



THE WYOMISSING FOUNDATION, INC.

READING AND BERKS HISPANIC CENTER AND LATINO COMMUNITY STUDY



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LATINO COMMUNITY STUDY**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Reading and Berks Hispanic Center and Latino Community Study

*Prepared for the Wyomissing Foundation of Berks County
by Lillian Escobar-Haskins, Alegre Advertising-Research and Demographics*

For more than 30 years the Spanish Speaking Council of Reading and Berks, Inc. has been the principal agency serving the needs of the rapidly growing Hispanic population in the Reading/Berks area. In this ongoing endeavor the Council has experienced both success and failure. During its years of service, the Council's growth and development has occurred in response to problems, crises and demand rather than to that of a strategic plan or long term planning. Consequently, the Council's decision-making and program development has been haphazard resulting in several organizational setbacks.

Current management has stated their primary focus is to strategically plan for maximizing community resources and alliances to more effectively serve the needs of this population. According to the director, "We have come to the realization that the Council cannot possibly have the answer to all the demands we are confronted with. It is our shared vision to create an environment where the Council can forge partnerships with other organizations and maximize on the concept of 'Capitalization of Collaboration'."

This document is a study of the Hispanic Center of Reading and Berks and the role it serves. The study was sponsored by the Wyomissing Foundation of Berks County, Inc., and seeks to address the following:

- How can the Council enhance its capacity as an agent of change?
- How can the Council best meet the needs of their most important stakeholders?
- What roles are realistic for the Council given the realities of nonprofit funding?
- With its small budget and staff, the Council cannot be all things to all people. How should it proceed?

This study presents a profile of the Latino community of Berks County and an analysis of its major issues and concerns. However, it is primarily a study that focuses on the Hispanic Center of Reading and Berks and how this organization can best serve the Latino community.

The Latino community in Berks is primarily concentrated in the city of Reading, which has one of the highest percentages of Latinos of any city in the northeast United States. The Latino population in Reading and Berks has grown dramatically in the last two decades and continues to do so. Estimates indicate that there are at least 31,000 Latinos in the City of Reading and a total of 37,000 in the county. Latinos comprise almost a third of the city's population. The composition of the Latino population in Berks has changed over the last six decades. The first significant group of Latinos to arrive in the area was Puerto Rican migrants who came to work in the mushroom farms. For several decades the Latino population here was primarily Puerto Rican and, although the population was beginning to diversify, in 1980 Puerto Ricans still comprised over 90 percent of the Latino population in the area. In 1980 the balance of the Latino population was comprised of Mexican (2.6%), Cubans (1.7%), and other Hispanics (5.5%). Over the next decade there was an increase in other Latino populations coming to the area and by 1990 the Puerto Rican population was 80.2%. The Mexican population had grown to 10.1%, and other Hispanics increased to 8.7% and the Cuban population now comprised 1.0%. Anecdotal data indicates that the Latino population in Berks County

continues to diversify with the Mexican population maintaining its growth and with a significant influx of persons from the Dominican Republic.

Close to half of the Latino population of Reading requires linguistically appropriate services to assist them through the acculturation process. The data indicates that the language barrier is primarily a first-generation issue. Latinos who are second generation and beyond are predominantly English dominant with a segment of the population with little to no Spanish language fluency. The data also speaks to the stereotype held by segment of the mainstream population that Latinos "don't want to learn English." Latinos are becoming English fluent at a rate comparable to other language minority groups but, due to their influx in such large numbers and the realities of facing a technological rather than an agricultural or industrial era, they cannot be easily absorbed into the workforce. At the same time, instant language fluency is expected by the mainstream population without consideration of the time and process involved.

Educational levels for Latinos aged 25 and over in Reading are dramatically low by comparison to the white and African-American populations. They are also low in comparison to other Latino populations in comparable Pennsylvania communities. In 1990, 67% of the Latino population in Berks had less than a high-school education. When examining Latino subgroups, Mexicans had the lowest educational attainment of any other Latino group. This is not surprising since the majority of this population are coming as migrants to work in the mushroom farms.

The Latino population of Reading is a very young population with a median age of 21.2 in 1990. This is significantly younger than the white population with a median age of 36.5 years. This young population results in the Latino families with younger heads of household and with a significantly higher percentage of households with children. Typically these younger families have more economic pressures and less earning potential placing them socioeconomically at risk. In 1990, 42% of Latino families were living below the poverty level compared to 23% for African-American and 4 percent for white. Department of Public Welfare statistics in the year 2000 indicated that significantly higher levels of poverty among Latino families continues to be a fact. When the poverty data is further broken down by Latino population subgroup, it indicates that poverty is overwhelmingly concentrated within single parent female-headed households. Generally, the median income for Latino married-couple families is four times that of the Latino female-headed households.

An examination of the history of the Latino population related to the growth and development of the Hispanic Center of Reading and Berks indicates a history of significant activism over at least the past four decades among Latinos in the city of Reading. It was Latino activism and leadership in the mid-1960's that brought attention to the serious concerns confronting many Latino families in the area. The activists came together to form the Spanish-speaking Council of Reading and Berks to serve as an advocacy voice for the Latino community. They soon came to realize that more was needed in terms of services to truly help looking of families in need. It was their advocacy that led to the establishment of the Hispanic Center of Reading and Berks. In addition to being the advocate voice of the Latino community of Reading they also took on the responsibility of serving as the board of directors to oversee the management of this new Center. The succeeding decades showed continued growth and development within the Latino community and the emergence of many new faces in leadership positions. It was also a development that included many struggles and controversies of which the Center was often a central element. Over these decades the Center experienced growth but also fiscal, management and programmatic difficulties. Latinos came to the forefront seeking political office and breaking new ground as the first Latino elected officials took their place. Many new Latino groups and organizations emerged within the community. Yet, at the close of the century, and

entering a new millennium with Latinos representing over half of the city of Reading, many Latinos and non-Latinos in Reading and Berks questioned why the Latino community had no representation within the existing political system. Even further, why Latino leadership appeared to be scarce and fragmented and without representation within key sectors of the community. This was especially significant since the Latino population continued to grow with a significant percentage of families confronting dire socioeconomic realities.

The Hispanic Center had come close to the end of the millennium having found itself in serious crisis. In 1997, after two years of unsatisfactory United Way evaluations, they were at risk of being disaffiliated by the United Way of Berks County, a longstanding and loyal funding source. To the Center's and the Council's credit they took unprecedented steps to face this challenge and began a process of a critical evaluation of the Center and its board. During the following two years the Center made dramatic improvements both programmatically and fiscally. Due to the failed housing program the center amassed a large debt. They managed to dispose of the properties, doing away with a vast majority of the debt with only a few loose ends to be addressed in order to completely eliminate the debt from their balance sheet. They conducted an analysis of existing programs and conducted another strategic planning session in 1999. They set policy, goals and objectives to more strategically and responsibly plan the direction and growth of the Center. They established a directive to maximize collaborations with existing community services. They also moved to a new location, 501 Washington Street, from the location they had occupied for seventeen years, which was cramped and in dire need of physical improvement. A year after this move they were able to expand considerably within the facility to provide ample space for all their current programs, including the Senior Center which had been housed at another facility, and to allow for some growth. They also increased and diversified their funding base. In 2000 the financial health of the Hispanic Center appears to be soundest in its history.

Surveys of various target populations that could provide a perspective of community needs and Center services were conducted. The target populations included professionals, key community members, agencies, current and former clients, and mushroom/migrant workers. The following emerged from the professional, key community members and agency surveys:

**Top Problems Latinos in
Reading/Berks Face**

Employment/Economic
Education
Language/Acculturation
Political/Leadership/Community
Crime
Drugs/Alcohol abuse
Discrimination
Housing
Family/Youth Issues

**Services Needed for Latinos in
Reading/Berks**

Community/Political/Leadership Development
Access and Bilingual Services
Education/Youth
Employment Related Services
Language/Acculturation
Mental Health Services
Housing
Transportation
Recreational Activities

The surveys offered a broad perspective on the needs of the community and the positives and negatives of the Center and its services and the role it should play in the community. The client and mushroom worker surveys provided some locally specific needs of this population, such as the need for a Latino supermarket with affordable and fresh foods appropriate to Latino diet and a need for a more effective way to disseminate information on the services available in the community.

The recommendations provided in this study focus on the most critical areas of concern that relate to the development of activities that address not only the short-term issues of survival but the long term impact on the socioeconomic status of Latinos in Reading and Berks. Primary among these recommendations is the redefinition the role of the Hispanic Center for the purpose of maximizing its effectiveness and the development of related collaborative efforts.

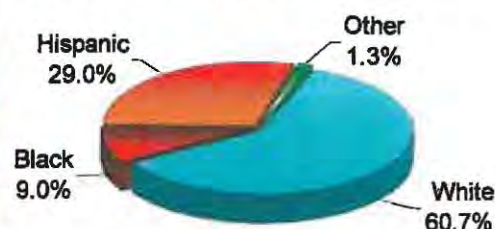
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE*

Reading City's population has one of the highest percentages of Latinos of any city in the northeast United States. The Latino community here has grown dramatically in the last two decades and continues to do so. According to the United States Census, the Latino population in Berks County increased 90.5% between 1980 and 1990 (from 9,013 to 17,174) and estimated a growth rate of 44.5% between 1990 and 1998. A study of Reading School District student demographics indicates that the Census estimated growth rate for the Latino population may be grossly underestimated. The Reading School District Census shows a growth of 90.3% during the comparable 1990-1998 eight-year period and a total growth of 113% for the 1990-2000 decade. By comparison, during the 1980-1990 decade, the general Latino population in Berks increased 90.5% while the student population grew 63.4%. Based on this data if the general Latino population increased in Reading City minimally 113% at a rate comparable to the School District's experience, the current numbers approximate to at least 31,000 in the city and 37,000 total in the County.

POPULATION	1998		1990		% Change
	Reading*	BERKS	Reading	BERKS	
TOTAL	82,906	355,956	78,380	336,523	5.8%
White	57,856	316,101	56,091	307,511	2.8%
African American	8,509	13,125	6,925	10,682	22.9%
Hispanic	27,587	32,682	14,486	17,174	90.3%
Asian and Pacific Islander	1,091	4,888	717	3,211	52.2%
American Indian/Alaska Native	96	469	74	360	30.3%

Source: U.S. Census; Hispanic Projection Based on School District of Reading Demographics

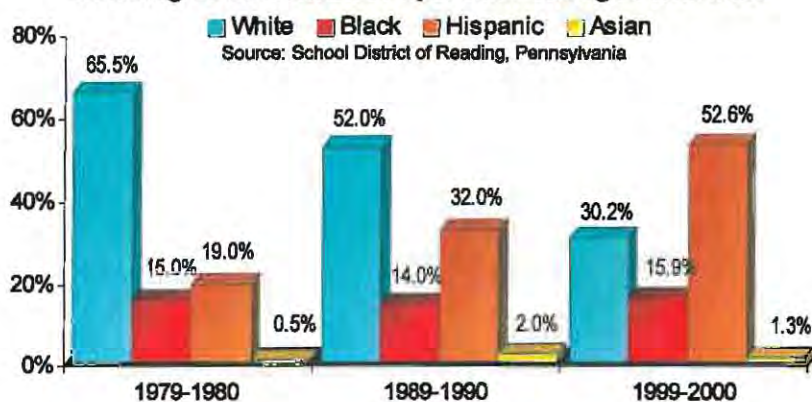
1998 Reading Population Estimate



The Latino population has grown such that it constitutes one-third of the population of the city of Reading, consequently making Reading one of the most densely Latino populated cities in the northeast United States.

Hispanic Student Population Reading School District		
1979-1980	2,330	
1989-1990	3,807	+63.4%
1999-2000	8,097	+112.7%

Reading School District Population Changes 1980-2000



The Latino population in Berks County is disproportionately concentrated in the City of Reading. Many factors contribute to this concentration including access to services, transportation, the availability of housing and a comfort level related to language and cultural support. In addition, past efforts to develop additional low income housing opportunities for this population outside the city have been unsuccessful.

Hispanic Population Distribution 1990



* The charts and graphs in this chapter are based on US Census 1990 data unless otherwise indicated.

Origins

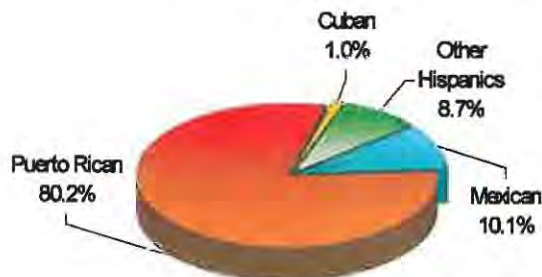
The first Latinos who migrated to Berks County were Puerto Rican. They were agricultural workers to who arrived in the late 1940's through employment secured by the Department of Labor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. These migrants were provided with housing in the employer's camps. Later, many secured year-round work in the mushroom industry and began to bring their families over and settle in the area. As a result of these circumstances, the 1980 U.S. Census indicated that over 90 percent of the Latino population in Reading was Puerto Rican. A decade later, the 1990 census showed the Puerto Rican population comprised 80% of the total Latino population. The largest growth rate occurred within the Mexican population, which grew from 2.6% to 10.1% of the Latino population. Another contributing factor to this change was the arrival in early 1980 of the Mariel Harbor Cuban refugees. With nearby Fort Indiantown Gap being used as a resettlement base for the Cubans, approximately 1000 to 1500 refugees settled in the area. Workers from these two groups replaced the loss of many Puerto Rican workers in the mushroom industry who had moved into unskilled and semiskilled jobs within the local manufacturing and service industries. The Cubans proved to be a transient group that did not remain in the area. Many relocated to Florida. Consequently, the 1990 census showed only a slight increase in that population. Mexicans, however, continued to migrate to the area, finding work in the mushroom industry. Many of these workers began to settle locally in areas outside the camps. The 1986 Immigration Act which allowed agricultural workers in the United States one-year or more to seek work permits helped to ease the transition for many Mexican workers.

The number of Latinos not of Puerto Rican, Mexican or Cuban descent, while still a small percentage of the Latino population nearly tripled in number between 1980 and 1990 from 424 to 1262. A significant portion of the increase were immigrants from the Dominican Republic. The small number (106) of Central American descent were Guatemalan, Nicaraguan or Panamanian, while those of South American heritage were primarily Colombian (221) with Ecuadorians (25) as a distant second. Not included in these figures are the numbers of uncouned and undocumented persons.

1980 Reading Hispanic Population



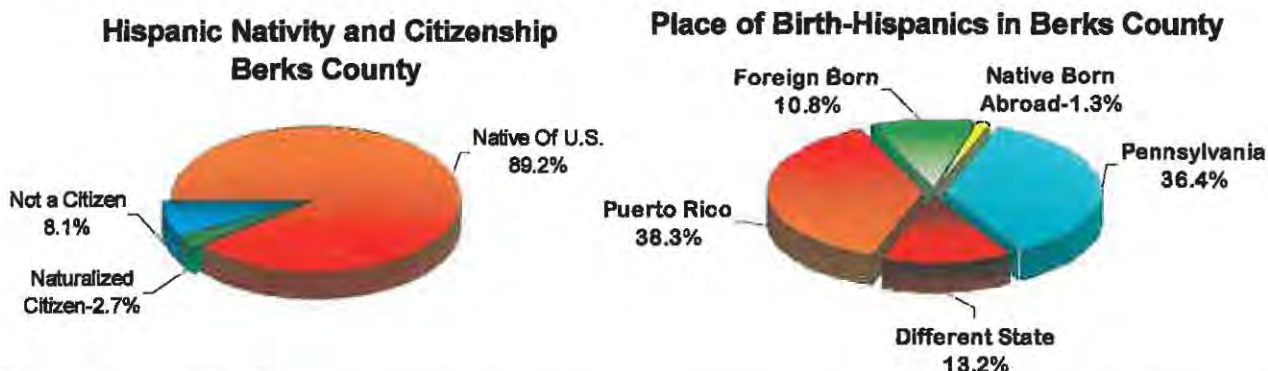
1990 Reading Hispanic Population



Anecdotal data indicates that the Latino population in Berks County has continued to diversify with the Mexican population continuing to grow and with a significant influx of persons from the Dominican Republic. It is expected that the 2000 Census will document this shift in population with the Puerto Rican population estimated to fall within 70%-75%. There is some concern about accuracy due to an undercount among populations who may have significant numbers of undocumented persons or simply the fear of being identified as not being citizens. Anecdotal data and news articles, documenting local industries that have been fined for their use of undocumented workers, indicate there is a small percentage of this population which has migrated to Berks in recent years.

Nativity and Citizenship

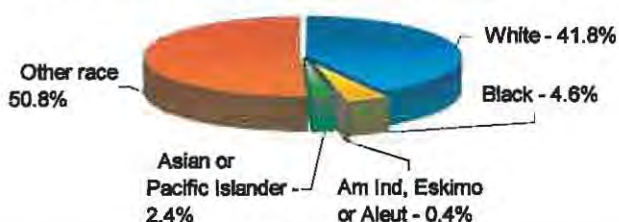
In 1990, 91.9% of Latinos in Berks County were U.S. citizens with over 36% being native Pennsylvanians. While it is estimated that undocumented persons may affect this percentage slightly, it is expected that in the 2000 U.S. Census this figure will not vary considerably. One of the most significant differences among the Latino populations is that Puerto Ricans born in Puerto Rico are naturalized United States citizens at birth. So, while Puerto Ricans born in Puerto Rico are from a culturally and linguistically different part of the United States, they are American citizens by birth and are counted as such in the Census. Migrating from Puerto Rico to Pennsylvania or any other state is equivalent to migrating from one state to another. There are no borders, boundaries or restrictions.



Race and Ethnicity

Latinos are comprised of racially diverse populations and individuals. Therefore, many Latinos face a dilemma when asked to select a race. Consequently, the majority of Latinos select the "other" race category on census and other forms that ask for race identification. More than half of the Latinos in Berks identified their race as "other".

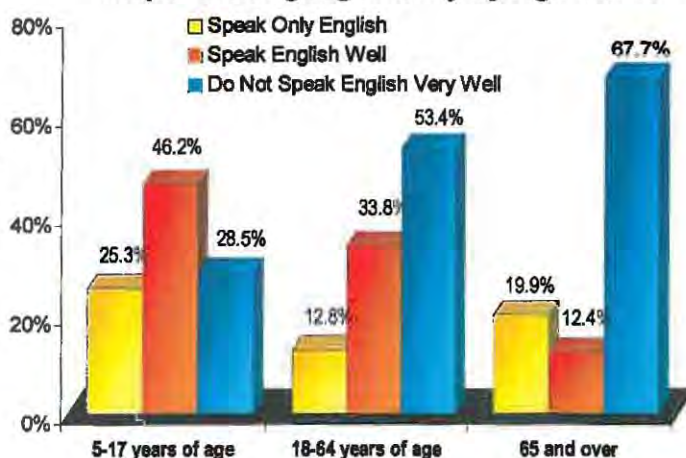
Hispanic Racial Self Identification-Berks



Language Ability

Close to half of the Latino population in Reading requires linguistically appropriate services to assist them through the acculturation process. The data indicates that the language issue is related to birthplace, age and level of acculturation. Language barriers are primarily a first generation issue. The figure below shows generational language differences with a much higher percentage of English language dominance among the young with over 71.5% of 5-17 year olds being English dominant vs. 46.6 of 18-64 year olds and 32.3% of those over age 65.

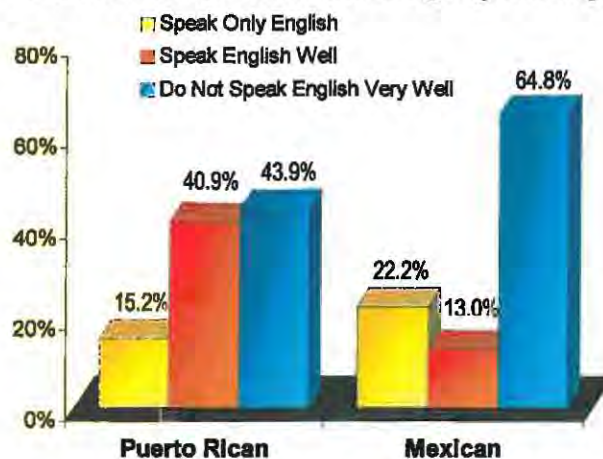
Hispanic Language Ability by Age-Berks



The Puerto Rican and Mexican Language Ability chart represents the language ability of the two largest Latino populations in Berks. The Mexican population represents the majority of Latino migrant workers in the area with a significantly lower dominance of the English language.

The data speaks to the stereotype held by a segment of the mainstream population that Latinos "don't want to learn English." Historically, the issue of language acquisition for most immigrant groups has been generational. First generation adult arrivals typically had limited English language fluency. The development of language fluency was also impacted by age, with younger persons having a greater degree of success in becoming more English language fluent. Latinos are becoming English language fluent at a rate comparable to other language minority groups who have migrated to the United States, but they confront a number of unique issues that impact their transition. Hispanics are migrating in much larger numbers than any other group and face the expectation they should become English-language fluent immediately, without consideration of the time and process involved. Also, this technological age requires more educated and skilled individuals. Employers cannot absorb the unskilled and language limited worker as was done during the agricultural and industrial eras. In addition, there is a lack of understanding and support of bilingual education where children are kept at grade level by teaching subject matter and curriculum in their dominant language while simultaneously developing their English language proficiency. The goal is to transition these students into an all-English environment.

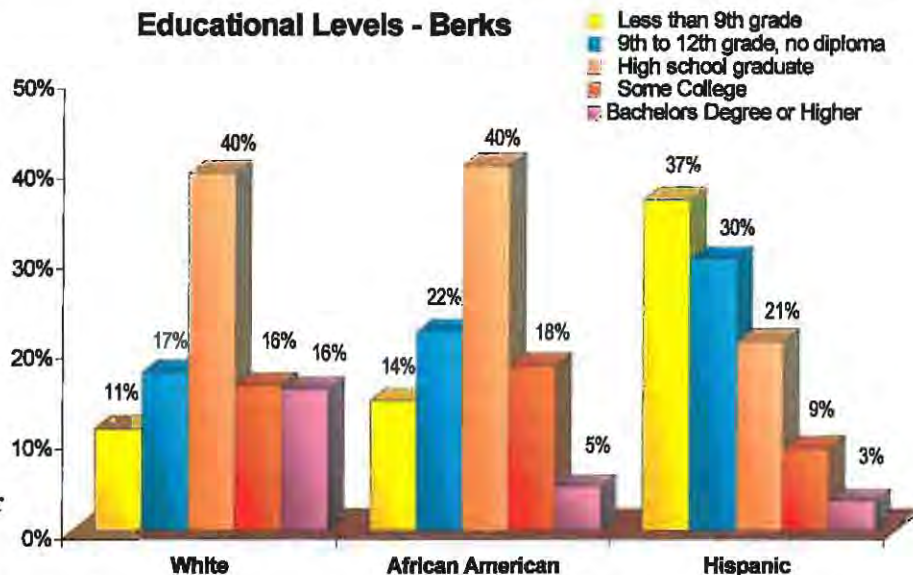
Puerto Rican & Mexican Language Ability

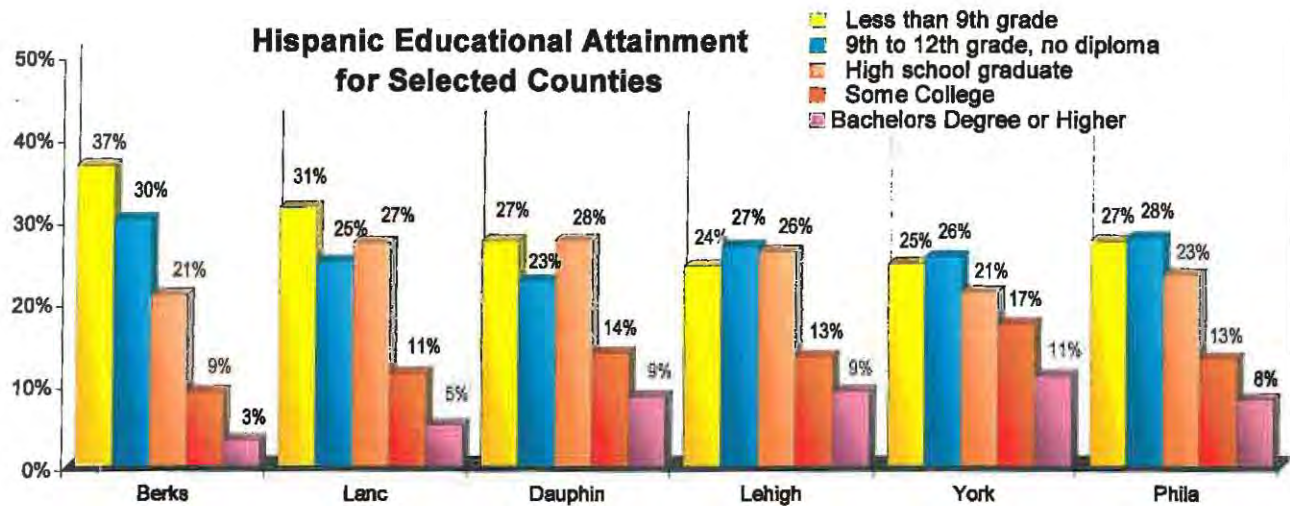


Educational Levels

The educational levels for Latinos age 25 and over in Reading are dramatically low by comparison to the White and African American populations. In 1990, 67% of the Berks Latino population at age 25 and over had less than a high school education compared to 28% of Whites and 36% of African Americans. Both Latino and African American populations have low numbers of persons with a bachelor's degree or higher with 3% of Latinos and 5% of African Americans compared to 16% of Whites. It is likely this educational gap continues to exist and will appear in the 2000 census data. In addition, it is significant to note that the Berks Latino population also has a lower educational level than comparable Latino populations in other Pennsylvania counties. Berks has a higher rate of Latinos with less than a 9th grade education and a lower rate of high school graduates.

