

Farewell, Cecilia Galvis - Susy Martorell

The Hispanic Health Coalition of Georgia, Inc. (HHCGA) would not be what it is today were it not for the incredible vision and hard work of one Cecilia Galvis. Many professionals and organizations in Georgia today can thank Ms. Galvis for leading them to open doors to new programs and opening hearts and minds to new approaches that addressed the specific health and education needs of Latino families. Over more than twenty years of service at St. Joseph's Mercy Care Services, Ms. Galvis developed, coordinated and implemented culturally sensitive educational and training programs for the Hispanic community, creating the first HIV/AIDS education and Parenting Skills programs in Spanish in Atlanta. Respect

and admiration from her peers was officially seconded by awards from the Latino Caucus of the American Public Health Association, the USA Department of Health and Human Services and the Consulate General of Mexico, to name a few. We are all thankful that a Microbiologist from Colombia changed careers and brought enlightenment and professionalism to services with the preeminent goal of achieving health and well-being for Latinos in Georgia! The Hispanic Health Coalition of Georgia, Inc. extends a hearty wish for health and happiness in retirement and feels confident that as the chapter of her life closes here in Georgia, another chapter vibrantly awakens in Colombia, her heart and home.



Ms. Cecilia Galvis, former HHCGA president, serving our coalition and the Hispanic community in Georgia for over 20 years.

2007 a Exciting Year for HHCGA - Mayira Bunting

HHCGA keeps growing and some examples of that are the important accomplishments that we reached during the past year of 2007:

- **Building membership:** For the first time HHCGA membership reached more than one hundred members: 59 Organizations and 50 individuals.

- **Establishing a strong presence in the community:** We continue to distribute our Quarterly Wrap Up newsletter with articles on issues for Latinos in Georgia such as: suicide in Latino adolescents, HIV/AIDS, leading causes of death, poverty, importance of Latino belief in community health programs, Medicaid news, Misconceptions of the SB529, common questions and answers about health care services, notable Hispanics in health, and how a member organization and an elementary school in Atlanta celebrated Hispanic Month.

Our listserv got stronger and stronger with 294 subscribers and a record numbers of messages posted in the following categories: Training; Job Opportunities; Events; Advocacy; Research/Studies; Prevention/Awareness; Announcements; Health Fairs; Grants & Scholarships; and Publications.

We accomplished outreach in the community by participating in the Federal Heritage Month Celebration, in the "Semana de la Salud", a Mexican Consulate Health Fair, and in the Gainesville Health Fair.

We celebrated our second Hispanic Network Health Resources Fair at the Latin

American Association with the participation of 36 member organizations.

- **Providing education within our membership:** We had four very successful Lunch and Learn sessions: "Disabilities in the Latino Population" in March, "Asthma 101 and Other Respiratory Issues among Latinos" in May, "Immunizations among Georgia's Latinos" in July, and "Understanding Mental Health, Disorders and Drug Abuse and Addiction" in September. All four had a good number of participants.

We were most fortunate bringing very interesting panelists for our quarterly meeting main topic sessions presenting: "Depression and Suicide Risk among Hispanic Adolescents" in January, "NCLR Health Advocacy Training" in April, "Emergency Preparedness" with representatives from Grady Health System, the State Emergency Committee and the American Red Cross in July, and "Pandemic Flu/Avian Flu and its Considerations in Outreach to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Populations and Different Ethnic Groups" in October.

- **Strengthening our health advocacy capacity:** We partnered with HEALTH-STAT and a Task Force of advocacy organizations to monitor the impact of the SB529.

On October 30th we were very excited with the discussion and participation of 20 people from different organizations at the First "Health Access Open Call" in Georgia

- Implications of SB 529 on Immigrants in our Community", having as speakers Elise Shore from MALDEF and Charlie Bliss from Atlanta Legal Aid.

- **Expanding the dialog with state agencies to improve access to services:** This is our second year of a dialogue with representatives of the Department of Human Resources (DHR), the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFACS), Right from the Start Medicaid (RSM), and the Department of Community Health (DCH), and several coalition members to advocate for equal access to health and human services for Latinos and refugees. We also collaborated on a survey of state programs intended to check how well language services are provided to clients seeking assistance.

- **Making a more sustainable organization:** HHHCG received two grants, the ISO/Emerging Latino Community Grant renewable for five years from National Council La Raza and one from the Funds for Southern Communities Fall 2007 Grant Cycle.

We are looking forward to the opportunities ahead for the HHCGA to have another very exciting year in 2008.

