



## Welcome from the Chairperson

Victor M. Flores

Each person has but one life to live and somehow feels deeply within him or herself that it might be possible to live a rich, rewarding, and meaningful life. We sense a potential for inner growth, where one seeks to express and fulfill that potential, as opposed to a life that is casual, passive, or wasteful. We ask ourselves, are we a product of our own choice or merely acting out what has been programmed into us? Hopefully we have asked ourselves the tough questions and completed enough self-examination to realize what is important in this life and act upon our own choices on a daily basis.

What is the most important thing in our lives? What can I do to develop my own life or make it better in a way that may enhance the lives of others? In considering these questions, we find the answer to be complex, one necessitating exploration from numerous diverse cultural lenses or paradigms. John Hogan (theoretical biochemist) states “that one of the major limits to knowledge is distortion” and “...the world can deceive us into thinking we understand it when actually we do not.” This is due to the fact that we cannot stand outside the universe and therefore are trapped in understanding our reality.

*“We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”*

*Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

*A Testament of Hope*

In this New Year, I challenge you to look deep within yourself and explore how your reality affects the families you come in contact with on a day by day basis, and how you in turn could challenge our families to live a rich and rewarding existence.

I want to wish you a happy and prosperous New Year. Keep up the good work!

Victor M. Flores  
Hispanic Advisory Committee Chairperson

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News from the Field

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# News from the Office of Latino Services

By: Petra Porras, Chief, Office of Latino Services



*Petra Porras, Chief, Office of Latino Services, addresses participants at last year's 15th Annual Hispanic Family Conference.*

Situated in External Affairs, the Office of Latino Services (OLS) addresses policies and issues related to the implementation and enhancement of statewide service delivery to Latinos. OLS also helps DCFS monitor compliance with the Burgos Consent Decree, which mandates DCFS to provide services in the Spanish language to families who indicate that their primary language and/or preferred mode of communication is Spanish. OLS also assists the department with recruitment of Spanish-speaking foster and adoptive parents and bilingual employees.

Under my direction, OLS has been expanding its role within the department to take in several new endeavors while attending to the traditional areas of its responsibilities. The historic mission of OLS is to monitor service delivery to Hispanic clients to assure maximum utilization of resources and services, advocate on behalf of Hispanic clients, serve as the liaison between the Hispanic Advisory

Committee and the Director's Office, assist in the development of the department's implementation of the Burgos Strategic Plan, promote and monitor the department's recruitment of Hispanic and bilingual employees, assist in the area of public relations and community affairs, advise the department on policy and rule making to ensure culturally sensitive and appropriate service delivery for Latinos, and oversee the development of the Annual Hispanic Family Conference.

More recently, OLS has been involved in a rush of recruitment events at job fairs and conferences around the state, including those in Aurora, Joliet, and Chicago. Of course, OLS was involved in planning and implementing the recent Hispanic Family Conference in Arlington Heights, which drew a record 362 participants. Other routine work has included participation in agency committees such as Integrated Assessment, planning for the spring Caregivers Conference, SACWIS review and PIP, as well as review of various proposals for new programs or positions. Finally, OLS, along with the Affirmative Action Officer, has been involved in reviewing several instances of IDCFS employee concerns regarding irregular job practices.

In the realm of new efforts, OLS has extended itself to other External Affairs programs and sister agencies to leverage the impact the Office has on Latino concerns. One example of this effort is the collaboration with IDHS to assess teen services within four Illinois communities. Another example is the effort that OLS and Daniel Ibarra-Fitzgerald, Assistant to the Director, made to increase attend-

ance at the annual Illinois State Hispanic Employee Conference.

As part of the department of External Affairs, OLS has had a role in several public relations events. OLS recently appeared on cable access channel 21 to promote public awareness of OLS and IDCFS. As a result of the radio programs, in which Director Samuels participated, OLS has been involved in follow up actions. OLS is currently working on a Latino community event for Director Samuels, planned for February.

One of the primary mandates of OLS is to expand the resources serving the Latino community. I am pleased to report that Director Samuels, at the HAC quarterly meeting last September, agreed to open a new slot for a Latino trainer. The job description will be posted and interviews will commence in the near future.