Educational Levels - Berks

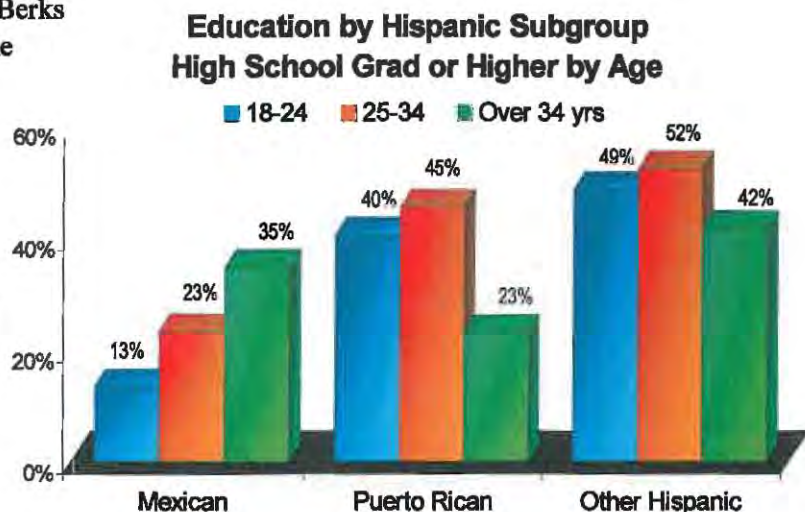




The following tables based on the 1990 Census provide an educational comparison across the above selected counties for Latinos, Whites and African Americans. Educational levels for White and African American populations in Berks are comparable to the other selected counties when comparing the percentage of the population with a high school diploma or higher, although they are on the low end of those with a bachelors or higher. African Americans had approximately half the percentage of college graduates in the other selected counties. The significant cross county gap in educational levels appeared to be specific to the Latino population.

Hispanic	Berks	Lancaster	Dauphin	Lehigh	York	Phila
High School or Higher	33.2%	43.6%	50.0%	48.8%	49.7%	44.7%
Bachelors Degree or Higher	3.3%	5.0%	8.6%	9.2%	11.1%	8.2%
White	Berks	Lancaster	Dauphin	Lehigh	York	Phila
High School or Higher	71.2%	71.5%	79.7%	75.6%	73.2%	68.3%
Bachelors Degree or Higher	15.6%	17.1%	19.9%	19.8%	14.1%	19.0%
African American	Berks	Lancaster	Dauphin	Lehigh	York	Phila
High School or Higher	63.6%	56.6%	66.3%	69.4%	64.7%	60.2%
Bachelors Degree or Higher	4.8%	9.4%	10.2%	12.9%	6.8%	9.1%

In assessing Latino educational needs in Berks County the chart to the right illustrates the educational achievement of the two largest Latino populations in Berks, Puerto Rican and Mexican, with all other Latino subgroups under the other category. The Mexican population generally has the lowest educational level especially among the 18-34 group who are of work age. A significant segment of the Mexican population came to the area as migrant workers to work in the mushroom farms. This population represents a significant segment of this subgroup which has low

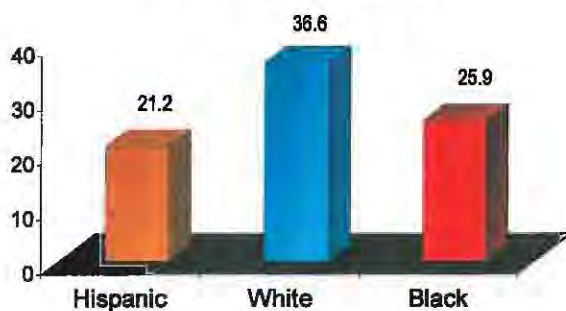


educational levels and little English language fluency. Over 90% of the local mushroom workers and migrant population are of Mexican descent. The Puerto Rican population has higher educational levels among the under 34 segment of the population. The over 34 segment includes those individuals who are first generation and many of the older members of the population who have very low educational levels. Within the other group are Hispanics from various other Latino countries from which a significant segment come as professionals seeking employment. These other groups usually have some background or resources that allow them to come to the United States. This is in contrast to the Mexicans who come via the migrant stream, and the Puerto Rican population, which are citizens by birth and have complete freedom to travel between Puerto Rico and the continental United States. Typically the Puerto Ricans who migrate are seeking employment and a better quality of life. They are often lower socioeconomic.

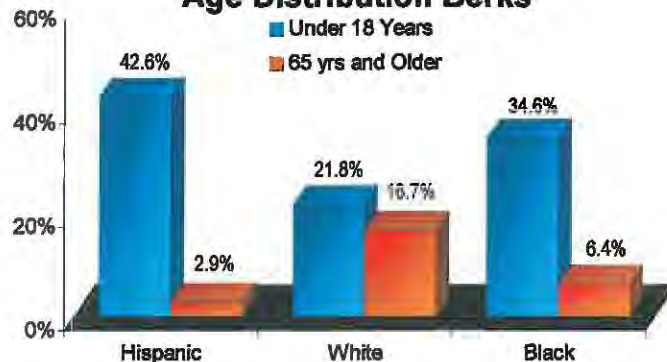
Age and Family Status

The Latino population in Reading is a young population with a median age of 21.2 in 1990. This is significantly younger than the White population whose median age was 36.5. Over 40% of the Latino population in 1990 was under the age of 18. Considering the significantly higher percentage of Latinos under 18 years of age in 1990, it is expected that this significant difference in median age was as true in the year 2000 as in 1990.

Berks Median Age

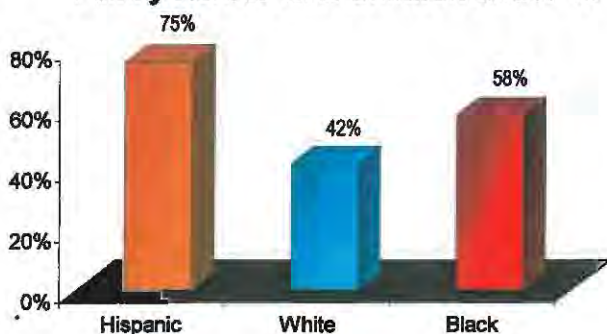


Age Distribution Berks

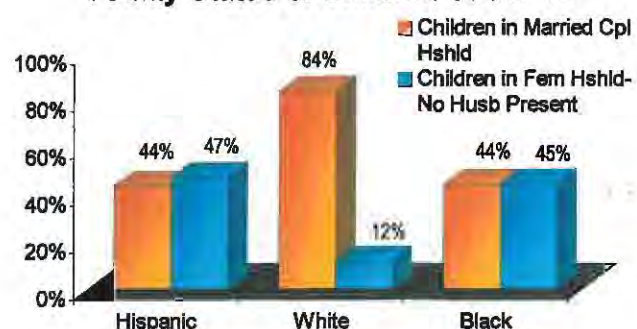


This young population results in Latinos families with younger heads of households and with a significantly higher percentage of children in the household. Typically these younger families have more economic pressures and less earning potential placing them socioeconomically at risk. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, 75% of Latino families were families with children. This was significantly higher than White (42%) or African American families (58%). In addition to the socioeconomic impact of Latino families consisting of primarily young families with children, more than half of Latino children under 18 lived in single-parent female-headed family households, most of which live below the poverty line

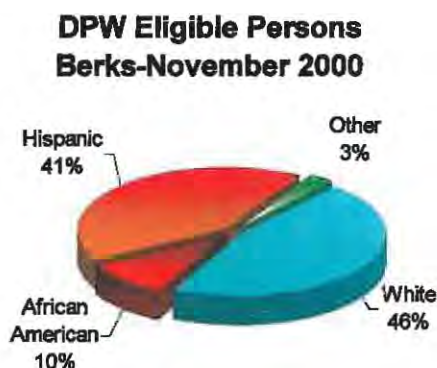
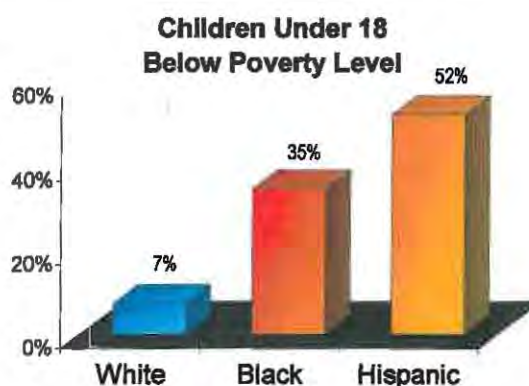
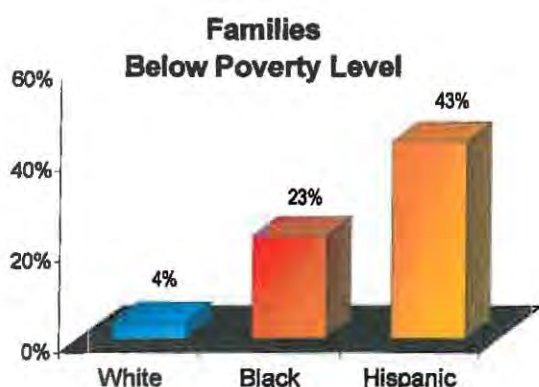
Family Hshlds with Children under 18



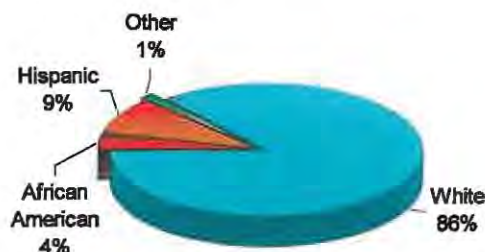
Family Status of Children Under 18



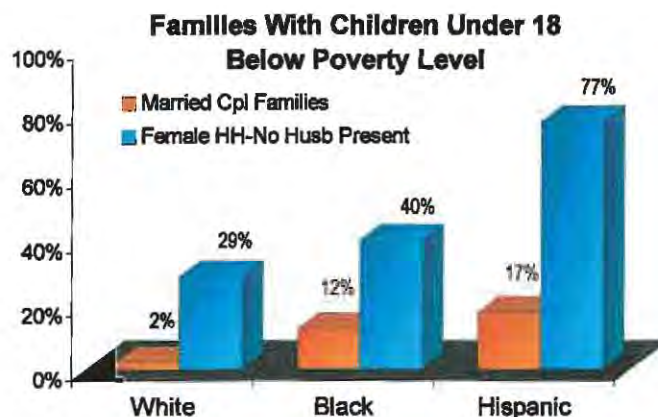
Latino families in Berks have a disproportionately high level of poverty compared to White and African American families. In 1990, 43% of Latino families were below the poverty level compared to 23% of African American and 4% of White families. In 1990 52% of Latino children were living in poverty. Based on 2000 DPW (Department of Public Welfare) statistics it is expected that the significantly high level of poverty among Latino families continues to be a fact. While the Latino population is an estimated 9% of the county population, DPW statistics indicate that Latinos constitute 41% of DPW eligible persons.



1998 Berks Population Estimate

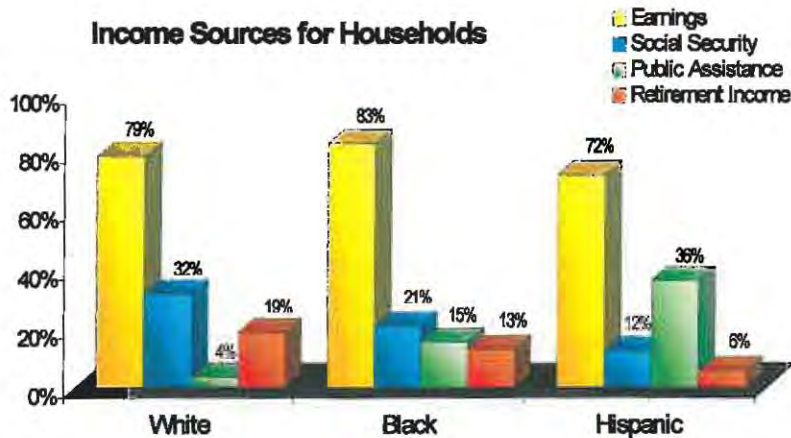


The feminization of poverty is a critical factor in the large percentage of Berks children living in poverty. This is especially true for Latino children. 77% of female single-parent headed households were below the poverty level while married couple households with children had a 17% poverty rate. During 1990-2000 there appears to have been no community factors that would have impacted the situation for the single-parent female-headed households to any significant degree. Therefore, this critical gap is expected to be documented again in the 2000 Census.



Income and Employment

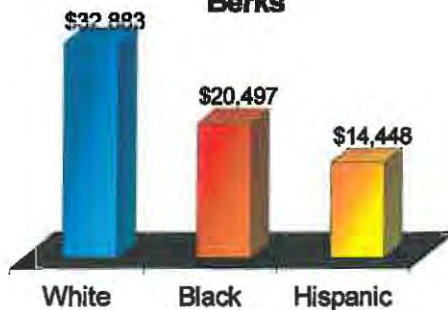
Income Sources for Households



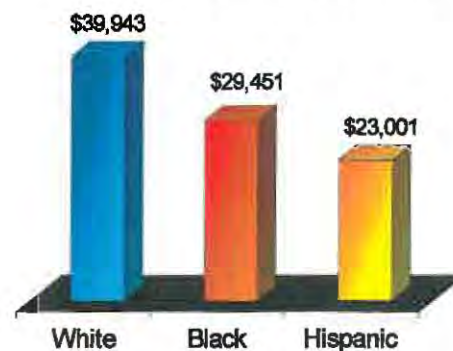
The issue of poverty for Latinos is not just one of unemployment. It is also a result of the significant impact of underemployment and lower earnings. The percent of Latino households with income from earnings is comparable to White and African American households. The overlap in sources of income indicates multiple sources of income in a household. In Latino households the overlap in

earnings and public assistance income is an indication of families who are working but living below poverty level. Latino earnings are only a little more than half of what Whites earn and are \$6,000 less than African American earnings. Although the percentage of Latinos in the work force is comparable to the other populations, their rates of unemployment are higher.

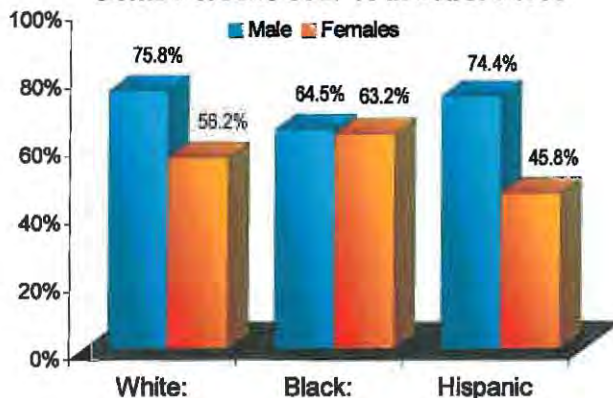
Median Household Income Berks



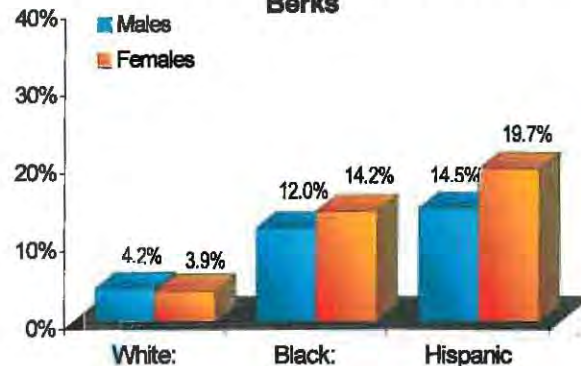
Mean Earnings - Berks



Berks Persons over 16 in Labor Force

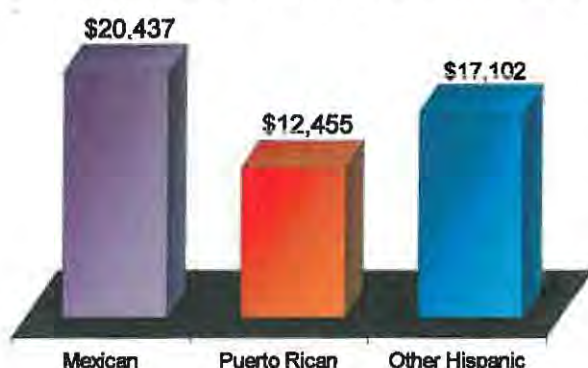


Unemployed Persons in Labor Force Berks



Latino Subgroup Comparisons

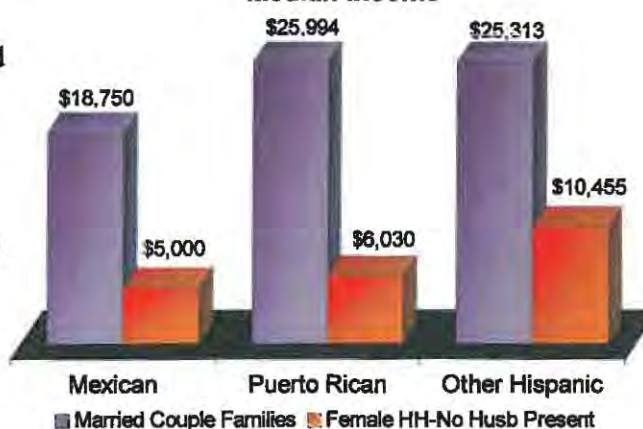
Median Income for Hispanic Households



A comparison of the economic status of local Latino groups, with a focus on the two largest subgroups, indicates that the Puerto Rican population has a significantly higher poverty rate than other Latino populations. It is estimated that currently the Puerto Rican population is approximately 70%-75% of the total Latino population in Berks and the Mexican, approximately 15%. The dynamics involving the reasons for migration and the status of citizenship are critical factors in these socioeconomic differences.

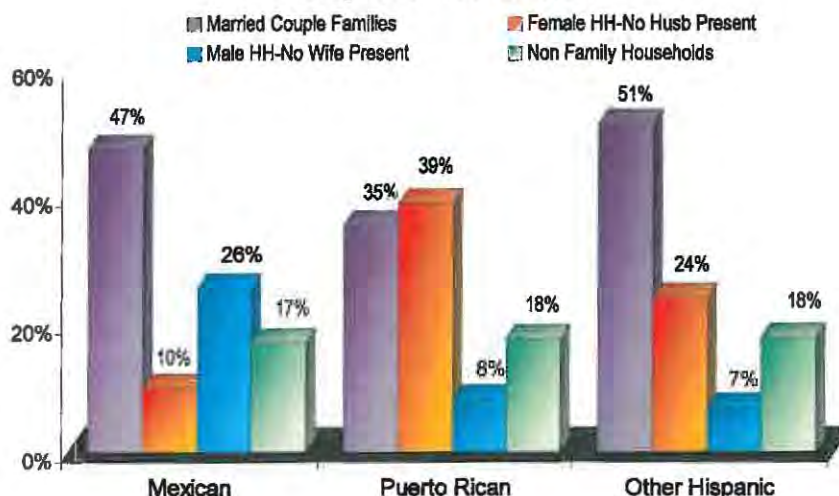
A comparison of different family households demonstrates the huge economic gap between married couple families and single female-headed households. This is especially significant in explaining the economic gap between Puerto Ricans and other Latino groups. It is significant to note that in a comparison of the median income for married couple families, Puerto Rican married couple households have the highest median income, but as a group, the high percentage of single female-headed households below the poverty level contributes significantly to the low median income.

Median Income

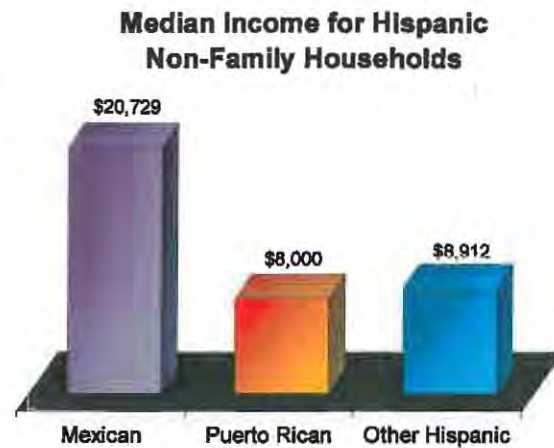


The Mexican population, while having lower median income than Puerto Ricans when comparing married couple families and female-headed households, have a higher overall median income. This is due to several factors related to their migration here, primarily as migrant workers, seeking employment in the mushroom industry. Since they have limitations in their ability to access public assistance due to issues of citizenship and documentation, families can only remain or migrate here if they find work. They have a much higher percentage of male-headed households because many Mexican men migrate here to work in the mushroom industry without wives or children. Male householders with no wife present often have other relatives living with them who are likely to come also seeking work, as opposed to female heads of households who live primarily with minor children.

Hispanic Households



In addition, the household median income is also impacted by the income of non-family households, which are households of persons living alone or with non-relatives only. The Mexican non-family households show a significantly higher median income. This appears to be reflective of households of individuals in the workforce either living alone or with roommates. Anecdotal data indicates that there are very few senior households within the Berks Mexican population. This is in contrast to the Puerto Rican population which has a higher number of seniors living alone on a limited income, many of whom are reflected in the non-family household statistics.



A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Spanish Speaking Council, The Hispanic Center and the Latino Community of Reading and Berks

This historical overview focuses on the history of the Hispanic Center of Reading and Berks and the history of the Reading/Berks Latino community as it relates to the function and goals of the organization. It is not intended to be a comprehensive history of the arrival and growth of the Latino population in Berks. That would encompass a much broader scope than can be covered within the parameters of this study.

The Spanish Speaking Council is Created

Reading's Puerto Rican Civic Association, which today is in its forty-third year, was formed in 1958. It served as a place where Latinos could come together socially and was the only Latino organization representing the interests of the Latino community in Berks. Among its primary goals were to assist Latinos in need and to work to move the community forward. It organized dances and other activities to raise funds to support these goals.

In addition to the Puerto Rican Civic Association, the YMCA was proactively involved in developing services to address some of the needs of the Latino community. As a funded agency, the YMCA was able to provide the kind of direct services the Association could not. To its credit the YMCA was one of the first non-Latino organizations that sought to develop programs to help ease the transition of this growing segment of the population in Reading. It provided Spanish classes to local citizens and organizations that frequently interacted with Latinos, conducted outreach to Latino youth through their Neighborhood Youth Corps, and established a Migrant Center in Muhlenberg in 1966. The Migrant Center, located in the heart of the mushroom industry, provided services and classes such as driver training and ESL, and social activities to the migrant community. The YMCA also supported the organizing efforts of Latinos in Reading by providing meeting space.

The roots of the current Spanish Speaking Council and Hispanic Center of Reading and Berks were established in February 1966. It was then that a meeting of various Latino community members, who were part of the Puerto Rican Civic Association, was held at the YMCA. The meeting was prompted by the desire to form an organization that would be seen as inclusive and representative of the changing Latino population, a population that now included Latinos from a variety of national origins. The result of the meeting was the formation of the Spanish Speaking Council of Reading and Berks County. The YMCA provided the staff assistance of Peter W. Armstrong and Carlos J. Ponce and made ongoing meeting space available for the next 10 years.

According to an article in the Reading Eagle, "The chief concern of the [Spanish Speaking] Council is to work toward a solution of various problems confronting the Spanish-speaking community of Reading. These problems include housing, police protection, education, and [the lack of] job opportunities. It is intended that all the various groups within the Spanish community of Reading are represented on the Council so that it may express the true feelings of the people."

On May 16, 1966, the Council adopted a constitution and officially elected its first group of officers including: Daniel Torres, president; Frank Colon, vice-president; Blanca Torres, secretary, and chairmen of the following subcommittees: Education, Consuelo Jordan; Employment, Carlos J. Ponce; Housing, The Rev. Enrique Fernandez; and Law Enforcement, Miguel Colon. The Council served as an umbrella organization comprised of the Puerto Rican Civic Association, St. Peter's Catholic Church, the Second Reformed Church,

the Spanish Mennonite Church, the Spanish Pentecostal Church, and Latino community at large. The Council resolved not to adopt any political or religious affiliation, or engage in any profit-making activities. Since they were not a funded agency with the ability to provide direct services, the Council saw its role strictly as that of an advocacy organization.

The Council directed its activities towards addressing concerns impacting the Latino community in Berks. Their first event was a collaborative effort with another newly formed group, the Speakers Bureau of the Reading School District. The group met in March 1966 with one hundred Spanish-speaking parents to discuss issues and concerns related to language barriers and its impact on the success or failure of Latino students in the school district. In August they sponsored a weekend discussion to promote better understanding and relations between the city's Spanish-speaking community and city officials, including the Reading Police Department. More than 200 persons attended this event.

The Council also became very involved with issues impacting mushroom workers, the majority of whom were Hispanic. In October they met with mushroom workers and decided it would send representatives to about 25 of the larger mushroom growers to present housing and wage requests and grievances. The action was prompted by an incident involving the alleged mistreatment of a young Puerto Rican mushroom worker. In November the Spanish Council was presented with a copy of the contract made with growers for Puerto Rican agricultural workers by a field representative of the Office of the Division of Migration of the Department of Labor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The following January the Council passed a resolution supporting the Reading YMCA's work with the migrant community. It endorsed the YMCA's migrant workers proposal that called for an appropriation of \$56,000 to finance leadership training and adult education for migrants, and to establish a migrant worker center. Among the Council's other activities in support of migrant workers that winter, they investigated complaints that mushroom growers in the area were not paying workers the federally mandated minimum wage. In April, the Council passed a resolution supporting the Migrant Worker Center in Muhlenberg Township. The resolution was drafted in response to a petition circulated among neighbors in opposition to the Center. The matter was taken before the Human Relations Council of Reading and Berks County.

The Council also sought to develop Spanish language programming on local radio that would provide news, information programs and music in Spanish. They also continued efforts to bridge the gap between Latinos and non-Latinos by sponsoring a community workshop in November 1967 that focused on housing, employment, education, and law enforcement. The guest speaker was Joseph Monserrat, national director of the Migration Division of the Puerto Rican Department of Labor, whose main goal was to assist in the mutual adjustment of Puerto Ricans to communities where they chose to live, and of those communities to the Puerto Rican newcomer.

It also remained very much involved with education and school district issues. They met with Reading School District officials to discuss the difficulties encountered by Spanish-speaking youngsters entering elementary school. They also proclaimed the need for a part-time English teacher for Spanish-speaking students at the secondary educational level and planned the formation of a Parent-Teacher Association to address educational concerns within the Latino community. In April 1968, junior and senior high school students participated in a meeting of the Council's Education Committee to provide insight on the reasons for the high dropout rate of Spanish-speaking students. Latino parents participated in a subsequent meeting to discuss the dropout issue.

That same month the Council provided all public agencies, including police departments and hospitals, with pamphlets explaining the structure of Spanish surnames which often included the mother's maiden name last, a practice which sometimes left non-Latinos confused about family relationships.

Rise and Fall of "The Spanish Center"

In 1968, the Council began to explore the possibility of receiving United Way funding for developing some service programs and for operating expenses. In June the Reading Model Cities Agency gave the Council a seat on their board. There had been some controversy regarding issues of representation and accessibility of Latinos in the local Model Cities program.

