



► CONGRATULATIONS TO ALBERTO CANO.....1

► MANO A MANO CONGRATULATES JOSE RUIZ, MB1

► MANO A MANO WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBER ANDRES CERRITOS.....2

► MEET ESMERALDA GOMEZ, NEW I&R CASE MANAGE2

► MANO A MANO RECEIVES GRANT TO SUPPORT HEALTH INITIATIVE.....3

► MANO A MANO IMPLEMENTS NEW STRATEGIC PLAN.....4

► THANK YOU FOR MAKING THE BACK TO SCHOOL FESTIVAL A SUCCESS.....4



Mano a Mano

Family Resource Center

A LOOK AT WHAT WE ARE ACHIEVING

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALBERTO CANO!

SAVE THE DATE



Light Up the World

MANO A MANO
2012 Gala

Saturday April 14, 2012

Round Lake Beach
Cultural and Civic Center

Even in this tight economy, there is good news to cheer for. A year ago, in March 2010, Round Lake resident Humberto Cano came to Mano a Mano's Employment Connection Program looking for a job. Mano a Mano helped him find employment with Echo, Inc., a Lake Zurich-based developer, manufacturer, and distributor of professional-grade outdoor power equipment for residential and commercial markets.



Mr. Cano began his employment with Echo working in the assembly department. But he proved to be a diligent worker and quickly received a series of promotions and pay increases. He now works in quality control as a QC Inspector, where he said he is very happy. Mr. Cano is grateful for Mano a Mano's services and plans to continue his education and attend college in the near future. ■



Mano a Mano Congratulates Jose Ruiz, MBA

In May Jose Ruiz, Mano a Mano's long-time business manager, earned his MBA degree from North Park University.

Like many of the center's clients, English is Mr. Ruiz's second language and was an extra difficulty. "I feel proud of myself because it was a huge challenge to take all the classes in English while working full time," he said.

Mr. Ruiz said that getting this degree has helped him "have a better understanding of how things work (in the financial aspect) in this country, as well as apply some of the concepts I learned to Mano a Mano's financial operation." "In the past number of years, Mano a Mano has been growing, thanks to our Board of Directors and the staff, and I plan to support them as much as I can," he said. ■



Mano a Mano Welcomes New Board Member Andres Cerritos

This past March, Andres Cerritos began a three-year term on Mano a Mano's board of directors. Mr. Cerritos, an attorney-at-law in private practice, serves on the board's Programs and Facilities Committee and works to bring awareness and community support to the center.

Mr. Cerritos is actively involved with the efforts of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights in Chicago and the Father Gary Graf Center in Waukegan. Mr. Cerritos, who immigrated to the United States as a child, became interested in Mano a Mano through a personal connection, which he shares in a powerful testimony:

"I was drawn to Mano a Mano for several reasons. First, the organization helped my own family. My mother obtained her G.E.D. through Mano a Mano's G.E.D. program. She worked tirelessly to achieve her goal. I was extremely proud of her accomplishment, and, likewise, grateful to Mano a Mano for supporting her throughout the process.

Second, Mano a Mano's overall mission is in keeping with my own. They seek to empower immigrant communities, in part, through access to quality services—as does my law practice. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I feel a sense of duty to give back to Round Lake. I was born during the Salvadoran Civil War. The war threatened my family's life, separated us for two years, and forced us into refuge. We later reunited in the United States under the blanket of political asylum. We made our way to Round Lake when I was five years old. The community embraced us. I attended Round Lake schools, and made lasting friendships and



relationships along the way. The people of Round Lake played a vital role in my own development. Today, I feel a sense of duty to give back to the same community that gave me so much."

Mr. Cerritos said that he understands the "hopes and dreams" of families whose struggles are similar to his family's experience. "As families search for answers to their questions, I want them to know that I am here as a resource for them," he said. "Thankfully, Mano a Mano gives me a forum to do just that: give back to a community that, after all, was invaluable to my own success." ■

Meet Esmeralda Gomez, New I&R Case Manager



Ms. Gomez was hired recently to work in Mano a Mano's Information and Referral Program, which connects people with the appropriate government and private agencies and provides case management and information and referral services. Ms. Gomez, who works part-time at Mano a Mano, is bi-lingual in English and Spanish. Among her duties, she also helps clients with important phone calls and documents.

"I enjoy working with people and for people," Ms. Gomez said. "If I can help people access resources that they may benefit from and will aid them in being better citizens, parents, adults, etc., I feel I have accomplished something great."

Ms. Gomez, earned her bachelor's degree in social work at Loyola University, Chicago. She gained a wide range of experience before joining the staff at Mano a Mano. At Most Blessed Trinity Church in Waukegan, she first worked in the

Continued on next page 



"Success By 6" program, which helped parents take on the responsibility of being their children's primary teacher, and later as a case manager in the Emergency Assistance Program, where she helped people face many types of problems, from meeting basic needs to counseling children affected by domestic violence. Later, at One Hope United, Ms. Gomez, helped young mothers cope with the struggles of raising children while working or completing their education.

"I want to help address issues early so that they do not become an enormous problem later. When I had heard about Mano a Mano's different programs, I knew I

wanted to be a part of its team. All the different programs work to address problems and attempt to nip issues in the bud."

