

~EL CENTRO DE LA RAZA'S 2005 HIGHLIGHTS~

IN MEMORY OF ROSA PARKS

El Centro de la Raza extends its warmest regards to the family, friends and followers of Rosa Parks. She touched the lives of people during her time and everyone who comes after her. She changed American history by igniting the Civil Rights Movement, and we are indebted to Mrs. Parks for her acts of courage, dedication, and activism.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

This year we received **\$900,000 from the Washington State Legislature** to replace our windows, so that El Centro is warmer for everyone and more energy efficient! This put us closer to our goal of \$1.3 million. Our old boiler has already been replaced and we can feel the difference.

NEIGHBORHOOD EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE

A very special 'Mil Gracias' to **Bank of America for honoring El Centro de la Raza with the 2005 Neighborhood Builders Award of \$200,000.** The initiative aims to help revitalize Seattle communities by identifying and addressing community priorities, offering fiscal support and building community leaders. The funds will be used to further develop our Homeownership Program and other initiatives. This was a highly competitive process and we appreciate the generosity and community involvement of Bank of America!

THANK YOU

El Centro would like to thank **Kristin Houser** and **Mark Burke** at the **Law Offices of Schroeter, Goldmark and Bender** for providing free, monthly, bilingual legal clinics for our clients!

VOLUNTEER CORPS POSITIONS

In September 2005, we added one Lutheran Volunteer Corps and five AmeriCorps positions to our staff that will help assist and support various programs including, the Senior Nutrition and Wellness Program, Hope for Youth, Life Skills & Job Readiness Training, Financial Literacy, and Fundraising Development. Thanks to the Fremont Public Association, Lutheran Volunteer Corps, Washington Service Corps; and Just Serve, Literacy and Vista AmeriCorps for this opportunity!

CAMPAÑA QUETZAL

This coalition of community groups including educators, parents, youth and concerned citizens was organized to address the needs of Latinos in the public school system in order to make our educational institutions more successful for Latino students. This coalition coordinates with Seattle Public Schools and El Centro de la Raza acts as the fiscal agent. Campaña Quetzal is also responsible for holding Seattle's Latino Education Summit.

EMPLOYEE BUS PASSES

Among other benefits, El Centro employees, work-study students, AmeriCorps and Volunteer Corps staff receive a free, yearly Sound Transit-Metro Flex Pass, which help our employees save on transportation costs. This program also helps reduce pollution in our environment to preserve our earth for current and future generations.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Our **Infant Mortality Prevention** case manager is stationed at the University of Washington Medical Center once a week to provide information about this program in both Spanish and English.

NEW AND EXPANDING PROGRAMS

As you know, the end of the year is quickly approaching and El Centro has some fantastic new programs and services planned for next year. Our newest and most exciting endeavors include the addition of a new program called the **Pregnant and Parenting Teen Program** and an expansion of our **José Martí Child Development Center**, **Hope for Youth** and our **Seattle Team for Youth** programs to reach more schools and students in the Seattle Public School District.

The **Pregnant and Parenting Teen Program** is a new addition to our Frances Martinez Community Service Center. **Our new case manager will work to bilingually educate youth in facing the challenges of teenage pregnancy and parenting.** This program works to bilingually educate male and female youth to address the challenges associated with teenage pregnancy and parenting. This program focuses on delaying and preventing second births to teenage mothers who are pregnant or are current parents, so that they may have the opportunity to finish school and pursue goals that will stabilize and prepare them for a secure future.

Our **José Martí Child Development Center** has expanded by adding a new classroom to prepare children for kindergarten through the Early Learning Network paid for by funds from the Families and Education Levy passed by Seattle voters. We have also added 16 new spots for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), which doubled our enrollment in this program. ECEAP and the Early Learning Network sponsor education costs for children from low-income families and involve parents in their children's preparation for kindergarten. Our teachers also attend classes in childhood education and further their professional development through continued education opportunities at local colleges.

Rooted in the theme of positive self-esteem and identity, **Hope for Youth** aims to develop and strengthen skills and habits that support academic success and connect Latino youth and youth of color to their community. We do this by providing ethnic history, poetry and service learning classes in partnership with Seattle Public Schools in order to promote positive expression and opportunities to learn about the contributions their communities have made to America. **We currently serve students at Ballard and Chief Sealth High Schools and have expanded to sites at Denny Middle School and the Bilingual Center.** Students learn true history from various points of view and cultural perspectives through documentaries, guest speakers, community events and performances. These classes meet high school graduation requirements.

Seattle Team for Youth, in partnership with Seattle Public Schools, offers comprehensive case management services to, but not limited to, Latino youth ages 11-21 who reside in Seattle. **We have expanded by adding an additional case manager, which enables our program to reach 30 more youth in our community.** We have offices at Chief Sealth and Cleveland High School and Denny Middle School. Services are focused on youth who are at-risk of dropping out of school or have dropped out of school. The objective of this program is to provide youth with the motivation, tools and resources they need to succeed academically. The promotion of academic success also helps prevent gang activity among at-risk youth. *Below is an account of one youth's life changing experience in this program.*

SEATTLE TEAM FOR YOUTH: ONE YOUTH STRIVES FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Before Don came to El Centro as a 15-year-old sophomore in high school, he was considering dropping out of school. He was so far behind in credits; he had less than half of his credits completed, and a 1.5 GPA. Raised by his mother with five other siblings in California, Don's older brothers were caught up in gangs, violence and criminal activity. One of his brothers is currently in prison on violence related charges. Don himself had been in trouble for stealing. His mother brought him here for a better life.