In April 1969 the process of establishing the first Hispanic Center began, which was referred to as *The Spanish Center*. The Reading Equal Opportunity Council (EOC) submitted a grant proposal to the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington, D.C. for \$30,000 of which \$12,403 would be used for the proposed Spanish Center. In May it was announced that the Office of Equal Opportunity in Washington, D.C. had granted the EOC \$12,403 to operate a Spanish Center until the end of the year. In June the EOC Planning Committee decided the Spanish Speaking Council should be the advisory board for the planned Spanish Center. They also decided that the EOC director should meet with the president and vice-president of the Council to draw up the qualifications and job descriptions for three staff positions for the center; an executive director and two assistants.

In August the EOC director announced the hiring of the first three employees of the planned Reading Spanish Center: Eligio C. Colon, coordinator; Felicita Rodriguez and Santiago Torres, assistant coordinators. The Center opened at 524 Spruce Street to assist Spanish-speaking residents in their dealings with social service agencies and to provide educational activities. The Center handled more than 900 cases between September and December 1969.

Unfortunately the development of the Spanish Center under the EOC occurred during a period of instability and controversy for the EOC. In November 1969 \$27,000 of the EOC approved funds was designated for the Spanish Center. In December, news came of the complete reorganization of the EOC and the resignation of its executive director. In March 1970, less than seven full months after the Center first opened, it was announced that the EOC would not include the center in its budget proposal for the following year. Over the next few months the EOC conducted an internal reorganization and the Spanish Center's executive director was relegated to the role of EOC liaison to the Spanish-speaking community. Seven years would pass before another center was established.

The Birth of The Hispanic Center

Without the services of the Spanish Center, Aleshire House, a multi-service center, addressed some of the critical needs of Spanish-speaking families until it closed at the end of 1974. During the month of January 1975, the Spanish Council of Reading and Berks urged city council for \$40,000 to reopen Aleshire House as an emergency measure to meet the immediate needs of families. They asserted that nearly a thousand persons were under a hardship without the services of Aleshire. In the meantime the Council sought state financing to establish a multiple social services facility that could deliver unmet services to the Latino community.

In February the Reading Police Department found itself inundated with Spanish-speaking persons seeking aid. With the assistance of the Public Employment Program (PEP) the police added a second Spanish-speaking civilian to its staff, Jesus Centeno. He joined Carlos Melendez who had been attempting to field the growing number of requests for assistance from the community since the closing of Aleshire House.

In April 1975, more than 50 Hispanic community members expressed their frustration to the mayor and city council members concerning the absence of around-the-clock interpreters at the city's hospital and unemployment office, and the need for a housing assistance program for Spanish-speaking individuals. They also said that since the closing of Aleshire House there was no centralized referral agency to attend to the concerns of Hispanic citizens. The group proposed that a center be opened for that purpose. They also expressed their desire for quality educational programs for Hispanic students in the Reading School District.

In November 1976, the Mayor's Policy Advisory Board was informed of a proposal for a federally funded Spanish community referral and information service center. The center would cost \$35,000 budgeted from community development funds for a staff of three. The Minority Services and Representation Committee of the United Way of Berks County recommended the center in a study it prepared. The report cited the upgrading of employment skills, and a source of bilingual and paralegal services as the chief needs of Hispanics. The United Way committee recommended that Hispanic Americans staff the Hispanic Center and that it provide information and referral, employment counseling, escort and interpreter services. In March 1977, the city council approved a new Hispanic Center that would be opened at 339 South Sixth Street. According to Susan B. Hartman, affirmative action/labor compliance officer of Community Development for the city of Reading, the United Way study was the most influential factor in the decision to go ahead with plans for the center.

The establishment of the Hispanic Center received the broad support of local agencies and groups who saw themselves as being able to provide only limited services to this population. They included Kennedy House, EOC, YWCA, YMCA, the Puerto Rican Civic Association, the Puerto Rican Political Club, Pentecostal Hispanic Church, and Central Pennsylvania Legal Services. City Council tentatively approved the center although it was anticipated that not everyone would be pleased with the idea.

Before voting to allocate \$30,000 in community development funds for the establishment of the Hispanic Center, one councilman questioned whether the Center would be a duplication of services provided by other agencies. It was discussed that Kennedy House was the only agency offering anything close, but it was primarily a Catholic Center. According to another city council member "Kennedy House cannot handle the demands upon it by the Spanish community." Councilwoman Karen Miller reiterated that the United Way was attempting to eliminate duplicate services between agencies and had given its assurance that the Hispanic Center would not be a duplication of services. The \$30,000 would finance the Center for one year. After that, the Center would have to find other sources of funding. The Spanish Council of Reading would be assigned to oversee it.

The vote to allocate \$30,000 was unanimous. One month later, in April 1977, the city allocated another \$17,000 in federal funds for a social services worker and a clerk under the Employment Training Act (CETA). In October 1977, the Spanish-speaking Council opened the new Hispanic Center at 339 South Sixth Street with a staff of four. Ligia M. Gomez was named executive director. Ms. Gomez served for the first few months and was replaced by Alma Martinez. The Center offered information, referrals, transportation and interpreters. Its hours of operation were Monday through Friday 8:30 am to 5:00 pm.

A year later, in September 1978, City Council continued its support of the Hispanic Center by allocating another \$15,000. According to the mayor, the Center had been a success because "...the 2,500 clients, agencies and individuals who used the Center in the past year were more than double the number specified in the contract."

In November 1978, at a rally at the local observance of Puerto Rican Week, the Hispanic Center commemorated its first year of existence and issued awards and plaques to its founders and supporters. In

May 1979 the EOC renewed its support of the Hispanic Center with a \$12,000 allocation. Also that year, Ramon E. Crespo replaced Alma Martinez as center director. In March 1980, the Hispanic Center was accepted into the United Way and became eligible for United Way funding.

During 1980, the Spanish Council became involved with the resettlement of Cuban refugees of the Mariel Boatlift who were being processed at Fort Indiantown Gap. The Council held a special public meeting at the Hispanic Center to find sponsors and to solicit donations of clothing, food, housing and other necessities. It was anticipated that hundreds of homeless Cuban refugees might need to be placed with local Hispanic families. Eighty-five persons packed into the Hispanic Center at 227 North Fourth Street to form committees and develop contacts for placement. Upon the arrival of the refugees at Indiantown Gap, Hispanic Center staff and volunteers visited with them bringing clothing, books and toys for the more than the 300 refugees housed there. The center also helped to arrange the sponsorship of a number of these refugees for settlement in the local Reading area.

In the latter part of 1980, EOC and United Way funds were earmarked for adding staff and programming at the Center; expanding its information, referral and bilingual services; for leasing a van for transporting clients to and from appointments; and for providing interpretation services. The Center was also working in conjunction with the United Way to become more efficient in their administration and bookkeeping. They were also exploring the possibility of developing a voter education program to counter the extremely low voter participation within the Latino community.

In 1981 the Center moved to the location that would be their home for the next 17 years; 225 North Fourth Street. In 1982 they joined the Berks County Chamber of Commerce to promote economic development and to form alliances to help promote Hispanic owned businesses in Reading. The Chamber president was agreeable to developing some kind of program to help Hispanics understand what it takes to establish and maintain a business but frowned on the Center director's idea for the establishment of a Hispanic mini-Council within the chamber. Chamber president, Anthony F. Grimm, indicated that the Chamber did not form mini-groups because it expected its members to participate fully in Chamber activities in order to make professional contacts.

In the Spring, the Center received \$2,900 from the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs to participate in structured activities through the summer baseball league. In November 1982 Ramon E. Crespo submitted his resignation as center director to accept a position as public relations officer at the Dorado Hilton Hotel in Puerto Rico. During Crespo's three-year tenure the Center's budget nearly quadrupled, it became a United Way agency, obtained Title 20 Block Grant Funds for Hispanic employment, and started a voter registration program, adding 500 new names to the voter registration rolls in 1982. Mr. Crespo also established the Center's radio and TV programming which still exists today as a tool to educate and bring information to Latinos in Reading. Disappointed, the board refused to accept his resignation, instead granting him a 90-day leave of absence and assigning assistant director, Alfonso Peña Ramos, as acting director. Mr. Peña Ramos remained with the Center until March 1983.

Political Empowerment and Center Leadership

The initial political empowerment efforts of the Center were augmented when the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights held its first assembly at the Reading Area Community College in June 1982.

In May 1983 Marcelino Colon Jr., a Latino born and raised in Reading, was named executive director of the Hispanic Center. In 1983 the Center's budget grew to \$118,000 and the staff to seven employees. The

city, the United Way, and private contributions were the primary sources of support of the Center's budget. In 1983 the Center was providing services, which in addition to the usual information and referral, interpretation and casework services, included immigration processing, employment, education, and ESL classes. With the changing population the number of immigration cases had increased. For example, in December 1983 the Rev. Cesar Segura, who joined the Center in March as employment specialist, reported that he had handled 69 immigration cases and had 19 immigration cases on a waiting list in addition to the employment cases he was handling.

During 1984, Dr. R. Tempest Lowry, the new chief of the emergency care unit of the Reading Community General Hospital, visited the Hispanic Center to meet with a group of Latino community leaders. The purpose of his visit was "...to open a dialogue between the hospital and the Spanish-speaking community (and) to discuss how the hospital's medical treatment of the community can be improved." He stated that he wanted to increase the unit's Spanish-speaking capability by hiring more Spanish-speaking staff. The group, who planned to meet monthly consisted of Center Director Marcelino Colon; Spanish Council President Aurora Dela Vega; Colon's assistant, Gricel Torres; Consuelo Jordan, retired head of the Language Department of Albright College; Raquel Yiengst, director of the Bilingual Education program in the Reading School District; and George Gonzalez, a Reading attorney. The group wanted to educate the Hispanic community about hospital procedures, and hospital employees about Hispanic culture so they would better understand the Hispanics they were interacting with.

Center director Colon also viewed political empowerment as a key objective in the progress of the Latino community. He expressed his interest in continuing to register Latinos to vote and cited ongoing voter registration as key to electing Hispanics to decision-making political office. In June 1984, Colon participated in the formation of the Spanish Political Association (SPA) with Reading attorney George A. Gonzalez as president. The purpose of the group was to try and rouse the Latino community into political action. According to the group, the Latino community was growing by leaps and bounds and represented a significant percentage of the city's population yet "...everywhere you look the first thing that hits you between the eyes is the absence of Hispanic leaders--in government, hospitals, schools, business, and industry. The Hispanic community has tremendous power which has not been properly used." The group's objectives included registering more Hispanic voters and supporting political candidates sympathetic to their issues regardless of party affiliation. In August 1984 the local GOP sponsored a rally on Penn Square aimed at building an alliance with the Latino Community. They brought in a Latino from the Reagan White House staff as a speaker. A number of local Latino leaders in attendance voiced their opinions that many of the administration's policies were contrary to the interests of the Latino population.

The First Latino Elected Official

The following year the SPA mobilized to register voters and to support the Center director Marcelino Colon who decided to run for school board, a position he had held for a year and a half since having been appointed to fill the post vacated by City Councilman Thomas A. Loeper. In May Marcelino lost the election by an extremely small margin--10 votes. Only the top four candidates would go on to the general election and he came in fifth. An analysis of the election showed that he was able to muster considerable support among the non-Hispanic community. He won in the northern part of the city and in sectors south of Penn St. but lost in areas with large numbers of blue-collar workers of Polish, Eastern European, and Italian backgrounds. According to Henry Lessig, Colon's campaign manager, those who most heavily voted against Colon were from neighborhoods adjacent to those with heavy concentrations of Latinos who might have felt most threatened by the encroachment of Spanish-speaking people into these working class city neighborhoods.

Hispanics, at the time, were concentrated in the southwest of Reading. Marcelino lost most heavily in the southeast part of the city. While inroads were made by the SPA with the registration of more than fifteen hundred new Latino voters, when primary day arrived, many of those registered in areas identified as Hispanic precincts did not turn out to vote. It appeared that much more needed to be done in the area of voter education. Marcelino remained optimistic after the primary stating they had made progress despite the loss and that he would definitely run again. His opportunity came sooner than expected. By the time of the general election circumstances had changed. One of four Democrats vying for the school board chose not to run for personal reasons. This qualified Marcelino to fill the fourth slot on the ballot. He won in November and became the first Latino elected official in the City of Reading.

In 1984 attention focused on the first issue the original Council attempted to tackle two decades before -- the conditions confronting mushroom workers. A major article in the Philadelphia Inquirer reported on what they described as "the longstanding deplorable conditions in the [mushroom] camps." According to the article, "Those in the Pennsylvania legislature who voted for the Seasonal Farm Labor Act of 1978 thought the law had finally put an end to longstanding deplorable conditions in the camps... But six years later, conditions in scores of mushroom camps in Chester and Berks counties remain squalid by anyone's description -- even the growers." In May, a coalition of Hispanic advocacy groups sued the Department of Environmental Resources in Commonwealth Court, alleging a conspiracy between the department and the mushroom growers, and seeking a court order compelling DER to conduct inspections. The conditions in the mushroom camps would be a recurring concern of the Council and other groups. Throughout the next decade the conditions for these workers would require continued vigilance and advocacy.

In 1986 there was another transition of leadership at the Hispanic Center when Marcelino Colon submitted his resignation as executive director in May 1986 to accept a position with CNA Insurance effective June 30. The Spanish-speaking Council and the Center's board of directors offered Colon an additional \$10,000 in an effort to have him reconsider his resignation. Colon declined but agreed to serve on the Spanish-speaking Council board of directors. He indicated that he would be willing to help select, train, and work with a new executive director. Mr. Colon indicated he was proud of some of the accomplishments made during his tenure, in particular the Employment and Training Placement Program and the Center's involvement in voter education in the Hispanic community.

Within a month the Spanish-speaking Council had selected the Hispanic Center's next executive director, Wilfredo Seda. A Lancaster resident, he was selected by a unanimous vote and was given a two-year contract. Seda had previously served in a consulting capacity with the Center and had also come to know the Reading Community as producer and host of a regionally broadcast TV program from Lancaster's WGAL-TV called "Our Hispanic Community." From 1974 to 1980 he also served as associate director of the Spanish American Civic Association in Lancaster. Seda indicated that he considered education and economic development the key areas in the development of the Latino community.

A Reading Eagle article in October 1986 provided a case study that exemplified the value of the work of the Hispanic Center. The article offered a profile of how the Center made a significant difference in the life of a young single parent of three children, two of whom were handicapped. She was in the midst of a divorce, had relocated to Reading and had little command of the English language. The Center assisted her through numerous crisis situations. They helped her maneuver through the system so she would receive the services she and her children needed, assisted her through her other crises, and eventually through the process whereby she completed her education, received employment training and became a dental assistant. The article clearly demonstrated the success and value of the Hispanic Center and its staff.

Community Attention to Rapid Growth of Latino Population

In November 1986 the rapid growth of the Latino community and its consequences was explored through a five-part series in the Reading Eagle. The series began on a negative note with Part 1 entitled "Growth Raises Problems: Reading urged to cope now with influx of Hispanics." The article began on page 1 and continued on page 8 with the banner "Reading faces problems with Hispanic growth." Dr. Thomas Sanelli, a Kutztown University history professor, referred to the growth of the Latino population in Reading as a "festering sore that someone should address." Dr. Sanelli, according to the article, prepared a study on the movement of Hispanics into Reading, Allentown, and Bethlehem. In addition to a litany of the many problems associated with the growth of the Latino population in Reading, Sanelli described Latinos in Reading as being dependent on government programs, explaining that many of the problems of the Hispanics were due to a lack of leadership, and urged them to rise up and help themselves.

Part 2 presented a different perspective. It profiled two Puerto Rican women who were among the earliest arrivals to the area. Consuelo Jordan arrived in 1945 and Dr. Raquel Yiengst in 1953. These were well-educated professional women from upper class Puerto Rican homes. Their perspective of the problems confronting Latinos in Reading and their first-hand experience in the Latino community was different from that of Dr. Sanelli. The third part of the series portrayed a hardworking, church-going, tight-knit Puerto Rican family representative of many working class Latino families in Reading and the obstacles they confronted because of the stereotypical view of Latinos. One of the major obstacles was the discrimination they confronted when attempting to buy a home and the hostility they faced from neighbors when they eventually moved into an all white community. Jordan, Dr. Yiengst and the Torres family all became involved in giving back to their community and in helping other newly arrived Latinos make the adjustment to life in Reading. Dr. Yiengst would be responsible for the creation and development of the Reading School District's Bilingual Education/ESL programs.

The fourth part of the series presented the efforts of the school districts to address the cultural and language barriers in the education of Latino students. The final article attempted to present the cultural differences and barriers that affect Latino adjustment to the mainstream. It focused on the special situation of Puerto Ricans, American citizens by birth who come from a linguistically and culturally different part of the United States.

On November 3 there was a follow-up to the five part series entitled "Hispanic leadership overturning." with Wilfredo Seda, executive director of the Hispanic Center; Lester Ortiz, president of the Spanish Political Association of Berks County; and Geraldina Sepulveda, president of the Hispanic Council, offering their comments on the series. While the trio acknowledged the dire socioeconomic statistics and the problems confronting Latinos where many were at the lower end of the economic ladder, they stressed that the positive aspects of the more than 20,000 Hispanics in the area far outweighed the negatives. They expressed the belief that there was a very pro-active Hispanic leadership involved in efforts to promote progress and development. They challenged Dr. Sanelli's statement that there was no Hispanic middle-class. On the contrary, they stated, there was a significant Hispanic middle class who were contributing to the benefit of their community. They pointed to the many efforts over the past decades and the establishment of the Hispanic Center, which promoted progress and was helping in the transition of Latinos into the mainstream.

On November 27, 1986, another article called attention to the increasing number of Hispanic youngsters referred to the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office. The Juvenile Probation Office was collaborating with the Hispanic Center to develop a program to work more effectively with Spanish-speaking youth. They applied for a \$65,000 grant from the State Commission on Crime and Juvenile Delinquency to fund the

program in its first year. The program would use Spanish-speaking paraprofessional social workers. Indicators showed a significant rise in the number of Hispanic youths referred between 1980 and 1985. In 1980 Hispanics were 16 percent of caseloads and by 1985 that figure rose to 24.5 percent. Consequently, Berks County led the state in the percentage of Hispanic juvenile delinquency from 1980 to 1984.

In 1987, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service began to allow undocumented persons to apply for amnesty. The Center worked with the Catholic Social Agency who were named the "...qualified designated entity..." to process applications for Berks, Lehigh, Carbon, Schuylkill, and Northampton Counties. While there were no hard numbers available, Wilfredo Seda estimated that 1000 to 1500 persons locally may be eligible for amnesty, many of them agricultural workers working at the local mushroom farms.

Ramon E. Crespo, former director of the Hispanic Center, returned to Berks County from Puerto Rico after serving four years as administrator of Social Action of Puerto Rico, an anti-poverty agency. He was now working as an auditor for Meridian Bank and had been appointed to the board of the Economic Council of Berks County.

In the meanwhile, executive director Wilfredo Seda expanded the Center's role to include housing rehabilitation. On July 15, 1987 the city council agreed to assist the Hispanic Center's Spanish-speaking Council in obtaining more than \$167,000 in public funds for the housing rehabilitation program the agency hoped to initiate. The program was aimed at renovating 12 apartment units within a three-block radius of the Center.

On August 24, 1987, the Reading Eagle lifestyle section highlighted the work of the Berks Campus of Penn State University specific to the Hispanic community in Reading. Many of the efforts had been conducted in collaboration with other institutions and organizations in the Reading area including the Hispanic Center. Their efforts included:

- the development of a minority small-business assistance center located at the Hispanic Center;
- establishing a one-credit course on Hispanic culture for people who live or work with Hispanics;
- college night, with Penn State and other area colleges, at the Hispanic Center for prospective students and their parents;
- securing several thousand dollars of financial aid for Latino students at the Berks Campus;
- developing a program at Southwest Junior High School to help raise the educational aspirations of Hispanic students;
- a television production, "The Impossible Dream" portraying the development and aspirations of the city's Spanish-speaking community;
- the Minority Advanced Placement Program targeting students in their junior and senior years for an eight-week program on how to prepare for college.

Controversy/Transitions in Center Leadership/Senior Center Opens

In September 1987, Wilfredo Seda announced his resignation as executive director of the Hispanic Center to accept the position of executive director of the Governor's Commission on Latino Affairs. Wilfredo had served 14 months as executive director of the Center.

In December the Spanish-speaking Council announced their selection of Dr. Ricardo Garcia-Rodriguez as executive director of the Hispanic Center. Dr. Garcia-Rodriguez came with outstanding credentials--a master's degree from Harvard University and two doctorates, one from Penn State University. The Council stated that

they needed someone with the skills to carry out the ambitious set of programs that Seda had set in motion. The Council stated they were familiar with his work in Grand Rapids, Michigan as director of Latin American Services for the Kent Community Action Program and executive director of the Latin American Council. During the previous two years he had been employed at Antillian College in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. He stated he wanted to relocate to Pennsylvania to be near his family as his two eldest sons were attending the Blue Mountain Academy near Harrisburg. He accepted the position for a salary of \$25,000 a year.

1988 was another very active year for the Latino community. It began on an optimistic note with the selection of a new Center director. It ended, however, in controversy with yet another unanticipated transition in leadership at the Hispanic Center.

The Spanish Political Association renamed itself the Latin American Political Action Committee, adopted bylaws and elected officers. Elected were: Wilfredo Seda, president; Lester Ortiz, vice-president; Ruth Herrera, recording secretary; Dr. Ricardo Garcia-Rodriguez, membership secretary; and Adelfa Agosto, treasurer. The group's major goal for the year was to focus its efforts on a massive voter registration drive and on voter education so the Latino community could have a greater impact on the 1989 elections for city council and Reading school board.

Edna Zayas, wife of Dr. Garcia-Rodriguez, was hired as County Commissioner Glenn Reber's personal secretary and as his communication link with the county's Latino population.

In March the Hispanic Center, in collaboration with the County Office on Aging, established a Hispanic senior citizens program at Kennedy House, 552 Spruce Street.

In May, Gov. Robert P. Casey visited Reading and presented a \$20,000 grant to the Hispanic Center. The Hispanic Center was one of nine agencies across the state sharing \$190,448 in funding to assist low-income Hispanics to increase their basic job skills.

After only seven months, Dr. Ricardo Garcia-Rodriguez resigned as director of the Hispanic Center. It appeared that the salary and administrative and programmatic frustrations led to his decision to resign. Spanish Speaking Council members unsuccessfully attempted to persuade Dr. Garcia-Rodriguez to reconsider. However, he agreed only to stay on for a period of weeks to accommodate a smooth transition. The parting was described as amicable.

Controversy surrounded the selection of the next executive director of the Center. On September 21, 1988 the board met expecting to appoint Lester A. Ortiz, Council President, to the post. Mr. Ortiz was a product-engineering manager for GAI-Tronics Corp, a subsidiary of Gilbert Associates, Inc. He had discussed taking the position with GAI and the company agreed to grant him a two-year leave of absence and to pay him the difference between his GAI salary and the \$25,000 salary of the Center executive director. Prior to the board's vote, however, a proposal was submitted by Wilfredo Seda to return to the Center as executive director for a salary increase to \$35,000 a year. The Council held a secret ballot and in a majority vote the decision was made to consider the proposal set forth by Mr. Seda. Marcelino Colon, Council member and former executive director, expressed shock at the outcome of the secret ballot and stated that "They turned down a very good and generous proposal from Gilbert." Colon also stated that there were many good uses for the \$10,000 that would have been saved by hiring Mr. Ortiz. The Reading Eagle reported that one Council source stated "I assume, as an experienced politician, he (Seda) has been gathering support for his effort. He wants to come back." Ortiz commented, "When we're dealing with politics, not everything makes sense. That's a decision the Council made, but the needs of the community are beyond politics. He (Seda) was able to convince the Council to hire him." Two weeks later Lester Ortiz, president of the Spanish Speaking Council, resigned from

the board citing philosophical differences. Wilfredo Seda was rehired as executive director and returned to the Center in December under a two-year contract at \$35,000 annually.

The Political Torch is Passed/Public Challenges to City Institutions

In 1989, the first Latino elected official passed the torch to a new Latino face in the political arena. In February, Marcelino Colon announced he would seek reelection to a second four-year term on the Reading School Board in the May 16 primary election. Also in February, at a special meeting to fill a vacancy on the board, Nytza I. Rosado became the second Hispanic to receive an appointment to the school board. Soon after, Mr. Colon announced that he would immediately withdraw from the election explaining that he wanted to devote more time to his family and job. He stated that the appointment of another Hispanic to the board made his decision to withdraw easier. He indicated that he would throw his support behind Ms. Rosado and would be one of her campaign coordinators.

At the Hispanic Center, plans to expand services and to include housing rehabilitation move forward with a \$110,000 state grant. Executive director Seda stated that the money would be used for acquisitions and rehabilitation. He submits that the Center plans to begin buying properties and converting them into 20 apartments over the next two years.

In response to a devastating natural disaster in Puerto Rico the Center mounts an effort to help the victims of Hurricane Hugo through the collection of donations of money and clothing.

1989 also saw the unprecedented development of nine Puerto Rican educators relocating to Reading as a result of a recruitment effort in Puerto Rico by the Reading School District. This effort was undertaken due to the frustration over several years to recruit qualified bilingual educators in the school district where there had been a dramatic rise in the number of Spanish-speaking students.

1990 began with the Hispanic Center taking a public and confrontational stance regarding the Reading School Board's directors opposing cultural excursions to Puerto Rico for educators. The board had voted the previous month to reject paid leaves for educators selected to participate in trips sponsored by Penn State University. More than 100 Latinos packed the School Board meeting room in a protest organized by Mr. Seda. Penn State University officials joined with leaders of the Hispanic community in condemning the rejection vote and pleaded with the board to reconsider. Seda then called on the board to apologize for what he described as demeaning comments about Hispanics made during the debate the previous month about the trips. School board director Nytza Rosado called for a second vote, which went five to four against funding the trips. Following the rejection Rosado volunteered funds from the Hispanic Center and School Board President Klein suggested the use of \$2,000 from a fund raised with corporate donations for school board workshops. Board supporters of the trip decried the fact that it was suggested that private funds be used to underwrite the district's share of the Penn State trip. They expressed that \$4,000 was very little investment to ensure that "our teachers understand 32 percent of our kids." and that \$4,000 represented only one-six thousandth of one percent of the district's \$62 million budget.