During the holiday season, OLS assisted with a special departmental toy drive for needy children. We were successful in gathering contributions of toys and clothing from corporate sponsors and elected officials. A special "thank you" goes out to OLS staff person Dante Plata, who helped coordinate this drive, in addition to acting as unofficial photographer for "Noticias" and assisting the Communications Department with photos for the D-Net and other venues.

All in all, it has been a busy first six months. I appreciate all the support and leadership that has been given by agency staff and the administration, in particular the Office of External Affairs. I look forward to working with and serving all stakeholders in the days ahead.

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# The Latino Consortium: Meeting the Needs of Latino Children and Families

By: Luis Barrios

In the mid-1990s, a group of eight Chicago private agencies under contract with DCFS to provide child welfare services to Latino children and their families came together to develop a consortium of agencies whose primary interest was to improve the services for Latino families in Cook County.

The Consortium's mission is to provide a holistic array of community-based bilingual and culturally competent social services to Latino children and families, through agencies who have demonstrated mission-based planning in its services to Latino children and families and who have dedicated substantial resources to serving Latino families. The Consortium is also seeking to improve other organizations' provision of culturally competent services of unmet needs.

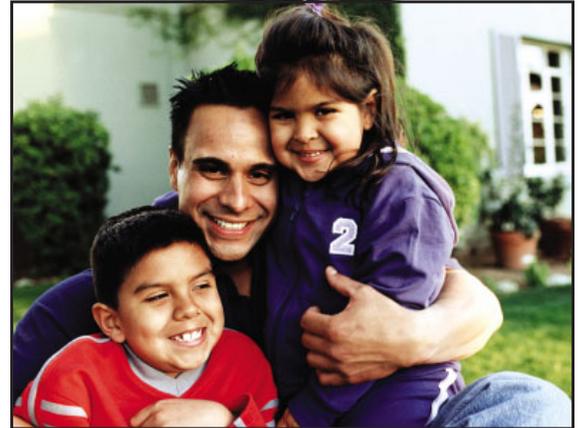
In December 1996, IDCFS proposed a framework for the Latino Consortium model. This model identified the Latino Consortium as the care manager for the Latino children who needed substitute care services with the expectation that eventually, the Latino Consortium will play this role for all Latino children in private agency care. At the present time, the Latino Consortium is meeting the substitute care needs as well as the service needs of Spanish-speaking children and families entering the child welfare system in Cook County, thus fulfilling the Consortium's mission as well as its commitment and obligations to this population.

The Latino Consortium constitutes a forum where Latino child welfare

issues, needs and concerns are being discussed.

Some of our efforts include the following:

- ◆ Reducing the length of stay of Latino children at the emergency shelter facilities by sharing resources among Consortium member agencies and by tracking the placement disruptions within the Consortium, as well as for children being served by non-member agencies and in other DCFS regions.
- ◆ Helping DCFS with the training activities of Spanish-speaking foster families. The Consortium provides the Chicago City Colleges with foster care trainers for Spanish language PRIDE classes and training sites.
- ◆ Assisting DCFS in monitoring and improving its System of Care (SOC) network by ensuring providers are able to respond to Spanish-speaking referrals. This effort yielded a number of recommendations, which have been implemented by DCFS. The changes help improve services, ensure that providers comply with their program plan and that no children or caregivers are rejected or services delayed because of language barriers.
- ◆ Developing an inventory of the number of foster care resources available. The Consortium is able to accurately pinpoint the number



of foster care resources it has available. This information will be useful in tracking availability and utilization of foster homes, and for planning expansion of the present pool of Spanish-speaking foster homes available through the Consortium.

- ◆ Improving communication with and assistance for non-member agencies seeking placement and service resources for their Latino clients.
- ◆ Publication of the 2003 "Hispanic Family Profile" that documents information regarding Latino population based on the U.S. Census reports. The profile is intended to assist in understanding current patterns and recent shifts in the general Latino population. Moreover, Latino data for IDCFS and implications of population shifts for child welfare in Illinois are discussed. It is hoped the profile can be used as a tool for planning and building the capacity of child welfare services to better serve Latino families and children in Illinois.

