

Press Release

A New Organization, Centro Latino, Inc., is Created

A 'Good News' Merger

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 1, 2009

Contact:

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What: Celebration Reception and Merger Announcement

Where: The Boston Foundation, 75 Arlington St, 10th floor, Boston

When: April 1, 2009, 3:00-5:00pm

Boston, MA: Two well-known Latino community service organizations, Centro Latino de Chelsea and Concilio Hispano, are proud to announce that they are merging. Board Presidents Freddy Gonzales and Linda Cundiff will make the announcement today at a reception hosted by the Boston Foundation.

"We are extremely pleased to be able to join together with the respected Concilio Hispano," said Freddy Gonzales, board chair of the former Centro Latino de Chelsea. Linda Cundiff, board president of the former Concilio Hispano noted that "the already strong mutual respect between these organizations grew significantly during the planning of this merger."

The organization will now be known as Centro Latino, Inc., according to Juan Vega, President & CEO of the new organization and the former executive director of Centro Latino de Chelsea. "This is a good news merger, because it brings together two of the most well-established and respected Latino service organizations in eastern Massachusetts. Together, the two agencies have 60 years of experience providing culturally competent services to this community. Our intent is to expand our services to the ever-growing Latino and immigrant community, and we believe that we are now better positioned to do so than ever before."

Latinos and immigrants are a critical part of the state's population and workforce. The Latino population in MA tripled from 141,380 in 1980 to 427,340 in 2000. From 2000 to 2008, Latinos grew another 20%, and now account for 8% of the state's residents. All immigrants make up more than 14% of the state's residents. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that the Massachusetts workforce will be completely dependent on immigrants for all of its growth over the next decade. In fact, if not for new immigrants, the state's population would have shrunk between 2000 and 2004. This population has a significant need for education, skills training, immigration, and support services.

The new organization will continue to offer programs to help clients learn about community resources and advocate for themselves, overcome barriers to sustainable employment, and integrate into and contribute to their community. All of the services take a capacity-building approach that helps people to identify and reach their own goals. Programs include adult training and education, community health services, citizenship preparation services, and youth development. Centro Latino, Inc. will continue to operate two sites in Chelsea and one in Cambridge, with plans to expand over the next few years, as feasible.

Centro Latino de Chelsea



Mission: “Centro Latino de Chelsea seeks to improve the quality of life and promote the self-determination of Latinos in Chelsea and surrounding communities through economic development, education, health and social well-being strategies.”

History: Centro Latino was founded in 1989 by community leaders as a Latino-directed multi-service agency to address the needs of the city’s fastest growing population, while contributing to the betterment and positive development of the entire community.

Programs: Today, Centro serves approximately 5,000 people annually, the majority of whom are low-income residents of Chelsea, East Boston, Revere, Lynn and 20 other cities and neighborhoods. Centro’s core programs include:

- ◆ *Health- HIV testing and counseling*
- ◆ *Citizenship and Immigration- Citizenship classes and preparation*
- ◆ *Youth- After school programming*
- ◆ *Adult Basic Education- Free ESL and Spanish language literacy classes*
- ◆ *Workforce Development- Employment focused ESL classes and training*
- ◆ *Computer Technology- 30-hour computer training courses for all levels*

Leadership: *Freddy Gonzales* is currently the chairman of the board, with other board officers including: Vice Chair *Silvia Guzmán*, Treasurer *Sergio Jaramillo*, and Clerk *Elaine Santiago*. *Juan Vega* is Executive Director.

Concilio Hispano



Mission: “Concilio Hispano Inc. is a visionary community organization dedicated to progressive social, economic, political change, and to the promotion of active citizenship. We are committed to fostering the culture, self-identity and advancement of Latinos and others in the United States.”

History: Concilio Hispano, Inc. is a non-profit, community-based human service organization founded in 1969 by Latinos who wanted to improve conditions in their community. Concilio Hispano's roots reach back to the mid-1950's when families began to arrive in Cambridge from Puerto Rico. Members of the then-tiny community saw the need to organize themselves into a council (concilio) in order to make their voices heard, assist in the transition to a new country, and begin to take a role in the political and social life of the community.