In March, at a meeting of the Reading school district task force that was reviewing the Bilingual Education program, director James B. Caltagirone accused the Hispanic Center of maligning the school board. He pointed to a letter circulated by the Center to bolster Latino turnout at the next school board meeting to present educational demands. The letter in part warned of a high dropout rate among Hispanic students and a lack of adequate counseling personnel for non-English speaking students. Director Rosado, who was also a member of the Spanish-speaking Council, criticized Caltagirone for bringing the letter to this meeting but defended the action of the Center. When the meeting proceeded with its intended agenda, a 30-member task force, comprised

of administrators, bilingual and regular education teachers, community group representatives, and parents began addressing the obstacles and needs the program was facing. Panel members described scenarios of overcrowded bilingual classes including: numbers in excess of 50 students under the guidance of a single teacher and an educational aide as well as overtaxed teachers lacking adequate supplies, textbooks, and without the assistance of bilingual guidance counselors and psychologists. At the time there were about 1,000 students enrolled in the program, which cost the district nearly \$2 million a year to operate.

In April 1990 the Hispanic Center became involved in promoting the Census enumeration within the Latino community with the purpose of attempting to minimize the undercount. Among their efforts was the distribution of Spanish language census forms.

Also that year, Hogar Crea, a bilingual and bicultural residential drug and alcohol treatment program, originating in Puerto Rico and with facilities in Bethlehem, Freemansburg, Allentown and Lancaster was planning to open a facility in the Reading area. The Center supported the effort and provided space to Hogar Crea for referral and intake purposes.

The Hispanic Center supported the development of a teenage youth group by helping them to organize and providing space for their meetings. The group named itself United Youth, elected officers, and planned activities. The Hispanic Center's goal was to teach Latino youth leadership, decision making, and organizational and communications skills.

The Hispanic Center joined with Latino merchants in a shopping bags slogan campaign to combat drugs in the Hispanic community. They received a grant of \$48,000 from the Governor's Drug Policy Council. The slogan in Spanish said "Drugs - NO. Dignity, Respect, Education -YES." The Center also distributed T-shirts with the same message to pupils at Thomas Ford Elementary School and handed out bumper stickers. The Center also made plans to sponsor anti-drug performances by the "Los Pregoneros" theater group and the start of a youth theater group in the area.

The Hispanic Center Housing Program

In April, the Hispanic Center officially entered the housing market when it purchased its first property for rehabilitation at 230 Rose Street.

1991 began with the Hispanic Center challenging a decision by City Council to reject a bid for a vacant city-owned property. Wilfredo Seda, accompanied by about 50 Hispanic community members, attended the first City Council meeting of the year. Seda accused city officials of management practices that appeared to be racially discriminatory, pointing out that the rejection of the bid was not a solitary incident. Seda, who spoke in Spanish to about 40 people during the community meeting, said council's rejection of the Hispanic Center bid has to be looked at from a cumulative perspective, not as an isolated incident. According to Seda, other incidents in the past year that did not reflect favorably on the Hispanic community included city council's decision to relocate the annual Puerto Rican carnival from Riverfront Drive to the Third and Spruce Recreation Center, and a newspaper commentary by city police Lt. Jere L. Verdone that several Hispanics considered offensive.

On February 4, 1991, a Reading Eagle reporter challenged the perspective and accusations of discriminatory behavior as well as the methods for effecting change. He acknowledged that in some cases discrimination does come into play but that in others "mental lapses and ineptness has clouded some issues to the point where it appears discrimination has come into play." He went on to question the effectiveness of the public demonstrations. "Their response has been to show up in force at council meetings to vent their

frustrations, with Wilfredo Seda, executive director of the Hispanic Center, usually speaking on their behalf. But while he brings up some valid points, Seda sometimes comes across as grandstanding. And he and other Hispanics can't dump all the blame on the steps of City Hall. As Seda has noted, if they really want to have an impact on city government, and if they really want to be heard, Hispanics should flex their voting muscle to get representation on City Council. Otherwise, they can continue to complain, seek answers, and request help - but usually in vain. And they'll probably continue to question whether prejudice sways politics in City Hall."

In March the Hispanic Center held a ribbon cutting ceremony and reception in celebration of their first two rehabilitated properties under their housing program. The goal of the housing program was to rehabilitate them, rent them to poor families facing housing crunches, and create a domino effect to clean up the neighborhood. A total of \$280,000 in public funding and \$500,000 in private loans were raised through the city, the state Department of Community Affairs, and the National Bank of Boyertown. The center intended to convert those funds into about 15 residential family units. While a nonprofit agency, the Center offered to pay full taxes on all properties. Seda saw the housing program as a natural extension of the services the Center was providing.

Political Voices, New Latino Groups and Transitions in Center Leadership Continue

A new group calling themselves "Latinos en Acción" emerges in 1991. It was a nonprofit, multi-cultural organization comprising a cross section of professionals dedicated to building a bridge between the Latino and Anglo community in Reading. The group described itself as an alternative Latino organization and described their function as different from the Hispanic Center whose role is to provide for Latinos in need. The purpose of the group was to present a different perspective of the community, to break stereotypes, and serve as role models. Luis Otero, a Reading schoolteacher, was named president.

In June 1992 a group called the "Coalition for Reading's Future" comprised of a cross-section of Reading's citizens held a peaceful rally, march, and demonstration against Reading school board policies. The group indicated their long-range plans included focusing on the following year's school board elections and beyond that to tax reform, to demanding more assistance from state and federal governments, and to building a coalition to influence school board politics well into the future. Speakers included Mayor Warren Haggerty; former mayor and secretary of the state Department of Community Affairs, Karen Miller; and Center Director Wilfredo Seda, who called for a community summit to develop a consensus five-year plan for the school district.

In 1993 some incidents took place that negatively affected the relationship of the police with the Latino community. The first was an incident where police were accused of overreacting in a situation where students had gathered after school. The police cited 28 students for allegedly failing to disperse when asked. They were searched for weapons at the scene, taken in three police vans to City Hall, where they were photographed and issued citations. Although no weapons were found the citations indicated that the defendants were involved in "gang related activities." Later, the citations were withdrawn. The second incident was that of the shooting death of a 19-year old Latino youth by a police officer when, according to the officer, the youth refused to discard a 9mm handgun he pointed at the officer. The Hispanic Center joined with other Latino organizations in hiring a private investigator to conduct an independent investigation of the shooting. According to the investigator's report, at the time of his death the victim was on a porch of a private residence and did not appear to be involved in any criminal activity. Autopsy tests showed no sign he had been using drugs and his only apparent crime was carrying an illegal weapon. The shooting became a rallying point for the Latino community, many of who said police often unjustly harassed and searched Latinos.

In this same year, Josue Diaz, who founded the first Latino-owned mortgage company in Berks, entered the primary race for city council. Of four candidates he came in second, losing to a 22 year incumbent, an impressive showing for a Latino candidate. Diaz today is the owner/president of the Universal Mortgage Company; one of three Latino-owned mortgage companies in Reading.

In August the Hispanic Center provided temporary shelter to local residents left homeless due to a fire.

In December, in another transition of leadership at the Hispanic Center, Wilfredo Seda resigned as executive director to accept a position as a community relations associate with Mercy Health Plan. Antonio Cruz, president and chairman of the board of the Spanish Speaking Council said Judith A. Long, director of finance and administration for the center, would serve as acting executive director pending the naming of a replacement sometime in early 1994.

A newly formed group, "Berks Votes!", set up tables at various sites in the area to make a concerted effort to increase the number of registered voters in the county for the November 1994 election. The group was organized by Luis and Anna Rodriguez as a nonpartisan voter drive to address the need to register Latino voters. Luis Rodriguez took his idea for a registration network to Lawrence P. Murin, vice president of the Reading-Berks Labor Council, and AT&T retiree Charles R. Borowski and the trio, along with Anna Rodriguez, began rounding up volunteers. Together they recruited 40 from among friends, contacts in organized labor, and people they knew in various civic groups, such as the League of Women Voters and Latinos en Acci3n. On Election Day the volunteers shifted their efforts from registration to getting out the vote, transporting people to the polls. Tragically in December, Luis, 40, died. In addition to his work with Berks Votes!, he was chairman of the AIDS awareness training program for the Berks AIDS Network, a trainer for the Community Prevention Partnership of Reading, a coordinator with the Berks County United Labor Council, and was a self-employed silkscreen artist. He was a Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam War.

The city's first Latino-owned, fully bilingual employment agency was established in July 1994 by Nelson A. De Leon, a native of the Dominican Republic and a resident of Reading since 1981. He started the agency with a staff of three and an office in downtown Reading. Called "America At Work", it helps companies tap into the potentially lucrative Latino market while helping Latinos with various levels of language skills find jobs in the business community. De Leon built a reputation in the Spanish-speaking community during six years as employment director at the Hispanic Center where he focused on placing low-income job seekers through a federally funded program.

In the latter part of 1994, the Center expanded its focus of services further with the development of outpatient psychological services. The Hispanic Center became licensed to provide outpatient psychological services for children and adolescents. Dr. Joseph Prewitt-Diaz and Dr. Pedro Miazza provided services. Dr. Prewitt-Diaz was a licensed psychologist with a Bachelor degree from the University of Puerto Rico and Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut; Dr. Miazza earned his Bachelor degree from the University of Puerto Rico and Medical Degree from Universidad Pontificio in Italy. He completed his residency in psychiatry at Temple University Hospital, Philadelphia. Unfortunately these services were short-lived due to staff, program and funding issues.

In 1995 Wilfredo Seda threw his hat in the ring as one of six mayoral candidates on the democratic ticket in the primary race. Although he failed to win the primary, having a Latino vie for the highest office in city politics was another step forward. Later that year another effort to organize came in the development of "Nuestra Comunidad" (Our Community). The organization hoped to concentrate its efforts to achieve the inclusion of Latinos into the mainstream social, educational and business fabric in Berks County. Nearly 70

Latinos, representing all sectors of the community, attended meetings to organize Nuestra Comunidad and to determine ways to best serve this fastest growing segment of the county's population. Lester A. Ortiz, the president of the group said past efforts did not take enough of a community-wide approach to many of the problems facing Latinos and that their approach would be to build coalitions with existing institutions. An education committee was formed to work with representatives of the five colleges and universities in Berks County to determine new ways of boosting the educational successes of Latino students. Other group plans included working with local banks to teach people how to use their services, how to apply for a mortgage and even how to do everyday budgeting. It would also encourage Latino small business owners to join the Berks County Chamber of Commerce to exchange ideas and information. It would also take an active role in the political process, conducting candidates' forums, endorsing candidates and registering and educating Latino voters. Finally, it proposed to create an awareness within the mainstream community of the contributions and achievements Latinos had already made in Berks including the addition of Latino doctors, lawyers, educators and other professionals who had contributed a lot to the area.

In December 1995 the Hispanic Center established a Latino Youth Center. The Latino Youth Center, an outgrowth of 1990's United Youth initiative, was developed to offer teens a safe place to plan positive activities, give them a chance to help other teens struggling with problems, let them take control of their lives, and allow them the opportunity to express themselves.

Lester Ortiz was appointed executive director of the Hispanic Center in March 1996. He stated he planned to break down barriers limiting the center's ability to serve the Latino community. According to Ortiz "Bad blood was developed by thinking that no other group could or should be servicing the needs of Hispanics. In the past, the Hispanic Center administrators have seen the role of the Hispanic Center as the place to service all the needs of the Hispanic community." He saw the center as taking a different philosophical approach by increasingly referring people to other organizations in the community rather than spreading staff and resources thin by trying to provide every kind of service in-house. He planned to evaluate which Hispanic Center programs were not effective and what programs it needed to add. Ortiz said he planned to establish better communications with other Latino community groups including the Latino churches.

Dozens of Latino churches had emerged with the growth of the Latino population. They represented a broad range of denominations. St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church had a Latino congregation of several thousand, representative of the long tradition of Catholicism, to the smaller congregations of storefront Pentecostal churches. According to a Reading Eagle article on April 14, 1996, "Pastors envision a coalition with its ear to the community's heartbeat. They might orchestrate voter registration drives. They could rally around issues important to them. On any given weekend, church leaders say, they would reach thousands with a simple announcement from the pulpit . . . A loosely organized group tried this a few years ago but failed. 'The little things were dividing everyone,' said Nicholas Camacho, pastor of Emanuel United Methodist Church, 13th and Chestnut streets. 'We had to convince everyone that this is not a matter of changing theology or faith. It's a matter of working together.'"

In 1996 the leaders of Nuestra Comunidad, including group president and Hispanic Center executive director Lester Ortiz, reaffirmed their commitment to increase voter participation in the Latino community. Despite past efforts the Latino community still has a low voter turnout and thereby still lacked influence in the Reading political arena. One local politician was quoted as saying, "What influence do they have in an election? Next to none. The sad fact is they could have a dramatic impact in the city and the county if they were to register to vote." The quote became a rallying point for Nuestra Comunidad, who started a door-to-door voter registration drive.

In November 1996, Mayor Paul J. Angstadt held a two-hour meeting with about 20 city Latino leaders. Angstadt said the meeting was an effort to make city government more accessible and accountable to Latinos. According to the Mayor, "There's a lot of experience and a lot of expertise out there, but people just don't know how to get involved." In September, Angstadt hired Deborah Pacheco as adviser and liaison to the Latino community, a move Latino leaders praised him for. Pacheco organized a meeting for Latino leaders to share their ideas and concerns with the Mayor and recommended a list of about 40 Latinos for Angstadt to consider as possible candidates for openings on city boards and authorities. Those in attendance included Lester Ortiz, Eli Velazquez, president of the Puerto Rican Latin Association; Maria Garcia-Otero, in-home services supervisor for the Lutheran Home at Topton; Cesar Lopez, a GPU Energy engineer; and Dr. Maria Colon-Alvarado, director of the Reading School District's bilingual program.

The First Latino School Superintendent

In December 1996 Marcelino Colon, president of the Spanish Speaking Council of Reading and Berks County, led a press conference to discuss why he and other leaders believed a Latino should be named city schools superintendent. With him were Maria M. Garcia, a member of Latinos en Acción; Edicto Alvarez, president of the Puerto Rican Civic Club; Mike Feliciano, Spanish program manager for radio station WXAC-FM; and Eli Velazquez. The press conference followed a two-hour meeting of representatives from 15 Latino groups who met to discuss why they believed hiring a qualified Latino would be best for the district. Attending were representatives of several Latino organizations including Nuestra Comunidad, the Spanish Speaking Council, the Hispanic Center, Dominicanos Unidos, the Puerto Rican Latin Association, the Puerto Rican Carnival Committee, staff of the Spanish radio program on WXAC-FM, the Puerto Rican Civic Association, Impacto Latino, Casa de la Amistad, Latinos Unidos, Latinos in Acción, Directo a la Comunidad, Descubriendo Talento and the Police Athletic League's Spanish program. The number of groups alone was indicative of the Latino community's growth since 1958 when the Puerto Rican Civic Association was the sole Latino entity in Reading.

Marcelino Colon was asked to be the spokesman for the groups who believed a Latino should be chosen because the student population was 45 percent Latino; that Latino students had the highest dropout rate and lowest test scores; that the needs of Latino children were not being met; and the percentage of Latino educators and administrators was not in balance with the student population.

April 1997 saw another leap forward in the political evolution of the Latino community. As Nuestra Comunidad moved on their goal in 1996 to increase voter participation they looked this year to not only getting Latino names on the voter registration rolls, but also on the ballot. In 1997 three Latinos entered the political arena as candidates in the primaries. They were Lucy Cortez, a 39-year-old Commonwealth Savings Bank branch manager, running for City Council in District 5; Yvette Santiago, a 46-year-old Reading-Berks Human Relations Council investigator, running for Reading School Board; and Valentin Rodriguez Jr., the 43-year-old owner of Letterman Press Inc., Shillington, running for district justice in Reading District 1. At the time the only Latino elected official was school board member Nytza Rosado-Santiago who was completing her term and did not plan to run for re-election. In the midst of this activity Dr. Ruben Flores was announced as the candidate selected as the new superintendent of Reading schools.

In 1997 the Hispanic Center celebrated 20 years of service and honored some of the founders of the Spanish Speaking Council including Consuelo Jordan who had recently died. Although the Center was providing a wide range of social services, including helping Latinos to find jobs and housing, providing activities for youths, running a senior center and linking Latinos with needed services, it was in crisis. In 1996 and 1997, the United Way placed the Center on probationary status citing fiscal, program and management

issues. The Center risked disqualifying itself from United Way funding if it failed to correct its problems within the two-year probationary period.

Over the past decade the center found itself overextended with some of its expanded services, especially their move into the housing rehabilitation market. To strengthen its finances and improve cash flow, the agency trimmed its staff and budget, and started to sell off housing units it bought years ago. The board also worked on coordinating with other organizations, improving fund raising and expanding services.

In the meanwhile, the Puerto Rican Latin Association planned a year-long educational program on the 1898 U.S. takeover of the island of Puerto Rico. Their decision to call the program "Invasion '98" met with some opposition within both the mainstream and Latino communities. 1998 also marked another significant event in Berks, the 250th anniversary of the City of Reading, and there was concern that Invasion '98 would detract from the city's year-long celebration. Center director Lester Ortiz said organizers of Reading's 250th anniversary celebration told him they worried Invasion '98 would draw participants and attention away from their activities. Ortiz said he personally did not support Invasion '98, largely because of the name, which he thought was antagonistic.

After a year and a half, in October 1997, Lester A. Ortiz resigned as executive director of the Hispanic Center. Ortiz did not have another job lined up, but said he was considering several opportunities. In February 1998 he announced he was moving to Puerto Rico for family reasons and planned to accept a job in the computer support center for Adventist Health Systems. Jonathan Encarnación was board president at the time.

Turning Point—A Time for Critical Self Evaluation

The last quarter of 1997 marked a turning point for the Hispanic Center when the Spanish Speaking Council decided to take a critical look at the Center and to go through the difficult process of self-analysis. It had taken serious steps to address the concerns of the United Way. As a result of its progress it was able to secure a six-month extension to the probation period to avoid disaffiliation from an agency that had historically been one of its major funding sources. The Council decided to examine the inadequacies of both the Center and the board, as well as to examine the role the Center played in the community and what its function should be. The board decided to hold a retreat to develop a strategic plan. "For a long time we reacted to emergencies instead of thinking strategically", Council President Jonathan Encarnación said, "I think we need to step back and see the total picture, see what we can do and then move forward."

Karen A. Rightmire, president of the United Way of Berks County, stated the Center's problems seemed to go back to its beginnings in 1977. According to Rightmire, "Any problem that came up in the Latino community, the rest of the community expected the Hispanic Center to be involved. The expectation was for a small agency to meet the needs of thousands and thousands of people. I'm not sure any one organization can do that." Encarnación agreed, "Obviously, the center can't resolve all the problems of the Latino community with five full-time staff, one part-time staff, three senior citizens whose salaries are paid by other programs, a handful of volunteers and a \$338,000 budget." As a result of the retreat the board created a mission statement and agreed it must decide which programs fit the mission.

The critical issues identified were poverty, the lack of affordable housing and childcare, unemployment, crime and juvenile delinquency, substance abuse and inadequate transportation. The board decided that forming partnerships with other social service agencies could help fill in the gaps. The agency had been plagued by financial problems. The organization's June 30, 1997 audit showed a budget deficit of \$52,000. The board planned to undertake a cost analysis of existing programs to determine whether to discontinue them, scale them back, find more money or pass them to another agency. One of the programs eliminated had

provided affordable housing for clients, but the upkeep of the properties drained agency finances. To reduce the debt, the agency disposed of most of the properties and would shortly be rid of the rest.

The board also identified a high staff turnover rate due to their inability to pay competitive wages coupled, in many instances, with overwhelming workloads and high stress. In addition, the Center's facility, where they had been housed for 17 years, was cramped and dingy with old second and third-hand furnishings. It was not a positive environment for staff or clients. The Council had been talking about relocating for over a decade. According to the Council, the Center had historically been under-funded and was expected to do more with less. They felt that by taking the step of self-examination and exposing their problems they were in a better position to develop the strategies necessary to give the agency the stability it needed to survive. The retreat and the resulting business plan were the starting point.

In March 1998 Jonathan Encarnación resigned his post as president of the Spanish Speaking Council to lead the Hispanic Center as executive director. He accepted the position after the board asked if he would take the position when they were not pleased with their choice of candidates. The agency had been plagued by high debt and staff turnover, and the United Way of Berks County, the agency's primary funding source, required the agency to fill the position by the end of the month. Encarnación said his first priority would be to restore the financial stability of the organization and to ensure the agency met the benchmarks set by the United Way and the Council. They included reducing the debt to zero, revamping all programs and expanding collaborations with other nonprofit agencies.

Within five months of the appointment of Jonathan Encarnación, the Hispanic Center moved to new offices in the basement of the Berkshire Towers at Fifth and Washington Streets and improved its finances to the degree that the United Way removed the agency from probationary status. Within ten months, through the combined efforts of the Council and the new director, according to one Council member, "We went from almost closing the agency to moving to a new location." In the old office at 225 N. Fourth St., the paint was dingy and the tile floor was worn. Caseworkers interviewed clients in a large, open room. The agency had been robbed four times in six weeks, the last time, two weeks before the move. The agency's debt, most of which had been incurred by purchasing properties for the now defunct housing program and reached a high of \$520,000 was down to \$75,000. All but one property had been sold, and it was under agreement of sale. In addition, the plan to establish collaborations with other agencies was implemented. For example, Reading Area Community College arranged to send a coordinator to the agency weekly to sign up clients for ESL classes, and Progressions, a nonprofit mental health agency in the city, agreed to provide mental health services at the agency five days a week.

Community conflicts with the School Board reemerged when only a year after the appointment of Dr. Ruben Flores as school superintendent, members of the African American and Latino communities accused the board of decimating the reform agenda of Dr. Flores by not allowing him to do the job he was hired to do. School Board Vice President LaManna responds, "We told Dr. Flores what we wanted him to do, and we're going to see if he can do it," referring to a list of goals set during an evaluation of the superintendent. This situation resulted in the termination of Dr. Flores as school superintendent.

In 1998, the Reading-Berks Human Relations Council honored the contributions of seven Latinos who were representative of the Latino leadership in Reading. Law enforcement: Luis Gonzalez, a city police officer active in the Police Athletic League of Greater Reading and a designated drug-free marshal representing the police department in a program involving more than 200 city youths; Politics: Nytza L. Rosado-Santiago, former Reading School Board member, community volunteer and legislative aide to state Sen. Michael A. O'Pake; Education: Dr. Geraldina Sepulveda, principal of 10th and Green Elementary School

and a member of several community boards. She had helped 11 Latino youth earn college degrees; Community activism: Eli Velazquez, the first Latino to teach upholstery in the Reading-Muhlenberg Vocational-Technical School night program and owner of an upholstery business; Social services: Maria Garcia-Otero, founder of the Latin dance group "Raices" and Latinos en Acción, and a social worker employed by Lutheran Services Northeast, Topton; Media: Moises O. Manon-Rossi, editor of Acento Hispano, the bilingual newspaper printed by Reading Eagle Company, and founder of the Civic and Cultural Dominican Association of Berks County; Community outreach: Tony Perez, a Baptist minister, migrant education and career guidance counselor, motivational speaker and parenting counselor with Latino Social Services of Lutheran Services Northeast.

The Center Hires New Director, Balances Budget and Plans for the Future

In December 1998, a United Way team met with the Hispanic Center and began the evaluation process that precedes their allocations in March. Five allocation team members spent two hours listening to center officials describe how the agency turned around its management and financial problems over the last year. They cited the hiring of Jonathan D. Encarnación as executive director, the completion of a long-term planning process to correct the problems, and the near elimination of the debt. The United Way, which had supported the Center since its inception and was a major source of funding, took a hard line the previous year by placing the Center on probation, which it lifted in June. Elaine Pennington-Stanko, who had been the United Way team leader for the Center for three years, said the team could see the agency had been in decline and it weighed heavily on their shoulders that the center might be forced to close as a result of a poor evaluation by their allocations team. They knew the Latino community relied on the center. Encarnación and Board President Paul G. Oxholm said stability and staff morale had been restored, and that the number of clients the center serves has increased without driving up costs. The volunteers said they were pleased by the improvements they saw since last year. "I think they hit it out of the park," Pennington-Stanko said. In its previous allocation the Center had received \$112,208 from the United Way toward its \$338,000 budget for 1998. The Center asked the United Way to provide \$116,674 of the total, or an increase of 4 percent over the \$112,208 the Center received in 1998 to support its increasing caseload. Encarnación said the number of clients the agency helped increased by more than 22 percent between 1997 and 1998, and that number was likely to rise even higher due to the impact of welfare reform. The proposed budget for 1999-2000 was \$315,426.

In continuing the efforts to cultivate leadership within the Latino community and increase political participation, the Hispanic Center of Reading and Berks County teamed with the U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute's northeast branch in Philadelphia to organize a meeting intended to heighten the knowledge of Latino community activists about the political process, how government works, the impact on the community and how one can make a difference. Nine sessions were scheduled with city, county and Reading School District officials. According to Encarnación, "Unless we understand the process, there's no way we are going to have an impact in the community. If we do not get involved as individuals we cannot expect government to work with us."

Latinos are scarce in City Hall. There are none on the seven-member City Council. No Latino holds a department head slot or even a supervisory position in middle management. Encarnación sees this as the impetus for the development of a base for political action. "There have been a series of attempts to organize politically in the past, but it was failure after failure. We didn't have a structure in place."

With bold leadership, solid management, the elimination of budget-draining ineffective programs, and long term strategic planning, the Center seems well on its way toward becoming the most efficient it has ever

been as a community service agency. Over the course of its history, each of its directors has made their own unique contribution. It seems clear, however, that the Center is currently in one of its most dynamic periods of growth and change with all indications suggesting a lasting and positive impact on the community it serves.

Center Directors:

1977-Ligia M. Gomez

1978-Alma Martinez

1979-Ramon Crespo

1982-Alfonso Peña Ramos, Interim Director

1983-Marcelino Colon Jr.

1986-Wilfredo Seda

1988-Dr. Ricardo Garcia-Rodriguez

1989-Wilfredo Seda

1994- Judith Long, Interim Director

1995- Beatrice Rodriguez

1995 Sebastian Quijada, Interim Director

1996-Lester Ortiz

1998-Jonathan Encarnación

SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARIES

Several survey instruments were designed to capture the perspectives of individuals with first-hand knowledge of the Latino community, the Hispanic Center, its services and its role as a community agency. Specific subject groups were targeted consisting of three distinct subgroups of five target populations. A combination of mail surveys, telephone interviews and face-to-face interviews were conducted totaling 305 completed survey units.

