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**ETHNIC CHANGES IN NORTHEASTERN
PENNSYLVANIA**

**WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON RECENT HISTORY
WITHIN THE CITY OF HAZLETON**

JOINT URBAN STUDIES CENTER
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The Joint Urban Studies Center

The Joint Urban Studies Center was established to provide essential research, analysis, and consultation to small and mid-size cities aiming for full participation in the new economy of the 21st century. The Center mobilizes the resources of regional institutions of higher education to engage communities in planning that is informed by research, energized by broad participation from stakeholders in the community, and validated by successful implementation. As the managing partner in the Center, Wilkes University is joined by Keystone College, King's College, College Misericordia, Luzerne County Community College, Penn State Wilkes-Barre, and the University of Scranton.

Note

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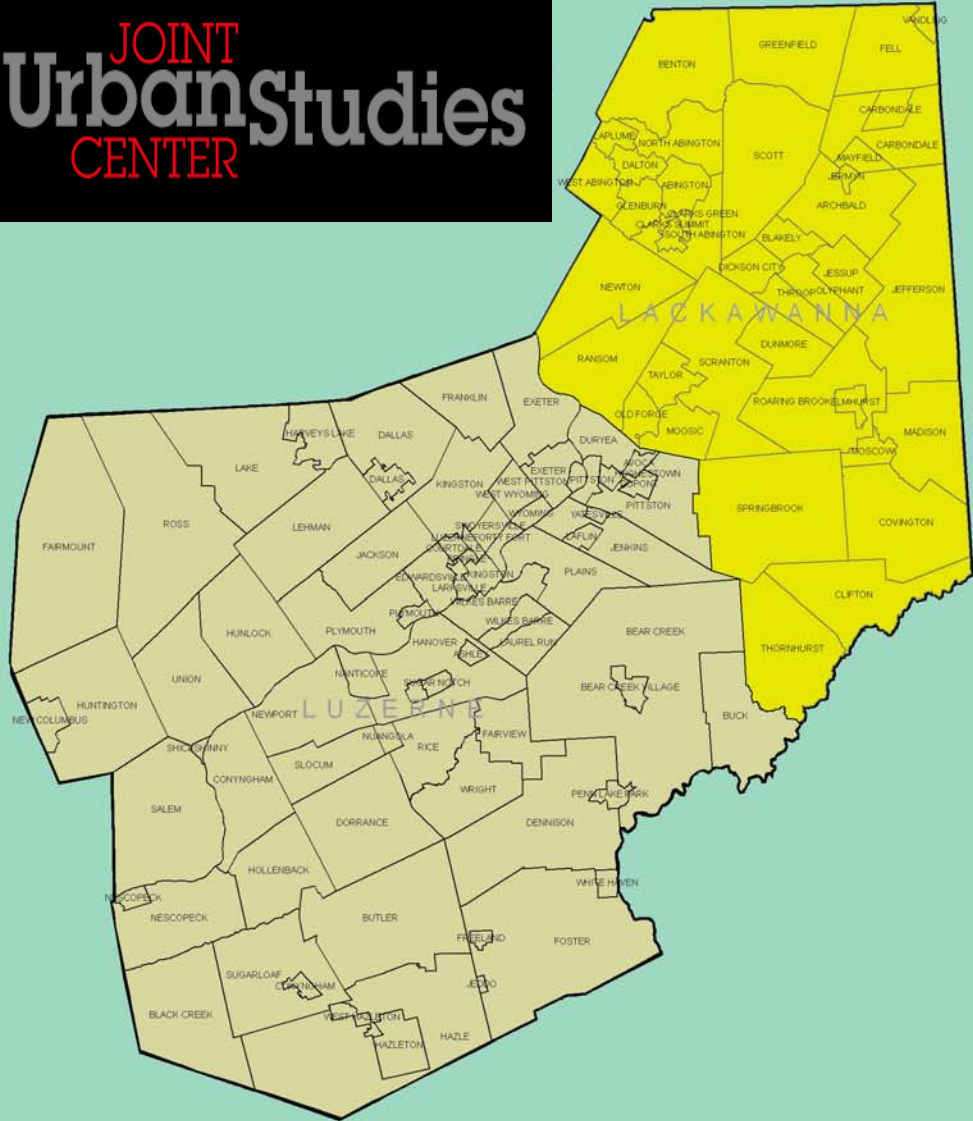
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Note: Research for this paper began in 2005 and ended in June 2006. Many current events have transpired in north-eastern Pennsylvania since completion of this paper and therefore may or may not be referenced in any detail or still be current.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The in-migration of Hispanics/Latinos (“Hispanics”) continues to occur at a rapid pace in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton Metropolitan Statistical Area, most noticeably in the City of Hazleton (or the “City”). This specific segment of the population is integrating into the educational systems, the business community, religious institutions, and in all areas of employment. While many in the region believe this is a rebirth for under-populated urban centers, others view it as a direct assault on the services and opportunities for established members of the community. The intentions of the majority of the new Hispanic residents to work, buy property, pay taxes, and open businesses should be encouraged. In the past, immigrants from many different countries and cultures built and populated this region. All came with hopes of a better life and a will to work, raise their families, and integrate with the community. Diverse religious institutions and thriving ethnic restaurants line the streets of Hazleton; cultural festivals and celebrations ornament City calendars.

The Hispanic culture emphasizes certain beliefs and values, like *familism* and *personalismo*, which are more clearly defined than American values. In education, the Hispanic population made a noticeable impact in the Hazleton School District; the English as a Second Language (ESL) program especially has expanded. Local post-secondary institutions have made headway in welcoming and providing for diverse additions to the population. Furthermore, since the year 2000 over 50 Hispanic-owned businesses have contributed to the revitalization of Hazleton’s business district. As the community develops, numerous opportunities arise for Hispanic



residents; for instance, local churches provide Spanish language services and offer free ESL classes. According to both Hazleton city officials and the Hispanic community, one of the biggest issues facing Hazleton is the language barrier. Hispanic residents hope for the implementation of translation services in the areas of healthcare, education, and agencies for gaining employment and licensing. Another topic emphasized as a point of concern by the Hazleton residents is its crime rate; many Hispanics were originally attracted to the area because of the low crime rate and peaceful atmosphere, but as the population increases there is growing concern about a possible negative impact on crime. Other issues facing Hazleton’s Hispanic community include housing, childcare, and healthcare - issues on which local officials could implement policy changes to alleviate concern.

This study examines Hazleton’s Hispanic population and summarizes changes that have occurred and will identify areas for discussion, collaboration, and cooperation in programs and services as they impact these new residents. Information was gathered from secondary sources, especially local reports and newspapers, and through interviews and personal communications with associated residents, officials, activists, and program directors from 2005 to early July 2006. In order to educate the community, the study also outlines some challenges that Hispanics may confront in trying to gain access to needed services. Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton MSA population changes provide an opportunity to embrace diversity and to learn and grow as a thriving community.

II. PREFACE ON THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY IN HAZLETON¹

In 2002, local activists conducted a survey, *Las Voces de la Comunidad*, to determine the Hispanic community's sentiments on what the area was lacking and needed to expand on to make them feel more comfortable. The goal of the study focused on learning more about Hispanic newcomers to the Greater Hazleton Area. One hundred twenty-one adult Hispanic residents responded to the survey. Focus groups were conducted to obtain information on the same subject area as the survey. The focus groups consisted of 88 adults and 18 teenagers and were administered in St. Gabriel's Church. Neither the survey nor the focus groups provided random sample. The focus groups were composed of people who stayed after church services and were willing to participate; therefore, the results cannot encompass the opinions of Hazleton's entire Hispanic community.