Programs: Concilio Hispano currently offers a wide range of support programs and serves more than 4,000 clients each year in the greater Boston area through 2 offices located in Cambridge and Chelsea, with an outreach that draws individuals as far north as Lawrence and as far west as Framingham.

- ◆ *Health Programs- Health workshops, outpatient services, driver alcohol education classes, young parent support, lead poisoning prevention, HIV/AIDS prevention education and case management services*
- ◆ *Educational Programs- Adult basic education programs and English classes for speakers of other languages (ESOL)*
- ◆ *Interpretation and Translation Services- Fee-for service translation services offered for Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, French and Cape Verdean Creole*

Leadership: *Linda Cundiff* is the current president of the board of Concilio Hispano de Cambridge. Other board officers include vice president *Antoinette Basualdo Delmonico*, secretary *Kelly Guenther* and treasurer *Jose Lopez*.



A New Organization: CENTRO LATINO, INC.

Mission: “Centro Latino seeks to improve the quality of life and promote the self-determination of Latinos in the Greater Boston area through economic development, health, education, and social well being strategies.”

Merger History: Recent changes in the needs of the Latino population in Massachusetts and the migration of Latino citizens to many different communities have altered the services of Centro Latino de Chelsea and Concilio Hispano. The two organizations have been conducting collaborative programming for some time, and in mid-2008 conversations began with the goal to join forces permanently so as to offer a larger network of services to a broader geographic area. The need for increased mission impact was intensified by recent economic challenges, which have led to cutbacks in certain governmental funding streams and made the merger a wise option for both organizations.

Headquarters: Centro Latino, Inc. will have its headquarters 267 Broadway in Chelsea with one branch location in Chelsea and one in Cambridge. Other branches will be added to the network as needed.

Combined Budget: \$2.4 million

Enhanced Programs: Centro Latino, Inc. will leverage the expertise of both Centro Latino de Chelsea and Concilio Hispano to offer a spectrum of high quality services to people residing in Greater Boston and Eastern Massachusetts. Core programs will focus on *health, education, and family development*. Programs include:

Education & Training:

- ◆ *Adult Basic Education* – Free ESOL, GED, and pre-literacy classes
- ◆ *Workforce Development* – Employment focused language classes and workforce training
- ◆ *Computer Technology* – Computer literacy, training, and certification courses for all levels

Community Health:

- ◆ *HIV/AIDS* – Prevention, Education, Counseling, Testing, and Support Services
- ◆ *HIV/AIDS* – Case Management and Peer Support Services
- ◆ *Substance Abuse Prevention* – support services and workshops
- ◆ *Workshops/Group Counseling* – drunk driver ed., anger management, lead poisoning prevention

Youth & Immigrant Support Services:

- ◆ *Citizenship and Immigration* – Citizenship preparation classes and immigrant support services
- ◆ *Young Parents Support* – Education and support services for young parents
- ◆ *Youth-* After school academic enrichment program for middle school students
- ◆ *Interpretation and Translation Services-* Fee-for service assistance offered for Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, French and Cape Verdean Creole

Leadership: *Freddy Gonzales* of Roxbury Community College will assume the role of Board Chair for the new organization, and *Linda Cundiff* of the Cambridge Health Alliance will be the new Vice-Chair. *Juan R. Vega* (former executive director of Centro Latino de Chelsea) will be President and CEO of Centro Latino, Inc.

Major Government Contracts: Mass. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Mass. Department of Public Health (DPH), Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC), Mass. Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DLWD), Mass. Department of Children & Families (DCF), Mass. Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI), City of Chelsea, City of Cambridge, and City of Somerville.

