



Latino Leaders for the Enhancement of Advocacy and Development

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LLEAD MICHIGAN - 2020 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 so that we can present unified solutions in resolving challenges confronted on the local, state, and national levels. The purpose of LLEAD and its chapters is to provide the vehicle whereby local communities can coordinate, design, develop and advocate to overcome societal problems they may face.

COVID-19 AND THE LATINO COMMUNITY

The LLEAD Michigan Board of Directors met in person at the Lansing Cristo Rey Community Center on February 21, 2020. The start of the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S. forced the LLEAD board to meet via Zoom for the rest of the year. We were fortunate that Dan Soza, Vice President- LLEAD Michigan, had introduced the Zoom communication platform to the Board in 2018. The pandemic affected Latinos in Michigan negatively, particularly in education, overall health, business, employment, and other life areas of daily living. Latinos were devastated, particularly frontline workers and migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

THE URGENCY TO LLEAD

The LLEAD Board of Directors began meeting weekly from the middle of March to the end of June, bi-weekly from July to October, and monthly in November and December. The call for LLEAD to intervene on behalf of Latinos in Michigan was strong and the Board Members took their voluntary positions very seriously. The eleven-member board in 2020 was as follows: Al Flores, President (Perrinton); Dan Soza, Vice President (Saginaw); 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 Martinez (Okemos) and James Moreno (Mt. Pleasant).

2020 U.S. CENSUS

LLEAD began its campaign to get Michigan Latinos counted in the 2020 U.S. Census at its 2018 Statewide Conference in Lansing. Marilyn Sanders, Census Regional Director – and staff from Chicago, presented a workshop on the upcoming 2020 Census and its importance to all Michigan residents, particularly Latinos. LLEAD continued its efforts throughout 2019 and 2020 to keep

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.

the census count of Latinos on the radar of organizations preparing for the Census. Juan Martinez was appointed LLEAD Michigan 2020 Census Committee chair. On behalf of LLEAD, Juan partnered with state-level organizations involved in getting all residents of Michigan counted. LLEAD Saginaw Chapter conducted a Virtual Census Town Hall Meeting to educate Latinos and non-Latinos on reaching the Latino community in the Greater Saginaw region.

VIRTUAL TOWN HALL MEETING: LATINO LEGAL MATTERS DURING COVID

LLEAD partnered with the Avanti Law Group PLLC to conduct a virtual meeting on April 15, 2020. We had Latinos join the presentations and ask questions regarding issues they confronted, particularly those involving/related to COVID-19. This virtual meeting was timely because people had questions about unemployment insurance, stimulus checks, evictions, COVID-19 testing, etc. The meeting presentations were as follows: Immigration Defense; Family Law (Custodial – Infant Support – Parent Time – Divorce); Employment Law/Rights of Employees; Penal/Criminal Law; Property Law/Evictions. These presentations were presented in English and Spanish by the five staff lawyers of Avanti Law, the largest Hispanic and female-owned law firm in Michigan serving the Latino community.

VIRTUAL TOWN HALL MEETING: SURVIVAL OF LATINO SMALL BUSINESSES

LLEAD conducted a virtual meeting on April 24, 2020, to provide Latino small business owners a platform to offer testimony and obtain information regarding their businesses' survival during COVID-19. U.S. Senator Gary Peters addressed the Small Business Administration loans & grants' status and listened to Latino business owners. Mr. Dante Villarreal, Vice President for Business & Talent Development, Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, presented information regarding Latino business owners and the next steps for a successful future. Q&A was in English and Spanish and presenters focused on how the COVID-19 crisis was affecting the business community.