This section summarizes the results of these surveys and interviews. Survey subgroups include:

Professional, Key Community Member, and Agency Surveys
Hispanic Center Client Interviews
Mushroom/Migrant Worker Interviews

Professional, Key Community Member, and Agency Surveys Summary

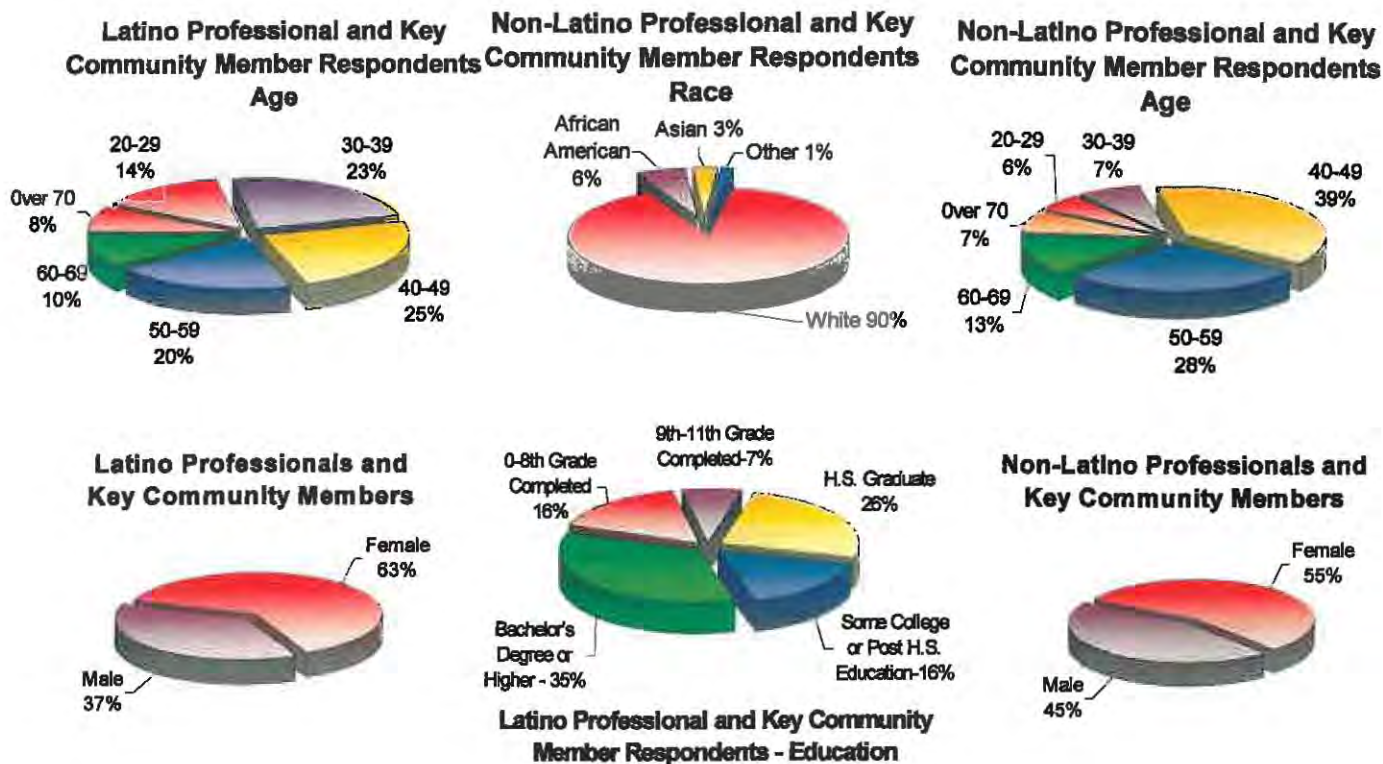
Methodology

Surveys were conducted with members of the community who interact most directly with the Latino community in terms of responding to its needs and the delivery of services. These included professionals working within the various local organizations and systems; key community members who have been proactive in addressing community issues and who may be leaders in an official capacity, or de facto leaders by virtue of their roles within the community. Also, surveys were conducted with professionals in a variety of human service agencies that provide direct services to community residents that address a cross-section of human service needs. The agencies targeted were identified using the Social Services Directory compiled by the Berks Community Action Program.

Because the target survey populations were limited in size, a high degree of statistical validity and reliability was established. 780 survey forms were distributed primarily by mail utilizing local mail lists, which identified key individuals. A small percentage of these survey forms were distributed via personal contact. After the initial return of completed surveys, follow-up contacts were made to increase the return rate. Some of these contacts resulted in telephone interviews. In all, 189 survey units were completed for a return rate of 24%. The numbers of returns within these subgroups break down as: Non-Latino Professionals and Key Community Members, 74; Latino Professionals and Key Community Members, 92; Agencies, 23. The surveys requested subjects to identify the needs of the Latino community as well as to make an assessment of services available to Latinos, for their depth of knowledge and perception of the Hispanic Center, and for their perspective on the viability and value of the development of a bilingual/bicultural coordinated services center model.

For the sake of brevity, the Non-Latino Professionals and Key Community Members will be referred to heretofore as Non-Latino respondents, the Latino Professionals and Key Community Members as Latino respondents, and the Agencies as Agency respondents.

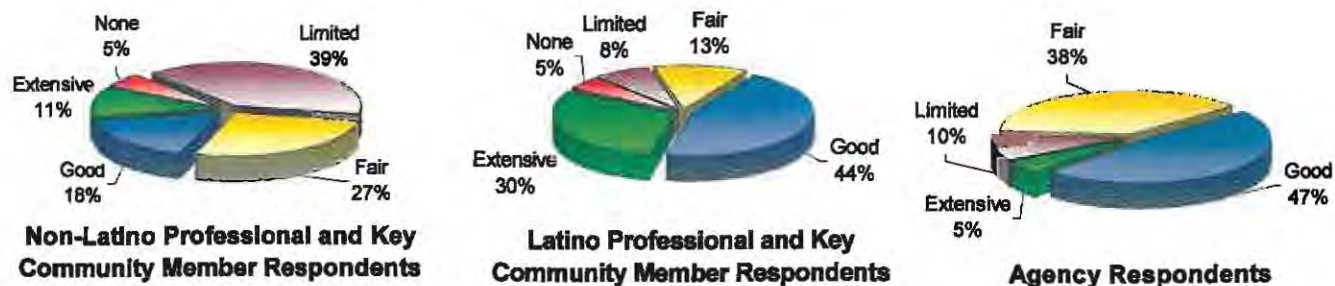
Respondent Demographics



Survey respondents reflected a broad cross-section of age, gender and professions. The survey results also reflected viewpoints of the diverse segments of the Reading/Berks Latino population, from grassroots to professional, with various educational levels represented within the group. Survey respondents also varied in their depth of knowledge of the local Latino community.

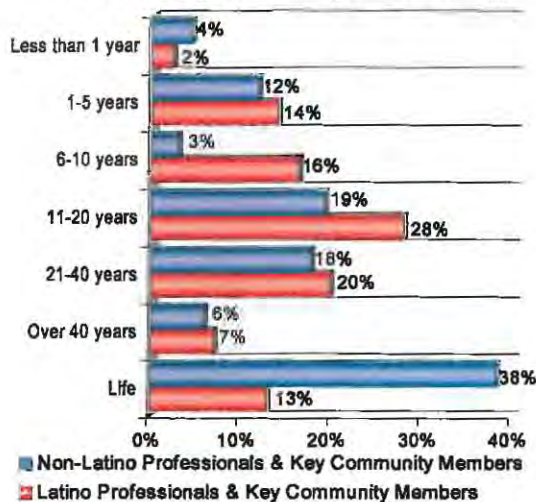
Over half (52%) of the Agency respondents indicated a good to extensive knowledge of the Latino community while 66% of Non-Latinos indicated only a fair to limited knowledge with 5% indicating no knowledge of the Latino community. 74% of Latino respondents had a good to extensive knowledge of the local Latino community with 13% declaring only a limited or fair knowledge of the community. A total of 8% indicated no knowledge of the local Latino community.

Knowledge of Latino Community

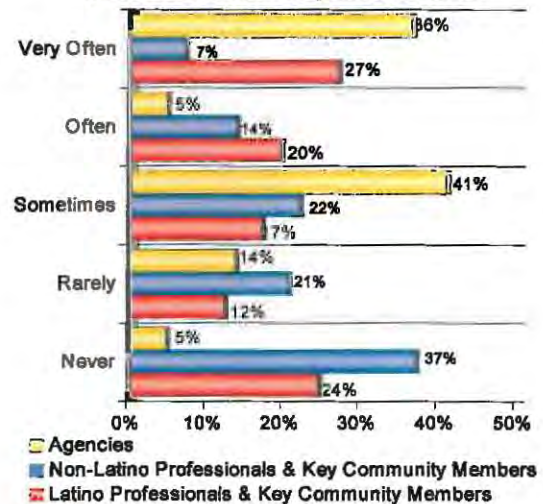


Most respondents represented long-term residents of the area. While often described as the newest population, a significant percentage of the Latino population are long-term residents. The majority of Latino respondents were long-term residents of the area with 13% native to the area and another 55% residing in the area for longer than a decade. Only 16% had been in the area five years or less. The vast majority of Agency respondents indicated that during the past two years they interacted in some capacity with the Hispanic Center with 41% interacting often or very often, and another 41% on a sometimes basis. The majority of Non-Latino respondents (58%) never or rarely interact with the Center. 47% of the Latino respondents interacted with the center often or very often, while 36% rarely or never interacted with the center.

How Long Residing in Reading

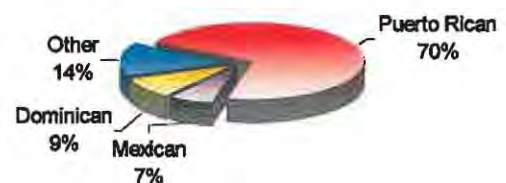


Interacts with Hispanic Center

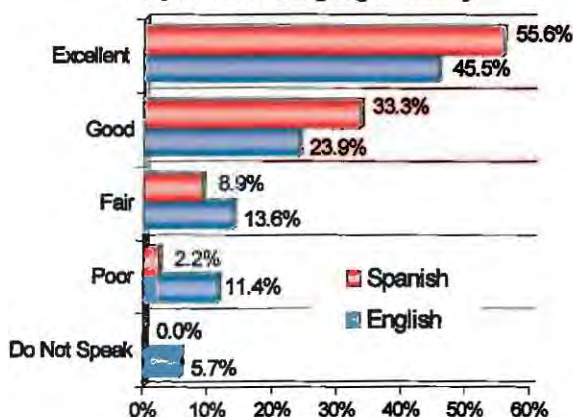


Latino respondents reflected a cross-section of the local Latino population with a close approximation in size to that of the major Latino groups in the area. The "other" category includes respondents with Latino ancestry from Ecuador, Venezuela, Belize, Cuba, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Colombia. The overwhelming majority of Latino respondents were fully bilingual with 83% possessing fair to excellent fluency of English and 97.8% of Spanish. 15.2% of Non-Latinos indicated a fair to excellent fluency of the Spanish language.

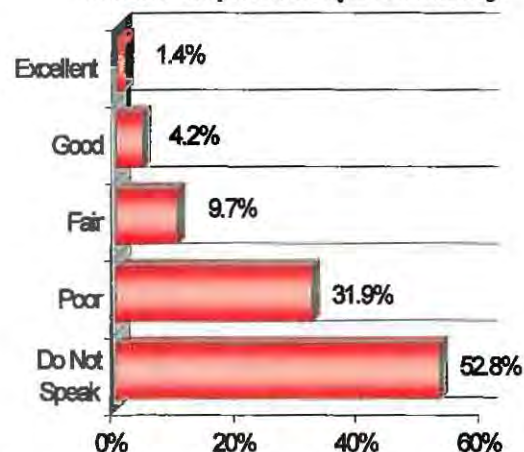
Latino Professional and Key Community Member Respondents - Latino Origin



Latino Professional and Key Community Member Respondents Language Fluency



Non-Latino Professional and Key Community Member Respondents Spanish Fluency



The following chart provides a list of the 23 agencies that responded to the 180 Agency Surveys mailed and the data they provided on the racial/ethnic breakdown of the clients they serve.

Race of Clients Served by Responding Agencies

#1 Name of Agency	Hispanic	White	African American	Asian	Other	Biling Staff	Latino Staff
Catholic Social Agency	70.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	0.0%	3	3
Literacy Council of Reading-Berks	83.1%	17.7%	6.8%	12.2%	0.2%	0	0
Greater Berks Food Bank	58.0%	6.0%	36.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2	2
Berks Visiting Nurses/ Community Health Project	40.0%	40.0%	15.0%	5.0%	0.0%	3	2
Lifeline of Berks County	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1	2
Berks AIDS Network	37.0%	39.0%	24.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5	6
Berks C.D. Office	35.0%	38.0%	24.0%	2.0%	1.0%	0	0
Goodwill Industries of Mid Eastern PA	27.0%	62.0%	10.0%	0.0%	1.0%	-	2
Berks County Juvenile Probation Office	26.0%	56.0%	17.0%	0.4%	0.2%	3	6
Berks County CareerLink	18.0%	65.0%	15.0%	2.0%	0.0%	9	10
Family Guidance Center	17.0%	61.0%	5.0%	1.0%	16.0%	3	3
Penn State Cooperative Extension-Berks County	14.0%	78.0%	6.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0	0
Center for Mental Health & the Reading Hospital	12.7%	81.0%	5.8%	0.7%	0.0%	6	7
American Heart Association	10.0%	70.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0	-
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation	6.2%	89.4%	2.4%	1.0%	1.0%	3	5
Reading Area Tourette Syndrome Support Group	5.0%	95.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0	0
Berks County Department of Veterans Affairs	3.0%	90.0%	5.0%	1.0%	1.0%	0	1
NAMI PA Berks County Affiliate	1.0%	98.0%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0	0
Women's Counseling Services	0.5%	98.0%	1.0%	0.5%	0.0%	-	1
Berks County Community Foundation	Data not provided					-	1
March of Dimes	Data not provided					0	0
Planned Parenthood	Data not provided					2	2
The Children's Home of Reading	Data not provided					5	11

Top Ten Agencies Identified by Respondents as Doing a Good Job

Top Ten Agencies Identified as Doing a Good Job Serving Latinos Combined Responses of the Three Target Survey Groups	
Hispanic Center	39.6%
Lutheran Home at Topton-Latino Social Services	9.8%
United Way	8.9%
Salvation Army	7.7%
Berks Community Action Program	6.0%
PAL	6.0%
Churches	5.5%
Community Prevention Partnership	5.1%
Puerto Rican/Latin Association	4.7%
St. Joseph's Hospital	3.4%
Olivetts-Boy's & Girl's Clubs	3.4%

Top Agencies Identified as Doing a Good Job Serving Latinos by the Three Target Survey Groups

Latino Professional/ Key Community Members		Non-Latino Professional/ Key Community Members		Agencies	
Hispanic Center	41%	Hispanic Center	35%'	Hispanic Center	29%
Lutheran Home - Latino Social Svcs	11%	United Way	11%'	PAL	10%
United Way	8%	Lutheran Home - Latino Social Svcs	9%'	Salvation Army	10%
Puerto Rican/Latin Association	7%	Churches-various	7%'	Kennedy House	7%
Salvation Army	6%	Berks Community Action Program	6%'	Reading Area Community College	7%
BCAP	5%	Salvation Army	6%'	BCAP	5%
Community Prevention Partnership	5%	PAL	5%'	Berks County CareerLink	5%
Catholic Social Agency	4%	Reading Berks Emergency Shelter	5%'	Berks Women in Crisis	5%
Berks County Office of Aging	4%	Reading School District	5%'	Catholic Social Agency	5%
Police Athletic League	4%	St. Joseph's Hospital	5%'	Community Prevention Partnership	5%
Women in Crisis	4%	Community Prevention Partnership	5%'	Lutheran Home - Latino Social Svcs	5%
Olivettes-Boy's & Girl's Clubs	4%			Migrant Farm Workers Program	5%
				Ponce Behavioral Health Center	5%

Top 8 Problems Latinos in Reading/Berks Face

Survey respondents were asked to identify what they considered to be the top five problems the Latino community in Reading and Berks confronts by responding to the question: "What do you believe are the five most serious problems affecting Latinos in Berks?" The following represents the top eight answers from each target survey group. The three target survey groups had a significant amount of agreement on the most serious issues affecting the local Latino population with 7 of the top eight responses being the same. This is especially significant since it was an open-ended question and not guided by a pre-determined list.

Top 8 Problems Latinos in Reading/Berks Face Identified by the Three Target Survey Groups

Latino Professional/ Key Community Members		Non-Latino Professional/ Key Community Members		Agencies	
Political/Leadership/Community	19.0%	Employment/Economic	21.6%	Employment/Economic	17.9%
Crime	13.4%	Language/Acculturation	16.0%	Language/Acculturation	16.7%
Education	13.1%	Education	14.6%	Education	15.4%
Drugs/Alcohol abuse	12.8%	Discrimination	11.2%	Family/Youth Issues	14.1%
Language/Acculturation	11.0%	Housing	11.2%	Political/Leadership/Community	10.3%
Employment/Economic	10.7%	Political/Leadership/Community	9.0%	Drugs/Alcohol abuse	7.7%
Family/Youth Issues	9.7%	Drugs/Alcohol abuse	6.3%	Discrimination	6.4%
Discrimination	6.6%	Crime	6.0%	Crime	6.4%
Housing	3.8%	Latino Negative Qualities	4.1%	Housing	5.1%

Employment and Economic Issues

Employment and economic issues ranked 1st among the Non-Latino and Agency survey respondents and 6th among Latino survey respondents. The major issues identified in this area were unemployment and underemployment, the lack of well-paying jobs, middle-income producing jobs and the ability to earn a living wage, the need for training and the development of skills commensurate with the current job market, and the impact of poverty on families. In addition, the need for connectedness to the local business community and the need for more business opportunities were identified as needs impacting the economic status of the Latino population.

Political/Leadership/Community

Among the Latino respondents this issue ranked 1st. It ranked 6th among Non-Latino respondents and 5th among the Agency respondents. The critical issues identified were the lack of: political representation, political clout, participation in the political process including low voter participation, understanding the political process, awareness of their power, visible leaders and role models, leadership development, unity and cohesion among Latino groups and leaders. Also noted was fragmented Latino leadership, Latino community apathy, the unwillingness to get involved to improve its own situation, the lack of respect from establishment to Latino professionals, and feelings of alienation from the majority population.

Language/Acculturation

This issue ranked 2nd among Non-Latino and Agency respondents and 5th among Latino respondents. The significant issues identified by respondents were the language barrier, cultural differences, the lack of acculturation/assimilation into the mainstream culture, isolation and non-acceptance by the mainstream, and lack of bilingual staff/services in agencies.

Education

Education ranked 3rd among all the survey groups. Identified concerns were low education and literacy issues, the high rate of school dropout, and access to a quality education related to issues within the Reading School District. Those issues included earlier vo-tech classes not available locally to middle school students, a lack of understanding of educational system, teenagers' lack of motivation relative to education, the school district failing to do a good job educating Hispanic children, crowded and unsupportive schools, the lack of parental support for schools, and questions regarding the effectiveness of the Reading School District bilingual education program.

Crime

Crime ranked 2nd among Latino respondents and 8th among Non-Latino and Agency responses. The key concerns relative to this issue were increasing criminal activity and violence, unsafe neighborhoods, growing gang activity, easy access to guns, drug-related crime and concerns about security in the schools.

Drugs/Alcohol Abuse

This issue placed 4th among Latino respondents, 6th among Agency respondents and 7th among Non-Latino respondents. Major concerns included the abuse of drugs and alcohol and the crime and violence related to drug trafficking in the area. These issues are viewed as problems that continue to rise

Discrimination

This issue placed 4th among Non-Latino respondents, 7th among Agency and 8th among Latino respondents. Key issues identified were discrimination, racism, non-acceptance/perception of outsiders by the Anglo community, unequal treatment, Anglo vs. Latino and Latino vs. Latino intolerance, and discrimination in the workplace.

Housing

Non-Latino respondents ranked this issue 5th. It placed 9th among Latino and Agency respondents with the issue of safe and affordable housing access, poor housing conditions, and availability being primary concerns.

Family and Youth Issues

Agency respondents identified this issue as 4th in their responses. Although it was not among the top eight issues it was identified as an issue among some of the Latino and Non-Latino respondents. Key concerns in this area were family dysfunction, parenting skills, child abuse, teen pregnancy, youth delinquency, lack of recreational activity for youth, domestic violence and the importance of education in sexual awareness and birth control.

Latino Negative Qualities

Some non-Latino respondents attached negative qualities to the population itself and indicated them as a top issue. These included the Latino population's failure to interact with the general community; its failure to appreciate the value of life; the instability of residence; lack of responsibility; the Latino male's view of family responsibility; the male's view of the role of women; not being conscious of time; the lack of parenting skills, a poor support system; the transient nature of the Latino community and their unwillingness to accept responsibility.

Services Needed for Latinos in Reading/Berks

Survey participants were asked to respond to the following question: "What services do Latinos need that don't exist or that are not being adequately addressed by existing services?"

Top Services Needed for Latinos Identified by the Three Target Survey Groups

Latino Professionals/Key Community Members		Non-Latino Professionals/Key Community Members		Agencies	
Access and Bilingual Services	26.4%	Employment-Related Services	22.3%	Community/Political/Leadership	20.8%
Community/Political/Leadership	21.7%	Community/Political/Leadership	19.6%	Lang/Acculturation	16.7%
Education/Youth	21.7%	Access and Bilingual Services	17.0%	Access and Bilingual Services	16.7%
Employment Related Services	17.0%	Lang/Acculturation	12.5%	Education/Youth	14.6%
Mental Health Services	3.8%	Education/Youth	11.6%	Employment-Related Services	12.5%
Transportation	3.8%	Housing	7.1%	Mental Health Services	12.5%
Housing	2.8%	Transportation	5.4%	Housing	6.3%
Recreational Activities	2.8%	Mental Health	4.5%		

Community/Political/Leadership Development

Agency respondents identified the need for community, political, and leadership development as the top service needed in the Latino community. Latino and Non-Latino respondents placed it 2nd. Suggestions included educating the community about city government, the integration of Latinos into government, inclusion on government boards and committees to advance political representation, voter registration efforts, leadership development programs including political training and training for Latino corporate and civic leaders, mentoring programs with the inclusion of Latino role models, cultural competency training and cultural events to build knowledge and understanding between Latino and majority communities.

Access and Bilingual Services

The need for more access to services placed 1st among Latino respondents, and 3rd among Agency and Non-Latino respondents. Suggestions centered on the addition of more bilingual/bicultural staff and professionals within the various community service sectors including medical services (clinics, hospitals,

emergency rooms), legal services, government offices (i.e., DPW, Social Security) and the various local human service agencies. Other suggested services were transportation, providing more bilingual information regarding available services, more outreach, and services that were culturally competent.

Employment-Related Services

Non-Latino respondents placed employment-related services 1st among services needed. It placed 4th among Latino responses and 5th among Agency respondents. Needed services identified focused on employment training, assistance with job placement and the development of employment opportunities for Latinos from unskilled to professional levels, job training and skill building through vocational workshops/training, fair wages, commitments by businesses to hire Latinos, internships at local companies, fair pay, transportation and affordable/flexible childcare options, and a survey comparing Latino vs. White earnings doing same work.

Education/Youth

Education and youth related services placed 3rd among Latino Professionals, 4th with Agencies and 5th with Non-Latino Professional among the top eight needed services identified by respondents. Suggested services included more advocacy on behalf of children in schools, proactively making educational opportunities more accessible to Latino community, additional higher education guidance, more scholarships and support dollars for higher education, adult educational opportunities with flexible scheduling, more GED services, and more parental support for academics. Youth services suggestions centered on the development of recreational activities and alternatives to gang involvement for Latino youth including youth centers/clubs, and summer programs. Also, teen pregnancy prevention and dropout prevention programs were recommended.

Language/Acculturation

The need for language and acculturation related services was 2nd among Agency and 4th among Non-Latino respondents but was not among those identified by Latino respondents. Suggestions focused on the development of services to overcome language and cultural barriers. They included more flexible options for English language classes and the integration of Latinos into the various sectors of the community including the business sector.

Mental Health Services

The need for mental health services placed 5th among Latino respondents, 6th among Agency and 8th among Non-Latino respondents. Suggestions for needed mental health services include parenting classes including responsible parenting for teens, counseling services for Latino women, information for women in crisis, effective bilingual/bicultural psychological and psychiatric services and education about mental illness.

Housing

The need for housing related services ranked 6th by Non-Latino respondents and 7th by Latino and Agency respondents. Suggestions included providing access to reasonably priced housing, addressing fair housing issues, assuring safety code compliance, the dissemination of information on how to obtain housing, and increasing accessibility to homeownership.

Transportation

Transportation services appeared 6th among Latino respondents, 7th among non-Latino responses and did not appear among the top needed services identified by Agency respondents. Identified needs were public transportation evenings and Sundays, scheduled transportation to workplaces over the various shifts, and the need for reliable transportation to access community services and to keep appointments.

Recreational Activities

Latino respondents identified the need for recreational and social activities for Latino individuals, families, and youth among their top eight services needed.

Most Valuable Contributions The Hispanic Center Makes

Survey participants were asked to identify the top five contributions made by the Hispanic Center. The following are the top responses identified by each survey target group to the question: "Name up to 5 contributions the Hispanic Center makes which are valuable to the Latino community in Berks."

Most Valuable Contributions The Hispanic Center Makes Identified by the Three Target Survey Groups

Latino Professionals / Key Community Members		Non-Latino Professionals/ Key Community Members		Agencies	
Community Development	16.1%	Advocacy-Leadership	19.7%	Information & Referral	34.8%
Information & Referral	13.7%	Information & Referral	12.1%	Community Development	17.4%
Basic Social Services	13.7%	Community Development	11.4%	Translation Services	10.9%
Senior Center	12.4%	Translation/Acculturation	10.6%	Basic Social Services	10.9%
Translation Services	11.2%	Basic Social Services	7.6%	Advocacy-Leadership	8.7%
Transportation	8.7%	Transportation	5.3%	Senior Center	6.5%
Advocacy-Leadership	6.8%	Senior Center	4.5%	Transportation	4.3%
AIDS/HIV Services	6.8%	Employment	3.0%		
Employment	5.0%				
Housing	3.1%				
Don't Know & No Response	2.5%	Don't Know & No Response	25.8%	Don't Know & No Response	6.6%

Don't Know & No Response

In assessing the knowledge of respondents regarding the programs provided by the Hispanic Center, the highest percentage (25.8%) of non-Latino respondents either indicated that they did not know what contributions were made by the Hispanic Center or gave no response. Only 6.5% of Agencies gave this response while appearing last (2.5%) among Latino respondents.