# 15<sup>th</sup> Annual IDCFS Hispanic Family Conference: The Latino Community: A Common Language, Diverse Cultures

By: Angela Fradagas

On November 13 and 14, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services held its 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Hispanic Family Conference. This year's theme was "The Latino Community: A Common Language, Diverse Cultures" in recognition of the many cultures that comprise the Latino community and the Spanish language that is common among all.

There were close to 400 DCFS and private agency personnel in attendance for the two-day conference. The conference served as a vehicle for child welfare staff to network with peers, participate in discussions with experts on relevant topics, and learn more about the importance of considering all aspects of Latino families and their children as it applies to the child welfare system.

The workshops were specifically developed to address and expand knowledge on Latino issues as they apply to families and children. The conference was sponsored by the department with assistance from the Office of External Affairs/Office of Latino Services, the Hispanic Advisory Committee, the Latino Consortium, and the Division of Clinical Practice and Professional Development.

Director Bryan Samuels opened the conference by thanking all of the participants for their attendance and emphasizing the importance of cultural recognition and diversity. He discussed the need to recognize that every child has a culture. Given the reduced number of cases (19,000) in Illinois, there is greater opportunity to meet the needs of all the children. Director Samuels poignantly empha-

sized educational issues and the need to focus on meeting the needs of older children and preparing them for independence. Overall, a preventative approach and early intervention is key.

The conference workshops, many that focused on the needs of Latino clients, provided information to assist child welfare professionals serve their clients.

Various awards and recognitions were also presented to acknowledge notable contributions made by employees, other professionals, foster parents, and youths. Attendees also had the benefit of listening to two keynote speakers.

Dr. Rosita Marcano, professor for the Department of Educational Administration and Leadership at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, presented a lively and enthusiastic Keynote Address. Dr. Marcano discussed her early childhood, living in a poor Latino community, and the struggles of her parents and family. She spoke of having been negatively labeled early in her educational life, and with the support of her family, being able to surpass early dreams, and create and meet bigger and better ones.

She spoke of "Dream-makers" and "Dream-busters." She emphasized the importance of believing in yourself, your culture and your traditions. She focused on the importance of making a difference wherever you are and by adding value to do the best work possible, no matter what it is. She discussed the importance of giving back to family, and the support derived from both the family and

community; "Nobody should be doing it alone," she proclaimed. Dr. Marcano closed her keynote address emphasizing that giving-up is not a "luxury" that we have, and to "Never, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, give up!"

## 2003 Awards and Recognitions

### **Celeste Peña Community Service Award**

Maria Vidal de Haymes, Ph.D.

### **IDCFS Foster Parent of the Year**

Eddie Sánchez

### **IDCFS Employee of the Year**

Dahlia Roman

### **POS Employee of the Year**

Paula Valencia

### **2003 Bilingual Master of Social Work Graduates**

Rebecca Crnovich

Marisol Davila

David B. Martin

Pedro Mendoza

Arlene Rodriguez

Rafael Serrano

### **Master of Science in Child Development**

Maria Ayala

Awards were also given to the IDCFS Youth of the Year and the IDCFS Adopted Youth of the Year.

# Hispanic Family Conference Photo Album



November 13  
and 14, 2003

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# Office of the Guardian: Incarcerated Youth Project

By: Madeline Gonzalez-Garcia

In April 2002, the DCFS Guardian's Office began monitoring cases of incarcerated youth being charged as adults after the Office of the Inspector General made recommendations to develop procedural protocol regarding the management of this population. The OIG's recommendations were made to former DCFS Director Jess McDonald after a review of individual records, which included interviews with case managers, prior and current foster parents, therapists and other mental health professionals. The OIG found that although cases were staffed, the individuals responsible for the case did not provide appropriate support services for the ward even though each had assigned tasks.

The recommendation from the OIG was that DCFS "develop a protocol to apply to those situations in which there is a genuine possibility that wards may be charged with a crime that would subject the ward to automatic or discretionary transfer to adult court."

