

Northeastern Center Inc.

The Bienvenido Newsletter is Northeastern Center's primary means of communicating with individuals and organizations current happenings in the Bienvenido Program. It shares activities, personal stories, and current initiatives that address the mental health and acculturation process of Latinos in Northeast Indiana.

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Cultural Competency and the Bienvenido Program

In the last fifteen years health care providers and mental health professionals have begun to address the issue of cultural competency, culturally and linguistically appropriate interventions, and evidence-based practice work. For any organization serving people of color becoming more culturally competent is of the essence and a necessary transformation that needs to take place.

This is the case for Northeastern Center (NEC) as it strives to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health services to the Latino community of Northeast Indiana. The development of the Bienvenido Program moves us in the direction of culturally competent services, however, we must evaluate whether or not this program is effective in reducing symptoms that arise in the process of transitioning to this country. For this reason, we began evaluating the Bienvenido Program in July 2005. In our previous newsletter we stated we would be involved in a four phase process. This newsletter will give you a small window into some of the formative evaluation results we have gathered from Bienvenido Facilitators. We believe a more in-depth evaluation of the Bienvenido Program is in order and we are working at identifying an external evaluator who will help us develop a more thorough formative evaluation.

You will also read of some of the initiatives we have begun in order to ensure we are linked with others institutions and individuals who strive to provide culturally competent service to Latinos. We will share briefly our Bienvenido Dinner initiative which brings former Bienvenido participants together for an evening dinner as well as a time for focus group work. As a result of the Bienvenido Dinner we will work at developing a consumer advisory committee that will give counsel on the further development of the Bienvenido Program. The nurturing of relationships with Bienvenido participants continues to teach us more and more about the migration experience. Finally, we will feature Frank Pizaña, Bienvenido Facilitator, in a short reflection on his experience on facilitating the Bienvenido Program.

We invite you to read on and learn of the work of sustaining a healthy Latino community. We believe it involves being on the healing edge. Cultural competency and the Bienvenido Program need to go hand in hand.

*- Gilberto Pérez Jr., MSW, ACSW
Services Team Leader*

Evaluation Bienvenido Program

On July 1 we met with four Bienvenido Facilitators for the Bienvenido Program Refresher Training.

The facilitators gave excellent feedback regarding the Bienvenido Program. Facilitators commented the lessons were appropriate, however, some were too difficult to understand. The facilitators gave excellent ideas on simplifying class lessons.

Facilitators were also contacted via-email to respond to a questionnaire. Those who responded stated they had not implemented the program due to their work schedules and budgetary problems. Others had difficulty finding community agencies to partner with them. The facilitators who are in the school setting informed that flyers were sent out, but no one responded.

The evaluation has shown that the Bienvenido Program can be implemented in the community and that participants find value in the program. Over 89 percent report feeling satisfied with the program and over 84 percent felt the material was beneficial to their adjustment process.

There is a strong sense that working from a protective framework rather than problems faced by Latinos in their adjustment process to another country is essential. Also, firmly basing the Bienvenido Program on an empowerment model and strengths based perspective allows for more social change and personal growth.

Activities and publications

Community leaders meeting

On July 20, 2005 Northeastern Center and over 20 community agencies met with Juana Watson, Senior Advisor for Hispanic/Latino Affairs, Governor's Office, and Amy Mendoza, Executive Director, Indiana Commission of Hispanic/Latino Affairs to discuss current needs of Latinos in Noble, Elkhart, Kosciusko, and LaGrange counties.

The main issues discussed by the leaders were immigration, driver's license, health care, and increased gang activity with youth.

Hispanic Roundtable Evan Bayh

In August NEC was invited to participate in the Hispanic Roundtable sponsored by Senator Evan Bayh. The meeting brought Latino leaders from across the state of Indiana to discuss current issues for Latinos. The pressing issues that arose were driver's license, health care, and immigration reform.

Activities continued

Community mental health education

In August NEC provided mental health information to Mexican immigrants at the Mexican Consulate Mobil Consulate in Goshen, IN. Learning Generation and Plazas Comunitarias were the sponsors of the event. The event provided an opportunity to share brochures, promote the Bienvenido Program, and orient on mental health services offered by NEC.

