

# CARECEN

Central American Resource Center

# NOTES

25th Anniversary Edition

Issue 1. May 2008

## CARECEN 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

CARECEN has grown from a small, human rights group with a staff of one and an annual budget of \$20,000, into a 30,000-square-foot agency with a budget of \$1.4 million that serves 60,000 people each year. It reaches out via service, education, organizing and advocacy in four areas: academic and cultural enrichment, legal services, civic participation and the day laborer program.

Now, it's time to celebrate! Join us on **Sunday, June 8 from 2 - 5**

**p.m.** for a Tardeada/Convivio/Bar-B-Q at the back patio of the ground floor Technology and Recreation Center at CARECEN.

Our reunion and kickoff party will be filled with delicious food and drink and a chance to dance to live music. Toast the last, and next, 25 years of CARECEN with friends, board, staff and alumni the solidarity movement.



We are also planning an email series celebrating our community members, profiling a variety of them and exploring how they got to the United States, what they did to survive, and what they are doing now. Please send your email address to [CZapata@carecen-la.org](mailto:CZapata@carecen-la.org) to receive these rich snapshots.

Our 25th Anniversary celebration will culminate in a gala dinner/dance at the Biltmore Hotel on **Thursday, September 18, 2008**. We will recognize the Solidarity contributions of Don White, Cynthia Anderson-Barker and Aris Anagnos, the current contributions of LAUSD Board Chair Monica Garcia and the family of Miriam Savaria which has been committed for years. ■

**SAVE THE DATES**  
**June 8th 2008**  
**September 18, 2008**

## CARECEN To Be Member of UCLA School Design Team

by Sherly Chavarria, Director of Education

CARECEN is continuing its work advocating for the creation of the Belmont Zone of Choice, the Pilot School network and the opening of a school at the Ambassador Hotel site, by joining the Bruin CommunitySchooldesignteam.

The Bruin Community School is a new K-12 Pilot school that is being created by UCLA's Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. The new school will be located at the Ambassador Hotel school site and is slated to open in 2009. UCLA's vision is to design a small school that offers personalized learning, innovative

instruction programs and community-based internships. The specifics of the school's budget, and instructional program will be determined by the Bruin Community School design team, a team that now includes CARECEN.

CARECEN is excited to participate in the design of this innovative school. The students of Pico-Union will be most successful when they have access to a rigorous, culturally relevant and resource rich educational experience. The Bruin Community School is an opportunity to offer students exactly what they need. ■

## Civitas SOL: an Opportunity to Strengthen School Partnerships

by Elena Sophia Kozak, Youth Organizer

Civitas School of Leadership (SOL), the new autonomous pilot school in Pico Union/Westlake, represents a revolutionary change in the delivery of education in Los Angeles. The organizational partnership between CARECEN and Civitas SOL (School of Leadership) is thriving. In 2005, CARECEN became an active member of Civitas's design team. In addition to joining the design team, CARECEN partnered with other local organizations in

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## From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Your continuous support for the programs and your concern with the human rights issues that CARECEN has been fighting for since its inception continue to be a source of inspiration for all of us.

As you will note in this bulletin, CARECEN is at the “pushing” edge of educational reform in Los Angeles as detailed in the article on the pilot school movement. In addition to our role in assuring that the Pilot Schools Network was born and is being raised with loving and supportive parents, CARECEN staff have also broken new ground in addressing the alarming loss of students between ninth and tenth grade with its CHOICE program.

CARECEN staff have now shown that Latino(a) eighth graders – even those most seriously at

risk of school failure – have integrated the dream of attending college into their lives. The terrible truth to come out of the CHOICE program is that this dream becomes a hollow fantasy within one year of experiencing the disassociation and neglect of their freshmen year in high school. We do not need to develop a culture of desiring a college education, we need to nurture this desire with increased educational quality in the LAUSD, appropriate and timely academic counseling and much greater involvement in individual skill development.

I look forward to seeing you at the June 8th reunion and kick off, and encourage you to reinvigorate your place in our legacy at the September 18th awards dinner.

Marvin Andrade



## CARECEN reaches out to local voters

The role of Latino voters has come front and center during this year's election. It is not surprising, considering 23% of eligible voters in California are Latinos (Pew Hispanic Center).

Our project, Get Out the Vote, funded by the James Irvine Foundation, is CARECEN's way of encouraging eligible Latinos in Pico Union to exercise their right to vote.

### Get Out the Vote encourages 2,730 Latino registered voters.

For 21 days before the February primaries, the Civic Participation Department at CARECEN carried out its Get Out the Vote program to encourage Latino registered voters in the Pico Union area to vote.

Voters who had voted fewer than three times in the previous six elections, categorized as low propensity voters, were targeted via door-to-door canvassing, phone banking and voting day reminders via mail and text messaging.

A team of 24 trained community volunteers canvassed Pico Union, reaching 2,730 voters with a non-partisan message about the issues and candidates involved in the primary elections.

Voters for the June 3rd and November 11th elections will also be targeted. ■

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## \$51,709 returns to Pico Union

This tax season, CARECEN staff and volunteers helped 128 community members file tax returns and submit form 1040a to receive Economic stimulus payments, for a total of \$51,709 in returns.

As tax payers, the 128 community members qualify for President Bush's one-time stimulus payment that could bring up to 1,200 dollars per couple.

### The Volunteer Tax Assistance

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what is known as the Belmont Educational Collaborative to advocate for the educational policy needed to create Pilot Schools, autonomous schools that remain in the district. That work continues today.

Now in the spring of its first year, Civitas enters a period of new growth. It has established a Governing Council, of which CARECEN is part, and has selected a new principal. With a new permanent leader, Civitas is now taking steps to expand by one grade level from 9th grade only to 9th and 10th grade. In addition, Civitas is only months away from its exciting transition from Belmont High to the new Vista Hermosa school site.

In addition to participating

Program, which offers free tax help to low- to moderate-income people who cannot prepare their own tax returns, provided training for a team of 10 CARECEN staff and volunteers.

This work was done over five Saturdays, filing an average of 25 returns per day. The forms were filed via paper and electronic versions of tax form 1040 and paper versions 1040a. ■

on Civitas's Governing Council, CARECEN is on the Civitas campus almost daily through our Youth Organizing Program, Carasol Juvenil. One distinguishing marker of the program is the fact that it is becoming integrated

**“[CIVITAS] re-evaluate[s] line between ... in-class education and after school programming”**

into the regular school-day as one of the curricular offerings. Students currently get course credit and complete Carasol Juvenil workshops four days a week during their Service Elective.

This unique intersection of CARECEN's Youth Organizing Program with Civitas SOL is the

tangible result of the passionate discourse within the Civitas design team over questions such as, “How do we engage students in learning beyond the four walls of the classroom and “How can we re-evaluate the line between what has been traditionally considered in-class education and after school programming?”

To date, the type of partnership between Civitas and Carasol Juvenil is still uncommon among youth organizing programs. Yet, it is also a prime example of what is possible when design teams become spaces where CBOs, teachers, organizers, and students come together to envision schools in the Pico Union community. ■