Countries of origin for Hazleton's Hispanic community include the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Argentina, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. The largest number of respondents represented the Dominican Republic, followed by Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Peru. Stated reasons for moving to Hazleton included work, safe environment, and educational opportunities. In 2002, Hispanic residents accounted for more than 5% of Hazleton's population - over two-thirds of whom have lived in Hazleton for less than five years.



At the time of the study, Hazleton's Hispanic residents expressed that the greatest problem with the area is the language barrier between those who speak English and those who do not. Two-thirds of those surveyed rate their ability to speak and write English as poor, but expressed a desire to learn. Three-fourths of teenagers surveyed attended Hazleton Area High School and felt that there was a barrier between them and other students because of language differences and inconsistent disciplinary consequences. These teenagers were also aware of a language barrier between their parents and others and realized that this contributes to problems in everyday life.

III. POPULATION GROWTH

Population Growth

The cause of the overwhelming Hispanic population growth in Hazleton is commonly believed to be the attacks of September 11, 2001, when two hijacked planes crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan. Many working Hispanics lost jobs - especially the large proportion who worked in New York City's tourism sector. As a result, the population migrated into smaller urban areas, like Hazleton, and family and friends quickly followed.²

According to the Pew Hispanic Center, part of the Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C., the explosive growth in Hazleton's Hispanic population is characteristic of all immigrant Hispanic populations. Large scale immigration is followed by a rapid second generation growth. Hispanic birth rates are twice as high as non-Hispanic rates.

Such growth made a noticeable impact on Hazleton's population, which had been falling for decades, prior to the influx of Hispanic immigrants. The City's overall population, which previously had been aging and declining, grew a noticeable 28.4% between 2000 and 2003.³

Population Growth in Other Communities:

Within Pennsylvania, Reading and the Lehigh Valley have also witnessed a growing Hispanic population. As of the 2000 United States Census, Reading had 30,302 Hispanic residents out of its 81,207 total residents, accounting for 37.31% of its population. Information obtained from the 2003 American Community Survey Summary Tables stated that 35,806 Hispanics were residents of Lehigh County; 310,151 comprised the total population. This number accounts for 11.54% of the population of Lehigh County. Each of these areas has developed specific programs and organizations to aid their growing Hispanic/Hispanic populations.

IV. VALUES AND BELIEFS**Hispanic Values and Beliefs:**

The Hispanic culture holds family in high regard; the word “familism” describes the strong family bond. Hispanics believe that family includes not only immediate family members, but also friends and elder relatives. The Hispanic emphasis on the importance of family is a similar to beliefs held by the Irish, Polish, and Italian. Elders hold a special, respectful position within the family and Hispanic daughters are expected to care for aging family members.⁴ “Hispanics depend more on family for services, emotional support, and advice than they do health professionals.”⁵

Other values characteristic of the Hispanic culture include “simpatía” and “personalismo.” Simpatía “emphasizes the expectation of individuals to avoid interpersonal conflict and to expect high frequencies of positive social behaviors.”⁶ Personalismo is “the trust and rapport that is established with others by developing warm, friendly, and personal relationships.”

Hispanics define “espiritismo” as the belief that “the world is inhabited by both good and evil spiritual beings who can affect humans - particularly health and well- being, in positive and negative ways.” “Jerarquismo,” is defined as “a belief in the way individuals deal with each other in terms of relative positions they occupy within vertical or hierarchical social structure.” The positions within the hierarchical structure are determined by social class, gender, and age.⁷

Hispanics also believe in a sense of collectivism - emphasizing the importance of achieving greater good for the benefit of the entire group rather than the individual. Hispanics are highly religious and feel that non-verbal communication is just as important as verbal communication.⁸

**Hispanic Stereotypes and Discrimination:**

Some societal stereotypes that Americans hold stem from the entertainment industry and the media. The way Hispanic characters and representatives appear on television and in the movies shape the general perception of the culture. Unfortunately, in many cases, Hispanics are portrayed as being lazy, unintelligent, and prone to criminality.⁹ Similarly, the values and beliefs discussed in the previous section, although pertinent to many Hispanics, cannot be applied to all. Assuming that each member of a culture maintains the same ideas and principles as those prescribed by his or her background is a generalization.¹⁰

Another stereotype commonly held is that all Hispanics speak the same language and maintain identical cultural backgrounds. Within each varying Hispanic country (i.e. Dominican Republic, Cuba), there are varying language dialects and traditions.¹¹ It is very important to Hispanics that they celebrate their own traditions, and many don't

appreciate the generalizing assumption that all Hispanics are the same. The language misconception is believed to be a misunderstood stereotype within the Hazleton area.¹²

Although many Hispanics in Hazleton feel they are making efforts to assimilate, stereotyping and discrimination continues. For instance, Hispanic employees of Cargill meatpacking donated over \$100,000 to the United Way in order to give back to the community. Despite such efforts, one interviewee expressed that Hispanics feel police and other citizens within the community treat them unfairly.¹³



Religious Involvement:

Religious services and affiliations for Hispanics in the Hazleton area are generally limited to those provided by the Church of St. Gabriel (Iglesia Catolica San Gabriel), located at 122 South Wyoming Street.¹⁴ The parish's Hispanic initiatives were originally implemented by Monsignor Michael Delaney, who no longer serves at St. Gabriel. However, stemming Msgr. Delaney's work, the church now has an Office for Hispanic Ministry, headed by Fr. John C. Ruth.

The Spanish language mass, which St. Gabriel began to offer more than a decade ago, has grown from 60 attendees to hundreds of exuberant worshippers. An article from the *Puerto Rico Herald* noted that the Spanish language masses are noticeably more exciting and boisterous than the traditional English language services.

St. Gabriel's youth group, run by Marisol Velez, holds weekly meetings in the church basement. Approximately two dozen teenagers attend the gathering and find it a haven.¹⁵

Similarly, other churches in the Luzerne/Lackawanna County region provide services for the Spanish-speaking populations within respective communities. In May 2005, Wilkes-Barre's Grace Fellowship Church implemented a Spanish language service; sermons are translated by Luis Albino, a church chaplain.¹⁶ St. Casimir's Church, at 301 Delaney Street, in Wilkes-Barre, and Nativity of Our Lord Church, 633 Orchard Street, Scranton, were mentioned along with St. Gabriel in *Diversity in Northeastern Pennsylvania*. Also mentioned was Catholic Social Services' Hispanic Ethnic Affairs Program, headquartered at 400 Wyoming Avenue, Scranton.¹⁷

The Diocese of Scranton, which encompasses the Hazleton Area, has provided funding for a Hispanic Outreach Program - established at Scranton's Nativity of Our Lord Church.¹⁸ In August 2002, and in partnership with Scranton Preparatory School's Office of Service Programs, the Hispanic Outreach Program hosted a summer camp. Called "Fun in the Sun," the camp was open to Hispanic youth ages 9 through 12.¹⁹

The Diocese of Scranton also provided funding to parishes in Monroe County, which is also experiencing a notable rise in Hispanic residents. The funding was earmarked to provide Hispanic parishioners with food, clothing, legal services, housing, and more. Elsewhere in the area, the Diocese granted funds to a number of parishes to aid the Hispanic community with medical emergencies, healthcare, and religious education opportunities. In Hazleton, the Diocese provided funding to St. Gabriel in 2003 for its Hazleton Free Medical Clinic.²⁰

V. EDUCATION

Education:

