

Ohio Turns to Hispanic Community to Develop Data Publication

By Houkje Ross

Closing the Gap, Supporting State Offices of Minority Health • September/October 2000

Hispanics are the second largest minority population in Ohio, but in 1998 there were no statistical data reflective of the needs of the community, said Cheryl Boyce, director of the Ohio Commission on Minority Health. “This has been particularly frustrating for providers and consumers in Ohio,” added Boyce.

So Boyce turned to the Hispanic community to develop the much needed information. She armed herself with as many statistics as she could find from the National Council of La Raza, the State Data Center and the Ohio Bureau of Employment Service. And she hired Lydia Alejandro—a well-respected member of the community and current director of prevention services at Adelante Inc., a Substance Abuse Prevention Agency in Toledo—as her program consultant for the project.

Alejandro and an advisory committee of nine members from Latino communities came together to develop a publication based on the U.S. Census Bureau series, *We the People*. The committee consisted of Hispanic professionals, including a marketing consultant, city council member, director of Hispanic social services agency, farm labor relations worker, and the president of a Hispanic Awareness Organization.

The publication includes an introduction on the history of how

Latinos came to Ohio, the types of jobs they currently and historically have held, and their countries of origin.

“We wanted to personalize it and clear up the myth that all Latinos in the state are from Mexico,” said Alejandro. Although Mexicans comprise the largest group of Hispanics living in Ohio, Puerto Ricans and Central and South Americans also reside in the state.

The publication also includes information on population growth; population in selected counties; median age; educational attainment; educational attainment by ethnic group; types of jobs held; marriage status; median income; poverty rates; and most prevalent diseases.

There is also a one page narrative section on farm labor and four “historical clips,” from individuals who have lived in Ohio for their entire lives.

“We have really built a model for developing an information base with a community partnership,” Boyce added. “It created an approach for the Commission to follow for integrating the talents of minority communities with federal and state government efforts to close the gap in data needs.”

For more information on the Ohio Commission initiative, contact: Cheryl Boyce, at the Ohio Commission on Minority Health, (614) 466-4000. ❖

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We...The Ohioans of Latino/Hispanic Heritage

The excerpt below is from a publication produced by the Ohio Commission’s Minority Health. *We... Ohioans of Latino/ Hispanic Heritage* is a statistical report produced as part of the state partnership initiative, funded by the federal OMH in 1998.

“We, the Latino Ohioans find that our birthplace in Ohio began with our fathers and grandfathers who came to this State for improved opportunities—the opportunity to work hard and earn a decent living to support our families as other immigrants have done in the past.

“Some of our ancestors were recruited to Ohio from Mexico and Puerto Rico to build railroads in Toledo and Cleveland as early as the 1920s. For others, coming to Ohio meant steady employment in the steel mills, farm labor and auto industry. And in the past 15 to 20 years, many other Latinos have come to Ohio to begin or continue their professional careers as engineers, doctors, professors at universities, and other careers.

“For whatever reason we have come to live in Ohio, Latinos have contributed significantly to enrich the economy of this State, not only through our agricultural labor or the auto or steel mill industries, but also in education, medicine, social services, sports, arts and culture, science, and the military.”

