



Empowering Latinas and their families

En Acción

A newsletter of *Mujeres Latinas en Acción* ♦ Summer 2007

Mujeres Mobilizes Teens for Power to Choose Campaign

Young Latinas for
POWER TO CHOOSE

YOUR BODY...
YOUR RIGHT...
YOUR CHOICE.

WWW.MYSPACE.COM/YOUNGLATINAS4POWER2CHOOSE

In the midst of pending and developing legislation regarding young women's reproductive rights, Mujeres and the young women of the agency's Proyecto Juventud (Project Youth) program decided they were not going to take a back seat.

In the State of Illinois, various legislative initiatives have been circulating in favor of establishing a parental notification law in regard to abortion. Most recently, in April of 2007 the Illinois House voted, by a very slim margin, against HB 317, The Adolescent Health Care Safety Act. The act provides that abortions may not be performed on a minor or on an incompetent person unless 48 hours notice has been given to an adult family member or a member of the clergy.

In response to this type of legislation and the parental notification movement, under the direction of program staff Maria Leon and Brenda Moreno, Mujeres has mobilized a small, but powerful team of young girls, ages 12-14 from the Proyecto Juventud program. The campaign, called "Young Latinas for the Power to Choose", is a grass roots awareness campaign designed to educate young Latinas about parental notification and young women's reproductive rights.

Sponsored by the Girl's Best Friend Foundation, the campaign is using a variety of vehicles to inform young Latinas about their rights and how they can take action.

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Save the Date

Conexiones

Thursday, July 26, 2007

6:00-9:00 pm

National Museum of Mexican Art
1852 W. 19th Street, Chicago, IL

Family Fest

Friday, August 17, 2007

10am - 3pm

Mujeres Latinas en Acción
2124 W. 21st Place, Chicago, IL

Las Comadres of Comedy

Friday, August 24 &

Saturday, August 25, 2007

7:30 pm

Chicago Center for the Performing
Arts, 777 N. Green St.
Chicago, IL

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Letter from the President & CEO, Maria S. Pesqueira

Since the Roe v. Wade legalized abortion in 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court has given more than 20 major rulings regarding a women's right to safe, legal abortion. This means that almost every year, a dispute about women's reproductive rights have been decided upon by our country's highest ruling court. It could arguably be one of Supreme Court's most contended topics.

It is more than apparent that women's reproductive rights will continue to be at the forefront of legal, religious and moral debates. In just the month of April, 2007, three major issues came on the decision block on an international, national and state level that have had a major impact on women's rights to a safe abortion.

Reaching beyond U.S. borders, a landmark ruling by Mexico City's City Council took place on April 25th that legalized first-trimester abortions in the country. The ruling has spurred protests, demonstrations and threats to those who perform abortions and to abortion seekers.

In the U.S., the most recent case decision occurred on April 18, (Gonzales v. Carhart and Gonzales v. Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc.), in which the court upheld the "Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003", which rules that it is a federal crime to have a third-trimester abortion.

In Illinois, on April 26, the House voted 55-62 against passage of HB 317, The Adolescent Health Care Safety Act, which provides that a person may not perform

an abortion on a minor or on an incompetent person unless 48 hours notice has been given to an adult family member or a member of the clergy.

Mandatory parental notification laws are not uncommon in states throughout the U.S. Although HB 317 was dissolved in Illinois, the future of young women's reproductive rights in our state is not secure. Mandatory parental notification or consent laws can increase the risk to the health of pregnant teens. Personal matters such as these are already difficult for teens to face and the added stress of potential abuse or displacement from the home is not warranted.

For the women and families that Mujeres Latinas en Acción serves, there are even greater cultural, religious and educational obstacles. Laws such as these could cause teens to delay seeking the medical services and counseling they need, and possibly turn to unsafe, and potentially life endangering procedures.

It is our responsibility to defend and support the rights of all Latinas, including minors. Young Latinas may not have a vote, but they do have a voice. We must support them and all young women through awareness, education and action.

For more information about Latina reproductive health and current issues, visit www.latinainstitute.org. To take action in regard to Illinois parental notification laws, visit the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health website at www.icaah.org.

Mission Statement

Mujeres Latinas en Acción, a bilingual/bicultural agency, seeks to empower women, their families and youth to become self-reliant and able to take full advantage of available opportunities, and create new opportunities to improve the quality of their lives.

To do this, Mujeres will:

- 1) Provide comprehensive services with integrated activities to assist in exploring choices, make informed decisions, develop self-esteem, and enhance daily living and problem-solving skills; and 2) Undertake policy analysis and advocate with and on behalf of our constituency.

"Let's Have Sex in Peace"



There was never a dull moment with Baytelman's wit and characters during "Tengamos Sexo en Paz"

In honor of International Women's Day, Mujeres Latinas en Acción hosted a special showing of the Nobel Prize winning Dario Fo's "Tengamos Sexo en Paz" (Let's Have Sex in Peace), performed in a monologue by Shlomit Baytelman.