According to the Pennsylvania State Department of Education regulation Section 4.26 states, “Every school district shall provide a program for each student whose dominant language is not English for the purpose of facilitating the student’s achievement of English proficiency and academic standards. Programs under this section shall include appropriate bilingual- bicultural or English as a second language (ESL) instruction.” It also states that “the district remains responsible to provide a core program to ensure that each limited English proficiency (LEP) student’s English proficiency and academic needs are met.” ESL programs are mandatory unless they conflict with religious beliefs and may be funded by Title III (No Child Left Behind Act).²¹

To opt out of ESL classes, students must meet two of the three following requirements: (1) Final grades of B or better in core subject areas, (2) Scores on a district-wide assessment that are comparable to the basic performance level on PSSA, (3) Scores of basic in reading, writing, and math on the PSSA.²² When enrolled in the ESL program, a student classifies as an English Language Learner (ELL), native language other than English, or Limited English Proficient (LEP). Through the ESL program, a student must accomplish certain criteria of proficiency; the program then monitors the student for two years after leaving the program. Parent permission is not required to test students, but parents must be made aware of their child’s placement in ESL. If the parents do not speak English, the school district must provide a translator, or whatever other means necessary, to make them understand.²³



The boom in Hazleton’s Hispanic population has challenged the school district’s capacity and resources. The High School now serves 2,500 students, although it’s built to accommodate only 1,800. There are currently 1,000 students enrolled in the English Language classes, seven times the number enrolled four years ago. The Hazleton Area School District attracted significant attention by hiring eighteen additional ESL teachers to accommodate new students.²⁴

A 1990 study of Pennsylvania school districts stated that the Hazleton Area School District had 12,440 students enrolled. The Hazleton Area School District was not listed in the categories “nonwhite children age 3 to 19 Pennsylvania School Districts 1990,” “Hispanic children age 3 to 19 Pennsylvania School District 1990,” or “Spanish speaking children age 3 to 19 Pennsylvania School District 1990.”²⁵ At the time, the District did not have enough students enrolled to establish a presence in these categories.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, between 2001-2002, 109 students migrated to the Hazleton Area School District area over the summer. At the end of the 2002 school year, 535 diplomas were presented during commencement ceremonies and 17 of those students were Hispanic.

During the 2002-2003 school year, 208 Hispanic students were enrolled at Heights-Terrace Elementary/Middle School. Hazleton Area High School reported 169 Hispanic students, Arthur Street Elementary reported 50, Drums Elementary Middle/School reported 9, Freeland Elementary/Middle School reported 11, Hazle Elementary reported 80, McAdoo-Kelayres reported 11, Valley Elementary/ Middle School reported 11, and West Hazleton Elementary/ Middle School reported 84.²⁶

Within the Hazleton Area School District, as of March 7, 2005, there were 696 ESL students enrolled - 528 in

elementary schools and 168 in high school. With 204 registered ESL students, Heights-Terrace Elementary School reported the highest number, which equated to at least 15 ESL students in every grade level.²⁷ Within the District, 230 students were tested to appraise their level of English as of the beginning of the school year.²⁸ As reported in the *[Hazleton] Standard-Speaker*, “566 of the district’s 9,507 students (approximately 6%) have only basic understanding of the (English) language.” Heights-Terrace Elementary reported the largest LEP student population - its percentage was 2.54% in 1993-1994, compared with 6.78% in January 2005.²⁹



By May 5 of the 2004-2005 school year, the number of the ESL students in the Hazleton Area School District rose to 728. The release of these numbers by Deb Carr, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, expressed to the school board the increasing need for ESL instructors. Members of the Hazleton Area School Board developed the idea of a “sheltered” English program. The program would consist of some classes “geared” for students who are “somewhat fluent” in English and other classes geared to students who have no ability in the English language whatsoever. A staggering comparison was also made stating that West Scranton High School reported 4 ESL students registered and Hazleton Area High School reported 167.³⁰

The *[Hazleton] Standard Speaker* in one of its reports highlighted Carlos Oriach, a senior at Hazleton Area High School, who spoke about migrant education at the Pennsylvania Summit on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Students. He had been in Hazleton for 18 months after migrating from the Dominican Republic. “According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, he is one of approximately 17,000 migrant students in Pennsylvania.” At the Summit, Carlos explained the difficulties encountered in school when students do not speak English and the financial hardships that are incurred if the students want to attend college.³¹

A report from the Census Bureau issued in June 2003, stated, “more than two in five Hispanics aged 25 and older have not graduated from high school.”³² However, many Hispanic students are graduating from Hazleton Area High School, with several students going on to Penn State Hazleton in the fall semester of 2004. Educational problems are also arising for Hazleton’s Hispanic Pre-K youths. Four Hispanic children applied to Head Start, but only two were accepted because Head Start does not provide a bilingual program.³³

The United States Department of Education’s Office of Migrant Education has in place programs designed to help migrant children, who are uniquely affected by the combined effects of poverty, language, cultural barriers, and the migratory lifestyle, to meet the same challenging academic content and academic achievement standards that are expected of all students.³⁴ Overall, the Office of Migrant Education is described as aiding in reducing educational interruptions caused by moving for students whose movement crosses state borders. One of the goals of the program is to assure that students are not punished, are given support they need both educational and supportive, and students are given the chance to meet the same standards as other students. Programs implemented by the Office of Migrant Education include the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) and the High School Equivalency Program (HEP). CAMP assists with post-secondary education, particularly during the first year. HEP assists students 16 years of age and older obtain a GED.³⁵

Pennsylvania has its own Migrant Education Program (PMEP). PMEP receives funding from both the federal and State governments. Services provided in local school districts due to PMEP include “tutorial programs, after school extended hours, summer programs, in-home programs, health and social support services, parental involvement, advocacy, language arts, and enrichment.” PMEP has proven beneficial in various school districts, decreasing dropout numbers and boosting graduation rates.³⁶

Information from a study conducted by the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce detailed levels of educational attainment by Hazleton’s Hispanic residents compared with others. In 1990, 2,419,632 Hispanic students throughout the U.S. graduated from high school; in 2000, the total number increased to 40,148,392. The number of Hispanic students graduating from high school surpassed all other education levels, including less than 9th grade, 9th to 12th grade with no diploma, some college with no degree, associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree, and graduate/professional degree.³⁷

In Pennsylvania, the number of Hispanic high school graduates in 1990 totaled 26,405, compared with 51,538 in 2000. In Luzerne County, 247 Hispanic students graduated from high school in 1990, compared with 498 in 2000. More specifically, in the Greater Hazleton Area, 39 Hispanic students graduated high school in 1990, compared with 225 in 2000; solely in Hazleton, 16 Hispanic students graduated from high school in 1990, compared with 158 in 2000. In 1990, 55 of Hazleton’s Hispanic students obtained education between the 9th and 12th grade with no diploma and in 2000, that number skyrocketed to 141.³⁸



The number of Hispanic students enrolled in area public versus private schools varies significantly. Hazleton Area High School maintains a ten percent (10%) Hispanic population, compared with a six percent (6%) Statewide average for the demographic. The private high schools that serve the Hazleton Area are MMI Preparatory School and Bishop Hafey Junior/Senior High School. MMI Preparatory School has a two percent (2%) Hispanic population, while Bishop Hafey reports less than one percent (1%).³⁹

Education in Other Communities:

Wilkes-Barre’s GAR Memorial Junior/Senior High School has a five percent (5%) Hispanic population, while nearby private school Bishop Hoban has a Hispanic population of less than one percent (1%). In Scranton, Scranton High School maintains an ethnicity ratio of nine percent (9%) Hispanic students; while private high school Bishop Hannan has a one percent (1%) Hispanic student population.

