

For the last four years I have been developing my leadership skills in youth organizing and health outreach. I hope to make even more positive contributions to my school and community in the coming years.

In the Latino community in the Washington, DC area, there is a lack of knowledge about HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. Since DC has the highest HIV/AIDS rate in the United States, I believe it is important to inform my community about this issue. For the past two years I have been a Teen Health Promoter at the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC). I conduct street outreach to raise awareness of sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, and obesity. I also educate youth on nutrition and teen pregnancy prevention. As a student apprentice to a doctor at the clinic, I provide Spanish translation, take patients' vital signs, and educate them about HIV/AIDS. I also train the new participants in our program. I attend health fairs to inform Latinos and others about HIV and about clinics offering free HIV and pregnancy tests. Through the LAYC's Youth Lead Substance Abuse Prevention Program, I also outreach about the consequences of drug and alcohol use and encourage youth to become involved in positive activities. We have reached approximately 300 adolescents through health education workshops and events. Not only do I outreach in my community; I share knowledge with my family and friends. I encourage my peers at school to be involved in this program, especially those who will pursue careers in health. This is a great opportunity for them to meet youth of other nationalities and help serve others.

Most recently, I have been politically involved with the immigration legislation bills being discussed in Congress. During the preparations for the protests held in the spring in the District of Columbia, I initiated and organized student participation in the

May 1<sup>st</sup> event. I organized and participated in workshops to inform students about immigration policy reforms and students civil liberties. The workshops were facilitated by lawyers from the ACLU, and two teachers, including Ms. Castillo, who teaches public policy, and supported me through this work. I recruited students to attend the *Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Atzlán* (MEChA) Forum on Immigration and to participate in the May 1<sup>st</sup> Immigrant Rights vigil and teach-in at Georgetown University. Additionally, I was invited to speak at the rally. It turned out to be a success. Not only did Latino students attend the event but also other students of color. During this period, I also worked with MEChA to establish a chapter at my school. Though these events were challenging to prepare, I am proud to say that I learned much about leadership and responsibility.

My interest in planning these events at my school is rooted in the fact that few other schools in DC were organizing around this issue. I wanted to be involved in the social issues that affect my life, and wanted more youth to make a difference. As a student at César Chávez PCHS for Public Policy, it is essential to learn about current public policy issues affecting our country and the world. I wanted my school and my community to see that young Latinos do care.

In the future I will continue my involvement in community and civic affairs. After attending the Greater Washington Hispanic Youth Symposium this summer at Marymount University I had the chance to interact with members of the Hispanic College Fund. This year I am going to volunteer at the Fund by visiting DC schools, participating in the Youth Symposium to recruit students, and attend the next Hispanic Youth Symposium as an RA. This is a great opportunity for young Latinos to learn more about

college, interact with other Latinos from the area, and network with people who can become their mentors.

This summer, I am beginning to plan the contributions I will make to my school in the coming year. Before I graduate, I will establish an organization where all Latinos can have representation. I will run for president of student government to address the issues affecting students in our school that is 40 percent Latino. One idea I have is to start a school newspaper, and to involve all the school's communities in its production. I want the Latinos at my school to be more involved in social issues, internships, learn more about our culture, and most importantly to attend college.

For me, attending college has always been a dream. Both my mother and my father are immigrants who came to this country with little formal education. They overcame many obstacles to provide a better life for me. If I am given the opportunity, I will be the first generation in my family to ever attend college. With a college education, I will be able to contribute even more to my community. I plan to double major in Political Science and Latin American Studies and minor in English. I want to learn more about my culture and politics to pursue a political career and uplift my community, the Latino community. In the future, I want to become the first Latina mayor of DC or a member of U.S. Congress.

Since I come from a low-income family with few financial resources, I must seek ways to pay for college. I appreciate what my parents have provided for me, their support and love is the cause of my motivation to succeed. I am very determined to achieve my goals of going to college and make my dreams a reality. My personal experiences as a resident, student, and active member within the Latino community of Washington, DC

has provided me with a strong learning foundation based on my personal interactions with the people of my community. My family has provided the roots of my pursuit to be a leader for my people; through higher education, I must now attain the wings to be able to leap forward into the future towards this dream.