The OIG's office made some specific recommendations: a) The Guardian should develop a system to identify those cases in which a ward is accused or seriously suspected of a crime for which, if charged, the case could be transferred to adult court; and b) For those cases, the Guardian should fully familiarize herself with the child and do the following:

- ◆ Determine to whom is the child emotionally tied
- ◆ Determine the limits of the child's ability to make important decisions

- ◆ Become acquainted with the child's mental health history and issues
- ◆ Determine the child's ability to withstand a long wait for trial
- ◆ Determine the child's need for therapy and spiritual or moral guidance

In order to follow through with the OIG's specific recommendations, I, as an employee in the Guardian's office, review case documents that provide a history or description of the youth. Subsequently, I staff the case with the worker and discuss the five areas suggested by the OIG office. I attend some criminal court proceedings to talk with attorneys. I have also met with some youth and their families to discuss the Guardian's concern for their future.

It is not easy to manage cases of youth facing pending adult charges due to the length of time it takes for cases to get settled in Adult Criminal Courts. However, DCFS and case managers must be diligent in our advocacy for these youth, which in many instances is all that is available to them.

Collaborating with attorneys and educating the court about our youth is where we must start. The case managers presence at court and continual contact with the youth expresses a commitment to this young person's future, and also demonstrates to the court the department's commitment. Most of these youth have probably given workers a very difficult time, but they are our responsibility and need our guidance and support, now more than ever

before. Many times the court outcome will not be the preferred one, but the youth will know that they were supported and advocated for, and this could lead the youth to refocus on themselves in a positive manner.

It has been a challenging job because the Adult Criminal Justice System has not been very welcoming and the number of youth facing adult charges is disheartening. However, I have met many admirable advocates for our youth, within DCFS and in the private sector, including some Public Defenders who have done their best in representing our youth. I have also had the pleasure to talk with and meet some of the youth caught up in this system that have touched my heart. It is because of these experiences that I know what I do is important, even though it is difficult. I move ahead in my advocacy for this population, hoping my zeal for this issue will help reduce the apathy toward these youth.

The following is a quote I read, although I have forgotten the author. I believe it describes many of our youth growing up in the child welfare system. I hope it will empower each of you to do the best you can to make our youth feel valued. "One of the things that's missing in the lives of many youth is a meaningful relationship with an adult who cares and really reaches out and shows that young person that he or she is important."

We encourage staff to submit a personal essay that you would like to share. Submit articles for consideration to: Maria Ayala, IDCFS, 2500 Bradley Place, Chicago, IL 60618 or [MAyala@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:MAyala@idcfs.state.il.us).

## Arden Shore: Dedicated to its Mission

By: Dora Maya

It is the mission of Arden Shore to *Rebuild Children's Lives* in a caring community, and after 105 years, Arden Shore remains dedicated to its founding mission. Our bilingual programs and services take a family centered approach and include: Family Centered Group Services; In-Home Counseling; Sexual Abuse Assessment and Evaluations; Mentor services; Intact Family Services; and Relative and Traditional Foster Care and Adoption Services.

**Family Centered Group Services (FCS):** addresses child abuse, domestic violence and family communication and interaction. The primary goal of FCS is to help families communicate better about family violence and help parents understand the effects of domestic violence on children. Families meet weekly for two hours for eight consecutive weeks. One series is conducted in Spanish and one series is conducted in English. The group experience includes dinner, parent support and education, educational and recreational groups for children, and a family craft activity. The goal is to enable families to learn to play together and develop skills to deal with stress, violence, communication, anger management, self-esteem and isolation in order to increase family preservation and support.

**Bilingual In-Home Counseling** provides assessment and family and/or individual counseling. Counseling focuses on strengthening family communication, improving parenting skills, enabling access to community resources, addressing mental health issues, teaching anger management skills, increasing self-esteem and building on existing strengths.

**Sexual Abuse Assessment and Evaluations** provides staff who have expertise in assessing/evaluating children and youth at risk of sexual abuse, are potentially sexually abusing other children, and/or are showing inappropriate or non-developmental signs of sexual behaviors.

**Mentor services** provide mentoring to parents and children. Services are tailored to the needs of the clients and include: parent and child advocacy; assistance in accessing community resources; respite services; attendance at court hearings, school staffings, school activities or social events; addressing personal appearance; providing recreational activities, tutoring and translation.