In Reading, Pennsylvania, there is a noticeable difference in school demographics. Reading Senior High School’s student ethnicity breakdown prescribes the majority of students, 59%, as Hispanic. Local private high schools, Central Catholic and Holy Name, maintain nine percent (9%) and ten percent (10%) Hispanic student populations respectively.⁴⁰

Post-Secondary Education Involvement:

Northeastern Pennsylvania’s growing Hispanic population is in constant need of resources as it becomes an established demographic. Many Luzerne County colleges and universities have taken advantage of the opportunities presented by the changing population. For instance, College Misericordia’s Diversity Institute, in collaboration with Holy Rosary [Church] in Wilkes-Barre and St. Gabriel’s Church in Hazleton, has established a program that provides ESL classes to immigrants preparing to become U.S. citizens.⁴¹

Another service provided by College Misericordia, through the Cultural Competency in Healthcare grant, are surveys and interviews with local Hispanic populations in Freeland in order to benefit healthcare providers - making them more competent in cultural differences. Graduate nursing students from College Misericordia also teach health and illness prevention strategies and provide physical exams and health screenings to migrant farm workers in Shickshinny.⁴²

In order to directly benefit Hazleton's Hispanic population, Luzerne County Community College has initiated a new Hispanic Learning Center. The Center's purpose is to serve the needs of the Hispanic community by aiding in the development of numerous life skills, cultural programs, and language acquisition skills. Classes aim to meet the needs of adult ESL students and bridge the gap between high school and higher education.⁴³

Students in the class of Dr. Paola Bianco at Wilkes University utilize their translation skills for area nonprofit organizations that are in need of translation services. Specific students are assigned to agencies based on their majors, which range from pharmacy to pre-law. According to Bianco, "This course serves the community by providing much needed bilingual personnel and helps nonprofit organizations with their increasing Hispanic clientele. At the same time, by translating documents, students use practical Spanish in real life situations."

King's College and Catholic Social Services established the Daniel Flood Elementary School Tutoring Program, through which King's students aid both Hispanic students with academic work, and their parents with translation services.⁴⁴



The McGowan Hispanic Outreach Program, initiated recently at King's College and headed by Isabel Balsamo, sponsors and initiates numerous activities for the local Hispanic population. The Program started by surveying the needs of this demographic and working from findings to provide community activities and services. For instance, the St. John's Celebration at the Catholic Youth Center in Wilkes-Barre demonstrates the common ground that Hispanics from numerous backgrounds and cultures share. The Hispanic Outreach Program plans for computer classes in Spanish, which is a service that the community expressed great interest in.⁴⁵

Penn State Wilkes-Barre implemented courses that train employers in human resources, healthcare, and social service areas to understand Spanish, especially particular business vocabulary. "To enhance the performance of a

diverse workforce, employers increasingly have turned to language courses to raise awareness of differing cultures, improve cross-cultural communication and understand basic supervision techniques for culturally diverse employees," stated an article in *The Citizens' Voice*.⁴⁶

Hispanic Outlook on Higher Education magazine cited the University of Scranton, among 16 other universities in Pennsylvania, for "doing a commendable job of recruiting, retaining, educating, and graduating Hispanic students." The University of Scranton has made the "Publisher's Picks" for eight of the ten years the list was published, and boasts increased Hispanic enrollment over the last five years.⁴⁷ Of those 16 universities, the University of Scranton is within the closest proximity to Hazleton and its growing Hispanic population. No universities in the Reading or Lehigh Valley areas (the other regions in Pennsylvania with a comparable rise in the Hispanic population) were included on the magazine's list.⁴⁸

Business and Employment In Other Communities:

Other counties that experienced rapid Hispanic population growth, such as the City of Reading (Berks County) and Lehigh County, demonstrated a higher rate of Hispanic-owned businesses than Hazleton. Lehigh County, which has the third highest number of total businesses in Pennsylvania, reported 668 Hispanic-owned businesses, while Reading reported 231. Luzerne County did not make the list, which included counties with 100 or more Hispanic-owned businesses.⁵⁴



A study commissioned by the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation described the needs of the growing Hispanic community in that area. It found that although Hispanics have significant economic potential, they rarely hold positions of influence.

Areas that provided numerous services for Hispanics included employment, business development, financial counseling, and access to small business and home ownership. Hispanics in the Lehigh Valley expressed concern over lag in the areas of establishing businesses, median incomes, and higher education – all of which were also concerns expressed from Hazleton’s Hispanic population.⁵⁵

A Hispanic Chamber of Commerce is established in the Lehigh Valley. The Lehigh Valley Hispanic Chamber of Commerce aims to advance the commercial, industrial, and professional interests of area Hispanics. The Chamber focuses on three principles of advocacy, business development, and community development. Membership benefits include networking between Hispanic-owned businesses, marketing and sponsorship opportunities, access to various minority certification programs, reduced costs on health insurance, and free subscriptions to *Hispanic Business Magazine* and *Lehigh Valley Magazine*.⁵⁶ These opportunities provide resources that are currently unavailable to Hazleton’s Hispanic population.

In Reading, the Micro-Enterprise Program, based in the Hispanic Center of Reading and Berks, coordinated a small-business development and micro-lending program. The program was implemented to stimulate Hispanic business development within Reading, and has already dispersed approximately \$130,000.⁵⁷ Notable program benefits include a bilingual business counselor - who provides training and technical assistance to current and aspiring Hispanic business owners.⁵⁸ At this time, no such program exists in Hazleton, although the Hispanic business community continues to grow.

Compared with Wilkes-Barre and Scranton, however, Hazleton’s Hispanic businesses developed more noticeably. As Hazleton now has over 60 Hispanic-owned businesses, Wilkes-Barre has only a handful and Scranton’s business district is still only developing. Scranton Mayor Chris Doherty plans to spend as much as \$20 million in local, state, and federal funding to establish a business district. He expects the district to be anchored by Hispanic-owned businesses.⁵⁹

Nationally, business and industry is placing more focus on the country’s growing Hispanic demographic. As younger Hispanic families come to this country and continue to grow, the Hispanic market is targeted by many companies. For instance, Kellogg Co. focused on the Hispanic market to the extent that in May 2006, the company dedicated its display to relative marketing tactics at the Food Marketing Institute Show in Chicago.⁶⁰

VII. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Community Relations:

Between 1999 and 2000, Hazleton's Hispanic population experienced a shocking 354% spike. It is estimated that, to date, approximately 5,000 Hispanics live in Hazleton despite 2000 U.S. Census data, which sites just 1,132. Hazleton's 5,000 Hispanics comprise approximately 4% of its total population.⁶¹

Hazleton Mayor Louis Barletta is happy with the influx of new Hispanic residents because of their progress in opening downtown businesses, occupying previously unoccupied space. Most of Hazleton's Hispanic-owned businesses begin as a source of secondary income used to support family in native lands. As some businesses fail because they do not earn enough money to cover overhead costs, this applies to all businesses and it is not unique to those that are Hispanic-owned. Amilicar Arroyo, publisher of *El Mensajero* – a Hispanic publication for the Hazleton area – believes that many Hispanic-owned businesses are not only succeeding but thriving.⁶²

Hazleton's Hispanic residents feel discrimination from the general population. As such, a "civil rights town meeting" was conducted by the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) to discuss discrimination problems plaguing Hazleton. Discussion topics ranged from crime to education, and from housing to health care coverage.⁶³

