

WINDS OF CHANGE: MEETING THE NEEDS OF RURAL RESORT LATINOS

Organisations Involved & Contact Details

Organisation: Asistencia para Latinos

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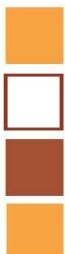
Website: <http://www.sustainabledevelopment.org/blp/>

Aims & Target Group

Aims: The aim of the project is to identify and build on the assets and capabilities of the Latino community, fostering a regional cross-sectoral, collaborative problem-solving approach that encourages the Latino and Anglo community to see each other as resources. As such it intends to empower the Latino community towards self-sufficiency through service, education, advocacy, and inter-agency collaboration.

The Winds of Change is a movement developed by Asistencia para Latinos to address the issues of cultural isolation and language barriers presented by the new population of Latino immigrants coming to the rural resort areas of Colorado.

Target Group: The Spanish-speaking population of the Roaring Fork Valley (from the city of Aspen to Parachute) has increased from about 500 to approximately 12,000 in the past five years; many are first-generation immigrants from Mexico, El Salvador, Belize, and other Latin American countries. This represents a challenge to both the new residents and the existing community, which has previously experienced very little cultural diversity. As this minority group grows, a lack of communication skills, lack of respect, and a lack of understanding of cultural traditions has become apparent between the Latino and Anglo communities.





Project Description & Components

The Winds of Change program addresses this situation with thoroughness and creativity. It advocates, encourages, and facilitates a new concept of the Latino community. It promotes a regional cross-sectoral, collaborative problem solving approach that encourages the Latino and Anglo communities to see each other as resources. The program facilitates businesses, nonprofit organizations, local governments, and citizens in meeting the needs of the rural resort Latino population, while also educating the Anglo community on the assets of the Latino population.

Process

The project assists and trains individuals, advocates for fair treatment for Latinos (including working for the hiring of Spanish-speaking staff in public agencies), and builds bridges and coalitions between the Anglo and Latino cultures. It provides services in four areas: health and human services, education, business, and public safety/immigration.

Outcomes

The project has been successful in bringing about considerable institutional change to the area in which it operates. For example, all social service agencies now have bilingual staff members, and the Latin American Festivals seem likely to continue. Some of the advances are intangible: the program has promoted a community norm of equity in service provision, increased the sense of pride of the Latino population, devised ways to develop mutual respect, and has assisted the Latino and Anglo community in recognizing the economic and social power within the Latino population. All these factors suggest a more promising outlook for the long-term integration of this overwhelmingly immigrant population into the mainstream than would have been possible without these efforts. The initiative's local, grassroots character and diversified funding base should also add to its sustainability.

Specific outcomes

- Over 5,000 people have received services;
- Every human service agency in Pitkin county now has a bilingual staff person;
- In past 2 years, 10 small Latino-owned businesses have opened in the area;
- 2 Latin American Festivals were held, total attendance of over 6,000 people;
- Program serves 5 counties.

A new coalition of 100 people, professionals, educators, law enforcement, and community members, Latinos and Anglos, have come together to work on issues affecting the Latino community, and the issue of integration of both communities. Partnerships between law enforcement and Latino youth have been created to address the issues of crime and violence.

Challenges & Obstacles

The key challenge is to provide the services in the program to an ever increasing Spanish-speaking population of the Roaring Fork Valley in the face of limited resources and funding.

Funding

Sponsored by Asistencia para Latinos, Glenwood Springs, Colorado.