**Intact Family Services** provides services to ensure the safety and well-being of children by assisting families with meeting minimum parenting standards, stabilizing and supporting families, providing necessary services and implementing timely and appropriate safety plans when necessary. Services include counseling, family advocacy, mentoring and support.

**Foster Care:** Arden Shore has traditional and home of relative foster care for children of all ages in temporary and long-term settings. Services include counseling, educational and case advocacy, 24-hour crisis intervention and in-home monitoring.

All services are available to DCFS families and can be accessed through the DCFS referral process. For more information, contact Carlos Argueta at 847-549-1730.

## Las Octavitas 2004

By: Miriam Mojica

On January 16, the Hispanic Advisory Committee sponsored Las Octavitas—their annual celebration for DCFS bilingual staff—to help promote staff retention. Participants were able to network, socialize and celebrate.

All DCFS bilingual staff were invited and encouraged to bring a guest. The evening included food and drinks, music and dancing, and a raffle. More than 70 bilingual employees and guests attended.

Questionnaires were given to the participants for feedback in an effort to improve future Las Octavitas gatherings. Some of the feedback from this year's event included:

- “Congratulations to all. It was better than last year.”
- “Excellent food, great music, no need to improve.”
- “It was awesome.”
- “It's great to network with the other DCFS staff.”

If you are interested in participating on the planning committee for this annual event, please contact Miriam Mojica at 708-338-6692.



*Angela Fadragas, Association House; Guillermo Torres de Noriega, Consulate General of Mexico; and Jose Garcia, IDCFS enjoy food and fellowship at Las Octavitas.*

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# Lifelink Latino Special Services Program: Caring for Latino Families in the Northern Region

By: Mario Barrales

The Latino Special Services Program (LSSP) was created to assist DCFS and POS agencies ensure that Spanish-speaking children and their families in the Northern Region receive Spanish-speaking and culturally competent services in a timely manner. LSSP clients include placement, intact and residential cases. Additionally, the LSSP actively participates in local resource development, partnerships and specialized trainings. It is comprised of five components: a resource/referral specialist; a foster parent recruiter and developer; an education advocate; a quality assurance specialist; and community development.

## Resource Referral and Linkage

To meet the needs of bilingual children and families, the LSSP team identifies both traditional and non-traditional services that are available in the Northern Region. Once an agency and/or a service provider is identified, it is categorized in the *Northern Region Bilingual Resource Guide*. The guide gives child welfare professionals access to up-to-date information about existing Northern Region bilingual-bicultural resources to deliver to their clients. Resources include: counseling, family preservation, SOCs and SASS; services generally funded through Medicaid such as psychiatric facilities and health care providers; and community services such as daycare, after-school programs, and mental health treatment. The resource guide is available in a hard cover format and online at [www.lifelink.org](http://www.lifelink.org).

**Foster Home Recruitment and Development:** The goal is to recruit and license bilingual-bicultural foster homes. The recruitment specialist

identifies the needs of each county, including determining the areas where foster homes are needed the most. Recruitment strategies include: visiting local businesses and faith and community based organizations, contacting local newspapers and radio stations, and participating in local meetings and events to create awareness in the Latino community about the need for foster homes.

The program also facilitates the development of new and existing foster homes in the Northern Region with training, family events, recognition of existing and new foster parents, and networking between foster parents and agency representatives.

**Educational Advocacy** attempts to ensure that clients access the services the educational system offers to bilingual-bicultural students. This component of the program, in conjunction with local agencies, churches, school districts, and community leaders, also identifies and develops both traditional and non-traditional mentoring, intensive mentoring, tutoring, and educational programs in the Northern Region. The educational resources are also incorporated into the *Northern Region Bilingual Resource Guide*.

The educational advocacy program includes the Family Support Specialist Program, an initiative created in March 2003 to assist eligible families with services like parenting, advocacy, domestic violence, substance abuse, healthcare, hygiene, and budgeting.

