

Cambio De Colores

Missouri Communities Responding to Change

The community development program for the Cambio de Colores conference is a chance for people to hear the stories that communities in Missouri have to tell about the changes they have been going through as a result of the immigration of Hispanics into their communities. We have invited communities from different parts of the state dealing with changes they have been facing due to recent immigration in their communities. The following summaries were taken from meetings held with some of the panelists from each community prior to conference. Conference participants will only be able to see one of the presentations so these summaries were assembled to give conference participants a sense of what is happening in these communities.

In visiting with each of these communities I saw several general themes that all of them seemed to be responding to on some level. One thing has become clear there are few public resources available for the express purpose of helping communities adjust to what are sometimes tremendous demographic changes. Most of the communities have created some sort of a multicultural council or forum to share ideas, network resources and provide services. What each of these communities has done is fashion their own unique responses that build on local resources and help them tap into other resources that can be of service to their community.

Issues that most of the communities share include communication, decent and affordable housing, education, cultural differences, and citizenship status. What is interesting about these stories is how they define the issues in each community and how they have organized themselves to address them.

I hope these summaries provide a sense of what each community is working on and stimulate you to follow-up with them to find out more. They are really doing some amazing work.

Sincerely,

Steve Jeanetta
MU Community Development Program
University Outreach and Extension

Milan, Missouri

Beverly Bonner, Milan C-2 Schools; **Dora Narvaez**, Renewing Rural Missouri; **Bruce Hensley** Private Consultant, Key Marketing Development Corporation; **Valentina Mensa**, Centro Latina; and, **David Wilson**, Mayor, City of Milan

The city of Milan, in Sullivan County, in the North Central part of Missouri, first began experiencing Hispanic immigration shortly after the Premium Standard Farms plant opened in 1994. Premium Standard Farms is a hog processing plant that employs nearly 1000 people.

In Milan the Hispanic population has not settled as a permanent population yet. They tend to migrate between Milan and other communities. For example many work in Milan for a while and then they may travel to work in the Excel plant in Iowa. They haven't really developed roots in the community. Some believe it is because the community has not been very accepting of the migrants.

Community acceptance is a key issue in this community. This is illustrated by the reluctance of the community to pass any kind of a school bond issue. Locals have opposed it because they do not want to build a Hispanic High School. Many believe that since Hispanics don't own property and thus don't pay property taxes, that a school bond would not be equitable to those who have

roots in the community. Related to this issue is a lack of understanding of the economic impact the migrants are having on the community. Many migrants, particularly the Hispanic migrants, do not own cars so they do almost all of their shopping locally. Property values have increased in the community and rents have gone up due to the increase in population.

The city government, the county government, and the schools don't have the resources to do what needs to be done. The area has one of the lowest school tax rates in the region so raising money for improvements has been difficult. City and County infrastructure needs are increasing as the population increases. Unfortunately, tax revenues have not kept pace with population growth so an already strapped infrastructure is further strained because of the immigration resulting from the new plant locating in the area.

The school system is also taxed because of the growth in population. Prior to 1994 there were very few Hispanic students in the school system. Now there are 300 in the elementary schools. The student population is transitory and difficult to serve. Approximately 25% of the new students in the schools this year have already left the system. Hispanics are not the only migrants moving into the community. About half the immigrants are Anglo but they are also transitory. Thirty-three Hispanic and twenty-six Anglo students who started the school year in Milan are no longer there. This makes it difficult to meet the educational needs of the students.

Providing services to the migrant community has really taxed church resources. A committee of the Catholic, Methodist, Christian, and Pentecostal churches has formed to better serve the community. They have embarked on a listening project to better understand the issues between the Anglo and Hispanic communities in Milan and to develop programs that bring them together through the churches using faith-based organizing methodologies.

Centro Latino, began in 2001, and is a multi-service referral program. They help people obtain resources in language, GED, filing citizenship papers, and health services. They provide direct services to Hispanics. For example they accompany people to the Doctor's office to provide translation so that they don't have to use a family member. Centro Latino hosts events and activities that bring people together. In December of 2001, they hosted a pre-Christmas multicultural event. They are planning to host a series of mini-conferences on diabetes awareness, domestic violence, alcoholism, and other topics. Centro Latino is launching a new "Parents as Teachers" program. They also have a couple of projects with Truman State University. On Tuesday evenings students from the campus ministries come to work with the youth. The Spanish honor society will be performing a play with scripts in both



English and Spanish. In the spring, a legal aid group from St. Joseph will be at Centro Latino to provide some legal assistance with immigration papers. There are lots of things going on at Centro Latino.