On January 26, 1989, Pennsylvania Governor Robert Casey developed a council to aid the State's growing Hispanic population. Coined the Governor's Advisory Commission on Hispanic Affairs (GACLA), the council serves as an "advocate agency for Pennsylvania's Hispanic Residents." "GACLA has helped to establish the Pennsylvania Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (PLCC) and facilitated the creation of the Pennsylvania Association of Hispanic Organizations (PALO) - a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to the capacity building and strengthening of our local community-based organizations." The functions of GACLA are to: (1) make recommendations to the governor on policies, procedures, and legislation that would enhance the status of the Hispanic community in Pennsylvania, (2) serve as the governor's liaison to the Hispanic community on policies, procedures, legislation, and regulations which affect the Hispanic community in order to ensure that state government is accessible, accountable, and responsive to the Hispanic community, (3) serve as a resource to all departments, commissions, and agencies to ensure that they are cognizant of the needs of the Hispanic community and that the community benefits in an equitable fashion from their respective services and programs, (4) assist local Hispanic communities in developing strategies and programs that will enhance their social and economic status, and (5) work with the administration to monitor the hiring, retention, and promotion practices of the Commonwealth as they relate to the employment of Hispanics in order to ensure that there are no discriminatory employment practices within the Commonwealth. "GACLA has been serving Pennsylvania's Hispanic community in the areas of arts and culture, communications and media, community development and empowerment, crime prevention, economic development, educational advancement, children and youth advocacy, leadership enhancement, equal rights and equal opportunities, employment, health, housing, and social services, among other areas."⁶⁴

Service Electric Cable Television has implemented Spanish language programming in order to attract Hazleton's Hispanic residents. The company aims to increase Hispanic cable television purchases over satellite, which caters more to Spanish-language television. In order to implement its ideas and goals, a 20-minute newscast, hosted by a Hispanic, is broadcasted weekly.⁶⁵

Attorney Brian G. Price is fluent in the Spanish language and has expanded his law practice to accommodate Hazleton's Hispanic population. His firm's staff includes legal aides from El Salvador and the Dominican Republic. According to James Haggerty of the *Citizen's Voice*, "Price represents Hispanic people in cases involving car accidents, immigration, criminal defense, real estate, domestic issues, and workers compensation." Some of Attorney Price's clients are illegal aliens that are seeking legal U.S. citizenship. Price relayed that about one-third of his professional work involves Spanish-speaking people."⁶⁶

In response to Hazleton's language barrier issue and the growing problem of illegal immigration, Mayor Louis Barletta proposed an ordinance making English Hazleton's official language. The ordinance establishes fines and consequences for landlords who rent to illegal immigrants and employers who hire them.⁶⁷ Responses to the ordinance have been mixed.

While some members of the Hazleton's Hispanic community are disappointed by the proposed ordinance, they acknowledge the importance of learning English. Luzerne County Commissioner Greg Skrepenak expressed that, in light of the recent proposed ordinance on immigration, government must pay more attention to the Hispanic population's needs. In order to prevent the growth of misconceptions and hostility, he moved to hold open meetings where translators will assist those who speak little or no English.⁶⁸

VIII. LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Language Barriers:

One of the greatest challenges facing all communities as it responds to the massive influx of Hispanic residents is the language barrier. Non-Hispanic residents express concern over the noticeable difference in the new wave of immigrants. Compared with Irish, Italian, and Polish immigrants who established themselves in Hazleton and worked to assimilate into the culture and learn English, Hispanic immigrants appear more determined to maintain their cultural identity, which includes primary use of the Spanish language.⁶⁹

Many Hispanic community members feel that more initiatives supporting diversity and responding to its population growth are needed. Activists like Anna Arias, from the Governor's Advisory Commission on Hispanic Affairs, have been pressing for more bilingual services and more Hispanic instructors for Hazleton School District's ESL program. It is believed that Hispanic community members want to learn the English language, however there are not enough classes available to accommodate everyone.⁷⁰

In 2000, Hazleton's total population was 23,329, with the Hispanic population representing 1,132 of the total. Of the total Hispanic population, 159 reported being Mexican, 271 reported being Puerto Rican, 11 reported being Cuban, and 691 reported themselves as another race of Hispanic origin. However, 1,779 of Hazleton's total population reported that they speak a primary language other than English.⁷¹

In contrast to Luzerne County's reports, wide-scale census data indicates that most Hispanic immigrants learn and speak English. According to an article in *The Citizens' Voice*, only about 2.5% of American residents speak Spanish but not English, while just 7% of children of Hispanic immigrants speak Spanish as a primary language. English seems to be surfacing as the language of commerce and publication within the Spanish community, just as it has with other major immigrant groups.⁷²

About 100 of Hazleton's Hispanic residents are learning to read and write English due to a donation from Michael MacDowell, President of College Misericordia. St. Gabriel's Church basement served as the meeting place for ESL classes run by Arthur Breese and the Northeastern Pennsylvania Diversity Education Consortium. MacDowell won the Luzerne Foundation's Mary Bevevino Community Service Award about a year ago and gave the \$1,000 award money to the consortium to help the Hispanic



community learn English. The consortium matched the award and created two free adult ESL classes in Hazleton. Students included those at both beginner and advanced levels, and ranged in age from their 20s to 60s. Beginner ESL classes covered English language basics needed to communicate with others in daily life. Advanced classes covered citizenship exam preparation.⁷³

Language Barriers in Other Communities:

Prior to the proposed Illegal Immigration Relief Act Ordinance, Allentown was the only other Pennsylvania city to have declared English its official language. That proclamation, established about ten years ago, remains controversial. City Councilman Tony Philips wants to replace the proclamation with, "Allentown is a city that celebrates the diversity of its residents," however, the suggested change has not attracted much support.⁷⁴ As previously noted, in reaction to Hazleton's recent proposal, many surrounding communities are also implementing English-only legislation.

In contrast to such proclamations, Berks County, particularly Reading, was ordered in 2003 by the Federal government to provide its residents bilingual voting services. The order followed a lawsuit instituted in response to discriminatory voting practices.⁷⁵ The catalyst of the lawsuit was the large Puerto Rican constituency, which comprises over 5% of Reading's total population. Because Puerto Rico is a Commonwealth of the United States, Berks County is required by law to provide bilingual signs, instructions, poll-workers and telephone operators during elections. The order was passed on August 20, 2003.⁷⁶

IX. QUALITY OF LIFE

Housing:

As of March 2002, U.S. Hispanic households totaled 10,499 - 8,516 of which were comprised of family households. Hazleton's Hispanic residents show trends of buying double-block homes for their families rather than renting. Hispanics moving to the area from New York are impressed with property prices. In New York, the price of a similar property would be approximately five times higher. Many Hispanics keep and maintain properties by employing their own skills and labor.⁷⁷

According to Anita Reber, a realtor with Lewith and Freeman, "The thriving local real estate market is not limited to double-blocks and rentals." Double-block homes in Hazleton have increased in value because new Hispanic residents are buying them. Luzerne County Recorder of Deeds Office archives show that within the last 6 months there were a number of Hazleton-area home sales to Hispanics, including double-block homes in which newcomers live on one side while renting the other side. Other typical double-block buyers live out-of-state and rent both sides. Others do so, but also move to Hazleton and acquire another property in which they reside. Houses in that particular realty market are in high demand and selling for prices "twice what they would have 10 years ago," stated Michael S. Pecora, owner of M.S. Pecora Realtor in West Hazleton. Hispanics commonly buy homes that need a lot of work and are willing to fix them. As such, Hispanic entrepreneurs are boosting the Greater Hazleton's real estate market.⁷⁸ Ms. Reber relayed that there are currently more buyers than sellers in Hazleton's real estate market.⁷⁹

The Hazleton area has experienced a pronounced boom in its housing market as a result of its increasing Hispanic population. As a result, property values have increased and County Commissioners expect major changes pending the County's reassessment.⁸⁰