Don's mother said he was depressed, angry and didn't want to help out before he came to El Centro. His teachers said he skipped class, was disruptive when he came to class and suspected he had a mental or learning disability.

With the help of El Centro's Seattle Team for Youth program, Don enrolled in alternative school and was able to get caught up academically within five months and currently holds a 3.0 GPA as a junior at a mainstream high school. He worked tirelessly throughout the summer and school year to complete over four credits of educational work, with 90 hours equivalent to a point five credit. After eight months with Seattle Team for Youth, Don can now maintain his academic and personal life on his own. Don's mother says her son is helpful around the house, active in school and goes to the gym. Don's original plan was to drop out, now he plans on attending a four-year university and currently holds an internship at a library.

Don's story is one of many such stories of the students that come through the Seattle Team for Youth program here at El Centro. Don didn't believe in himself, but luckily El Centro did and believes in youth just like him everyday of every year.

ABOUT US

Our mission includes ensuring access to services and advocating on behalf of people regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, gender, level of income, age, ability and sexual orientation. El Centro de la Raza was founded in 1972 to address poverty and the problems that people face related to cultural differences, racism, literacy, health, education, income and assets.

For 33 years, El Centro de la Raza has served Latino and low-income communities through our holistic programs and services. We are staunch advocates of civil rights and human rights, both locally and globally. We have been a model to our community and to other organizations. The majority of our participants reside in the Seattle-King County region, with some coming from neighboring counties as well. Our purpose is to provide services in a culturally competent manner to Latino and other low-income families and individuals of all ages, so that they may develop self-sustainability and may more fully participate in society. To continue providing these services to the community, we need your help!

Please read an account of another youth's experience in our Seattle Team for Youth program as well as one of our staff's profiles below.

SEATTLE TEAM FOR YOUTH: A YOUTH DETERMINED TO BE EDUCATED

Anita came to Seattle from Guatemala with her family because her father's life was in danger in their home country. Her father was granted political asylum in the United States, but on arrival in the U.S. the family discovered that only their father would be documented, not them. Her family stayed, but things were very rough for Anita at home. She began school as a freshman and her mother forced her to drop out her sophomore year. Her mother was against Anita attending school, but Anita desperately wanted to go, so she left home.

Behind in school her junior year, homeless for two years, and living in transitional housing when she came to El Centro, Seattle Team for Youth helped Anita complete her graduation requirements. She rode the bus for two hours everyday to get to school, and no one even knew she was homeless. Since Anita was undocumented it made it difficult for her to find work and impossible to get medical care.

El Centro and a year of determination helped Anita graduate from high school. She is currently attending college, completely paid for by scholarships, and wants to become a doctor. She still struggles with

housing and tells no one that she's virtually homeless. Anita displays the type of courage and determination that is only found at the core of the greatest of heroines, and luckily, we have her on our side.

STAFF PROFILE: ENRIQUE - SEATTLE TEAM FOR YOUTH

Enrique's journey began with El Centro de la Raza when he was four years old at the José Martí Child Center, however his family's involvement goes back even further. Terrified and with tears in his eyes, Enrique took the first of many steps into El Centro which was his first school, his first challenge, his first guide. When he was younger, he came to El Centro to hang out when his father worked here as the head of maintenance. Enrique claims being more or less required to write poetry and learn public speaking when he was 13 at El Centro's Youth Leadership Conference. He now acknowledges this experience as one of the best things to happen to him, a turning point you could say, that wouldn't have happened without his father.

Before Enrique, came his father. Enrique's father came to El Centro in 1972 for the peaceful occupation of the building this organization now owns. Enrique's eyes search for the words to describe this man. "My father had to grow-up fast," he says, "he had no real childhood." His own father died when he was very young. He was forced to work selling gum and papers, and shining shoes when he was six, but his own shoes wore out within a week. When Enrique's father was 11 he defended himself and his family against the abusive man his mother remarried. His father would tell Enrique that he never had time to cry. Enrique says his generation now has the luxury of being able to cry and express their pain. His father never had such a comfort. Today's generation, according to Enrique, has a responsibility to turn their pain and the suffering of those that came before them into action and justice.

After finishing his degree at the University of Washington, Enrique now finds himself back working at El Centro as a case manager for Seattle Team for Youth. He'll tell you he knew he would be back; he predicted when he was ten that there was no way not to be a part of El Centro. "It's me, it's who I am, it's what I do," he affirmed. Four generations of his family have been here at El Centro, and he sees his future generations here as well. Enrique says that if it weren't for El Centro he would have probably been lost in today's society. "Often for minorities," he observes, "it's either success or failure. There is no in-between." Enrique has always thought of El Centro de la Raza as a parent with many identities. The people he's known here have been his mentors, teachers, role models, friends and family. Enrique feels El Centro de la Raza has been, and continues to be a part of his and his family's success.

*When asked what he would say is the most important aspect about El Centro that he keeps with him, he said, "The ability to turn pain and tragedy into love, compassion and action." This is El Centro de la Raza: *hace algo, o dispersa al viento; do something, or scatter to the wind.**

EL CENTRO DE LA RAZA



**EL CENTRO DE LA RAZA
2524 16TH AVENUE SOUTH
SEATTLE, WA 98144
www.elcentrodelaraza.org**