard this story during my freshman year. She took one of her precious sick days, which teachers only get so much, and took two of her students to the University of Nebraska – Lincoln to make sure that they filled out their applications and everything properly. To think that she would do something, that would be an all day event, so that she could make sure that her students had a bright future. Another moment that moved my class was when she decided to stand up to her bullies. I remember telling her how proud my class was when we heard that, and she told me, "How am I supposed to expect my students to step up to their bullies when I don't do the same?" Those powerful words were something that one can just erase or

My Champion: Marcos Mora

By: Kai Johnson, Grade 8, Beveridge Middle School

The person I would like to present to you is not just a champion, he is an inspiration, a musician, a friend, and he is the one who introduced me to Hispanic heritage and culture. This hero is Marcos Mora, Director of the South Omaha Arts Institutes, and founder of Mariachi Luna Y Sol. A year ago, he invited me to join his mariachi group, Luna Y Sol, and play violin. Since then, I have walked a new path that has led me to the opportunity to learn more about Hispanic culture through one thing I love the most, music.

Marcos Mora...I first knew him as the "Hispanic guy" who helped my elementary school's mariachi program. After a year, I was performing with his mariachi at various locations around Omaha and even other cities in Nebraska. Ever since I joined, he has inspired me to open myself up to the Hispanic heritage, people, and culture. I have learned many new mariachi songs on my violin and I enjoy playing with the group during Hispanic holidays and celebrations such as Cinco de Mayo. Being with Marcos and the mariachi, I have had the opportunity to listen to conversations in Spanish and enjoy authentic Mexican food more often. Thanks to Marcos, I have started to get a new view of the Hispanic culture.

For over fifteen years, Marcos Mora has educated kids about the Hispanic culture through music. Many of the members of Luna Y Sol have been playing with Marcos since they were as young as me. He is in charge of a program named Mariachi Las Estrellitas that teaches kids mariachi music. Aside from his teaching, he helps many businesses, such as helping to create the first Spanish Yellow Pages in Omaha. Marcos is an accomplished musician; he plays bass, vihuela, mandolin, guitarron, a variety of percussion instruments, and is well known for his amazing guitar skills. Performing with Marcos and the mariachi has been a great experience. What are the odds of a middle school student being in a professional mariachi? This one opportunity, that many people do not get the chance to have, has changed me and will continue to keep changing me. I have made friends that I would have never met, and performed at places I would have never imagined. In some ways I have grown up more, such as taking more responsibilities, and I have become a better musician. Thanks to Marcos, I am continuing to learn about Hispanic culture and heritage.

take back after you have been publicly humiliated in the community that has come to think of her as family.

Mrs. Sulu will always be an idol at my school that was so sad to see her go, but the school that has received her was very lucky; that school has gained a magnificent, strong, unforgettable woman. A woman whom you could read about in the future and never get tired of her story. You will just be even more inspired by her every time you read about her because she will not just become a book to you she will become your favorite, unforgettable book that will always be on your mind. Mrs. Sulu has, in the eyes of many, promoted Hispanic Heritage and great futures for all the students that hold her in their heart.

Pieces of Nebraskan Hispanic History



A Cinco de Mayo dance is held at the Terry Carpenter Center in Terrytown, Nebraska in these photographs taken in 1964.

The Mexican population of the Scottsbluff/Gering Valley has strong roots in the community. Many of the families migrated to the area in the 1930's and 1940's with the prospect of work in the agricultural community and continued to come until the mid-1960's.

The families brought aspects of Mexican culture to the Valley leading to the creation of many dance and Mariachi groups. Most community dances such as this one had a local or visiting band perform. Several musical groups such as Los Guadalupanos continue to perform in Scottsbluff today with new members mentored by former Los Guadalupanos musicians.

More than 400 people were in attendance with many wearing traditional dress. A Cinco de Mayo King and Queen were also selected. Cinco de Mayo is still celebrated today with a parade and festivities at the Guadalupe Center in Scottsbluff. The Terry Carpenter Center is now a gym, youth and senior center.



Upcoming Events

- **Holiday: December 24 & 25**
Christmas Eve & Christmas Day
- **Holiday: January 1**
New Year's Day
- **Session: January 9**
Legislative Session Opens
- **Deadline: January 9**
Nuestra Nebraska Photo Exhibit Contest
- **Deadline: January 15**
Dell Scholarship
- **Deadline: January 16**
Gates Millennium Scholarship
- **Event: January 18**
MLK Freedom Breakfast
- **Holiday: January 21**
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

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Latino Education Summit 2012



The Latino Summit was held on Oct. 22, 2012 in Kearney, NE promoting college education. (Above) NLAC Commissioners hold a session on NLAC and the government. (Left) Jani Martinez (standing) tells 600 students about her background and education on the Student Panel. (Below) UNK's Sigma Lambda Gamma Latina sorority held a session and booth on Greek life. (Below left) Gallery of Stars on high school students. (Below right) Information tables.