A related challenge facing incoming Hispanics is the lack of real estate agents who speak Spanish. One such agent, Silvana Hogben with Realtec, bases her operation in Scranton. According to Hogben, 90% of her clients do not speak English.⁸¹ Overall, approximately 95% of her sales are to Hispanics from New York. Because of the even lower cost, many of these people are now looking for homes in Wilkes-Barre. There are at least four Spanish-speaking realtors serving the Hazleton area.⁸²

According to Amilicar Arroyo, most Hispanics in southern Luzerne County own their homes.⁸³ This stands in contrast to the Hispanic population in the Lehigh Valley Area. As reported in a study commissioned by the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, almost two-thirds of Hispanics in the Lehigh Valley rent.⁸⁴



Crime:

According to the Pennsylvania State Police Uniform Crime Report, in Hazleton, Hispanic arrests increased from 8% in 2000 to 21% in 2005. City crime statistics for violent crime among Hispanics is disproportionately high relative to the population. Hispanic arrests for violent crimes rose from 14 percent in 2000 to 35% in 2005. The number of arrests for violent crimes decreased from 133 in 2000 to 65 in 2005. Based on the drop in violent crime, the number of Hispanics charged each year has remained consistent - about 20 per year.⁸⁵

In November 2005, Hazleton Police Chief Bob Ferdinand discussed some department changes he'd like to implement. One such change was offered by Migel Colon, who offered to organize Hispanic businesses to

host fundraisers for the police department to increase positive interaction between Hazleton law enforcement officials and its growing Hispanic community.⁸⁶

Crime in Other Communities:

In September 2005, Reading's City Council approved a proposed police minority recruitment program. The program, a result of combined efforts of the City of Reading and the Pennsylvania Statewide Hispanic Coalition (PSLC), was created after a 2003 federal lawsuit filed by the PSLC. The program aims to increase the number of minority and female Reading Police Department applicants.

The Reading Police Department enlisted the aid of Charles M. Tiffin, Ph.D., a police recruitment and diversity expert, to provide counsel and advice through the program's implementation. Reading plans to implement procedures to improve community relations between its police department and community members for whom English is not a primary language.⁸⁷

Transportation:

Hazleton Public Transit (HPT), a service of the City of Hazleton's Department of Public Services, operates nine routes within the City and surrounding townships and boroughs – running Mondays through Fridays, with limited weekend service. There are three zones in which residents can travel, each having a different fare. HPT provides discounts for frequent users. Senior citizens ride public transportation for free during off-peak hours, while children under age six ride free - as long as they are riding with a paying adult. While there are various HPT routes, some run exclusively on weekdays or weekends. Routes allow riders to travel to neighboring boroughs, like Treskow, Beaver Meadows, Weatherly, McAdoo, and Freeland. Motor Transportation Co. and Quinn's Transit provide HPT services.⁸⁸

Immigration and Citizenship:

The 1990 U.S. Census reports Hazleton's total population to be 24,730, with the Hispanic population accounting for just 249.⁸⁹ Further breakdown of the 249 Hispanics includes 26 Mexicans, 71 Puerto Ricans, 5 Cubans, and 147 noting "other."⁹⁰

For Pennsylvania's 15 largest counties, cities and townships, the U.S. Census Bureau released detailed information on population by race and Hispanic or Hispanic origin as of 2000. With 3,714 Hispanic residents of any race, Luzerne County ranked 11th, compared with other Pennsylvania counties.⁹¹ As of the 1990 U.S. Census, 232,262

Hispanic or Hispanics of any race populated Pennsylvania and accounted for 2% of its total population.

By comparison, in 2002, Pennsylvania Hispanics or Hispanics of any race totaled 394,088 - accounting for 3.2% of State's total population. Within ten years, this population increased from 2% to 3.2%.⁹² The 2002 American Community Survey Profile stated, "Two percent of the people living in the Scranton-Wilkes-Barre-Hazleton area were foreign born." At home, 5% of those surveyed spoke a language other than English, with 29% speaking Spanish.⁹³



By 2002, one in eight Americans were reported as Hispanic. Puerto Ricans (58%) were most likely situated in the Northeast

United States, including the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Further Hispanics were more likely than non-Hispanic whites to live in central cities of metropolitan areas.⁹⁴ As such, the Scranton-Wilkes-Barre-Hazleton area is considered a metropolitan statistical area.

The 2003 American Community Survey Profile stated, "Two percent of the people living in the Scranton-Wilkes-Barre-Hazleton area were foreign born." Four percent of those surveyed spoke a language other than English at home. Of the 4% speaking a language other than English at home, 28% spoke Spanish.⁹⁵

The U.S. Census Bureau provided a summary of the general demographic characteristics for 2003. The summary estimated that Luzerne County's Hispanic population (of any background, i.e. Mexican, Cuban) totaled 4,275.⁹⁶

From 2003 to 2004, Hispanics accounted for one-half the country's population growth (2.9 million) and now constitute one-seventh of the total U.S. population." A U.S. Census Bureau report shows that the growth trend will continue "because of immigration and a Hispanic growth rate outstripping non-Hispanic blacks and whites." According to the report, the Hispanic growth rate for the 12 months starting July 2003 was 3.6% compared with overall population growth of 1%." The report further stated, "The Census Bureau projected last year that whites and minority groups overall will be roughly equal in size by 2050."⁹⁷

A 2004 Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce study stated the Hispanic impact on the area's population. In 2000, there were 3,713 Hispanic residents of 319,250 total Luzerne County residents and in 2001, there were 3,947 (estimated) Hispanic residents of 315,944 total Luzerne County residents. This shows a 6.38% increase in Luzerne County's Hispanic population over the one-year period. In 2002, there were 4,220 (estimated) Hispanic residents of 314,469 total Luzerne County residents - showing a 6.91% increase in Hispanic residents over the next one-year period. In 2003, there were 4,792 (estimated) Hispanic residents of 313,528 total Luzerne County residents, showing a whopping 12.84% increase over the final one-year period. For the 2000-2003 period, Luzerne County's Hispanic population increased by an astonishing 28.36%.

Further information provided by the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce's study includes the percentage change in Hispanic residential growth. Between the years 1990 and 2000, the Hispanic race grew 57.9% across the U.S., 69.7% in Pennsylvania, 83.5% in Luzerne County, 212.0% in Greater Hazleton, and 354.6% of Hazleton.⁹⁸

In response to the massive influx of Hispanics to the region, Hazleton's Mayor Lou Barletta has encouraged the Bureau of Immigration and Customs to establish an area presence. He hopes to address the issue of illegal immigrants, while still encouraging immigration to Hazleton.⁹⁹

May 2, 2006 marked a national demonstration by immigrants, including marches and boycotts throughout the United States.¹⁰⁰ Hazleton's Hispanic population sought to show presence through absence by participating in an economic boycott. Small businesses closed, school absences were especially high, and Cargill Meat Solutions shut down for the day in a show of solidarity. Scranton area Hispanics also participated in the boycott. Despite being faced with the challenge of losing out on compensation for time off, Hispanics showed widespread participation. According to David Falchek, of The Citizens' Voice, "...the act became a way for them to respond to the sneers and smears made about them: that they bring crime, sell drugs and take jobs from Americans."¹⁰¹

Childcare:

A study, *America after 3 PM: A Household Survey on Afterschool in America* showed that 22% of Hispanic children care for themselves once the school day ends. Hispanic families are willing to enroll their children in after school programs, but demand is higher than program availability. It should be noted, however, that Hispanic families rely on such programs more than their non-Hispanic peers. Further, 88% of Hispanic parents with children enrolled in after school programs reported being satisfied.¹⁰² Just as childcare is an issue for all working families, it is a problem for Hispanic working families. Usually, neighbors or family members such as grandparents step in. Hazleton's Hispanic families also use the area YMCA's child care services.¹⁰³

