



Latino Leaders for the Enhancement of Advocacy and Development

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LATINO LEADERS FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF ADVOCACY AND DEVELOPMENT

LLEAD MICHIGAN - 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

MISSION & PURPOSE

LLEAD is a statewide Latino organization. Its mission is to bring together Latinx communities in the state to exchange ideas on common issues to present unified solutions in resolving challenges confronted at the local, state and national levels. LLEAD and its chapters aim to provide the vehicle whereby local communities can coordinate, design, develop, and advocate to overcome societal problems.

COVID-19 AND THE LATINO COMMUNITY

The LLEAD Michigan Board of Directors continued to meet via Zoom during 2021, except for the December meeting hosted by the Latinx Technology & Community Center in Flint, Michigan. The Center Director, Asa Zuccaro, hosted the LLEAD Board and participated in the monthly meeting agenda items. Some Board members and guests participated and reported via Zoom to bring a successful and productive meeting to fruition.

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to negatively affect Latinos in Michigan, particularly in education, overall health, business, employment, and all other areas of life. Latinos remained primary victims of the pandemic, particularly frontline and essential workers, including the vulnerable Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers.

THE URGENCY TO LLEAD

The LLEAD Board of Directors once again volunteered to assure that their efforts towards the creation of a statewide Latino organization were able to advocate and develop systems whereby issues confronting the Michigan Latino community were resolved. The 2021 eleven-member board of directors included the following Al Flores, President (Perrinton); Danny Soza, Vice President (Saginaw); Dr. Laura Gonzalez, Secretary (Mt. Pleasant); and Leroy Hernandez, Treasurer (Holland); Esther Fifelski (Holland); Gil Guevara (Saginaw); Bobby Deleon (Saginaw); Guillermo Lopez (Lansing); Diana Rivera (Okemos); Juan Marinez (Okemos) and Dr. Sheila Contreras (Lansing).

*Bringing together Michigan Latinx communities to exchange ideas, and to develop and present solutions on common issues encountered at local, state and national levels.
LLEAD is a 501 (c)(3) organization.*

Robert Anthony Alvarez joined LLEAD Michigan as its General Counsel, whose legal and judicial experience and skills have proven to be a great asset for LLEAD. Mr. Alvarez is with the Avanti Law Group PLLC, the largest Hispanic and female-owned law firm in Michigan serving the Latino community. Established in Cinco De Mayo 2010, they have six attorneys and 20 staff providing legal services in all areas of law. Avanti Law often files suits against the government to protect residents' civil rights. They once filed a lawsuit against two Michigan counties denying marriage licenses to individuals who did not have social security numbers. They also filed suit against the state of Michigan when they denied driver's licenses to immigrants who were eligible under the law.

LATINO LEADERS MEET WITH MICHIGAN LT. GOVERNOR GARLIN GILCHRIST II

LLEAD Michigan Legislative Committee, chaired by Gilberto Guevara, coordinated and conducted a gathering for Latino leaders to meet and converse with Michigan Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist II on Thursday, July 29, 2021. Bobby Deleon, a LLEAD Michigan Board of Directors member (also a LLEAD Saginaw Chapter member), facilitated the Lt. Governor's presence. The meeting took place at the home of Alberto and Diana Flores in Perrinton, MI. LLEAD was honored that Michigan's first person of color and Lt. Governor met with Michigan Latino leaders to discuss Latino issues in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. He interacted with 60 Latinos from 17 different cities from across the state. LLEAD looks forward to a long-lasting relationship with the Lt. Governor and staff.

2020 CENSUS: MICHIGAN LATINO REPORT

LLEAD Michigan partnered with the Hispanic Latino Commission Of Michigan (HLCOM) to begin the process of compiling a report regarding statistical results in the 2020 census regarding Michigan Latinos. A significant reason to compile a user-friendly report is for Latinos to be able to use this type of information. Latinos are highly reliant on institutions, i.e., Pew Foundation, State of Michigan demographers, colleges, universities, private/for-profit organizations and others, to access data that support efforts to provide services to their state or local level communities. This type of processed data comes in various forms. It can be challenging for novice data analysts to process and use content in grant applications or present to those in power to effect change in bettering the lives of Michigan Latinos.

The LLEAD/HLCOM analysis of Michigan census data will break down the information into state and local level factions to better inform and confront those issues and better analyze relevant areas such as: education (Example: Latino drop-out rates); higher education enrollment; business development; poverty rates; incarceration rates (school to prison pipelines); pregnancy rates; and others.

CONTROVERSY IN ALMA, MI: NOT ALLOWING UNACCOMPANIED IMMIGRANT CHILDREN INTO THEIR COMMUNITY

Three LLEAD State Board of Directors (also LLEAD Saginaw Chapter members) became involved in the various hearings conducted by Bethany Christian Services and the City of Alma regarding converting a vacant former nursing home into a federal temporary shelter for male children and teens detained at the Mexico border. A typical stay is 30 to 45 days before reuniting with family elders. Daniel Soza, Gilberto Guevara and Bobby Deleon attended the gatherings at which they encountered strong opposition to welcoming the children into the Alma community. Up to 400 residents with raised fears of higher crime with gang-related activity and opposed to the housing of unaccompanied children dominated the audience, enough so, that it required meetings to be moved to the larger high school auditorium. Daniel Soza said, "The anti-immigrant allegations against the unaccompanied children were racist in nature."