Board of Directors

Freddy Gonzales, Chairperson

Director of Corporate and
Community Education
Roxbury Community College
Residence: Chelsea, MA

Linda Cundiff, Vice-Chair

Senior Director of Community Affairs
Cambridge Health Alliance
Residence: Arlington, MA

Sergio Jaramillo, Treasurer

Proprietor, Broadway Jewelers
Residence: Canton, MA

Elaine Santiago, Clerk

Branch Manager
Metro Credit Union
Residence: Chelsea, MA

Carlos Bernal

Director of Marketing Communications
and Public Relations
WebLayers, Inc
Residence: Boston, MA

Antoinette Delmonico

PhD Candidate
Boston University
Residence: Cambridge, MA

Frank DeVito

Executive Director
Fenix Center for Innovative Schools
Residence: Lynn, MA

Michael Falzone

Proprietor, John's Pizza
Residence: Revere, MA

Kelly Guenther

Foreclosure Counselor
Metropolitan Boston Housing
Partnership
Residence: Boston, MA

Silvia Guzmán

Attorney at Law
Residence: Chelsea, MA

Jose Lopez

Biocomputation Administrator
Harvard University
Residence: Providence, RI

César Martínez

CEO
AccuComp Enterprises
Residence: Boston, MA

* *Organization / Business Affiliation listed for identification purposes only.*

President & CEO: Juan R. Vega

Since July 1998, Juan has been Executive Director of Centro Latino de Chelsea, a non-profit community-based organization that over the past 20 years has focused on addressing the health, education, and social well-being goals of Latino and immigrant families in the Greater Boston area. In this role, he has increased the profile and reach of the organization, and successfully managed the growth of Centro Latino into one of the state's largest Latino-directed human service organizations.

Juan was awarded a 2009 Fellowship by the Barr Foundation for distinguished service to the community, which includes a sabbatical, international travel, executive leadership development, and peer learning opportunities.

After two prior attempts to enter politics, Juan won a decisive election victory in 1993 and began his public service as a member of the Chelsea City Council, and went on to be re-elected for three additional terms. In 1999, he became Council President, the first Latino in the state to serve in that capacity at the municipal level. Juan served as a City Councilor until 2001 when he stepped down to focus on his family and career.

Before Centro Latino, Juan worked at the TEAM Education Fund coordinating community outreach efforts on state tax and budget policies, and promoting the Earned Income Tax Credit. As a long-time community leader and social justice activist, Juan has held a range of positions working on community organizing projects, civil rights advocacy, civic engagement, and even coordinated the publication of a bilingual community newspaper, *El Faro*.

Juan serves on various community boards and committees, including the Chelsea Chamber of Commerce, Multicultural Advisory Committee at Massachusetts General Hospital, Gaston Institute Advisory Council at UMASS Boston, Latino After-School Initiative Steering Board, and the Metro North Regional Employment Board.

Juan is a lifelong Chelsea resident whose family came from Puerto Rico in the early 1960s. He currently resides in the city, where he and his wife Carolyn are raising their four young children.



Frequently Asked Questions

Why a merger? Why now?

We have seen recent changes in the needs of the Latino population, including a steady migration of Latino citizens in eastern Massachusetts to many different communities. This pattern makes it difficult for small organizations to cover all the needs of these individuals. By creating a larger network of services we can serve populations that have previously been underserved.

Why did these particular organizations decide to join forces in this way?

Leaders in both entities (Centro Latino de Chelsea and Concilio Hispano) have always known about and respected the other group, and the two organizations have a history of collaboration on a modest scale to offer services. Given this history, it seemed natural to explore a closer working relationship.

Is this merger a result of the economic downturn?

Not directly. The initial discussions between the two organizations began in mid-2008, well before the recent economic challenges intensified. However, since then, both organizations have experienced cutbacks in certain governmental funding streams, making the merger an even more attractive option.

Would either organization have gone out of business without this merger?

While both organizations are small, community-based nonprofits without deep financial resources, we do not believe that the merger 'saved' either organization.

Will there be job losses associated with this merger?

We do not expect any job losses to occur as a result of our merger. Our research suggests that just in the general area from Chelsea/East Boston, east to Cambridge and north to Lynn there are over 60,000 Latinos, a large market for our services. We hope the combined strength of Centro Latino de Chelsea and Concilio Hispano will allow us to pursue the resources necessary to expand our services in existing and new communities in eastern Massachusetts.

Where will the offices be and how can I contact them?

Headquarters: 267 Broadway, Chelsea, MA 02150 – Tel. 617-884-3238

Chelsea Branch: 280 Broadway, Chelsea, MA 02150 – Tel. 617-889-0888

Cambridge Branch: 105 Windsor Street, Cambridge, MA 02139 – Tel. 617-661-9406