



HAPpenings!

HISPANIC AFFAIRS PROJECT

We are an organization dedicated to the development of leadership, community organizing, and the provision of key services for the integration of the western Colorado community

July 2017

First graduation of the Latino Citizen Police Academy

Under the direction of the Grand Junction Police Department, 26 members of our community received their certificate of participation in the first Citizen's Police Academy on May 23. Other counties in Colorado have had a similar experience, but this one is the most successful one. It is the result of a strong police-immigrant community partnership to improve public safety. In 2014, HAP, law enforcement agencies and the Police Departments' leaders created the Law Enforcement Latin Alliance (LELA), as a space for better communication between the police and minority groups.

"One of the objectives is to ensure that minority groups also have access to the resources and programs that have existed for many years for the established community. Having concluded this program in Spanish is an achievement, and now Grand Junction is a model for other communities", said Estrella Ruiz, community organizer of HAP



Joel Flores, a HAP board member, said "We are greatly appreciative of the Chief of Police and all the county's law enforcement agencies; also the District Attorney, for their dedication in protecting the constitutional rights of all its residents. These activities elevate the participation of immigrants as an important part of the society and also help our public institutions in carrying out their mission."

Red de Colorado para Combatir el Trafico Humano/Colorado Network to End Human Trafficking (CoNEHT) 1-866 / 455-5075

A New Generation of Leaders

Recently, 4 young people participated in one of the annual events organized by the Latino Community Foundation of Colorado (LCFC), one of the organizations that has supported the work of HAP for several years. Carla Hernandez from Olathe, Cynthia and Evelyn Luna de Montrose, and Wonder Wachara, an immigrant from Africa that studies at CMU Grand Junction, participated in the first training focused on young Latina women this past June 10th.

“Latinas LEAD was a great experience. I got the opportunity to meet many other Latinas who want to have an important impact in our community. After listening to Prisca I learned that it's okay to be a Latina and have big dreams. Overall, attending Latinas LEAD was one of the best experience I have had. Thank you HAP for this amazing opportunity to improve my skills”: Carla Hernandez



The West Prepares to Protect the Constitutional Rights of its Residents

With the coordination by the Coalition for Immigrant Rights of Colorado, CIRC, a group of 33 allies had its first **rapid response training**, faced with the threat of raids in neighborhoods and workplaces.

Representatives from 8 counties (including leaders from Alamosa and Durango), learned about the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the possible scenarios where the community can activate a support network to reduce the negative impact of the raids on families.

Bernardo, a U.S. citizen member of the community in Gunnison was detained in an ICE detention center for several days. It is not the only case in Western Colorado that citizens or residents are victims of abuse on the part of ICE and we are concerned that community-law enforcement trust is endangered by the rhetoric and the new anti-immigrant measures of the new administration.

At the same time as our allies are organizing, HAP Committee members are being trained to visit neighborhoods and give out information about constitutional rights and crime prevention



HAP's mission is to develop leadership and capacity building among its members to better serve the community where they live. A new generation of leaders working in issues impacting their communities is a good example of our accomplishments.



The Immigration Legal Assistance: In Numbers



Last April 15, our program turned two years old. That is the date when the Department of Justice authorized HAP to represent families before the USCIS and help them navigate the immigration system.

In the past 12 months we have assisted with:

- 290 legal consultations.
- 50 applications for citizenship by naturalization.
- 60 applications for work permits focusing on youth (DACA).
- 15 renewals of permanent residency.
- 14 cases of family petitions.

"Although the program operates with limited resources, we have done the best we could to help more families and we have seen the positive impact on all of them. Legal assistance includes community education to understand the legal system and its institutions; also, the prevention of immigration fraud. However, many families have benefited from our program.

Immigration status means family unity, economic and social development and it is a great responsibility that we are complying with fully. We are in a phase of growth, and we are ready to assist more families at low or no cost, depending on their income," said Ricardo Pérez, executive director of HAP



- ◆ Thanks to the support of **Mesa County School District 51**, our ILA program has a new office located in Basil T Knight Center at 596 N. Westgate Drive. We want to express our gratitude to the **Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Grand Valley** for opening their doors to our legal service program during the first 2 years.
- ◆ 130 miles away from Grand Junction, HAP is opening an office in Gunnison, sharing the building with the **Law Office of Luke Danielson**, and the **Sustainability Development Strategies Group**, located at 116 N Taylor St.