The Hazleton area's YMCA offers its Youth Center Day Care – providing childcare services at its Laurel Street location. "School age childcare" services are offered before and after school at Hazleton's Height-Terrace Elementary/Middle School, EA Encke Elementary School, Hazle Elementary School, Valley Elementary/Middle School, Drums Elementary/Middle School, and West Hazleton Elementary/Middle School. Using YMCA staff, Holy Spirit Academy also provides care during afternoon hours. "Holiday Camp" is another program available at the YMCA. Holiday Camp provides a full day of care for kindergarten through sixth grade students on school holidays, Act 80 days, in-service days, and during weather related school closings.¹⁰⁴

Health Care:

A report by National Health Interview Surveys stated that 25.7% of Hispanics in the U.S. have no health insurance. Hispanic children from poor or near poor families were more likely than non-Hispanic white children from poor or near poor families to lack health insurance coverage. Foreign-born Hispanic children were 2.8 times as likely as U.S. born Hispanic children to lack health insurance coverage. For those in better health, Hispanic children (88.1%) were less likely than non-Hispanic white children (95.4%) to have a routine place that they visit for health care. Foreign-born Hispanic children who were not U.S. citizens (60.1%) were less likely than foreign-born Hispanic children who were U.S. citizens (92.0%) to have a regular place to go for healthcare. During 1998-2001, the most common place for Hispanic children to go for healthcare was a doctor's office or health maintenance organization (HMO) (65.6%), followed by a clinic or health center (30.5%). In terms of health care, Mexican children were the worst off of all Hispanic groups.¹⁰⁵

In Hazleton specifically, many Hispanic residents receive employer-sponsored health insurance. Residents who are uninsured or underinsured take advantage of free clinics that are provided through the Hazleton Health Alliance. Some Hispanic residents desire translators in the doctors' offices in order to better communicate with doctors and other health professionals.¹⁰⁶

In order to assess area health care needs, the University of Scranton hosted a bilingual health fair, in which approximately 175 people participated. Testing for blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, body mass index, and eyesight was provided.¹⁰⁷

A survey performed by the Institute of Medicine states that 51% of health care providers feel that multicultural patients may not understand interactions between patient and doctor and, therefore, do not follow treatment

recommendations. Of those same health care providers surveyed, 56% stated that they do not have any background in “language or cultural competency training.” Due to such factors, smaller practices are now recruiting bilingual staff for dual roles (i.e., front desk and interpreter positions), hosting ongoing cultural and language competency training for interpreter staff, using community resources like hospitals, managed care organizations, students and volunteers, and capitalizing on underutilized funding sources. Problems often arise, however, with the lack of bilingual individuals to fill such positions. In addition, Medicare and Medicaid do not provide compensation/funding for needed bilingual services.¹⁰⁸

Challenges faced by the Hispanic population in regard to health care and benefits are likely to be exacerbated in response to Medicaid and Medicare cuts in federal and state budgets. Medicaid, which provides healthcare benefits to low income individuals, is likely to endure larger cuts based on recent White House recommendations. Federal cuts are encouraged by state governors because program costs are soaring - hindering state budgets. There is hope that Medicaid will evolve to resemble employer-sponsored health insurance programs.¹⁰⁹

In Pennsylvania, Governor Ed Rendell proposed a budget that reduces Medicaid payments to hospitals by \$171 million. The cuts include a \$43 million drop in funding for the Community Access Fund, which supports hospitals that care for high volumes of low income adults who don't qualify for Medicaid.¹¹⁰

There also remains concern about medical professionals' inability to effectively communicate with growing Hispanic populations. A report by the National Health Law Program addresses the issue. Its recommendations include the employment of bilingual staff in both areas of patient reception and for purposes of interpretation in the examining room. Doctors' offices and health centers can also provide written translations of evaluations and recommendations. According to the report, there is an eight step process to providing premium care to limited English proficient (LEP) patients:

1. Designate responsibility.
2. Conduct an analysis of language needs.
3. Identify resources in the community.
4. Determine what language services will be provided.
5. Determine how to respond to LEP patients.
6. Train staff.
7. Notify LEP patients of available language services.
8. Update activities after periodic review.

According to Robert A. Gabbay, M.D., Ph.D., co-director of the Penn State Diabetes Center, many patients fall short on “achieving and maintaining certain goals for blood glucose levels, blood pressure, cholesterol, exercise and more.” He believes that the reasons for such shortcomings may include language barrier problems within primary health care systems.¹¹¹

Health Care in Other Communities:

In Hershey and Reading, Pennsylvania, patients from twelve primary care clinics, including three clinics in Reading that care for the underserved Hispanic population, will participate in a study to determine “whether enhanced nursing care in the primary care setting can reduce sickness and death from complications of Type 2 diabetes.” The study, in which 38% of participants will be Hispanic, aims to determine how nurse case management interventions can improve the health of the Hispanic minority population. The study tracks quality of life, patient satisfaction, and self-management behaviors.

Such case studies are important to the Hispanic community for two reasons. First, Hispanics are more apt to develop diabetes in their lifetimes. Second, determining the effects of the care provided by health professionals when focused on the Hispanic population needs should work to improve overall care and service.¹¹³

X. OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities and Services for Hispanics:

Luzerne County Community College offers free adult ESL classes in various locations. Classes run over a 12-month period with an open entry policy. Open entry allows students to enter or exit the classes as needed. When calling to register for classes, students are evaluated on English proficiency and placed into a beginner, intermediate, or advanced class. ESL classes are not solely for those who speak Spanish as a primary language; students come from various ethnic backgrounds, including China, Vietnam, Serbia and Ukraine.



More and more opportunities are available for Hispanic children entering the Hazleton Area School District. The District has in place 20 ESL instructors for the 2006-2007 school year. Additionally, information sent home to parents is now written in both English and Spanish. Additionally, a separate Spanish-language orientation is offered for incoming freshmen at Hazleton Area High School - who would not benefit from the English-language orientation.

The Church of St. Gabriel (Iglesia Catolica San Gabriel) provides a free medical services clinic, mainly to Spanish speaking people, which runs under the care of Anthony Veglia, M.D. and Nan Smith. The clinic's concept was based on Shavertown's Free Medical/Legal Clinic.

The Lower Luzerne Bar Association created a free Medical and Legal Services Clinic, based out of St. Gabriel Church, to better serve the Hazleton community. Through the clinic, attorneys provide pro bono legal services; the clinic's attorneys include Brian Price, who, as previously noted, speaks Spanish fluently, Jerald Wassil and Salvatore Savatteri – both of whom specialize in immigration law. The clinic operates on a first come, first served basis, and deals with matters best handled in a counseling context – not through active representation.¹¹³

La Onda Latin, which translates to “the Latin Wave,” is a local radio show airing Saturday afternoons on Hazleton based radio station WAZL AM-1490. This Spanish-language radio show plays upbeat Hispanic music and advertises for local non-profit groups. The show's hosts, Robert Arias and Sixto Vasquez, try to promote cooperation among cultures.¹¹⁴

Opportunities in Other Communities:

In Scranton, Hispanic community members have established a non-profit organization for the promotion of Hispanic Affairs. Dubbed the Scranton Latin Alliance, the group held its first meeting at Nativity of Our Lord Church, Scranton. The organization's founding members include Josué Rojas, a grocery store owner; Alejandro Marroquin, coordinator of Latin Affairs at Nativity Church; and Pedro Gonzalez, a personal trainer and community activist.¹¹⁵ The Scranton Latin Alliance addresses questions and concerns from community members on everything from ESL classes to the need for bilingual staff members in government offices. The group has received support from the Scranton School Board and numerous area professionals. The grocery store owned by Mr. Rojas, at 319 South Main Avenue, served as the Scranton Latin Alliance's temporary headquarters. Meetings continued, and were attended by City officials, County Commissioner Robert C. Cordaro, and First Assistant District Attorney Gene Talerico. According to Mr. Rojas, the Scranton Latin Alliance has great support, but its most pressing need is for material supplies.¹¹⁶