The **Quality Assurance and Improvement** component ensures that

subcontracted service providers, professionals, and the LSSP are in compliance with DCFS regulations and deliver comprehensive and appropriate services in a timely manner. The services are evaluated through utilization reviews, client/referral satisfaction surveys, and outcome/goal achievement monitoring. Reports are compiled quarterly and provided to DCFS. Contents of this report include: trends of the Latino culture and population in the Northern Region, provided services and outcomes, and the number of foster homes recruited.

The LSSP also provides assistance and consultation services for Spanish-speaking cases in the Northern Region, including meeting with caseworkers and supervisors, reviewing files, and creating an action plan and/or providing appropriate resource information when needed.

**Community Development:** The LSSP is committed to building relationships with local Northern Region organizations, and agencies to support their development and expansion of services to Latino children and their families. Lifelink LSSP actively participates in and sponsors conferences, workshops, and special events to provide a forum for continuing education and networking. They will continue to pursue partnerships with DCFS staff, other child welfare professionals and POS agencies in order to adapt to the ever-changing needs of Latinos in the Northern Region.

For more information, contact Mario Barrales at 630-521-8261 or visit [www.lifelink.org](http://www.lifelink.org).

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# News from the Field

## Child Welfare in the Hispanic Community

By: Vince Casillas

The first phase of the "Child Welfare in the Hispanic Community" forum took place in Joliet, in the heart of Will County on October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2003. The first ever child welfare event held at the Joliet Renaissance Center could not have actualized without months of planning and coordinating from local agencies, Lifelink and DCFS staff. Over 100 participants began their day with a keynote address from Dr. Jose Sisneros, assistant clinical professor and multi-cultural coordinator at the University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work, who spoke of the need for language and cultural competency in the field of child welfare. The bulk of the day consisted of workshops on Mental Health and Social Services, Immigration, Law Enforcement and Education. The day ended with a question and answer session facilitated by a panel that included, Carmen Alvarez, DCFS; Jorge Gonzalez de la Vega, Mexican Consulate; Captain Tony Jerisha, Joliet Police Department; Lois Nelson, Joliet Spanish Center; and Kenny Martin-Ocasio, Lifelink. The panel generated poignant dialogue about the needs of Latino children and families in the Will county area. A second phase has already been scheduled for October of 2004. Planning began in late January.

## Pregnant and Parenting Teens

By: Asela Paredes

Catholic Charities' Arts of Living Institute is a comprehensive counseling, education and health promotion social service program directed towards resolving a wide array of psychosocial barriers and

providing support to pregnant and parenting adolescents. The program's current site is Roberto Clemente High School. The high school will accept students out of the district if they are pregnant or parenting and wish to engage in services with the Arts of Living program. The clients receive services from the Arts of Living and are enrolled as full-time Clemente students for the rest of their academic curriculum. The program provides health education classes for Chicago Public School credits, individual and family counseling, psycho-educational groups, case management, home visitation, outreach and referral. Master degree level clinicians and a registered nurse staff the program, some of who are bilingual and fluent in Spanish.

The primary goals of the interventions are educational progress and success and maintaining optimum health for the teens and their infants. Some of the program objectives include: improving the psycho-social functioning of the clients and their families; increasing school attendance and decreasing the drop out rate; increasing the client's attendance at prenatal visits; maintaining the infant's immunizations and well-baby visits as recommended; decreasing subsequent births prior to high school graduation; enhancing mother/infant bonding and improving parenting skills; improving life skills; improving coping skills through crisis intervention for expectant mother's experiencing depression, suicidal ideation, domestic violence; or a destabilization of the current living arrangement.

If additional information is needed or you wish to make a referral, call 312-948-3607 or contact Alice Wyatt, program director, at 312-948-3610.

## Family to Family Fall Festival

By: Carol Bean

Licensed foster parents from the greater Humboldt Park community were invited to attend a family event held on October 18, 2003. Invitations were mailed to many of the area licensed families to attend an information forum at Casa Central's community center. Families were enticed to attend by the offering of goodie bags, a raffle, breakfast and lunch, foster parent training credits and childcare and activities for children.

The main objective of the forum was to introduce the foster families to the Family to Family initiative currently being sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. This program is being piloted in the greater Humboldt Park region of Cook Central's Local Area Network (LAN) 67, along with Peoria (LAN 20) and Rock Island (LAN 29).