On March 17th over 60 audience members gathered together at Mujeres for the play. The performance addressed the delicate area of sexual education with humor, in a manner that was culturally relevant for Latinos and appropriate for both adults and adolescents. Shlomit touched on topics such as relationships, reproductive and sexual health, and HIV/AIDS.

Shlomit enthralled the crowd with wit, antics and costume changes, but always kept the important messages top of mind - know your body, protect yourself and have loving relationships. Her performance opened dialogue among an audience for whom sex is not a topic open for discussion. Attendees also had the opportunity to take part in a question and answer session at the culmination of the play.

Chicago Cubs Care for Mujeres



This spring, Cubs Care, a fund of the McCormick Tribune Foundation, donated \$5,000 to Mujeres to support the agency's Domestic Violence program.

Cubs President John McDonough (left) and Coach Lou Piniella (right) presented the donation to Mujeres' President and CEO Maria S. Pesqueira.

Power to Choose

(continued from front cover)

The "Power to Choose" team is distributing informative post cards and brochures throughout the community and is also circulating a petition against parental notification laws for young women to sign and to be presented to legislators. On May 30th, they participated in a rally in downtown Chicago against parental notification laws.

Mujeres enlisted the support of NARAL and the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health (ICAH) to help train the girls in public speaking and outreach in preparation to give presentations to young women and their families at schools and various community organizations.

To reach even greater numbers, an integral initiative of the "Power to Choose" campaign was the creation of an interactive myspace website at www.myspace.com/younglatinas4power2choose, where visitors can read about parental notification and reproductive rights, post their comments and "chat" with other youth via blogs and message boards.

"We realize that these are very sensitive topics for young women to address with their parents, particularly for our community," acknowledged Proyecto Juventud Program Youth Counselor Maria Leon. "We are taking an integrated approach to involve their families as much as possible. It's critical that both the girls and their parents are informed and take action, as legislative decisions that are being made now may affect young Latinas for the rest of their lives."

For more information about the "Young Latinas for the Power to Choose" campaign, contact Mujeres at 773-890-7676 or visit:

[www.myspace.com/
younglatinas4power2choose](http://www.myspace.com/younglatinas4power2choose)

Upcoming Events!



Thursday, July 26th

In a collaborative effort to fund domestic violence services, Mujeres Latinas en Acción will team up with the Chicago Abused Women Coalition (CAWC) for a special fundraising event, "Conexiones" on Thursday, July 26, 2007 at 6 p.m. The event will take place at the National Museum of Mexican Art located at 1852 West 19th Street in Chicago.

The event will showcase a special art exhibit, Women Artists of Modern Mexico: Frida's Contemporaries. Proceeds will benefit Mujeres' and CAWC's programs for domestic violence survivors and their families.

Tickets: \$100/person -- includes beverages, hors d'oeuvres and networking with women business leaders. To purchase tickets online go to: <http://www.cawc.org/events/conexiones.html>. To order tickets by phone please call Anne Borg at (773) 489-9081 x 21.

Family Fest!!

Friday, August 17th

Don't miss out on a full day of fun for the entire family, featuring music, dance, games, clowns and more at Mujeres' annual Family Fest. The festival will take place at Mujeres Latinas en Acción, 2124 W. 21st Place, Chicago, IL 10:00 am - 3:00 pm, and is free of charge.

Las Comadres of Comedy

Friday, August 24th & Saturday, August 25th

Check out some of America's funniest Latina comedians including Gina Brillon, Grace Fraga, Shayla Rivera and Abuelita Alegria!

Don't miss this special benefit at the Chicago Center for the Performing Arts, 777 N. Green St. (1/2 block west of Halsted at Chicago Avenue) in Chicago.

Tickets: \$25/person. For tickets contact the box office at 312-733-6714 or online at www.theaterland.com

Mujeres Defends Itself



Mujeres staff members gives it their all when trying out self defense techniques



What would be more appropriate than a self-defense class for a women's organization? That's exactly what Program Director Neusa Gaytan thought when planning staff training this spring.

And so was the impetus to organize a day-long session of self defense. Conducted by Thousand Waves Spa, in addition to self defense techniques and strategies the interactive session reviewed important safety and awareness issues.

"As a women's organization it's our job to defend women in every way -- this goes for our clients, program participants and staff," commented Gaytan. "It was a great session for us, and I hope the techniques our staff members learned will be passed on to their families and friends."

Polk Bros. Foundation and Susana González Recognized as Community Leaders at Benefit



Left to Right: Mujeres' President and CEO Maria S. Pesqueira; Susana Gonzalez; Deborah Bennett and Evette Cardona from Polk Bros. Foundation; Yolanda Gaspar, Mujeres Board Member and Benefit Dinner Chair

Mujeres Latinas en Acción recognized two community leaders at its Voces Unidas (Voices United) Benefit Dinner at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on March 15, 2007. A corporation or foundation and an individual are selected each year based on their support of the Latina community, as well as for their contributions and good will to the Chicago area community as a whole.