There was an attempt to recall three Alma city council members that sparked the petition drive when they prevailed in the September split vote to allow the rezoning for Bethany Christian Services. However, it fell short of the year-end deadline for signatures. The home will provide youth with meals, sleeping quarters, educational classes, individual counseling, therapy, and recreational activities, including around-the-clock supervision. More than 50 employees are expected to be hired, including teachers, therapists, food service workers, and case managers.

<https://tinyurl.com/almamason>

GREATER LANSING LATINOS INVOLVED IN THE REDISTRICTING PROCESS

LLEAD Michigan was granted \$5,000.00 from the "Count MI Vote Education Fund" as a (Latino) community of interest to show where these communities are in the Greater Lansing Region. It would potentially give these Latino communities a voice in the new redistricting process. Juan Marinez, LLEAD Michigan Board of Director, led the effort and worked with LLEAD Lansing Chapter Chairperson Guillermo Lopez and other members to gather Lansing area Latinos for Zoom meetings with Voters Not Politicians representatives. They brainstormed the essential issues for the Latino community in Greater Lansing; they came up with community boundaries (city of Lansing, Lansing + E. Lansing and other adjacent areas, or bordering neighborhoods). The group also created a smaller sub-group to write testimony that described their community and shared interests and concerns and wrote a short version to present to the Michigan Redistricting Commissioners.

LLEAD partnered with Action of Greater Lansing to design, compose and release a short video expressing the dire need for Latinos to learn about and become part of developing the redistricting process. The video actors used the analogy "Mi Voto No Cuenta!" ("My Vote Doesn't Count!") It shows two Latinxs having a heated discussion on why Latinos should take the time or even care about this critical process.

Oscar Castañeda, Action of Greater Lansing, demonstrated a simple map development process and wrapped up with a video showing the difference Latinx

can make in elections and how we can help lift and strengthen the Latino vote/influence.

LLEAD LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

The LLEAD Legislative Committee, chaired by Gilberto Guevara, conducted its first Legislative meeting via Zoom, gathering information from over 30 Latinos residing throughout Michigan on March 5, 2021. The data collected was to introduce and change legislation affecting Latinos on the federal or state levels. Bobby Deleon was again instrumental in virtually attracting a Latino celebrity to address the participants known as "The King of Brown Sound" in the genre of Texano Music, Jose Maria Hernandez of the musical group Little Joe y La Familia. Little Joe has had a long career as an entertainer and is also involved in the Latino Movement. He's written a book entitled "No Llore Chingon." On September 30, 2021, a meeting with U.S. Senator Gary Peter's senior staff members; the Legislative Committee presented the primary legislative suggestions from the March 5th Legislative session. LLEAD will continue to communicate with legislators on the State and Federal levels so that Latinos continue to have open communication channels in the legislative process.

NEW HLCOM DIRECTOR RECEPTION: DR. ISABEL MONTEMAYOR-VASQUEZ

LLEAD Michigan partnered with Commissioner Florencio Hernandez, Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan (HLCOM), Francisca Garcia, HLCOM staff, and Commissioner Juan Marinez, HLCOM, to conduct a congratulatory reception for Dr. Isabel Montemayor's appointment as Executive Director. HLCOM selected Dr. Montemayor, a native of Lansing, for her extensive experience and professional achievements in health and immigration policies research. The reception took place at the Sir Pizza Restaurant in North Town - Lansing on October 28, 2021. Diana's Catering provided Latino Hors d' Oeuvres and live musical entertainment was provided by Norma Contreras-Serna. Over 60 Latino and guests attended the gathering to meet and greet Dr. Montemayor and enjoy a relaxing evening with friends and new acquaintances. Sponsors for this event included MI ALMA, Lansing Area League of Women Voters, Cafecito Caliente, Lansing Latino Health Alliance, and LCLAA Lansing Chapter.

1ST ANNUAL LLEAD MICHIGAN GOLF OUTING

The 1st Annual LLEAD Michigan Golf Outing was led by Leroy Hernandez, Treasurer, LLEAD Michigan Board of Directors. The golf outing was held at the Macatawa Legends Golf Course in Holland, MI, on Wednesday, September 15, 2021, and successfully brought Latinos and non-Latinos together for a beautiful day of fun and relaxation. The proceeds will be used for the upkeep of the LLEAD website and other annual organization expenses. LLEAD plans to have Latinos attend its annual golf outings for years to come.