The Family to Family model promotes a family-centered approach that is neighborhood-based with quality, accessible and culturally sensitive supports and resources. The program strives to shorten the length of time children live in temporary care.

There were over 40 foster parents and 46 children in attendance. The adults viewed an introductory video, participated in a question and answer session and were able to express their needs and concerns. Other events are being planned to help implement the Family to Family program and to encourage active participation from community members. A birth parents forum is being planned for March 2004 to target intact families.

For more information, contact Donna Cain at 773-854-0600.

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## Celebrating El día de los Reyes

By: Mario Barrales



*The Wise Men brought gifts and cheer to participants of the El día de los Reyes celebration.*

On January 6, 2003, Arden Shore, DCFS, and Lifelink sponsored “El día de los Reyes,” the Day of the Kings, or the Wise Men Day celebration. The purpose of the event was to continue strengthening the ties between foster parents, and to provide a forum for them to talk about their experiences.

Foster parents, POS and DCFS personnel shared with children and adults their January 6 traditions. Children learned that the “Wise Men” were the ones who brought presents to the Baby Jesus, thus, they bring the toys to the boys and girls who have been good through the entire year.

On January 5, Latino children write a letter to the wise men, which usually includes a thank you and a gift request. Once the letter is written, it is placed inside their shoes which are placed by the window, under the Christmas tree, and/or by the nativity set, so the Magi can place the present in the shoe. If the present is bigger than the shoe, it is placed next to it. In some places, like Puerto Rico, children get ready to receive gifts by collecting freshly cut grass to put in a shoe box, which is placed under the children’s bed for the Wise Men’s camels to eat.

*El día de Reyes* was celebrated with a “Merienda”, which included delicious

Mexican food, cake, and soft drinks. Adults and children in attendance were given the opportunity to learn more about the Latino traditions.

The event was a success, thanks to the participation of foster parents and their children, Arden Shores, Lifelink and DCFS, who were surprised when the Wise Men – Melchor, Gaspar, and Baltazar – stopped by the party to bring gifts to the children and wish everyone a Happy 2004.

The Lake County Foster Parent meetings occur quarterly. Foster parents and children are welcome to attend. For more information, contact Jean Mani at 847-249-7800.

## Bi-annual African American Advisory Council/Hispanic Advisory Committee Meeting

By: Sylvia Fonseca

The African American Advisory Council and the Hispanic Advisory Committee held joint meetings in May and in December. These joint meetings began over five years ago in the hopes of uniting efforts on issues that greatly impact both communities and to work towards development of resolutions or improvements.

The second joint meeting for 2003 was held on December 17. The Hispanic Advisory Committee hosted the meeting at 2501 W. Bradley Place. The gathering began in the holiday spirit by sharing traditional and non-traditional foods prepared by Hispanic Advisory Committee members.

Honored guests at the luncheon included: Arthur Bishop, Deputy Director, Operations; Jackie Bright, Cook North Program Manager; Jose Candelas, Associate Deputy Director, Operations; Chris McGrath, Cook North Regional Administrator; Bamani Obadele, Deputy Director,

External Affairs; and David West, Chief of African American Services.

After lunch, discussions began on topics that impact both communities. Last December, we formalized the Joint Incarcerated Youth Committee with members from both groups, and have worked closely with Carol Leimux.

This committee has worked diligently to review policy and procedures that are targeted towards this population. The group decided the best plan of action was to develop focus groups for incarcerated youth, youth who have been released from the Department of Corrections, front-line staff, and ultimately Department of Corrections staff. After gathering the data, we can then develop a report and recommendations of what and how policy and procedures should be implemented to ensure the service needs of our incarcerated youth are adequately and uniformly provided. The committee is very pleased to have received the support and approval from Arthur Bishop to begin the focus groups with front-line staff. This committee will remain as a working committee.

Due to early retirement and administrative changes, the two groups decided to form a subcommittee to address the planning and implementation of the African American and Hispanic Family Conferences, to ensure these training opportunities continue to be made available to the staff who provide services to our families and children.