Always pay your taxes. Even if you are paid cash, you can go to a tax filing service and they will estimate your yearly earnings. Besides the fact that it is the law of the land, paying taxes is an important consideration when moral character is evaluated in the immigration context.

Do not give the police a reason to stop you. The police cannot stop you in your car unless you give them "probable cause". Probable cause can include, but is not limited to:

- **Speeding and aggressive driving.** Driving in the US is not nearly as aggressive as in other countries, and aggressive driving can be a reason for police to initiate a stop, and potentially take a person into custody.
- **Failure to keep the car in good shape.** Police stop people for cracked windshields, cracked lights or signal lights, tinted windows, loud music, illegal equipment such as blue "racing lights", and busted lights, including tag lights.
- **Drunk Driving.** Georgia is a zero tolerance state, so any amount of alcohol in the system can be a potential violation. Additionally, SB529 provides that anyone arrested for DUI must have their immigration status checked.
- **Insurance violations.** It is the law in Georgia to have valid insurance coverage, even if you don't have a valid driver's license.
- **Tags and registration.** Police can check the tag and registration of a vehicle as they are following it. If your tag does not match your vehicle, they can figure it out with their computers, and pull you over. They can also pull up your registration and if it is suspended, pull you over for it.
- Do not drive if you do not have a driver's license. Upon moving to Georgia, the law dictates that any out of state license must be exchanged for a valid Georgia Driver's license within 30 days. International driver's licenses are not valid unless one has a valid visa. Additionally, nearby

states that used to issue driver's licenses, like Tennessee and North Carolina have now stopped the practice, so it is not recommended to try to get one.

- Have a plan in place in case that immigration takes you into custody. Individuals, including parents, who are out of status in the US run the risk of being taken into custody at any moment. They should execute a "power of attorney" letter authorizing a close friend or family member to take custody of the children in the event of detention/deportation by immigration officials. The power of attorney should include authorization to make decisions regarding the schooling, health, and travel of the children.
- Always have a valid passport. Passports from your home country can be easily obtained through your local consulates. Everyone in the family should have a valid passport, including children, since one never knows when one might have to leave the country in haste.
- Children born in the US are automatically US Citizens, and therefore entitled to benefits and US passports.
- Do not buy or carry false documents. In the desperate attempt to acquire a license or work, many people buy fake social security cards or fake green cards. If law enforcement finds these documents on your person, you can be charged with Felony Forgery, effectively ending any chance in the future to acquire legal status.
- Beware of attorneys and "notarios" who offer easy solutions to your immigration problems. Solutions that are offered by these attorneys or "notarios" are very expensive and they are probably too good to be true. Get a 2nd opinion from a licensed attorney to confirm if this "solution" is valid. Immigration attorneys can be licensed in any state from the US, and they are generally members of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA). Ask to see proof of their law license and membership in AILA.

- Do not miss any court dates. In the US, when a criminal or traffic court date is missed, the court issues a bench warrant or arrest order for the person. This arrest order is in the person's record and can be accessed by any law enforcement officer anywhere in the US. If a court date was missed, an attorney should be contacted, so that the attorney can speak to the court and get the bench warrant recalled and the case put back on the calendar.
- Do not miss any appointments in immigration and immigration court. If one has an appointment in immigration for a benefit, such as residency or asylum, one must keep that appointment or contact immigration about rescheduling. Otherwise the case may be denied and referred to immigration court. If one has an appointment for immigration court and does not attend, the court will deport the individual without the person being there ("in absentia").
- If you are not sure about your immigration or criminal record, a good attorney can request it for you. Many individuals have old criminal incidents, applications, and possible deportations that they are unsure about. An attorney can request your immigration file to view old applications. An attorney can also request your FBI file to view previous deportations and criminal history.
- Everyone present in the US is entitled to demand or sue for benefits stemming from their injuries. Even if you are undocumented, if you are injured at work you are entitled to Workers Compensation benefits; if you are injured in an accident anywhere, you are entitled to sue for personal injury damages.
- If you are married in your country, you need to get a divorce before you get married again in the US. You can get a divorce in the US even if you don't know where your first spouse lives.

2nd Health Open Call in Georgia

Food Insecurity and its Impact on Health and Well-being of Latinos

Speakers:

Jennifer Ng'Andu, National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
Elizabeth Omilami, Director, Hosea Feed the Hungry
Bill Bolling, Director, Atlanta Community Food Bank

Tuesday, January 29th 2008

10:00-11:00 AM

To register for this Free HHGCA teleconference

RSVP hcgamembership@yahoo.com

With your name, organization, position, phone & email
The teleconference will be a 60 minute call and will include speaker presentations and Q&A.