LLEAD ONGOING PROJECTS

- **Intern Recruitment Project (2021)**

In 2021 LLEAD began to recruit student interns from universities to work on projects that will enhance the organization's mission by developing systems to better the lives of Latinos in the state. Board member, Diana Rivera, initiated this vital endeavor and serves as the chair of the LLEAD Intern Committee. Students are recruited and apply through university intern sites where job descriptions are posted. The committee interviews and selects intern applicants based on required skills and project interests that meet LLEAD needs. Interns are paid for their work only if funds are secured for the internship. Interns have worked on or will be working on the following projects in 2021 and beyond: Running for Office and Training for Boards & Commissions; 2020 Census Michigan Latino Report; Online Statewide Latinx Directory; Repatriation Data Collection Project; Greater Lansing Redistricting Project; Social Media Development and Refinement Project.

- **Running For Office And Training For Boards & Commissions (2021)**

LLEAD Michigan recognized that Latinos in the state need to "be around the table" to become part of the decision-making process. The goal is to ensure that we develop formulas that will determine the distribution of funds and other valuable life-changing solutions.

The LLEAD Board decided to provide a pathway for Latino engagement in their localities to run for office, from, Precinct Delegate to becoming a State House Representative. The committee members responsible for this endeavor are: Esther Fifelski, Leroy Hernandez and Diana Rivera, who worked to secure an intern from Michigan State University to work on this project. The project concentrates on researching misconceptions or hesitations in serving, particular processes running for office or being appointed to a board or commission on the state or local levels. This LLEAD Training Manual will assist Latinos interested in becoming involved in public office by creating a replicable framework for Latinos to advocate for their communities and issues relevant to community needs.

- **Online Statewide Latinx Organizational Directory (2021)**

The LLEAD Latino Organizational Directory Creation Committee, led by Diana Rivera and Laura Gonzalez, LLEAD Board Members, began identifying existing best practice models to design and create a LLEAD Michigan Latino Resources Directory.

The Committee partnered with HLCOM staff to identify necessary fields to be included. The name and type of organization (civil and human rights; cultural; arts; athletics; LGBTQ; political; business; immigration; business; advocacy; college scholarship; general services) and contact information were selected. The Directory will also refer victims of hate crimes, bias incidents, and unlawful discrimination to appropriate organizations/agencies. Committee plans include working with the LLEAD Website Developer for its proper design to provide efficient, user-friendly and multi-platform access on the LLEAD website.

- **LLEAD Michigan Strategic Planning (2020)**

LLEAD Michigan conducted a strategic planning session on December 11, 2020, to set priorities for 2021. Mr. Dante Villarreal, Vice President for Business & Talent Development, Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, facilitated the session and guided the Board members in outlining their goals and objectives. There were four priorities and priority leaders selected as follows:

- **Funding:** (Leader – Leroy Hernandez) Identify priorities and the dollar amount to accomplish and meet LLEADs mission.
- **Expertise Around Table:** (Leader -Laura Gonzalez) Create a data pool of members and non-members with personal and professional expertise in areas that help meet LLEAD goals and objectives.
- **Communications:** (Leader – Daniel Soza) Build on LLEAD's existing social media platforms and strengthen electronic communication systems that will reach those in Michigan to work with LLEAD in meeting its mission.
- **Pro-Active Advocacy:** (Leader – Juan Marinez) Work in advocating for Latinos by creating activities/ projects that will form alliances with political and non-political entities to resolve problems confronted by Latinos and develop partnerships for future ventures.

- **LLEAD Website www.llead.org (2017)**

Currently, this site shares LLEAD and its history, call to action, chapters, speakers bureau, crisis response, and conference information. The website hosts learning and teaching resources, the Crisis Response Manual, Speakers Bureau, and recent local and state news of interest to the LLEAD mission. The page is open to the public and invited to browse the Speakers Bureau for available speakers knowledgeable on topics affecting Latinos in Michigan.

- **LLEAD Speakers Bureau (2017)**

The Speakers Bureau is a Web-facing service for individuals and organizations seeking information from qualified and knowledgeable speakers. Latino, particularly non-Latino organizations, agencies, educational institutions, associations, and other groups, may request qualified speakers on Michigan Latino

topics. Its goal is for Michigan residents to learn about Latinos' rich history in the state from February 12, 1781, when Spaniards arrived at Fort St. Joseph (now known as) Niles, Michigan. In 20th century Michigan, the 1942-1964 Bracero Program, under the US-Mexico bi-lateral agreement, brought Mexicans to work in Michigan's agricultural fields. They and Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans also migrated for agriculture and industrial jobs and remained. With the arrival of the Caribbean and South American immigrants, the Latinx community continued to grow, providing Michigan with a significant labor force and an active cultural community.

- **Creation of LLEAD Chapters (2017)**

The LLEAD Chapter Development Committee continues to work on developing chapters in the state. There are currently four LLEAD chartered chapters in Michigan, including Grand Rapids, Holland, Lansing, and Saginaw. In 2020, the Development Committee worked with the newly formed Grand Rapids Chapter to establish its infrastructure to resolve local issues. Their work also supports the LLEAD Michigan state-level Board to positively change and impact Latino issues at the state and national levels. If you are interested in creating a LLEAD Chapter in your community, please get in touch with Al Flores at: alflo2@outlook.com.