Indiana Commission Hispanic/Latino Affairs

In October NEC met with the Indiana Commission of Hispanic/Latino Affairs to present the Bienvenido Program. NEC was invited to participate in the Sub-Health Committee.

Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health

In October Northeastern Center met with the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health in Washington D.C. The purpose of the meeting was to gain knowledge into the grant submission process. Dr. Teresa Chapa was helpful in providing counsel regarding next steps for the Bienvenido Program.

Publications

The National Association of Social Workers Specialty Practice Section (SPS) published an article on the Bienvenido Program in the Summer 2005 School Social Work newsletter.

Latino Behavioral Health Summit

Plans are underway to hold the Inaugural Latino Behavioral Health Summit at Pokagon State Park in Angola, IN. The summit will take place on November 2-3, 2005.

Our efforts to create a sustainable initiative are underway and we are excited that leaders from our local communities have responded to our call.

Summit goals:

Goal 1 - Increase knowledge and understanding of culturally appropriate behavioral health services for Latinos.

Goal 2 - Increase linkages among the Latino community and community social service agencies in order to decrease barriers to service delivery.

For more information visit www.nec.org

Bienvenido Dinner

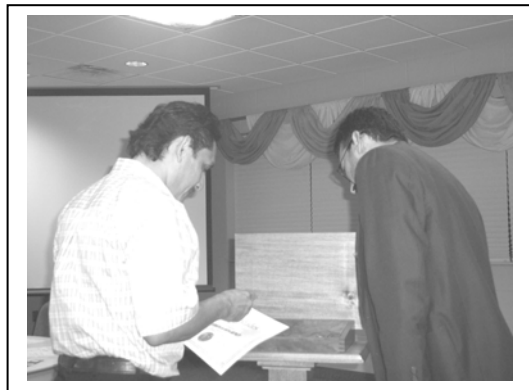
Northeastern Center held its first Bienvenido Dinner on October 8 at the Cross Walk in Ligonier, IN. The dinner was held as a way to recognize the work done by former participants of the Bienvenido Program.

The participants and guests enjoyed a meal and an opportunity to share how the Bienvenido Program has impacted their lives. The participants expressed that the classes helped them reflect on their arrival to this country, helped them make better choices in their personal life, and be better adjusted to their new environment. The participants received a certificate of completion and a small gift.

Students were asked informally what would work best when intervening with Latinos. One of the students commented that perhaps giving the classes in a restaurant setting or homes could ensure higher participation. As we look a evaluation and cultural competency issues, this advice was well received and noted for future Bienvenido classes.



Bienvenido participants receive certificate of completion.



Bienvenido participant selects gift: stone with the word power, wisdom, strength.

Bienvenido Facilitator Reflection *by Frank Pizaña*

I would like to share my personal experience with the Bienvenido Program. About one year ago I began a new work experience at Northeastern Center in Ligonier, IN. For me, it has been a good experience to work with the Bienvenido Program.

The Bienvenido Program helps the client as well as the facilitator reflect on one's past. Through this program I have been able to remember some of the beautiful things of my beloved country, Mexico. I have lived in the US for seventeen years and I remember vividly arriving in this country. In my anecdotes with the Bienvenido students I talk about the difficulty of learning a new language. I share with the students that my first three months were the most difficult. I missed my friends and my people. It was a change I was not ready for.

Once I was established in my new community of Ligonier I began to become involved with kids my age. However, it was still difficult to adjust to the way of life here in this country. The culture was different and there were times I had to confront my classmates because of our cultural differences. I found it interesting that the school offered so much support for sports. In reality, the way this country did things fascinated me.

The Bienvenido Program has helped me relive some of my early experiences of when I immigrated to this country. This program is capable of helping people have a better future in this country. The program is designed to support Latinos who come to this country. The Bienvenido Program offers skills to be successful in a country that is different than our own.

One of the more important lessons covers mental health. This lesson helps the participant understand the importance of mental health because in many occasions Latinos do not place much importance in this area. The curriculum also covers communication and the importance of communicating well with others.

I encourage you to consider the Bienvenido Program as a prevention program for your community. It may help people remember many of the same things I remembered. Perhaps it will help the Latino immigrants of your community be better adjusted to this country. You can contact our office at 260-894-7179 if you would like more information regarding the Bienvenido Program.