Information and Referral

Information and referral was identified as one of the top contributions made by the Hispanic Center with Agency respondents placing it 1st and Latino and Non-Latino respondents identifying it 2nd. The Center was described as the central agency for making informed referrals to other service providers, for disbursing information to the Latino community, for serving as a clearinghouse for information about the Latino community and its issues, as the first point of contact for Latinos, for linking the community to social services, and as a community liaison for those who speak little or no English and need to know where to go in order to receive services.

Community Development

Community development efforts were identified as the number one (1) Hispanic Center contribution by Latino respondents, 2nd by Agency respondents and 3rd among Non-Latino responses. Community development activities identified were: promoting Latino awareness, understanding and cultural pride; conducting trainings/workshops/presentations/orientations; providing information and developing community awareness through their radio and TV programs; sponsoring a scholarship program; conducting leadership development activities; bringing various Latino groups together for common goals and challenges; and organizing community programs for recognition of Latino contributions.

Advocacy-Leadership

Non-Latino respondents identified advocacy and leadership activities as 1st among the contributions made by the Hispanic Center; it was identified 4th by Agency respondents and 7th by Latino respondents. The Hispanic Center was identified as an advocate for improved services/resources for the Latino community, playing the role of community spokesperson, helping non-Latinos understand needs, facilitating communication between Anglo professionals and the Latino community, respected within the Anglo community, being a positive role model--Latinos helping Latinos, and for providing a forum to discuss issues related to the Latino community. Some respondents commented on recent positive changes including increased and stabilized financial resources. Overall, the Center is viewed currently as having good leadership and its director seen as model of good leadership. It has enhanced its credibility by developing and projecting a more professional image and by effectively increasing and stabilizing financial resources.

Basic Social Services

The provision of basic social services was 3rd among contributions identified by Latino respondents, 4th by Agency and 5th by Non-Latino respondents. Services identified were emergency needs intervention, family services, counseling, case management, casework for CYS, assistance with completing applications and forms for needed services through other community and government agencies, providing assistance for families/individuals new to the area, hospital/home visits, and with immigration and migrant issues.

Translation/Acculturation Services

Providing translation and interpretation services was 3rd among contributions identified by all three target group respondents. Agency and Latino respondent responses all focused primarily on the translation while Non-Latino respondents included acculturation activities as valuable. Contributions included bridging cultural gap/language barrier through translation services, interpreting for appointments with certain social service agencies, assists in acclimation to a new culture and language, and provides Latino personnel and a first point of contact to persons new to the community where they feel welcome.

Senior Center

The Hispanic Center's senior program, La Casa De Amistad, was 4th among Latino Professionals, 7th among Non-Latino and 6th among Agency respondents. It was identified as an important contribution described as an excellent program which provides seniors access to services and information.

Transportation

The value of the Center's transportation services placed 7th with Latino Professionals, 6th among Non-Latino Professionals, and 8th among Agency respondents. The most valuable of these services was transportation to agency and medical appointments.

Employment

Among other important contributions, employment counseling and job placement/training were identified as 9th by Latino and 8th by Non-Latino respondents.

AIDS/HIV Services

HIV/AIDS education, counseling and prevention were identified as 8th among Latino respondents and did not appear among the services identified by the other two respondent groups.

Housing Assistance

This was identified as a contribution by Latino Respondents (10th) with the focus on the availability and access to affordable and safe housing.

Criticisms of Hispanic Center

Respondents were asked to identify the top five criticisms they had of the Hispanic Center. The criticisms of the Hispanic Center are grouped into some key categories that were common to all three target survey groups. The following are a summary of the criticisms submitted in response to the question: "Identify up to 5 criticisms you have of the Hispanic Center which affect its ability to serve the Latino community."

Image\Reputation

Non-Latino Responses

A persistent perception that it is a "Puerto Rican" organization; that the Center only serves certain Hispanic groups; it can represent many sectors of total Latino community; does not/cannot represent all Latinos; difficult to access services unless a member of the "in" group; not all Hispanic population trusting of center; that it wants to be the sole provider of services to Latinos in the county; not viewed as leader; is isolated; needs more outreach activity; its mission and purpose defined by political powers; not active enough in Latino advocacy/political activism; inability to engage in "power structure"- be a community player; lacks understanding of the community infrastructure; doesn't have itself or community to counter "traditional Anglo perspective; having "segregated" services for various population only prolongs the existence of disparities between different groups; previous financial problems still hurts credibility.

Latino Responses

Perceptions among this group are that "it has a poor reputation" especially in the Mexican-American community; different Latino groups accuse center of only serving certain groups (such as Puerto Ricans or Dominicans); it attracts a specific group of people, many feel that they have not received any services; inability to sustain to improve image as "the" center for all Latinos; no stable consistent program - history of not being stable-cannot count on it being there tomorrow; some well-educated, professional people are ignored because of their status; too dependent on non-Latinos to enhance credibility; current and former staff members have personal political agendas; too many priorities; too few qualified human resources;

lacks demonstrated measures of performance, accountability; lacks vision; lacks knowledge of community because leadership is not in touch with the people; too many non-Hispanics on board of Center; most board members are not residents of the City of Reading.

Agency Responses

Agencies responses assert the Center "caters to Puerto Rican clients"; other Latinos (Cubans, Mexicans, Colombians) do not feel comfortable receiving service; has an appearance of serving only one population within the Latino community; needs to identify with Latino groups other than Puerto Ricans; perceived as too "Puerto Rican"; not sufficiently grass roots; spread too thin; should concentrate on 3-4 critical issues; and lacks leadership in addressing wide (broad) community issues.

Marketing of Services

Non-Latino Responses

Lacks visibility and credibility within Berks county (especially within Anglo community); failure to effectively communicate and market their services and opportunities for business involvement; need to educate agencies/community about Hispanic Center; need to clearly articulate mission to non-Latino community; community unaware of what the center provides; no clear image of what they do (in Anglo community); role of Hispanic center not well understood in community; is the sole focus that of providing social services?

Latino Responses

Not enough PR; don't publicize their services enough; could enhance its use of publicity/media relations; director and staff need to visit churches and organizations; marketing and public relations efforts should be made; I've been here for 4yrs and I can't refer a person to the Hispanic Center because I don't know what they offer to the community; it's the same with all the non-profits.

Agency Responses

Needs to market itself: available services, location, purpose and philosophy; the services are not known by Latino community.

Community Relations

Non-Latino Responses

Too often programs, services, ministries are overlapping new programs started without consultation with other social services serving Latinos; fails to cooperate fully with other agencies; fails to refer to other agencies for particular services; lacks presence in Reading and Berks business community; has not built a successful coalition of Latinos across entire community; building support within Latino community; Center can help bridge the gap with other community groups; could assist with PR for Latino community; Center must get the community involved in helping improve neighborhoods; no "internally generated" ideas (which are effectively communicated) of how private sector can become involved to address problems; should be more visible in school board and local government (city council).

Latino Responses

Need to get community involved in the Center's activities; need to have more Hispanics on the board of directors; the board of directors needs diverse groups of Latinos - Cubans, Dominicans, etc.; at least 3 clergy need to be represented on the board of directors; needs stronger presence with lawmakers and

government officials; could do more to unite disparate groups into a pan-Hispanic group; should encourage/teach youth and adults to volunteer; need to be more collaborative with other agencies; it's nonprofit--should not be political--should keep in mind who they represent--they do not represent everyone; should be more of a voice on behalf of the Latino people-advocacy. They need to reach out to Latino professionals more.

Agency Responses

They need to network with other agencies to provide service to multi-ethnic clients; they do not network with other agencies; lacks involvement with other agencies on a more consistent basis, whether secular or religious; not much interaction with other agencies; poor coordination with other Latino agencies/organizations; lacks involvement in critical issues affecting our community (in) education and housing.

Service Provision

Non-Latino Responses

Limited transportation assistance; one location; need to develop community leaders who will volunteer their time in community organizations to make their presence known as caring and informed citizens; need emergency hours; Latino students have a drop out ratio that must be addressed; the business community needs to be organized; Latino leaders must be more vocal about the drug problem.

Latino Responses

Most services at the Center and in other agencies are merely band-aid measures and do nothing to deal with long term issues of the community; open the radio programs with Albright College more educationally; on their TV show the Hispanic Center's beliefs on certain issues were presented in a biased manner as the only way to handle things and did not inform the public of the medical and statistical truth; poor translation services (according to some people); the person providing transportation is unprofessional and doesn't treat people nice; for some services, they don't provide a referral network; it had taken too long to identify and provide concrete services; need to be more service oriented than a referral service; transportation--they advertise but then the client has to donate \$20 and sometimes people are turned away; charge for notarization even when the client cannot pay; should get more volunteers; sometimes seems to be disorganized--they need to be more professional; not big enough--need to have more than one location; it should provide more comprehensive services not just referrals.

Agency Responses

Provides incorrect information to clients which can and has been damaging; sometimes slow to respond to consumer requests; Does not provide services advertised; staff often has a negative attitude; not providing transportation for appointments scheduled early in the morning, drivers not working until 8am.

Staffing

Non-Latino Responses

Need bigger staff; [frequently] changing leadership; [needs] professional development of staff; frequent change in management, board and staff; inconsistent leadership; not accessible to rest of population.

Latino Responses

Lacks professional staff answering phone; losing good employees due to low salaries; lack of confidentiality from some employees; giving too many duties to their staff. For example, if an employee is

hired for housing the person must also do home service, translation at court and casework in the office; within the last year I visited the Hispanic Center in Reading with the intention of volunteering time for a worthwhile cause. I asked the receptionist for information on the Hispanic center activities. Being too busy watching TV, she just pointed to where the center brochures were and didn't ask any questions. Again I explained what I was there for and she just said that's all they had. So I left thinking I wasted my time visiting the Hispanic Center to offer help.

Agency Responses

Understaffed to meet demands and needs for services; does not return phone calls; lacks stable, consistent staff; lack of professional training/credentials; staff is primarily Puerto Rican.

Fiscal

Non-Latino Responses

Limited funding; needs more resources to diversify services; not enough money; lack of funding limits what they do; too few dollars to serve a growing population.

Latino Responses

Some fees for services aren't affordable; lack of permanent and sufficient endowment funds; dependence on public funding; understaffed due to lack of funding; should seek more funding.

Agency Responses

Limited financial resources.

Other Comments

The following are responses to the last question on the survey which was open-ended, allowing the respondent to make any additional comments: *"Do you have any other comments related to other issues you feel should be considered related to the economic, educational, social, or political growth of the Latino population in Reading."*

Other comments - Non-Latino Professional and Key Community Member Survey

- The Latino population is extensive and if it worked together many changes could be effected, however few leaders seem to appear. Leadership development is very key to change.
- The community needs strong, legitimate, visible leadership to make it a credible force in the county. Leadership must be vested in a group that speaks out (Spanish Speaking Council). What is the role of the Council vs. the Center? I don't understand.
- Political representation at all levels of city and local state government is a must. Need watch groups and advocacy against bureaucratic tyranny of the local police force and Children & Youth services.
- Need to form broader political alliances and increase mainstream political activity.
- Need to be better organized politically and socially such as other communities in PA with large Latino populations.
- Latinos should make an effort to become involved in Reading and Berks politics. They need someone of their nationality to represent them.
- Latinos need to be voted into local government positions. They should be recognized as separate cultures with varying needs, but need to work together to become a force in the community.

- Latinos must represent themselves on city council and on school boards within the districts where they live. This means Latinos must register and vote. No one can do this for them.
- Jonathan Encarnacion, executive director, of the Hispanic Center is the very best leader the Center has ever had. The Latino population needs to become politically active.
- Assist existing organizations in obtaining Latino Leadership for Boards and Committees. Could be in the modified form of Leadership Berks.
- Create easier access to mainstream economy, teach and get Latinos involved in government, keep Latinos off front of the newspaper (negative press).
- We need to find a way to encourage the Latino population to become more politically active. People need to vote and run for public office so that the concerns of the Latino population are dealt with.
- We need to dispel the ideas of the mainstream population about Latinos. Political organizations at all levels need to get involved and we also need to fight against bureaucratic abuse.
- The Hispanic Center could play an important role in reducing the crime and violence that has taken such a toll on the Latino community and all of Reading. This is the biggest obstacle to be overcome.
- The drug wars in Reading are making the Anglo/Hispanic rift bigger. Afraid to come to Reading and get involved.
- Drugs and crime will grow and dominate unless the majority, the good Hispanics, work with law enforcement people to report, testify, witness & help community stop crime.
- We employ many excellent Hispanics, however I do not feel I have a great deal of experience that I can respond to most of your questions.
- These questions were difficult for me to answer since I don't interact with these agencies on a regular basis. I believe that Latinos are not aware of all services available to them.
- Survey should be done of Latino businesses, plan to encourage students to graduate from high school, social involvement with other groups, help in political campaigns for networking -develop leaders to run for office.
- Someone in Berks County must force *Better Communities Partnership*, *Healthy Communities*, and *Berks County Community Foundation* to sit down together when funding takes place.
- Positive image of leaders important to be not just interested in the Latino community, but society as a whole.
- I have helped many Latinos obtain homes through my work. I understand fully some of the challenges they face-mainly perception as to who and what they are.
- I would rather see a multi-cultural center as the demographics of our community is changing.
- I would like to see more done to keep the young Latino students in school, more social activities to keep kids out of gangs, and work with youth on GEDs & diplomas so they can get good jobs.
- I think overcoming prejudices & racism on the part of the Anglo community and all the stereotypes that go with them are the most difficult tasks for the Latino population as a whole." Reading seems exceptionally slow in accepting the fact that the world has changed.
- I do not consider myself well informed to answer many of the questions.
- I deal with mostly Mexican migrant workers. They are illiterate in Spanish as well as English. I tried adding Spanish titles to the collections, but they were not used.
- We have "one-stop" services such as workforce investment board. We should not duplicate, however there may be activities particular to these groups that should be centralized such as language.
- Broaden the programs and services to reach more individuals. Quality and ability to sustain programs that will benefit families. Youth focus for school age children, setting goals and broadening horizons.

- Balance-creating a community in which all residents' needs are met. Where those residents in turn feed a future positive environment.
- At Prospectus/Berco we are in need of bilingual employees but are not very successfully attracting them or at reaching out to the Latino community. A centralized service center would help as an employment link.
- Any person needs a reasonably compensating job to provide shelter, food and clothing. Without that solution we will make little progress.

Other comments - Latino Professional and Key Community Member Survey

- You cannot talk about this growth simply from a Latino perspective. Integration with and influence upon existing power structures is imperative for effective growth.
- We need more Spanish leaders in all agencies.
- The police department needs to be more educated about the Latino community. If they would interact with us more it would reduce stereotypes we have about the police department.
- The friction between the different Hispanic groups is sending the wrong message to the larger community. One problem is everyone's problem and we must work as one group to solve them.
- The center should be an advocate for real bilingual education not only for the Latinos but also for the mainstream community. The center may offer citizenship classes and leadership training and an open forum for the honest discussion of community issues.
- Reading/Berks Latino communities need to be more united and work together on the Latino agenda of city/county.
- Need better communication channels.
- Latino community is fragmented -- we need unification! We need to create awareness/acceptance of each other's Latin American cultures and respect them.
- Lack of opportunities is major factor for Reading's present state. Reading is a PA Dutch town set in their ways and used to having control. Latinos have tried to get into office and failed. They are not given the same opportunity as non-minorities.
- If an agency provides services coming from the director's beliefs only, it limits the range of citizens it can help. They will only use, or refer people to, the agencies that believe as they do.
- I historically have not been involved with the Hispanic community. I could not answer some of the questions fairly.
- I feel we must unite & reach out to those Latinos that do not have any hope. We need to be educated about our history and about services available to us.
- Educational-Bilingual schools should be looked at because programs need more looking into.
- Considering the downward spiraling of the community in terms of crime, housing, loss of prestige, loss by resignation of Dr. Flores, many Hispanics are reluctant to be involved in helping or volunteering.
- Reading is considered an economically and financially distressed city (thanks to the school district's taxes) run mostly by White Dutch/German descendants who do not want to see minorities in any kind of power position.
- In order for Latinos to successfully assimilate into life in the U.S., community-learning centers designed to meet their unique needs are essential to their success. However, these centers must be staffed by bilingual/bicultural staff who is qualified to continually challenge, improve and adjust its services to meet the demands of the global work environment.
- There are tons of services and ways to access services. Parents need to be aware of services available in the educational system. An overall lack of information cripples the Latino community.
- Would be willing to volunteer to help Latinos.

- He tried to work with Jonathan E. but was not successful in connecting. Mr. A. offered to help and J.E. never called him. He will work with community through radio and newspaper (El Hispano). The Hispanic Center should but doesn't work toward uniting the community. The Latino community needs to be educated about the larger community as well as the Hispanic Center's function. Most people know J.E. but nothing about the organization structure and services.
- Hispanic Center should change their name to Latino Center.
- Education for Latino children. Do something to motivate them.
- The Hispanic Center is doing a great job--needs more funding to provide expanded services.
- If the Latinos could understand... education is the key to progress and participation in community life.
- Lack of knowledge. If Latinos could be made aware of what's available, they would partake and perhaps prosper.
- Agencies that provide services to Latinos should form a task force to enable collaboration/coordination of services.
- They should consider that improving the conditions of Latinos benefits all of the community.
- It would be good if the Hispanic Center could expand services and collaborate with other organizations to bring more to the Latino community.
- Something needs to be done to better the communication to the Latino community.
- Latinos should do something to get ahead, go to school, etc.
- All services to Hispanics should have bilingual personnel with strong Spanish language skills. Each agency should have personnel from the Latino groups/countries represented in Reading population.
- In local politics Latinos need to be taught how to vote and where to vote--very, very important!
- It would be good to have a newsletter--also the "outing" was a good thing.
- Latinos should be united regardless of culture. The racist practices of the larger community need to stop. Opportunities for Latinos need to open up.
- What needs to be done is to not make programs by and for the majority and then expect Hispanics to fit the program.
- Need to develop avenues of participation for middle class Latinos to contribute--not all Latinos need social services.
- Lack of unification in the Latino community--political arena--grave lack of participation really damages the people. I am willing to help. Call on me.
- Latinos don't like to help each other and that needs to change.
- Unity among Latinos is missing and needed--especially among Puerto Ricans. I give to the Center via the United Way.
- Latinos need to be more active in the political system and participate by voting.
- There should be more opportunity to enter the political and professional life of the community.
- Latinos need to get involved in the political process--locally and statewide. There is little/no acknowledgment of Latino accomplishments and contributions to the community.
- Workshops and/or local TV programs that would teach Latinos about the law, rights of individuals, the way local and state governments work, and laws and rules of society that pertains to everyday survival.
- School system -- the Latino children are not a priority. The school system is highly political.
- Latinos need to learn to collaborate and unite across cultures, not undermine.
- We should work at improving the opinion of "others" about all Latinos and improve the attitudes of Latinos towards being a part of the larger society.
- In our schools 52% of student population is of Latino origin; however, only 1% of Latinos are members of teaching/administration staff.

- This survey of the Latino community is needed. I'm glad it's being done and hope it will bring positive progress

Other Comments - Agencies

- They will not have any growth if they do not become involved as leaders responsible for their own change/growth. I become frustrated making decisions which affect them without any input from them.
- Latinos need more unity and organization. Education and economic power are access to political influence.
- BAN has struggled with the bicultural dilemma for some time. Many staff members have participated in community services and have seen the rewards and the consequences of providing Spanish language services. We believe it extremely important to have culturally appropriate services.
- Bilingual skills need to be stressed. Need for opportunity for positive interaction. Build on strength and abilities to encourage motivation, education and to improve status.
- When there was a multi-service center for all low-income people (with Spanish translator) only a few Latinos used the services. Penn State Cooperative had participated, but would hesitate to try again. It closed due to lack of clients.
- The best route to progress is assimilation, which does not mean abandonment of family traditions. Education, family stability, self-discipline and permanency have been the keys to a sometimes unnoticed growth in the Latino middle classes.
- We need more role models in the Latino population. There are some outstanding people presently, but it would be helpful to have more to show Latinos that Latinos can make a positive difference in the community.
- While there are some focal Latino leaders, we need to be better represented in local politics. Hispanic Center receives the spotlight for any happenings in Latino community, good or bad. Need to get other focal non-Latino people to participate in program.
- People who are placed in human service positions and remain for a long period usually look down on others applying for benefits, negative attitudes are often displayed to clients, applicants are given a hard time during application.
- Latino community is afraid to come out of the system that they are used to.
- Service providers need to go into the community to provide services and educate.
- Latinos in community will feel much better once they conquer first obstacle -- education.
- I have some suspicion that the Latino population would be better served by integrating services rather than segregating them.
- I hear with the new census that 50% of Reading is Latino. Addressing their needs is very important. We are all foreigners to this country and those able to address the issues need to remember this.
- It appears, from my contact at Ames distribution center, that many need education on health awareness and we do have the ability to change the future of our health.
- I would like to see more interest on the part of the Latino population in vocational rehab. I would also like more information on figures of Latino population in Berks including breakdown of Cubans, Mexicans, etc.
- Need to address language issues, education system issues, social division issues amongst different types of Latinos, and lack of political involvement & representation.

Hispanic Center Client Interviews

Methodology

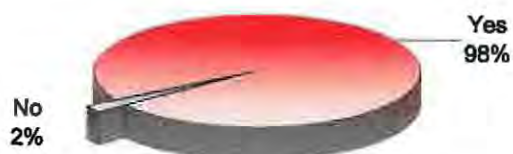
To assess the satisfaction of clients and the effectiveness of the Center's services, telephone interviews were conducted with clients utilizing a random sampling from the Hispanic Center Social Services program client database. In the selection process, preference was given to clients who had visited the center multiple times rather than those who had been to the center only once. The selection was made from a database of clients who had been served by the center between 1998 and 2000 in order to base the assessment on current management and services being provided. This was an especially significant criterion since so many administrative, management and programmatic changes had taken place since 1998. 101 telephone interviews were completed from a database of 1500. Telephone interviews were conducted utilizing a survey which focused on questions concerning the level of client satisfaction with services provided and referrals made. In addition, respondents were given the opportunity to comment on how services or conditions could be improved to address Latino needs.

Last Time Client Used Center Services

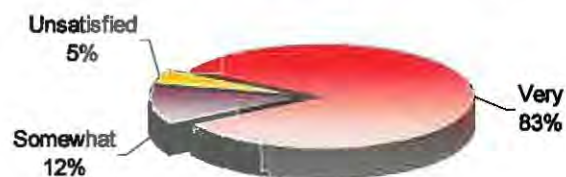


Satisfaction with Service

Received Services Needed

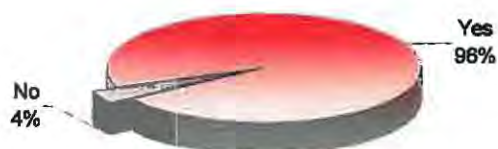


Satisfaction With Service Received



Client respondents overwhelmingly expressed satisfaction with the treatment and service they received from Center personnel. Comments regarding their level of satisfaction included: Employees very attentive; Center employees are "good people"; received help with all my problems to comments like that from a senior participating in the Hispanic Center's Program for Seniors: "I like to visit the center".

Referred to Other Service



Satisfaction With Referral



94% of clients surveyed had been referred to another agency/service during one of their visits. Referrals were made to Welfare, Housing, Employment, Hospital or Medical services, Food Banks, Food Stamps, SSI, education, schools, English classes, counseling, D&A rehab, medicine/PACE, child care, emergency financial help for utilities, child support, immigration, legal services, shelter, Social Security, and the WIC program.

Criticism Regarding Service

- Were kept waiting a long time
- Had to wait too long
- Had to wait more than one hour to be seen.
- Called various times and was kept waiting to be seen.
- Was kept waiting.
- The Center employees were too busy and I had to wait a long time to be seen
- Center hard to find.
- Had to go 3 times. Felt it could have been resolved in 1 visit
- Thought they would provide financial help with the purchase of a house
- Housing referral: Thought there would be more help and wished that the process were faster. Felt the center did its job well, but housing agency was slow.
- Did not find him a good job
- Center employee translated court papers and later someone else said they were not correctly translated.
- Welfare referral-treated badly by DPW worker
- Had to go twice because couldn't be seen the first time

Client Comments and Suggestions

Client Respondents Key Community Issues

Lack of Bilingual Agency Workers	34.1%
Transportation	22.0%
Lack of Supermarket	16.5%
Affordable Housing	14.3%
More English Language Classes	4.4%
Center Location & Space	4.4%
Employment	4.4%

Suggestions/Comments

Lack of Bilingual Agency Workers

The primary suggestion for improving services for Latinos was the addition of more bilingual and Latino employees in other agencies. The following agencies/offices were specifically identified: Social Security, Welfare, Housing, city government offices, hospitals, social services, and the Probation and Parole office. It was stated that with more Latino employees in other agencies it wouldn't be necessary to constantly seek translation services from the Hispanic Center. They also stated that they often have to take an interpreter to appointments and there is also a lack of confidentiality. In addition, clients identified the need for bilingual lawyers and doctors, more Latino teachers, more Spanish language drug and alcohol programs. Clients also stated that agencies should provide handouts and forms in Spanish.

Transportation

The need for better public transportation was the second most identified need by client respondents. Comments included the need for better public transportation to jobs for different shifts, that none was

available when one gets out of work or school late, the need to provide public transportation at night, that well paying jobs are some distance away and there is no transportation to them especially on second and third shifts. A system of public vehicles that take people to specific places was suggested.

Lack of Supermarket

The need for a downtown supermarket that provides the foods and condiments specific to the Puerto Rican diet and also the diet of other local groups such as Mexicans and Dominicans was the third most important concern identified by client respondents. Their comments included: Supermarkets too far from center of city; few places to buy food near center of city; have to walk too far to go food shopping; the need for a Latino supermarket, the bodegas (corner stores) are too expensive while fruits/vegetables there have little variety and are sometimes not fresh; need convenient and inexpensive place to shop for food and fresh fruit; No supermarket nearby, the local grocery stores are expensive.

Affordable Housing

The issue of affordable housing was fourth among the top concerns of the client respondents. Issues identified were the need for affordable housing in general and affordable housing for seniors in particular; that the wait for low cost government housing was so long other affordable housing opportunities need to be made available.

More English Language Classes

Client respondents identified the need for more availability of ESL classes for adults in terms of location and schedule.