More information about ILA program,
visit the website www.hapgj.org
or call 970.249.4115

Migrant Outreach Program: More Abuses to H-2A Workers

My name is Hernan Huaman. I have come to work each year since 2003 with the H-2A visa. My salary has been \$1,042 a month, working at least 53 hours a week (even though my pay stub says that I only work 43 hours per week). Well, I work with cows in a company with several ranches in Ridgway and Telluride. Recently, I got sick and my boss tried to send me to Peru to get medical treatment there, but, because of the urgent need I was hospitalized in Montrose and had a surgery done there. I have already been told that the boss has bought [me] a ticket to leave this Saturday, and I believe that I will never have the opportunity to return to the United States to work. This worries me because I am leaving with a debt with the hospital, because the insurance from the ranch only covers for an accident on the job. I don't think the way visas work is fair. The employer is not liable, nor is the worker able to pay for medical insurance with this salary. I think the employers should provide medical insurance to their employees, if they really need us. I am asking for help to investigate what is going on in



these ranches. There are two workers [that have been here] only for three weeks and up to today they have not received one day off. Even though the contract states that we will get tools to carry out our jobs, we've been working without gloves. They've given us some ATV's to travel between ranches, and recently, two Peruvians were driving an ATV in the mountains without brakes. If something were to happen to them, the boss is ready to put them on the plane and take them out of the country without assuming any of the responsibility.

"I want to thank my friends at HAP that visited me in the hospital and gave me legal advice. I will always be thankful to you because you didn't abandon me"

Member of HAP receives CCASA 2017 Innovative Practices Award

On June 13, Tom Acker, HAP board President was recognized by **Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CCASA)** for "developing and Implementing innovative programming or practices related to sexual violence intervention and prevention". Tom was recognized for his innovative work within the Hispanic community in western Colorado.

The recognition was awarded to him publicly at CCASA's annual Colorado Advocacy in Action Conference Awards Ceremony, which took place in Vail, CO.

Tom Acker was instrumental building the HAP's Human Trafficking Program, which focus in labor trafficking prevention, especially among migrant workers with H-2A visa. Currently, Tom is a member of the Colorado Human Trafficking Council, statewide entity appointed by the Governor as described in statute (HB14-1273) to advocate for policies that enhance human trafficking prevention in Colorado.

Picture: Tom Acker and Brie Franklin, Executive Director of CCASA



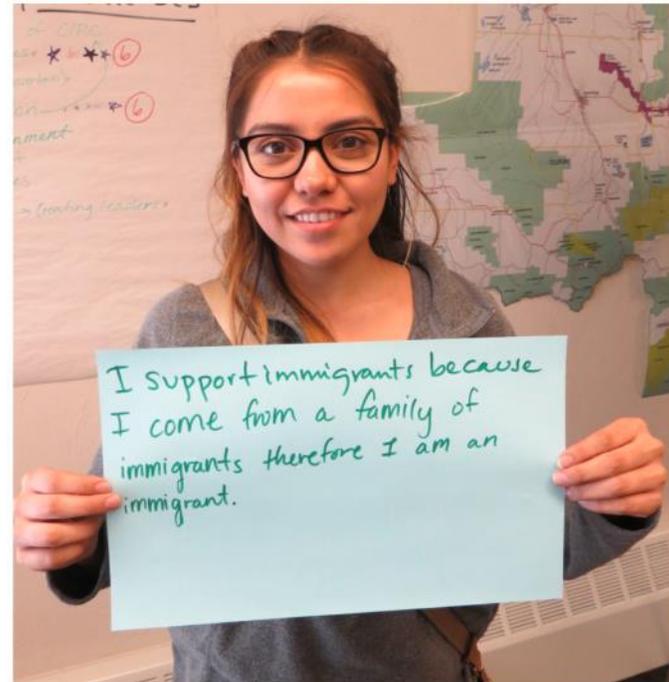
A Community with Great Leaders

My name is Crystal Ruiz, I am 23 years old, and I was born in Nampa, Idaho. My dad is from Sonora, Mexico and came to United States at the age of 14. My mom is from Pharr, Texas. When I was little I moved around a lot, from Mexico to Texas back to Idaho and then I finally stayed in Colorado.

I attended Colorado Mesa University and received my bachelors in criminal justice December of 2016. I decided to study criminal justice because when I was growing up I looked at the people around me and there was no one I could relate to that was a police officer or in the criminal justice field. For that reason I decided to go into this field in hopes of encouraging more people to go into it as well or feel better about approaching people in this field.

I got involved with HAP my last semester of college, hoping to get involved with LELA (law enforcement latino alliance). I went to the first committee meeting and that's where my involvement with HAP really began. From HAP I have learned so much on topics I knew nothing about and how certain things will affect a lot of people. This organization has certainly opened my mind and my heart to want to help and be very involved. I encourage more people to get involved in organizations that are making a difference.

We are facing many challenges as immigrants. The experiences of racism I have encountered were comments made by other students in school when I was younger and a few as I got older. It was always some comments about "Mexicans". Over the years I have learned that no matter what comments some people make there is no reason to stoop down to their level. We are here to make a difference.



**Colorado was built with strong character.
Why stop now?**

Yes, I want to support HAP!

My donation is in honor to: _____

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I would like to contribute \$ _____ Annually: \$ _____ Quarterly \$ _____ Twice a year

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Make a check payable to **Hispanic Affairs Project** - 300 N. Cascade Avenue Suite C4 Montrose CO 81401