With much enthusiasm Mujeres announced the 2007 winners: **Philanthropy Award winner Polk Bros. Foundation**, and **María "Maruca" Martínez Community Service Award winner Susana González of MacNeal Hospital**.

Through grants to non-profit organizations, the Polk Bros. Foundation reaches the greater Chicago area to increase the quality of education, preventative health care and basic human services. The Polk Bros. Foundation not only strives to reduce the impact of poverty, but also to enrich the cultural fabric of the city via grants to various cultural institutions.

Susana González is the Director of Women's Services at MacNeal Hospital. She has contributed to a number of organizations, including serving on the Chicago Human Relations Commission's Advisory Council on Latino Affairs as

well as on the board of the March of Dimes, where she actively participated in outreach efforts to the Latino community.

She was a long-term board member of Mujeres Latinas en Acción, and served as Board Chair from 2004 to 2006.

"The support our sponsors and contributors have given to Mujeres is evident in the increased number of women and families that we have been able to reach with our services each year," remarked Mujeres CEO María Pesqueira. "Polk Bros. Foundation and Susana González, who have been steadfast contributors to Mujeres, are examples of true commitment to reach the underserved. They embrace their mission to the fullest, make it their personal agenda, and are committed to consistently go beyond expectations for the greater good of the community."

Corporate supporters of the Voces Unidas Benefit Dinner included: Presenting Sponsor State Farm Insurance Companies and Gold Sponsors AT&T, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois, Dominick's and Verizon.

To participate in the 2008 Voces Unidas Benefit Committee, please contact Juan Calixto at 773-890-7665.

Mujeres Latinas en Acción Receives NCLR/Comcast Grant

In partnership with the Comcast Foundation, the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), has given a \$75,000 capacity-building grant to Mujeres Latinas en Acción for its immigration advocacy efforts. Mujeres is one of eight community-based organizations throughout the nation to be recognized with an NCLR/Comcast grant.

Through its Latina Leadership Program (LLP), Mujeres has mobilized participants to become active in the community and advocate on its behalf. Over the past two years, Mujeres' staff and Latina Leadership program participants have been extremely active undertaking outreach in the community to facilitate the citizenship process for thousands of Latinos through citizenship workshops.

"We are so pleased that NCLR and Comcast have recognized the work we are doing to increase the voice of Latinos in major policy debates. In the past year alone Mujeres has participated in various workshops, given hundreds of presentations and made thousands of referrals to help Latinos navigate and complete the citizenship process. By providing us this grant, Comcast will help to continue our momentum with this initiative and to support so many more people in our community," noted Estela Melgoza, Latina Leadership Program Coordinator.

Contact Mujeres Latinas en Acción for:

- Crisis assessment and intervention
- Education on the Illinois Domestic Violence Act (IDVA) and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)
- Individual and group counseling
- Community education
- Civil and criminal court advocacy
- 40-hour domestic violence training and certification

For volunteer opportunities and referrals, call Mujeres at 773-890-7676

**24-Hour Domestic Violence
Crisis Hotline
312-738-5358**

Sexual Assault Awareness Month Gives Global Perspective

Human trafficking is the third most profitable criminal activity in the world, following only drug and arms trafficking. An estimated 9.5 billion is generated in annual revenue from all trafficking activities, with at least \$4 billion attributed to the worldwide brothel industry.

Each year, an estimated 600,000 to 800,000 men, women, and children are trafficked across international borders. Seventy percent are female and 50 percent are children. The majority of these victims are forced into the commercial sex trade. Due to the hidden nature of trafficking activities, many organizations estimate this number as significantly higher.¹

As part of Mujeres' Sexual Assault Awareness Month Campaign, a special training workshop was held to inform social service providers about human trafficking.



Presented by the Salvation Army's Stop-It Anti Human Trafficking Program, topics of discussion ranged from the scope and the causes of this crime, to how to identify victims and understand the dynamics of control, to available shelter and protection resources. A focus was put on the sexual violence often perpetrated against victims of human trafficking and Latinos.

"Human trafficking victims are largely women, children and immigrants, which are all groups that Mujeres supports," remarked Sexual Assault Program Coordinator Maritza Reyes.

"Because of the frightening increase in human trafficking cases in recent years, we felt it was extremely important to include it in our awareness and outreach efforts."

In addition to the human trafficking session, Mujeres also hosted an Open Art Studio in which clients and program participants were able to process their experiences with sexual violence via creative arts. Mujeres' staff and volunteers targeted community members and commuters at the 18th Street "L" stop and at Cermak Avenue by distributing palm cards that contained information about sexual violence and available resources.

¹The United States Department of Justice <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/help/tip.htm>

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