VIRTUAL TOWN HALL MEETING: LATINO VOTER REGISTRATION

LLEAD designed, developed, and conducted a Virtual Town Hall Meeting on June 29, 2020, encouraging Latinos to vote in the 2020 election. The presenters were as follows:

- Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist: addressed the status and the importance of voter registration and mail-in voting for Latinos in the state
- Maria Van Core, President/ Lansing Chapter – Labor Council for Latin American Advancement: spoke to LCLAA's work in registering Latinos for voting in Michigan
- Pete Vargas, Michigan Organizing Director – Restaurant Opportunities Centers of Michigan: shared information regarding their projects to get Latinos, Native Americans, and African Americans registered to vote and how local communities can partner with their organization to register Latinos
- Betsy Cushman, Vice President / Voter Services – League of Women Voters - Michigan: spoke to how local communities can partner with the League to register Latinos and how to find nonpartisan information about "What's on Your Ballot, Vote411.org."
- Moderator: Guillermo Lopez, Member, LLEAD State Board of Directors

**Funded by: The Gerald Beckwith Constitutional Liberties Fund.*

REACHING OUT TO THE LATINO COMMUNITY: REGISTER & VOTE!

LLEAD produced two Latino culturally relevant videos encouraging Latinos to get registered and vote. LLEAD Michigan Board Members helped formulate scripts, recruited Latinx leaders from its four-chapter communities (Lansing, Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Holland) and coordinated the shoots in the cities the (Latino Leaders and Latino Youth) videos.

**Videos can be viewed at LLEAD Michigan YouTube Channel.*

**Funded by: The Gerald Beckwith Constitutional Liberties Fund.*

LLEAD produced two additional videos encouraging Latinos to vote. These two videos also promoted and invited Latinos and interested parties to attend the LLEAD 2020 Virtual Conference on October 7, 2020. This conference included presentations on the importance of voting and Latinos surviving the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first video featured two prominent Michigan Latino leaders, Mr. Juan Martinez, a Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan - Commissioner, and Ms. Lupe Ramos-Montigny, a Michigan Board of Education Member. The second video featured Jose Maria Hernandez, commonly known by the stage name "Little Joe" of Little Joe y La Familia. Known as "The King of Brown Sound," he is one of the most popular Tex-Mex voices in the music industry and a musical icon. He is recognized for his political participation throughout the years. In both videos, they encouraged Latinos in Michigan to vote in the 2020 election and promoted and invited them to the LLEAD 2020 Virtual Conference of October 7, 2020.

**Videos can be viewed at: LLEAD Michigan YouTube Channel.*

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LLEAD composed an electronic flyer to educate new Latinx voters on registering and voting via absentee ballot from home. It included a hyperlink to a media site with information about the importance of voting in 2020. LLEAD distributed the flyer on the Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube social media platforms.

**Funded by: The Gerald Beckwith Constitutional Liberties Fund.*

LLEAD 2020 VIRTUAL STATEWIDE CONFERENCE

The LLEAD Board added another aspect for getting Latinos' attention in Michigan regarding voter registration and voting by designing, developing, and conducting a LLEAD Conference via Zoom and using YouTube as a platform for the Keynote speaker. The conference was held on October 7, 2020. The session titles, presenters, and keynote speaker were as follows:

SESSION I: Latinos: Get Out and Vote!

- Mr. Pete Vargas Restaurant Opportunities Centers United
- Mr. Javier Cervantes Grand Rapids Public Schools

SESSION II: Michigan Latinos Surviving the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Ms. Celeste Sanchez Lloyd, M.A. Strong Beginnings-Healthy Start
- Diana Marin, J.D. Michigan Immigrant Rights Center

SESSION III: Immigrant Detainees/DACA

- Dr. Oscar Castañeda Detroit Hispanic Development Corp.

- Dr. Felipe Lopez-Sustaita Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan
- Ms. Diana Rivera, M.L.S. Librarian Emeritus, Michigan State University

MODERATOR: The Honorable Guillermo Lopez

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

The Honorable Congressman Joaquin Castro, Chairperson, Hispanic Congressional Caucus

MODERATOR: The Honorable Lupe Ramos-Montigny

**Funded by: The Gerald Beckwith Constitutional Liberties Fund.*

Sponsor Donation: Kalamazoo Community Foundation

LLEAD MICHIGAN STRATEGIC PLANNING

LLEAD Michigan conducted a strategic planning session on December 11, 2020, to set 2021 annual and long-term priorities. 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) Spell out priorities and dollar amount in terms of what needs to be accomplished. Apply for funds that will assist in meeting the mission of LLEAD.
- Expertise Around Table: (Leader -Laura Gonzalez) Create a data pool of LLEAD members and non-members who have the expertise in all areas of life that may assist LLEAD in meeting its goals and objectives.
- Communications: (Leader – Danny Soza) Build on LLEAD 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 Martinez) Work in advocating for Latinos by creating activities/ projects that will form alliances with political and non-political entities to resolve Latinos' problems and build partnerships for future ventures.