Center Location and Space

At the time of the interviews the center was located in the lower basement of 501 Washington Street, space was limited and there was no visible signage on the building indicating the location of the center. Client comments about the Center facility included: location should be changed, hard to find; needs more space; needs to be more visible and bigger; needs to have more services and be more visible; should be located at street level so it will be easier to find. While still at the same location, the Center has since expanded its space significantly and its main office is now located on the main floor street level with a visible and signed street level entrance.

Employment

Additional services related to finding employment was also identified as a critical concern. Comments included the need for an agency specializing in jobs for Hispanics, better paying jobs, and more places to find employment.

Additional Concerns/Comments

The following are additional individual concerns/comments of the client respondents:

- More help for migrants-legal and language.
- Immigration-need local assistance-now have to travel to Philadelphia to resolve issues.
- Legal-no Latino Lawyers.
- Services-more help to locate ex-husbands.
- More help needed for pregnant women.
- Recreation-more places needed.
- After center closes nothing available for seniors.

- Services-more programs for seniors.
- Help for assembly line workers (i.e. immigration, English classes, etc).
- Childcare problems.
- Childcare-no accessible childcare where Spanish is spoken.
- Respondent said he experienced much discrimination and abuse as an assembly line worker.
- Education-more information needed for university students re: scholarships, tutoring, English, etc.
- Childcare-no accessible childcare where Spanish is spoken.
- Respondent said he experienced much discrimination and abuse as an assembly line worker.
- Education-more information needed for university students re: scholarships, tutoring, English, etc.

Migrant Mushroom Workers Survey

Methodology

As a unique and significant Reading/Berks Latino subgroup, face-to-face interviews were held with mushroom farm workers to ascertain their concerns, possible service needs and perspective of the Hispanic Center. Interviews were conducted at a local mushroom farm and a worker profile was provided by a key Latino leader with 20 years of experience working with this population and in a management position at the mushroom farm. The workers are primarily Mexican (97%) and the remainder are Puerto Rican, Dominican and Central American. 95% live in the city of Reading and the remaining 5% live in the outskirts of the city. Workers are primarily male (84%) and they range in age from mid-twenties to early forties. They are primarily year-round workers. The majority is not English language dominant. The company provides a Spanish language employee's handbook, benefits booklet and safety information, and hold bilingual employee meetings.

In the community this group is primarily involved with their church and peripherally involved with the schools their children attend. They attend school programs and sports activities in which their children participate and meet with teachers when necessary.

Respondent Demographics

Fifteen face-to-face interviews were held with migrant mushroom farm workers at a local mushroom farm. All were of Mexican descent despite a random selection of interviewees. 11 of the 15 interviewees were in their thirties, the others were 28, 40, 41 and 50. Fourteen of the fifteen interviewees are full-year residents and one is a part-time resident spending 6-8 months out of the year in Berks County.

Gender



Who They Live With



How Long in Berks



Like Living in Reading/Berks



Living in Reading

Likes

14 of 15 interviewees indicated they liked living in Reading/Berks and when asked what they liked about living in the area their comments were relative to three distinct areas. 1) What they perceived as a better quality of life for themselves and their families. Their comments included better utilities and community services than in Mexico; you can get whatever you need (food, product, services); recreational activities; and time to rest due to getting out of work early. 2) More job opportunities/availability, 3) Better educational opportunities and the availability of support and recreational activities such as summer programs sports, nearby schools, and child protection laws.

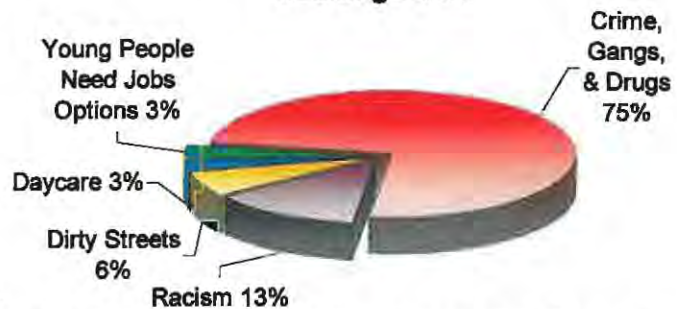
What Interviewees like about living in Reading/Berks



Dislikes

When asked what they disliked about living in Reading, crime, gangs, and drugs represented the overwhelming concern comprising 75% of the responses to this question. The issue of drugs was seen as interwoven into the crime issues. Recurring comments referred to crime, gangs, vandalism, violence, and drugs. Comments included: some areas of Reading are dangerous for children and adults; dangerous at night; my neighborhood is OK but other areas are bad -- cannot go out at night; violence in the streets, fearful for children, wish there was more vigilance of children in school and streets by authorities; Gangs hanging out on corners -- American gangs both black and white; violence/robbery/crime; drugs -- concern for children; can't go out because of the drug problem -- too much, too dangerous; don't want children to attend Reading High School because of gangs and violence; the rowdiness in the streets at night in the city.

What Interviewees dislike about living in Reading/Berks



The second highest concern was the issue of discrimination and racism with specific reference to police discrimination against Latinos followed by concern over dirty streets and poor garbage pickup. Lastly mentioned were the issues of daycare being a problem for Latinos and idle young people loitering in the streets without jobs, skills, or benefits.

Problems Faced by Migrants Coming to Reading/Berks

Employment Issues/Availability	23%
Language Barrier	17%
Transportation	14%
Housing	14%
Don't know where to get help	11%
Racism	9%
Cultural/Value Differences	6%
Not knowing anyone	6%

When asked what problem migrants face who come to the area to work, respondents identified the eight issues identified above. Comments included:

- Employment -- finding jobs and finding jobs that pay fairly; some employers abusive -- treat workers that are illegal unfairly; if you come without papers it is difficult to get work; males dominate and are favored in obtaining work although it is better for women than it used to be; workplace training needed -- difficult to learn how to do the job.
- Language barrier -- not knowing English; cannot communicate.
- Transportation -- transportation problems -- not enough info available about public transportation.
- Housing -- finding housing is difficult if you don't have relatives here already; finding housing is a problem for migrants.
- Don't know where to get help --there isn't sufficient information available to let newcomers know what is available in terms of assistance and things such as transportation; difficulty in knowing what assistance is available -- where to go for help; I have helped newcomers with a referral to Rural Opportunities and letting a family live with me for a month.
- Racism -- discrimination/racism, they do not want us; finding job difficult due to racism; when you get a job, Mexicans get less pay.
- Cultural/Value Differences -- adjusting to lifestyle here; the change in moral values; it's different from Mexico spiritually. In Mexico there is more humaneness and unity, love for family and friends.
- Not knowing anyone -- not knowing anyone is difficult; if you know someone they can help you find work; difficult not being with other Mexicans to help one another.

Suggestions for Services Needed

Services Suggested for Assist Migrants Coming to the Area

1. Provide information on help available

Comments: provide support by giving info on where to go for help; need more information about what services are available in Reading to help newcomers; find a better way of informing the people on what services are available and where; TV could be used to announce/give information. Newspapers can list agencies, services, churches names and phone numbers.

2. Assist newcomers with basic needs.

Comments: help with food and housing for newcomers; provide temporary help until they are on their feet; assistance with money for food for newcomers; Help with money for housing (deposit and first month rent difficult when you first get here); Housing, clothing, jobs, food, transportation for newcomers.

3. Employment Assistance

Comments: job opportunities; job search assistance that is better than temp agencies to help find permanent jobs at better pay; there should be no discrimination on the job, just fair/equal treatment for all.

4. Transportation options needed

Comments: Transportation for work; transportation is a problem for jobs, shopping, etc. Taxis are too expensive; provide support by taking people to places to get help.

5. Language

Comments: Interpreters needed at doctor's, lawyer's, etc. Perhaps retired people could help in this; English classes at night for workers.

Comments/Suggestions for Improving Conditions for Latinos in Reading

1. Language Barrier and Access to Services Issues

- Need more interpreters at hospital.
- Not speaking English is a real problem when going to the hospital and government agencies because they don't have interpreters.
- Interpreters are needed--children have to be taken out of school to interpret for parents.
- Interpreters in the hospital, schools, and other organizations. In health care this is critical--lack of English is a problem with care especially for the children.
- Poor, slow service at the hospital (St Joseph). Lack of info on private doctors and if you go, no interpreter, the same in stores.
- Poor service from clinic on 6th Street. Long waiting period, when you go for appointment.
- There is no time to learn English because of having to work.
- The Hispanic Center should have teachers to teach English.

2. Racism and Discrimination

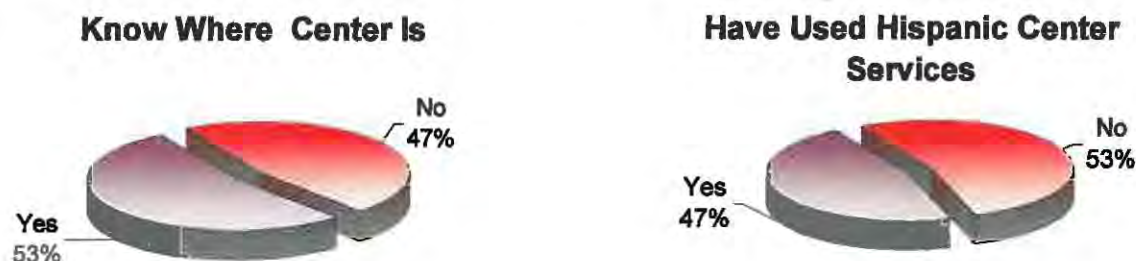
- Racism is a great problem.
- Discrimination in stores where the personnel does not want to help Hispanic customers (i.e. Radio Shack).
- Housing is a problem. Landlords sometimes do not want to rent to Hispanics due to fear and cultural differences.
- Police treat Hispanics terribly. They're abusive.

3. Transportation is a problem.

4. Daycare needs to be nearer to workplace.

5. Counseling should be available for children of workers to prevent them from joining gangs and being influenced by bad elements.
6. It's difficult to get work documents (immigration issues).
7. Problem acquiring driver's license so many forms and types of identification required.

Interaction with Hispanic Center



Comments about experience with Center

- Used center years ago for help with telephone installation--was treated well.
- Went one time but wasn't helped.
- Last year sought assistance with heating because they were out of work. They were helped and treated well.
- Lost some money orders and center helped him fill out forms to retrieve funds. Was treated well. Sister used the center recently several times for some housing repair issues.
- Does not know where it is now--it used to be on 4th Street.
- When she first arrived she needed help but did not know of the center.
- Was helped with electric service installation--was treated well.
- They helped with finding housing but had to go 3 times because the person handling housing was not there. Treated fairly well.

HISPANIC CENTER PROFILE

Fiscal Profile

In 2000 the financial health of the Hispanic Center appears to be soundest it has been in its history. Since its inception, funding has been a critical issue and financial stability elusive. Former staff and board members indicated that, throughout its history and until a few years ago, the inability to make payroll was not unusual incident. Many times a new director assumed his position having inherited a serious financial crisis. In the early 1980s the Center, facing a fiscal crisis, was assisted by State Representative Thomas Caltigirone who provided discretionary state funds at the request of the director. When Marcelino Colon became director he was confronted on the first day with a delinquent tax bill and a fiscal situation that placed the Center in peril of closing. Then mayor, Karen Miller, assisted the Center and with the City's help they managed to survive the crisis. The ongoing support of the City and the United Way helped the Center survive at various times throughout its history and especially in the early years. As new directors came in with new ideas and initiatives the Center continued to grow with funding solicited for new programs and projects but the basic fiscal stability of the organization remained shaky.

Often new initiatives were undertaken without any strategic planning or cost-benefit analysis regarding its overall impact on the organization. In 1996 and 1997 the United Way placed the Center on probationary status under the threat of disaffiliation if they did not achieve satisfactory status within the maximum two-year probationary period. When, in the latter part of 1997, the Center had yet to resolve its fiscal, management and program issues, it was confronted with the serious possibility of being disaffiliated and losing United Way support. This was a turning point for the Hispanic Center. Determined not to allow the Center to go under, a core group of board members decided it was time to critically evaluate the shortcomings of the Center and the board. In October 1997, they accepted the resignation of Lester A. Ortiz, the director who had headed the Center for the previous year and a half and began the process of self-evaluation and strategic planning. The board added a number of new members to supplement a core group who had remained on the board and to enhance the capabilities and capacities of the board.

The new board held a retreat on December 6, 1997 to review the Council's and Center's current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and develop action steps to stabilize the agency and move forward. They appealed to the United Way to extend their probationary period for up to a maximum of six months based on the Council meeting specific performance criteria within established deadlines. Within the stated six months the Council was able to meet all the requirements set forth by the United Way and was removed from probationary status.

During the following two years the Center made dramatic improvements both programmatically and fiscally. Due to the failed housing program the Center had amassed a large debt. They managed to dispose of the properties and eliminate the vast majority of the debt with only a few loose ends to be addressed in order to completely eliminate the debt from their balance sheet. They conducted an analysis of existing programs and conducted another strategic planning session in 1999 to set policy, goals and objective to more strategically and responsibly plan the direction and growth of the Center. They also moved to a new location, 501 Washington Street, from the location they had occupied for seventeen years, which was cramped and in dire need of physical improvement. A year after their initial move they were able to expand considerably within the new facility enough to provide ample space for all their current programs including the Senior Center, which had been housed at another location, and to allow for some growth. They increased and diversified their funding base.

Their fiscal audit for years ending June 30, 2000 and 1999 indicated that for the year ending June 30, 1999 the organization received approximately 32 percent of its total support from a the United Way and 53% from the Berks County Office of Aging. For the year ending June 30, 2000 19% of the total support came from the United Way and 46% from the Berks County Office of Aging. Of the various programs and service being provided by the Center currently only four remained from 1996 (La Casa de la Amistad, Social Services, Transportation/Interpretation, and the radio/tv programming).

The following chart shows income and expenses during the United Way probationary years and the last two fiscal years. The Center progressed from operating with a deficit each year to having a surplus. In 1999 the Center had net assets of \$95,599. In 2000 their net assets were \$304,416. Based on income to date it is expected that the current fiscal year will continue to show growth.

	2000	1999	1997	1996
Total Revenues and Other Support	\$490,851	\$392,486	\$315,120	\$343,947
Total Expenses	\$420,384	\$309,322	\$348,128	\$349,447

Current Budget

The following is the budget for the fiscal year ending June 2001:

	<u>Revenue</u>	<u>Expenses</u>
Office of Aging	\$ 180,000	\$ 202,438
United Way	\$ 115,600	\$ 118,068
LAOP	\$ 25,544	\$ 5,544
AIDSNET	\$ 18,000	\$ 9,000
County UWBC Admin	\$ 24,700	\$ 0,725
Reading Housing	\$ 29,513	\$ 9,513
SAM	\$ 10,600	\$ 0,600
BCCY In-Home	\$ 120,000	\$ 93,952
Fund Raising Revenue	\$ 25,463	
Rental Income	\$ 3,000	
Total	\$ 553,420	\$ 529,840

Hispanic Center Direct Service Programs and Selected Client Profiles

Social Services and Transportation/Interpretation Programs

Funded by the United Way of Berks County

Social Services

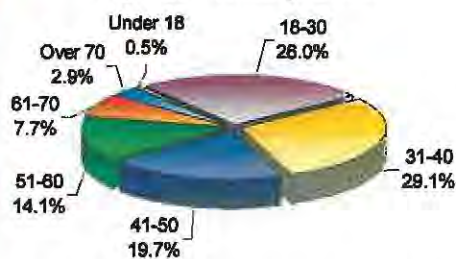
The social services program offers case management, information and referral services, supportive counseling, assistance in filling out applications, looking for work and using public services. Caseworkers conduct needs assessment and provide counseling and service planning. The referral program constitutes the flagship program to the Hispanic Center. One of the key components is the provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate services to assist families and individuals whose access to community resources is limited due to language and/or cultural barriers. The ultimate goal is to assist families with their immediate needs and provide access to programs and services. This program serves as a bridge between mainstream organizations and the Latino population, assisting these organizations in serving this population. Clients are also assisted with the filling out of forms such as applications for SSI, welfare benefits, insurance, social security benefits, housing, and retirement benefits.

Transportation and Interpretation/Translation Services

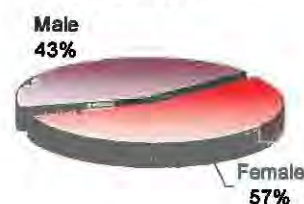
This service provides transportation to and from necessary medical and other needs-related personal appointments as well as interpretation services during the appointment. For more than 11 years, this program continues to be the only one of its kind in Berks County. Currently, it provides transportation to medical facilities all over the state of Pennsylvania. However, it concentrates primarily on institutions such as Hershey Medical Center, Children's Hospital, Dupont Center, VA Hospitals, St. Joseph Hospital, etc. Interpretation/translation services also include scheduling meetings between clients and other community services (i.e., attorneys, accountants) at the Center to facilitate communication between the two parties, translating mail correspondence for clients, and acting as phone translator on behalf of client.

July 6, 88 - July 2, 89	
No. of Unduplicated Clients	1450
No. of Visits	3113
Single Visit	898
More Than One Visit	554
Avg no. of Repeat Visits	5.62
SEEN FOR:	
Forms/Applications/Letters	13%
Phone Call Assistance	13%
Employment Related	10%
Translation	9%
Welfare/Basic Needs	9%
SSI Related	8%
Birth Certificates	7%
Transportation	7%
Housing	4%
IRS	3%
Utilities/Energy App.	3%
SS Related.	2%
Other	14%

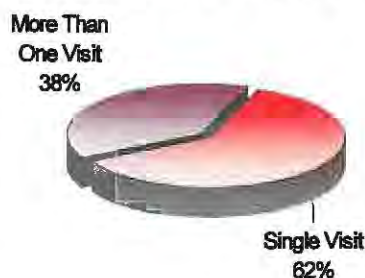
Age of Primary Client



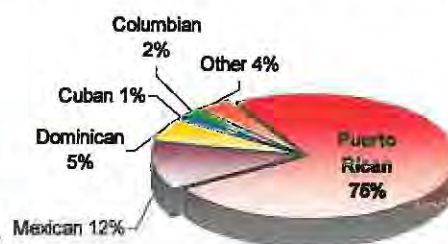
Gender



Client Visits To Hispanic Center



Hispanic Ethnicity of Clients



La Casa de la Amistad

Funded by the Berks County Office of Aging

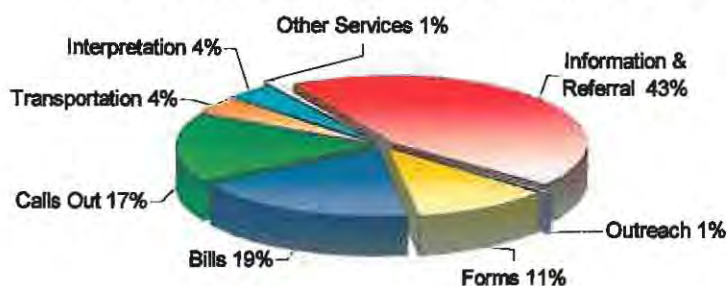
La Casa de la Amistad is a linguistically and culturally appropriate Latino Senior Center program for individuals over 58 years old. It operates from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. It provides social, cultural, recreational, and educational activities, which include weekly English classes. They are also provided with meals that are culturally appropriate and consistent with their lifelong diet.

Daily Senior Center Program

	Jul-98	Aug-98	Sep-98	Oct-98	Nov-98	Dec-98	Jan-99	Feb-99	Mar-99	Apr-99	May-99	Jun-99
# of Clients	81	77	75	78	80	76	75	78	79	81	75	78
#Meals Served	1313	1504	1311	1386	1400	1464	1152	1313	1717	1413	1325	1400
Avg Daily Attendance	62	66	64	68	64	65	67	64	66	65	64	64
# Days Program Met	20	21	20	19	19	21	17	19	23	20	19	21

A social services component tends to their socioeconomic needs. These include case management, transportation, interpretation, and filling out forms for Social Security, welfare, SSI, PACE, rent rebate, and housing. Recreational activities at the Center include dominoes, bingo, music, exercise, arts and crafts, traveling to other centers, field trips, and meeting with other community organizations. Representatives from other organizations make presentations on issues relevant to the health, welfare and special interests of the seniors. They celebrate anniversaries, birthdays, Easter, Christmas, Mother's Day and Father's Day. La Casa de la Amistad was established March 22, 1988, in response to a group of concerned citizens who in the mid 1980's approached the Center expressing a need for this service. Many Latino senior citizens were physically and emotionally isolated with little contact to the outside. While Latino seniors were welcome at existing senior centers, these centers lacked the bilingual personnel and cultural competency to understand and serve the needs of this population. This senior center program is one of the most successful and important components of the services provided by the Hispanic Center. It met and exceeded all original program expectations and in recent years has grown to be one of the most successful and widely used senior centers in Berks County. It currently serves a daily clientele of 65-70 persons.

Services Provided to Seniors Beyond Daily Program



Other Services Provided to Seniors

Information & Referral	813
Walk-in	870
Home Visiting	31
Hospital Visiting	12
Outreach	12
Forms	235
Rent Rebate	36
Pace	6
Soc.Sec	2
Housing	7
Medical/Health	1
Welfare	28
SSI	4
Energy	8
Others	143
Calls Out	390
Telephone	96
Cable	106
Medical	0
Housing	16
Utilities	82
Others	90
Calls Out	344
Transportation	88
Interpretation	76
Other Services	20
Clients	487
Female	312
Male	175

Latino AIDS Outreach Program (LAOP)

Funded through the Council of Spanish Speaking Organizations in Bethlehem

This program uses education as a primary tool to outreach the Latino community in order to create awareness about risky behavior that could lead to AIDS and minimize the risk. The program offers classes about AIDS and HIV to both student and community groups, and individual counseling is available.

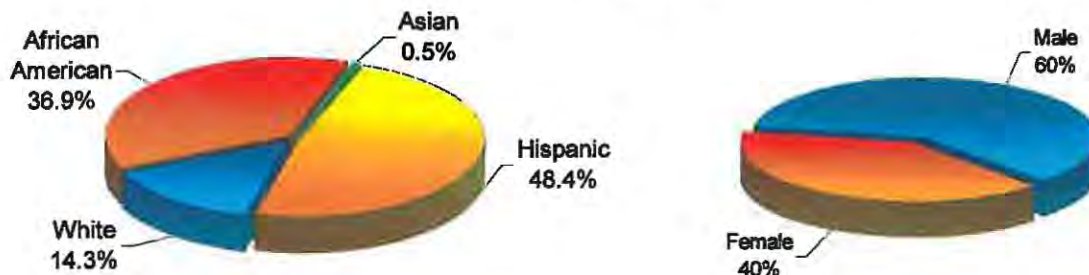
HIV/AIDS Minority Prevention Program

Funded by AIDSNET

This service provides training and "train the trainer" to other local community organizations so that their staffs can become more aware of the issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. As with the LAOP, these funds are used for the prevention of HIV/AIDS infection or its affects and the education of persons at risk. While focused on assuring that Latinos as a high risk population are reached, this program brings AIDS education to the community across racial and cultural boundaries.

AIDS Outreach, Training and Instruction Participants (Jan-Dec 2000)

Total – 8,947



Family "In-Home" Services

Funding from the County through Berks County Children & Youth Services

The Family "In-Home" Services program provides family intervention to ensure the completion of the family assessment plan set forth by the Berks County Children & Youth Services. These services may include parenting training, educational programs in budgeting, hygiene, housekeeping and basic living skills, case management, supportive counseling, transportation, providing supervision during family visits, and translation and interpretation. The Center works with approximately 40 families. This program is billed out on a fee for service basis. The budget figure is an estimate of expected revenue. At time of assessment, billing to date indicated that the funding would likely exceed the estimated revenue of \$120,000 by over \$30,000 bringing the funding to over \$150,000.

Job Readiness

Funded by the Reading Housing Authority and the Housing and Urban Development Agency

The Center works with approximately 80 families residing in the two major housing projects in Reading, Oakbrook and Glenside, to provide counseling, education and referral services to enhance their work skills. The focus is on job readiness and job development in the county of Berks.

Electronic Deposit Outreach

Funded by the Department of Treasury

The Center provides education to the Latino community about electronic deposits as it relates to welfare benefits and Social Security.

Mental Health Outreach Program

Funded through Services and Access Management

Through television and radio the Center coordinates a media campaign to educate the Berks' Latino community about how to access mental health and mental retardation services in the County.

Hispanic Center Indirect Services: Collaborative Partnerships

The Hispanic Center has adopted the policy of establishing collaborative partnerships with other agencies that service the Hispanic population with the goal of increasing the delivery of services in quality and quantity while minimizing the duplication of services. The Center has established following collaborative partnerships:

Reading Area Community College

Weekly ESL (English as a Second Language) classes are provided at the Senior Center. In addition, space is provided for direct recruitment by a RACC representative of individuals in need of ESL, GED classes or post high school education.

Family Guidance Mental Health Services

Rents space and maintains a full-time on-site satellite office to provide counseling and psychiatric services to Latino clients. A Hispanic Center staff member provides translation services for the psychiatrist.

Albright College

Provides airtime to allow the Center to bring the Latino community weekly Spanish language programming, which includes music, general information and a community calendar.

BCTV

Provides airtime to allow the Center to bring the Latino community a monthly TV show showcasing the different issues impacting the Latino community in Reading.

Penn State and Albright College

Gabriela Mistral Charter School Initiative: As one of their collaborative efforts, the Center has currently partnered with Albright College and Penn State University under the Albright/Penn State Partnership to establish a dual language (English and Spanish) to educate 240 students (K-5th grade) from the City of Reading. An independent Board of Trustees comprised of representatives from the sponsoring organizations, parents, and the community at large will be the governing body. The concept hope is that it will be a dual language education program in which students would achieve bilingual proficiency and bilingual literacy in English and their native language. The charter school will use the same curriculum as the Reading School District but will deliver the curriculum in both English and Spanish. The goal will be to achieve academic performance at or above grade level in both languages.

Council on Chemical Abuse and Berks County Television

This partnership provides a comprehensive tobacco prevention media campaign targeted specifically to the Berks' Latino population.

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

This agency operates from the Hispanic Center once per week and provides supportive services to individuals in need of vocational training.

Pennsylvania Counseling Services

This collaborative provides access to drug and alcohol services to the Latino community in Berks county.

Project C.A.R.E. (Children At Risk in Education)

The Hispanic Center provides the funds for an after school program targeted to at risk youth in three elementary schools within the Reading School District.

Proposed Collaboratives

Community First Fund: Micro-lending Program

I-LEAD: Berks Hispanic Leadership Institute (BHLI)

BCTV: Low power radio network

Pennsylvania Association of Latino Organizations (PALO): Bilingual education network.