In 1977, Reading created a Hispanic Center called Centro Hispano. The mission of Centro Hispano is to provide the Hispanic community in Reading City and Berks County with services in cooperation with other community service agencies and organizations.¹¹⁷ Centro Hispano includes Casa de la Amistad Senior Center - a Hispanic senior center launched in March 1988. This center was created to assist the aging Hispanic population obtain bilingual services not offered by other senior centers.¹¹⁸ Centro Hispano has also created the Hispanic Center Scholarship Fund; through the fund, Hispanic residents of Berks County can apply for post-secondary educational scholarships (country of origin must be Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Central America, or South America).¹¹⁹



Abstinence education, breast cancer prevention, tobacco prevention and Allied Health Academy programs are also made available through Centro Hispano. The abstinence education program is part of a federal and state grant to the Pennsylvania Association of Hispanic Organizations. The program offers culturally appropriate instruction to community youth programs and emphasizes education, personal responsibility, positive attitudes, and healthy life skills.¹²⁰ Programs like those offered through Reading's Centro Hispano have not yet been established in Hazleton. The most likely reason is that although the Hispanic population in the area is on the rise, it has not yet reached the proportions of Reading's Hispanic population.

Reading also is home to organizations that specialize in services to meet Hispanic needs, including: Reading-Berks Human Relations Council, Spanish Speaking Council (Hispanic Center), Reading Public Library, and MINDO (Minority Development Council). The Hispanic Church of Brethren, catering specifically to Reading's Hispanic residents, is also very popular.

The Lehigh Valley also has a radio station, established in November 2003, which plays a variety of Spanish-language music.

Hispanic Professionals

Information obtained from interviews with Hispanic residents indicates that due to language barriers and a lack of professional licenses, Hispanic professionals are coming to the Hazleton area and taking jobs that are below their skill level.^{121 122} There are, however, a variety of national organizations that could aid such residents in need of assistance in finding appropriate employment, including: the National Society of Hispanic MBAs, the Association of Hispanic Professionals in Finance and Accounting, and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists.

The National Society of Hispanic MBAs is a non-profit organization that "exists to foster Hispanic leadership through graduate management education and professional development." "The National Society of Hispanic MBAs works to prepare Hispanics for leadership positions throughout the U.S., so that they can provide the cultural awareness and sensitivity vital in the management of the nation's diverse workforce." This society makes its members aware of job postings, conferences, and career fairs.¹²³

The Association of Hispanic Professionals in Finance and Accounting is "dedicated to enhancing opportunities for Hispanics in Finance, Accounting, and related professions." This association encourages Hispanic professionals in these fields to network through workshops and other related activities.¹²⁴

The National Association of Hispanic Journalists is "dedicated to the recognition and professional advancement of Hispanics in the news industry." The organization "created a national voice and unified vision for all Hispanic journalists."¹²⁵

XI. CASE STUDIES

Other States and Their Hispanic Population:

In Georgia, there has been a similar boom in the Hispanic population - so influential that the University of Georgia implemented a two-year study to assess the needs of the growing Hispanic population. Similar to findings and reports in the Hazleton area, researchers in Georgia found that population growth, while stimulating the economy, has had the effect of straining transportation, education, and other public institutions. The report concluded with a number of recommendations, including calls for policy changes related to employment, transportation, housing, healthcare, childcare, crime, community relations, and education. The study recommended an increase in bilingual and bicultural staff for area agencies. It also encouraged the U.S. Department of Labor and the Bureau of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Service) to work with local businesses to establish lasting jobs for Hispanic workers who lack permits. Additionally, the report called for the promotion and funding of high school and higher education programs that encourage and aid the retention of Hispanic students.¹²⁶

Several Wisconsin communities are now offering financial loans to illegal immigrants. Illegal immigrants applying for loans complete the same paperwork as legal residents, which requires proof of state residency and steady income, with the exception of providing an IRS identification number instead of a social security number. Illegal immigrants who do not have any credit established are eligible to use utility and rent payments, as well as letters of recommendation, to prove they are creditable. If the loan is approved, illegal immigrants are offered the same terms and benefits as legal residents. While this practice has brought some controversy to the Wisconsin State Senate, it has worked to rejuvenate areas within the community – helping new businesses to open. Mitchell Bank, which primarily is responsible for most illegal immigrant loan transactions, must assume all risk for the loans. It should be noted, however, that Mitchell Bank's assumed risk does not deter it from offering such loans. Mitchell Bank has benefited from this business practice in that it has increased the amount of bank traffic and its number of transactions. Of all of the illegal immigrant loans Mitchell Bank has granted, it has never had a default and has only witnessed two late payments.¹²⁷

XII. CONCLUSION

In recent years, Hazleton's Hispanic population has grown substantially and this has resulted in a change within the community. As previously noted, there are certain areas in which the Hazleton's Hispanic residents feel there is room for improvement in order for them to feel more comfortable living in the area, including: employment, education, community relations, language barriers, housing, crime, transportation, citizenship, childcare, and health care. Since 2002 when the study *Las Voces de la Comunidad* was issued, Hazleton's Hispanic population continues to grow and hold many of the same attitudes presented in that research.

The region's history is such that assimilation of different ethnicities into the fabric of our communities is not new. There have been times when more than one ethnicity came to this region at the same time. There may have been difficulties, but in the end, neighborhoods and communities pulled together and made it work. Despite the fact that in recent years the population, age, gender, and ethnicity demographic in Northeastern Pennsylvania has not changed very much, it is within the grasp of the community to accept and work with change. Our region will be the better for it.

Hazleton's once stagnant business district now thrives on new Hispanic-owned businesses. While the City's Hispanic population is growing quickly and demands for services are increasing, the Hazleton community at large could benefit from these changes and grow both economically and culturally. Programs and services to integrate the Hispanic community into Hazleton's fabric will promote cohesiveness.

Based on its expanding population, it is important that the [Hazleton Area School District] continues to grow to accommodate all students. The District has increased emphasis on its ESL program and should prepare to increase ESL funds to ensure that it adequately meets student population needs.

Professional offices, healthcare institutions, and public safety departments should work to recruit more Hispanic workers. This type of integration will promote good will and address deficiencies in demographic balance.

Programs and services provided by the area's post-secondary institutions offer numerous opportunities for education in Spanish and English. Access to open communication is key to building a strong community in Hazleton.

The Hazleton Chamber of Commerce should evaluate creation of a Hispanic Chamber subsidiary. This subsidiary could provide all of the services and benefits needed by the Hispanic community, while remaining a part of the Chamber - with access to both its members and resources. Such an action would work to promote unity and should be taken before a Hispanic Chamber forms.

In order to keep its business district thriving, Hazleton should contract services with the Wilkes University Small Business Development Center. The Small Business Development Center provides consulting and training that could be based within the City of Hazleton.

Ideally, a regional (Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties) needs assessment of the Hispanic community should be completed. Upon completion regional strategies should be developed to ensure the region can deal with diversity as it grows over the next 15-20 years.

Finally, while today we are seeing growth in the area's Hispanic population, tomorrow it may be Asian or Russian. In any case, the same principles of acceptance, tolerance, collaboration, and cooperation should be carried out in all phases of work, play, governance, and life.

XIII. ENDNOTES

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