When Ms. Gomez is not at Mano a Mano, she works with adult patients in a psychiatric care unit. "Here, I have the opportunity to work with patients who have a range of mental health issues," she said. "I had a great role model at Most Blessed Trinity who inspired me to always go the extra mile for a client," Ms. Gomez said. "I've always said that when I am at my deathbed I don't want to have any regrets and that when I am asked what I have accomplished with my life I may be able to answer this positively." ■

Mano a Mano Receives Grant to Support Health Initiative

To help with its health education efforts, Mano a Mano has received a grant from The Center of Excellence in the Elimination of Disparities (CEED), a coalition of community health organizations that works to reduce the incidence of diabetes and cardiovascular disease in Chicago-area Latinos and African Americans.

Mano a Mano will use the funding to support a new diabetes prevention project, entitled "DEEP - It's for Your Children." Mano a Mano's Promotoras de Salud (Community Health Educators) will conduct the program, said Mano a Mano grants manager, Mary Ellen Saunders. Ms. Saunders noted that the need for the program is particularly urgent, given Lake County's-and Round Lake's-substantial Latino population, a group, which along with African Americans, has a high prevalence of diabetes.

The project has a two-fold goal. First, it will provide individuals and families with information to help them prevent diabetes or lessen its effects, if they have it. "The Promotoras," Ms. Saunders said, "will be trained to provide the Diabetes Education Empowerment Program (DEEP), which was developed by CEED@Chicago. The Promotoras will offer the program (a multi-session class to be offered three times during the year) as part of the Adult Education offerings at the Round Lake Area School District 116."

"We chose to implement it in conjunction with the Round Lake School District for a number of reasons," Ms. Saunders said. "It is a way to reach a population not already reached by the medical establishment. Also, with programs held in the school district, you think of programs in positive educational terms, such as, 'I'm doing this to better my life'-not 'I'm sick,' or, 'I have a problem,' she said.



"In addition, there is a strong bent in the Latino community to do things for the benefit of one's children. We hope this motivation will help families be more open to participating in the program and implementing its recommendations."

The second goal of the project is to expand to full capacity the community garden at Murphy School so that more families can provide affordable, easily accessible, fresh organic produce for themselves. Currently, 36 families participate in the garden program. "The garden also has the added benefit of providing an opportunity to engage in regular physical activity and for families to work together," Ms. Saunders said. "We hope that the new learning will affect the participants' children as well, either delaying or preventing the onset of diabetes in the next generation," she said. ■



Mano a Mano Implements New Strategic Plan



After much hard work, Mano a Mano has successfully completed its Strategic Planning Process, the outcome of which will guide the center from now through Fiscal Year 2013-2014.

Mary Charuhas of the College of Lake County has served on Mano a Mano's board of directors for five years. Ms. Charuhas, who helped guide Mano a Mano through its strategic planning process, is optimistic about Mano a Mano's ability to meet the challenges it faces in this tough economy. Mary said the new strategic plan "affirms Mano a Mano's mission, establishes prioritized organizational goals to address critical issues and presents a system to monitor implementation tactics that encourages continuous improvement."

Ms. Charuhas also said the strategic plan "provides a framework from which to grow and expand the organization to make the greatest impact promoting independence

and self-sufficiency among the immigrant and underserved members of Lake County."

The strategic planning process was completed with a \$7,000 grant from the Lake County Community Foundation. "Like all community based organizations Mano a Mano must continue to provide services and stay within its budget," Ms. Charuhas said. "It must build constituencies while working within limited facilities. It must build partnerships without exceeding its capacity to support them. Finally, it must broaden its funding base without over taxing the staff in grant writing, reporting and accounting". She also noted that Mano a Mano must build on its achievements and focus on the outcomes of its work-the things necessary for attracting funding sources.

"The best opportunities for expansion will be based on what Mano a Mano already does well" said Carolina Duque, Executive Director of Mano a Mano. This includes preparing people for jobs and that means improving their English skills and increasing their computer skills, educating people about the importance of maintaining their health, helping people better understand the role of lifelong learning not just for themselves but also for their children," Ms. Duque said.

About how the poor economy of the state has affected Mano a Mano and other community service organizations, Ms. Charuhas said, "It is not the decrease of state funding but the broken promises for state funding that hurts community based agencies. Agencies have extended themselves on the expectation of payments by the state through grants or awards. The funds have not been forthcoming. As a result, the agencies are over extended or in debt. "Unpredictability is far more devastating than tightening a budget. Funding sources are available; however foundations and other grantors are carefully selecting the agencies they support. They want agencies that are managed well and accountable for the funds being used." ■

Thank you for Making the Back to School Festival a Success!

A BIG THANKS to all of our supporters for making Mano a Mano and B.E.S.T's Back to School Festival a success! The goal of the event was to bring resources together in one place to make it easier for families to get their children ready for school, learn about additional resources available in the community and have fun too. It truly was an event with something for everyone!

Continued on next page 



Many organizations, volunteers and the 30+ sponsors made it possible for over 2,000 participants to receive valuable services and information. At the event,

- 213 children were registered for school
- 80 children received a school physical
- 33 children received a dental exam
- 75 children received an eye exam
- 42 parents received a health screening (blood sugar, blood pressure, foot screening and Body Mass Index)

In addition, we raised over \$10,000 through sponsorship opportunities. The money raised will support the continued good work of Mano a Mano and B.E.S.T (Bringing Everyone's Strengths Together) throughout the year.



Mano a Mano

Family Resource Center

6 E Main St • Round Lake Park, IL 60073
English 847.201.1521 • Spanish 847.201.1522 • Fax 847.270.3209
E-mail info@manoamanofamilyresourcecenter.org

"The Mission of Mano a Mano is to empower immigrant and underserved families of Lake County to become full participants in American life by providing quality programs and services that educate and establish links to essential community resources. Our mission is sustained by our respect for human dignity and our belief in the equality of all people."