In the past we have also participated in the Relay for Life, in which our two groups have raised thousands of dollars for the American Cancer Society.

We look forward to continuing the collaboration and will meet again in May 2004.

## Southern Region: Building Relationships on Behalf of Latino Children and Families

By: Enrique Howell

There are exciting changes taking place in the Southern Region of the state in the area of Hispanic/Latino relationships, and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is playing a major role.

During the summer of 2003, Judge Wharton, a St. Clair County judge, put together a panel to raise awareness of the growing needs of Hispanic/Latino families in Southern Illinois. The panel consisted of a representative from the French Academy School; Marti Jones, project director for the Southern Immigration Project; and Enrique Howell with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. The panel's discussion was broadcasted on a local radio station and people were allowed to call in, ask questions and become a resource to that community.

The Southern Region is also developing relationships with other local social service agencies so that they can work together to ensure that the region is adequately serving Latino children and their families.

The Southern Region has had a very good relationship with The Violence Prevention Center. When a family comes to their attention, the department has been assisting them in ensuring that the family is safe. Other initiatives are being developed in the Southern Region and we look forward to sharing those with you.

If you have any knowledge of resources in the Southern Region that may assist our Latino clients, contact Enrique Howell at 618-394-2195 or [ehowell@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:ehowell@idcfs.state.il.us).

## What is the Hispanic Advisory Committee?

The Hispanic Advisory Committee (HAC) is a committee that advises the Director regarding issues that the department faces concerning Hispanic families and children and subsequently makes recommendations to resolve these issues. The HAC meets monthly and the Executive Committee meets with the Director on a quarterly basis. Additionally, the HAC meets twice per year with the African-American Advisory Council to address joint issues which impact our communities.

### How are Members appointed?

Individuals who are interested in serving on HAC can nominate themselves or be nominated by someone else. Their immediate supervisor is contacted to ensure the individual will be allowed to participate fully in Committee and Sub-Committee meetings. Current HAC members hold elections for available positions during the February meeting. Terms are two years and members may be re-elected upon completion of their term. The makeup of the membership consists of department staff and private agency staff in accordance with the HAC By-laws.

The HAC consists of the following sub-committees: Youth Services, Employee Issues, Newsletter, and Purchase of Service Agency Issues. Each sub-committee is composed of a chairperson who is responsible for coordinating meetings to address and identify concerns and solutions to issues affecting the Hispanic families and children who fall within the parameters of their sub-committee. The sub-committee reports monthly to the HAC on their progress, and the general committee votes on recommendations made by the sub-

committee. Sub-committee members can request input of non-committee members to assist with projects. The HAC and the African-American Advisory Council jointly developed a sub-committee to address incarcerated youth issues.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Hispanic Advisory Committee, or would like to nominate someone, please contact Sylvia Fonseca at 312-814-6800 or Victor M. Flores at 847-888-7656.

### Hispanic Advisory Committee Members

#### Executive Committee

Victor M. Flores, Chairman  
Sylvia Fonseca, Secretary  
Madeline Gonzalez-Garcia, Chair-Elect

#### Members At-Large

Maria Ayala  
Luis Barrios  
Joseph Becerra  
Luis Carrion  
Angela M. Fadrugas  
Jose Garcia  
Madeline Gonzalez-Garcia  
Enrique Howell  
Kenneth Martin-Ocasio  
Dora Maya  
Miriam Mojica  
Asela Paredes  
Dahlia Roman  
Sergio Vasquez

#### Ex-Officio Members

Carmen Alvarez  
D. Jean Ortega Piron  
Petra Porras

This Newsletter is brought to you by the Hispanic Advisory Committee and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

Submit articles for consideration to:

Maria Ayala

HAC Newsletter Chairperson

IDCFS

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Chicago, Illinois 60618

MAyala@idcfs.state.il.us

## **Special Thanks to the Newsletter Committee**

### **Members:**

Carmen Alvarez, Carol Bean, Angela Fradagas, Emely Nunez, Jose Garcia, Dahlia Roman, and Dante Plata

### **Thanks to:**

Jenny Florent, DCFS Office of Communications

Hispanic Advisory Committee

Noticias

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