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Saginaw Chapter:

Saginaw Chapter members served traditional Latino meals to Latino (and other) seniors who could not venture out and purchase groceries. "Menudo" was a favorite among the Mexican-American seniors who benefited from the LLEAD chapter volunteer activity. Many Latino seniors expressed their gratitude to enjoy cultural comfort food during dark and lean times amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Saginaw Chapter also partnered with the Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan to conduct a Political Candidates Forum. They invited candidates running for office to share their ideas and intentions to win their elections. Daniel Soza moderated the productive session for

voters to determine who would be the best-elected officials to work with and support Latino issues.

Angelo Kapp, Acting Chairperson of LLEAD Saginaw Chapter, led "Operation #WeCareGLBR" and partnered with The Ezekiel Project of Saginaw and SC Johnson in Bay City to Create gift baskets for healthcare workers in the Great Lakes Bay Region. The gift baskets were distributed in mid-December and consisted of SC Johnson cleaning and household products. Additional partnerships and donations allowed the Chapter to add gift certificates from restaurants and businesses from the region. These partnerships and donors provided eighty-eight gift baskets and gift certificates which were in turn gifted to area healthcare heroes.

Lansing Chapter:

Guillermo Lopez, LLEAD Lansing Chapter Chair, initiated a project in the Greater Lansing area to determine the hiring practices and employment numbers of Latinos by employers, including the State of Michigan local departmental offices. LLEAD will work with regional employers to develop systems for qualified Latinos to be hired into their workforce. This employment project can become a model for other communities in Michigan to follow so that Latinos are included in hiring pools and in obtaining jobs.

LLEAD ONGOING PROJECTS

LLEAD Website www.llead.org :

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. We invite you to browse the available speakers knowledgeable on many topics affecting Latinos in Michigan. This site currently shares information regarding LLEAD and its history, call to action, chapters, speakers Bureau, Crisis Response, and Conference 2020.

Crisis Response System (CRS):

In 2017, LLEAD collaborated with Latinx leaders around Michigan to create the Crisis Response System Manual. This PDF document details how community members can best respond to racial bias incidents or crises in their community, including unlawful discrimination. The page provides an introduction to the manual, a link to download the complete Crisis Response System Manual, and our new Bias Incident Report system form. The form should not be considered or used as a substitute for emergency medical attention or legal advice. The Report system form responses are sent immediately to the nearest chapter representative, who will contact the incident reporter regarding their assistance request.

Since the 2016 election, an upsurge of anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ, anti-Muslim, anti-Black, anti-Asian and anti-Latina/o hate speech and hate crimes has threatened communities around the country. Racist incidents have historically plagued the Latinx community. With recent past promises to "Build the Wall" with Mexico and widespread fear of "illegal aliens" "stealing" American jobs, "freeloading" off government benefits, and committing violent crimes, these narratives have fueled a rise in hate crimes and bias incidents against the Latinx community. Members of our diverse community identify themselves in a myriad of ways -- as Hispanic,

Latino, Chicano, Indigenous, Black, Afro-Latinx, or as a nationality such as Puerto Rican, Mexican, or simply as American. Nonetheless, threats to our entire Latinx blended community continue.

LLEAD Speakers Bureau:

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. Michigan residents need to learn about the rich history of Latinos in the state and how it goes back to February 12, 1781, when Spaniards arrived at Fort St. Joseph (now known as) Niles, Michigan. From 1942-1964 the Bracero Program, the US-Mexico bi-lateral agreement, brought Mexicans to work in Michigan's agricultural fields. Mexican Americans 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 labor and an active cultural community.

Creation of LLEAD Chapters:

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 contact Al Flores at alflo2@outlook.com.