PA Migrant education INEA program: Adult literacy program targeted to migrant families.

United Way of Berks County: "Weed and Seed" Program

Oley Institute and USDA: Spanish Market

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The issues and recommendations addressed in this section concentrate on the central focus of this study, which is the role of the Hispanic Center of Reading and Berks. The study focused on the following questions:

1. How can the Hispanic Center enhance its capacity as an agent of change?
2. How can the Hispanic Center best meet the needs of its most important stakeholders?
3. What roles are realistic for the Hispanic Center to assume given the realities of nonprofit funding?
4. With its small budget and staff, the Hispanic Center cannot be all things to all people. How should it proceed?

In addition to addressing the above, some select initiatives are identified which address some critical community concerns. For some of these initiatives, the Hispanic Center's role is primarily a collaborative/advisory one and possibly one of organizer, bringing together those institutions in the community that are best able to provide the services required.

1. Defining the Role of the Hispanic Center

1.1 Issue

There is little doubt that the Hispanic Center of Reading and Berks is an essential organization in the community. It is overwhelmingly viewed as the primary agency serving the Latino community of Reading and Berks. It is also seen as the one agency that can significantly help to positively impact the social, political, educational, and economic status of this population. This perception has motivated key individuals to help the Center survive fiscal, management, and programmatic crises throughout its history. It is generally believed that, historically, the Center has yet to effectively use its potential to make a significant political impact, harness the potential of the local Latino leadership, or serve as a unifying force to bring the various elements of the community together to significantly impact the long term progress of the Latino population. It has functioned primarily as a reactive rather than a proactive organization in addressing Latino needs. Traditionally, its funding base has been focused on the provision of services to meet basic survival needs. There has been an expectation that it should be a more proactive political leader and voice of the community.

The issue of leadership, political activism, and advocacy vs. the provision of services to meet basic needs is related to the historical confusion and merging of the roles of the Spanish Speaking Council of Reading and Berks, and the Hispanic Center of Reading and Berks. In 1966, the Spanish Speaking Council was originally established to bring together the various elements of the Latino community to serve as a proactive advocacy organization and as a voice representative of the diverse Latino community.

As it took on the role of activist, putting pressure on local systems, government and organizations, the Council came to realize the existing organizations lacked the cultural and linguistic skills to address the needs of this population; that the segment of the population most in need required assistance to understand and maneuver the system, and that some needed services were not available. As a result the Council saw the need for the establishment of an organization that went beyond advocacy/activism and could provide some direct client services that would address some of the immediate needs for Latino individuals and families in crisis.

When, through their advocacy efforts, they succeeded in the establishment of the Hispanic Center, they also decided to accept the role of governing body of the Center to assure the organization would fulfill the role they envisioned. The Council saw their role as governing body as just one of their functions and failed to envision that their role as the board of the Center would eclipse their role as an activist organization

representative of the various segments of the Latino community. But in fact, they could not effectively serve both roles. By becoming the board of the Center, they not only compromised their ability to be an organization representative of the views of the various other Latino interest groups, and their role as activists involved in controversial issues, it also caused the Center to open advancing the illusion it could be all things to all people.

The public did not separate the function of the Council from the function of the Center. This certainly put undue pressure on those individuals who took on the role of executive director of the Center. The Center executive director was hired to manage the Center and its programs but he or she automatically assumed the role of community activist and voice of the people. With some executive directors this role overshadowed their effective management of the organization. Karen Rightmire of the United Way aptly identified the expectation of the Center being "all things to all people" as a critical issue in 1997 when the Center was under probationary status in peril of being disaffiliated from the United Way. She stated that the problems of the Center began when it was first established and *"any problem that came up in the Latino community, the rest of the community expected the Hispanic Center to be involved. The expectation was for a small agency to meet the needs of thousands and thousands of people. I'm not sure any one organization can do that."* That expectation continued throughout its history.

The current director feels the pressure of these expectations. According Jonathan Encarnación, *"Part of what continues to hurt the Center are unrealistic expectations from community members as well as clients. For instance, the Center is never viewed in the context of other not-for-profit organizations. We are considered to be the 'de facto everything' that is related to the Latino community. If you compare other organizations such as the Police Athletic League or Latino Social Services, they do not have the same pressures that we do."* Mr. Encarnación provided the following as examples of some of these expectations that place undue pressure on the organization because they cannot be met with the current staffing and capabilities:

- Requests to provide demographic data to businesses that want to establish themselves in Reading.
- Responsibility for the recruitment of professional Latinos to other boards and to fill city or state positions.
- Expected to get involved in politically charged issues that affect the Latino community (i.e. race relations, elections, etc).
- Center's staff and director are expected to represent "Latinos" on other boards due to the lack of participation by the Latino community.
- Many clients rely on the Center for elementary needs such as looking up a telephone number in the phone book.
- Clients are often dissatisfied when needs are not met because the Center does not provide the particular service or assistance they are requesting.
- Many not-profit organizations expect the Center to help them reach the Latino community because of their own lack of bicultural/bilingual staff. Examples are Easter Seals, American Red Cross, Cultural Collaborative, AIM, St. Joseph Hospital and many others.
- State and Federal organizations expect the Center to intervene to correct problems in Berks and PA (i.e. EPA program for equal justice, Department of Labor, Housing and Urban Development, etc.).
- Reading's city council president calling on the Hispanic Center to solve the problems of Latino gangs with pit bulls, trash, crime and other issues.

As part of its recent self-evaluation and strategic planning process, the board came to the conclusion that the Spanish Speaking Council of Reading and Berks and the Hispanic Center should separate and become independent entities so each could fulfill the roles for which they were intended. Along those lines, within the last year the Hispanic Center established its own 501c3 status. Formerly it operated under the 501c3 status of the Spanish Speaking Council.

1.2 Recommendations

1.2.1 Clarification of the role of the Hispanic Center and the development of a unifying and representative Latino community advocacy organization.

The Spanish Speaking Council has moved in a positive direction by seeking to separate the role of the Hispanic Center from the role of the Spanish Speaking Council and by seeking to redefine, internally and publicly, the role of the Hispanic Center and its limitations, especially from advocacy and political perspectives. The Center should continue its advocacy in the form of serving as an educational and organizing entity. It should assist community individuals to develop the knowledge base and leadership skills necessary to understand, maneuver and become participants in the institutions that affect their lives and those of their children. It should also continue working and collaborating with other organizations to help improve the quality of social services to this population.

It is also crucial there be an organization separate and independent of the Center that represents the various sectors and interest groups within the Latino community and that is seen as the central community issues advocacy group. The primary role of this organization is to challenge the systems that affect the social, political, economic, and educational status of Latinos in Berks County, and when necessary take controversial stands and sometimes confrontational actions to address critical concerns.

Although the concept of the separation of roles is a positive organizational step, the Spanish Speaking Council has been so historically enmeshed with the Center that the names Hispanic Center and Spanish Speaking Council have come to be used interchangeably and are seen as one entity, which in reality is what they became. In separating itself from the Center to return to its original mandate to serve as a representative advocacy organization, the Spanish Speaking Council will face an extremely difficult task making that separation in the minds of the community at large and the various institutions that affect the lives of Latinos in Berks.

It is recommended that the Council achieve this objective by establishing an organization under a new name, for example the *Reading and Berks Latino Advocacy Task Force*. It should be promoted as a new entity seeking to serve as an umbrella organization that brings together and represents the diverse voices of the Berks/Reading Latino community. The Hispanic Center would be only one of these voices. All local Latino groups, churches, community activists, et al, should be invited to be a part of this organization. Establishing a Hispanic Center Board of Directors should eliminate the confusion of the Hispanic Center vs. the Spanish Speaking Council. The *Hispanic Center Board of Directors* would no longer be an entity that also functions as an independent organization. In essence the Spanish Speaking Council would be eliminated and its function would separate, forming two new and distinct entities.

1.2.2 The development of a model Hispanic Center with a two prong approach to address the basic needs of the population and impact the long-term socioeconomic progress of the population

Most Hispanic centers in local grassroots Latino communities were created for the primary purpose of impacting the socioeconomic status of the Latino population, which was dire for a significant segment of the

population. Serving as an advocate voice to promote Latino interests was also a role that these types of centers played due to the lack of Latino representation in local government, agencies and institutions. Unfortunately, due to funding realities and staff limitations, most centers became reactive rather than proactive organizations primarily focused on providing services to meet the immediate and basic needs of the neediest segment of the population. Initially the needs of the community guided their direction but later as funding dollars in the human service sector became much more competitive, they, like many mainstream agencies became caught up in the pursuit of funding for the survival of the organization. In many cases it became a case of the "tail wagging the dog". Pursuing funds had little to do with any level of strategic planning and was guided more by seeking whatever type of funding was available. As a result, they were willing to develop programs in whatever funding area was available whether or not they had any expertise in that area. This sometimes led to duplication of services and little coordination with existing organizations or programs to determine the best way to develop quality services for the client. Also, caught up with organizational survival, the broader issue of impacting the long-term socioeconomic status of the local Latino population was not being addressed. For the Hispanic Center of Reading and Berks this lack of strategic planning or fiscal analysis of the impact of new programs contributed to a precarious fiscal situation.

After twenty-three years of existence, the Hispanic Center of Reading and Berks County has taken an important step now in seeking to move beyond organizational survival and basic needs service provision. The Center is looking at developing programs that will have a positive long-term impact on the socioeconomic status of the population while operating in a fiscally responsible manner. It will take a two-prong approach to meeting the needs of the Latino population in Reading and Berks.

Service Provision Component

The first is the Service Provision Component for the continued provision of necessary services to meet the immediate needs of individuals and families at risk or in crisis. As part of their strategic planning, the Center is seeking to redefine its role as a service provider by taking an approach to maximize collaboration with existing services to minimize the duplication of efforts, to effectively coordinate the delivery of services to Latinos, and deliver services in a cost effective way. The Center will take a coordinated services approach in which they will serve as the primary coordinating agency for the provision of services to the Latino community. It will continue to provide a basic core of direct services which are needed by the Latino population and which are not effectively being provided by any other organization, and will "forge partnerships with other organizations to maximize on the concept of *Capitalization on Collaboration*." The type of collaboration developed with other local organizations will be specific to the type of service being provided. In some cases the collaborating agency will provide services on-site using the Hispanic Center facility. In others, the primary service will be delivered at another location to which the Center will refer clients. Some collaborations will provide specific support to agencies that will enhance their ability to serve Latino clients. Descriptions of the core services and the current and pending collaborations are identified in the Agency Profile chapter.

In looking to the concept of the development of this coordinated services system and how many agencies would be interested in collaborating with the Hispanic Center, agencies surveyed were asked if they would be interested in becoming part of a group of different agencies coming together at one location to form a bilingual and bicultural centralized services center providing services to Latino clients. 70% indicated "Yes" or

Agencies Interested in Collaboration



"Not Sure". Some agency respondents indicated that they needed to know more about the collaboration before deciding.

Community and Leadership Development Component

The second component would be a Community Leadership and Community Development Component. This component is currently in the planning stages. The Community Leadership Development Component will focus on the development of programs that will seek to impact the social, economic, educational and political status of Latinos in Reading and Berks from a long-term perspective by addressing the local crisis of leadership. It would build a cultural knowledge base within mainstream institutions seeking to serve this population. Latino, Non-Latino and Agency survey respondents all identified the need for community, political, and leadership development as one of the most serious issues impacting Latinos. The critical problems they identified were the lack of political representation, clout and participation in the political process. Respondents indicated that Latinos generally lacked an understanding of the political process, lacked awareness of their power, did not have visible leaders and role models. The current leadership is seen as fragmented, with Latino groups and leaders seen as lacking unity and cohesion. They identified the need for community, political, and leadership development as one of the top services needed in the Latino community. Suggestions included the integration of Latinos into government including onto boards and committees to achieve political representation, educating the community about city government, voter registration efforts, leadership development programs including non-partisan political training focused on understanding government and political systems; training for Latino corporate, business and civic leaders and grassroots community members, mentoring programs with the inclusion of Latino role models, cultural competency training and cultural events to build knowledge and understanding between Latino and mainstream community members.

Throughout the history of Latinos in Reading and Berks, Latino leaders and leadership efforts have come and gone. While some progress has been made there exists no community infrastructure that maintains and builds on past efforts of Latinos. The individuals who have emerged as community leaders over the years were a combination of grassroots and professional individuals who, for the most part, had little organizational, leadership and political experience or training. This is true of many of the Latino individuals in local communities who take on significant leadership roles because of their desire to help address the inequities and critical needs confronting this disenfranchised population. Unfortunately, as new individuals come on the scene they are usually starting from scratch rather than building on past efforts or working from an already established knowledge base. This component will seek to provide an entity to coordinate efforts and develop the skills necessary to significantly improve the odds for success. The Hispanic Center Community Leadership and Community Development Component will build on the old adage of "If you give someone a fish you will feed him or her for a day, but teach someone to fish and you will feed them for a lifetime."

The Hispanic Center is currently planning to create a Leadership Institute serving the region's Hispanic communities. They are seeking to partner with the Institute for Leadership Education (I-LEAD), a recognized regional leadership training program serving grass roots community leaders in many communities in Southeastern Pennsylvania. The Center is working with I-LEAD to create a Leadership component specific to the needs of Latino communities. The Center is currently exploring funding options for this initiative.

If successful, the Hispanic Center of Reading and Berks will have created a Center that could serve as a model for the development of Hispanic Centers in other similar local Latino communities throughout the Commonwealth.

1.2.3 Address administrative and staffing issues that impact performance and perception of Center professionalism

Perception of Center efficiency and professionalism is impacted by the fact that current staff is overwhelmed and the Center is understaffed. The ability of the Center to respond to community demands can only be addressed by adequate staffing. The Center executive director is currently seen as unavailable and unresponsive due to his inability to meet the numerous demands as the Center's CEO while also managing day-to-day operations and serving as fundraiser and grant writer. If the Center is to develop and move forward, the addition of an assistant director, whose primary function is to oversee the day-to-day operations, and a resource development person, to expand the funding base within the parameters of the strategic plan of the center, should be considered. The Center's computerized and record keeping database needs to be updated to increase accuracy but existing staff cannot meet this need. Further assessment should be done to assess adequate staffing from both a quality and quantity perspective.

1.2.4 Development of a public relations campaign to improve perception and increase knowledge of the role/services of the Hispanic Center.

While the Hispanic Center is making significant progress as an organization, many of the current perceptions in the community are colored by past experiences. In order for the Center to achieve its goal of changing expectations regarding the role of the Center and developing a level of confidence and trust in serving as a coordinating body to impact the development of community leadership, a public relations strategy should be developed and implemented. This will also address the fact that many mainstream professionals have little knowledge of the services the Center provides.

2. Improving Access to Existing Services

2.1 Issue

The need for more access to services was identified and placed high among the top services needed for Latinos in Reading and Berks. Issues of bilingual staffing, cultural competency, and outreach were identified. In addition, among the various survey groups, the need for information on available services was identified as a concern. Mushroom workers interviewed indicated that more information was needed about where to go for help and what services are available in Reading to help newcomers. They stated that better ways of providing this information should be explored and suggested that the TV could be used to announce/give information and newspapers could list available services and the names and phone numbers of agencies and churches.

2.2 Recommendations

2.2.1 Organize a Latino Coordinated Human Services Committee

The Hispanic Center could take the lead in the establishment of a committee which would bring together local agencies and organizations interested in meeting on a regular basis to enhance their capabilities and develop ways to best address the needs of Latino clients. They could share information on programs and services available, on job opening information and seek assistance in recruiting more bilingual/bicultural staff. They could also plan staff development activities related to culturally competent service provision.

2.2.2 Develop a bilingual Community Services Informational Booklet

A bilingual community services informational booklet specific to Latino needs should be developed for distribution to Latino community members. This booklet can provide information on local services including government agencies, human service organizations, schools, special programs, utilities, housing, etc. It should include contact information and indicate the availability of Spanish language staff contacts and should be

widely distributed to places where it would be most accessible to Latinos populations including workplaces, schools, agencies, etc.

3. Poverty and Delinquency

3.1 Issue

The issue of crime and delinquency emerged as a major issue of concern for all the target groups surveyed and interviewed. Respondents e

xpressed concern over the growing number of gangs and the increase in crime, especially that of drug trafficking, which result in unsafe neighborhoods for families and children. The issue of crime and delinquency cannot be separated from the issue of poverty since its relationship is one of cause and effect. As the demographic data indicated, a significantly disproportionate percentage of Latino families (43%) live below the poverty level as compared with 4% of White and 23% of African-American families. The result is that 52% of Latino children are living in poverty compared to 7% White and 35% African-American. The consequences of this are dire since the impact is compounded by the fact that the Latino population has a significantly higher number of children. 42% of the Latino population in 1990 was under the age of 18 compared to 21.8% White and 34.6 percent African-American.

When the data was further broken down by Latino subgroups, Puerto Rican households had a much lower median income and a much higher poverty rate than the other Latino groups. But when the data within the Puerto Rican population was examined it indicated a huge economic disparity between married couple families and female-headed households with no husband present with median incomes in 1990 of \$25,994 vs. \$6,000. There is little doubt this disparity is just as true in 2001. The data indicated the Puerto Rican married-couple families had a higher median income than other Latino married-couples families. Among Puerto Ricans the concentration of poverty was overwhelmingly found in female-headed households with no husband present. Female-headed households with no husband present comprise a significant percentage of Puerto Rican families (39%) compared to 10% for Mexican families and 24% for other Latino families. Married-couple families comprised 35% of Puerto Rican families compared to 47% of Mexican families and 51% of other Hispanic families.

Addressing the issue of the feminization of poverty among Latinos and specifically among Puerto Rican families must be a significant priority in attempting to impact the future socioeconomic status of this population. The economic, social and emotional burdens confronting most female-headed single-parent households are overwhelming. Many of these mothers are unable to provide the guidance and support needed to meet the emotional, social and, sometimes, the physical needs of their children. Many who work are often forced to leave their children with little or no guidance or supervision. In addition, the situation is complicated by the lack of positive male role models to play a part in the identity development of these children, especially for boys. There are few, if any, social, economic, educational and emotional support systems to assist single mothers to address issues of the feminization of poverty and its related social consequences. New studies have shown that among the most critical predictors of children at risk for delinquency and criminal activity are family composition and socioeconomic status, with children from female-headed single-parent households at highest risk. The data for children from female-headed single parent households represent:

- 85% of all children who exhibit behavioral disorders (source: Center for Disease Control);
- 90% of all homeless and runaway children (source: U.S. D.H.H.S., Bureau of the Census);
- 71% of all high school dropout (source: National Principals' Association Report on the State of High Schools);

- 75% of all adolescent patients in Chemical Abuse centers (source: Rainbows for all God's Children);
- 63% of youth suicides (source: U.S. D.H.H.S., Bureau of the Census);
- 80% of rapists motivated with displaced anger (source: Criminal Justice and Behavior, Vol 14, 1978);
- 70% of juveniles in state-operated institutions (source: U.S. Department of Justice, Special Report, September 1988);
- 85% of all youth in prisons (source: Fulton County Jail Populations, Texas Department of Corrections 1992)

Referrals to Berks County Juvenile Probation Office reflect the over-representation of those populations disproportionately living in poverty and coming primarily from single-parent female-headed household. In 1995, Latino youth represented 29% of the referrals to the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office while representing 10% of the Berks County school enrollments.

There is no doubt that attacking the issue of poverty and crime and delinquency must be significantly focused on the issue of the feminization of poverty yet there appear to be no specific projects or efforts to address this situation.

3.2 Recommendations

3.2.1 *The development of single parent programs at local universities*

The direct correlation between educational levels and those living in poverty is a well-established fact. The majority of Berks Latino females heading single parent households are young women with low educational levels whose job options are limited and whose future prospects are dismal. For most, poverty has become a multigenerational issue. The prospect for many of their children suggests a continuation of the cycle of poverty, especially when considering the dire statistics for these children. The ability to attain a college education will significantly impact the lives of most of these women and their children. While colleges and universities are concerned with increasing the number of African American and Latino students, very few are seriously targeting this population.

Collaborations should be established with colleges/universities interested in the development of comprehensive single parent programs that will provide the support necessary to overcome the obstacles of attaining a college education. Programs can be established that provide varying degrees of support.

An example of a full support program is the program provided at St. Paul's College in Lawrenceville, VA called the Single Parent Support System (SPSS) which provides on-campus housing and childcare for single parents and their children. The education program within the SPSS operates on a twelve-month basis. Students are required to attend school full time (12 credit hours), including summer school, and are expected to complete their degrees within a three or four year time-frame; depending upon achievement level and aptitude. Their class work and criteria for academic excellence remain the same as for other students. Tutorial and personal counseling are offered through a small cadre of support professionals sensitive to the history and needs of single parents. Students are supported through financial aid, scholarships, work-study and public assistance for whatever time they are eligible. A very significant aspect of the academic experience for the single parent studies program is the competent and reliable academic support that is provided. One experienced faculty advisor from each academic department is assigned to advise the single parent student major. Specifically designed seminars for SPSS students feature activities and programs to enhance achievement or success in academics, and assist the participant in the transition from college to educational opportunities and career options. Some typical topics included in the seminars are: Career Awareness, Single Parenting Strategies, Time Management and Setting Priorities, Family Financial Planning/Management, Nutrition and Personal Hygiene, Study Skills/Library Usage, Test Taking Skills, Child Development, and

Stress Management. The program currently serves 20 single parent families. It is viewed as an opportunity for the continuing education of the parents and for providing a wholesome environment for the children so that both can break the cycle of poverty. SPSS students have generally performed academically at a relative high level.

While programs like this are the ideal, other colleges and universities can develop programs that can address the academic, financial and childcare obstacles for single parents who can live off campus in their own housing possibly with family support.

While the up-front investment in assisting single parents to achieve a college education can be significant, the returns are great for an investment that can break the cycle of poverty for a family and greatly improve the chances of success for its children. It is the concept of "pay now or pay later" and later the cost will be much greater. The development of this program should include the design of a rigorous selection process to select those individuals who are truly ready to make the commitment and sacrifices necessary to assure a high degree of retention and success. Also, since one of the major concerns is overcoming financial obstacles, part of this process should be the establishment of a single-parent education scholarship fund to fill the gaps not covered by the existing financial support available.

In addition to a college education, a similar concept can be used for other types of technical education that may require less than a four-year degree.

3.2.2 Develop alternative recreational activities to provide more options for youth

In addressing delinquency from a more immediate perspective, survey respondents indicated a need for the development of programs and activities that will provide alternatives to "hanging out" in the streets after school and on weekends. While some community programs for youth exist it is obvious that they do not meet the current need or provide the necessary incentive.

4. Other Key Issues and Initiatives

4.1 Latino Educational Needs

The low educational level of Latinos in Berks and the high dropout rates of Latino youth must be dealt with on various fronts. This is an issue that must be comprehensively addressed by the local educational institutions and the Center's primary role should be one of advocacy for the development of programs that effectively impacts this problem. As one of their collaborative efforts, the Center has currently partnered with Albright College and Penn State University under the Albright-Penn State Partnership for the development of a dual language charter school for grades K-5. Its proposed name is the Gabriela Mistral Charter School. An independent Board of Trustees comprised of representatives from the sponsoring organizations, parents, and the community at large will be the governing body.

4.2 Economic Development

Economic development within the Latino community must be addressed from both the employment and the business development sides. Issues of unemployment and underemployment are significant to the disparity in median incomes between Latinos and Whites. The Center is currently exploring a collaboration with the Community First Fund of Lancaster for the development of a micro-loan initiative to promote business creation opportunities for Latino entrepreneurs.

4.3 Downtown Supermarket Serving Latino Needs

Community Latinos identified the lack of a downtown, easily accessible and affordable supermarket as one of their key concerns. The Hispanic Center is currently part of a collaborative effort that is planning to develop such a market.

This report sought to create a comprehensive understanding of the Latino community and its issues and concerns as a basis for setting the parameters regarding the role of the Hispanic Center and its ability to serve the needs of this population. There is no doubt that the center cannot address all the needs of this population, and it is focusing on collaborations with other organizations to help meet the need. It is hoped that the various entities within the community capable of addressing these issues will further utilize this data to consider how their organization can positively impact this community.

Lillian Escobar-Haskins, Researcher

Alegre Advertising's owner/partner and creative director, Lillian is a specialist in Latino-focused research and demographics, community relations and outreach, and special event design, development and management. She designed, developed and from 1991-2000 coordinated the annual Pennsylvania Statewide Latino Coalition Conference, currently the largest Latino conference based in the East. She has more than 18 years professional experience in cross-cultural competence, needs analysis, program design, community outreach, service delivery, organizational development, Latino cultural and community issues on a national state and local level. A former family therapist, she has a strong clinical background in substance abuse, parent/child relationships, marital, self-esteem, cultural issues, and physical/sexual abuse of children and women.

She has served as consultant/trainer to numerous organizations including business, educational institutions, non-profit community based organizations and government. Topics include: Diversity, Multiculturalism and Cultural Competence; Social Status and Cultural Factors Affecting Achievement Among Minority Groups; Promoting Educational Excellence for Children of Color; Latino Traditional Cultural Values, and Second Generation Perspectives; The Puerto Rican Client from a Therapeutic and Historical Perspective; Latino Health and Mental Health Issues; The Culture of Poverty; Institutional Racism; Child Abuse Issues in Latino Families; Train the Trainer for Latino Professionals on Cultural and Community Issues; Counseling Across Cultures; Acculturation and Current Social Realities in Relation to the Traditional Cultural Context.

Among her current associations, she is a board member of the First Union Regional Foundation and the National Puerto Rican Coalition. She served as the executive director of the Pennsylvania Governor's Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs, 1989-1995. She has received numerous awards and recognitions including:

- PA State House of Representatives, *Citation for Distinguished and Dedicated Service as Executive Director of GACLA*
- PA State Department of Community Affairs *Certificate of Appreciation, Commitment and Professionalism in the Advancement of Social Justice and Equity*
- Mt. Pleasant Hispanic Center, *Recognition for Outstanding Service to Harrisburg Latino Community*
- Commonwealth of PA Diversity Planning Committee, *Diversity Award*
- United States Postal Service, *Affirmative Action Women's Program Outstanding Contributions in Professional Field*
- Women's International Coalition, *Unsung Heroine Award*
- HOGAR CREA International, *Outstanding Service Award*
- Spanish American Civic Association, *Outstanding Achievement Award*
- Lancaster Hispanic Human Services Committee, *Leadership Award, Outstanding Service Award*
- Senate of Pennsylvania, *Citation for Commendable work with Displaced Homemakers and Single Parents*
- HOGAR CREA of PA, *Outstanding Service Award*