Housing has become very expensive in Milan. A person immigrating to Milan needs lots of cash to get a place to live, as much as \$1500. There is a need for quality, affordable housing. Premium Standard Farms has a program to help the people they recruit get settled into a home. However, there are many people who come to the area, who are not recruited, but looking for work. They may get a job but not have the resources to get into adequate housing. The Methodist Church is collaborating with others in the community to develop two houses that will

provide free, transitional housing for families for up to two months. Another project is converting an old retirement facility into 16 units of transitional housing that will allow families to stay for up to 18 months as long as they put a some money in an escrow account.

Efforts are being made to improve access to medical care for Hispanics. A pediatric doctor in town has access to interpretation and the Tri-County Health Clinic has interpretation for those with general health care needs. The hospital maintains an on-call translation service. There is also a monthly women's clinic held at the Green Hills agency. One of the struggles is educating people so that they know there are some resources available to help them get adequate medical care. Others don't go because they don't have valid social security numbers.

Centro Latino and other programs are developing as effective resources in the Milan community. They are trying to link people to each other, the services they need, and to the community. They expect that more people will choose to stay in Milan and their hope is that the community will be a more welcoming place for those who choose to stay.

California, Missouri

Marcella Peters, *Hispanic Community Liaison/Translator*; **Stephanie Hufendiek**, *Teacher, California Public Schools*; **Bill Boies**, *Missouri Division of Family Services*; **Edna Potter**, *Administrator, Moniteau County Health Department*; and, **Joyce Koerner**, *Income Maintenance Supervisor, Moniteau County Department of Family Services*

Hispanics began to move into California, a small community in Moniteau County, in Central Missouri, about 12 years ago. They were mostly taking jobs at the Cargill turkey processing plant located there. The plant has been in California for more than 30 years but it was only about 12 years ago when Hispanics began to move into town to work at the plant. Seven years ago the School system added a kindergarten teacher who could speak Spanish to work with the burgeoning number of Hispanic students appearing in their classes. At first people moving into California were from the same families so the Spanish dialects spoken were basically the same. Over time, people began to move to California from places that spoke different dialects of Spanish complicating the process of providing education to children and providing other services to these families.



As the population of Hispanics began to grow, some residents of California began to think about how they were going to help these families access the services they needed. Language differences, access to affordable housing, and health care were considered major issues for Hispanics in this community. Business, service providers, and government, and Hispanics themselves formed the Multi-cultural Council to deal with some of these issues. One of their first projects was to help families get legal assistance.

They had a graduate intern from the University of Missouri working with the Council who was able to help them bring a legal aid attorney to California who set up shop for a day and was able to help many families sort out their legal paperwork.

The principle role of the Multicultural Council is to serve as a network. They are not incorporated and don't have staff. They use the resources of the members to help address issues as they arise. The network suffered a real test a couple of years ago when there was a fire in the community. Five children from three families were killed. Questions were raised about the housing being substandard and the fire response. Even though the community has no formal organization, the Multicultural Council helped the families and the community get through the crisis. California doesn't qualify for many outside resources so they have tried to address issues themselves. The Multicultural Council is California's "Home Grown" approach to addressing the issues related to Hispanic immigration.

As the committee developed, a local bank and Cargill were pushing to have the Multicultural Council formally organize. They were raising resources to hire a community interpreter and thought that the Council would be the best organization to employ this person. Many on the Council were not interested in formally organizing so by working together with the City of California and some of the agencies on the Council they were able to find a place to house the interpreter. Cargill provides the resources to pay the interpreter and the Multicultural Council works to find a host. Currently, the interpreter has an office at the Human Development Corporation.

One of the issues that California is facing is an economic downturn that is directly impacting the Hispanic community. Cargill is shutting down its third shift. The total impact of this shutdown is not yet known but it will lay off some people and significantly reduce the income of others. Many of the families impacted have lived in the community for a long time and really don't want to leave. Finding other sources of income is a real challenge in the current environment.

Related to this shutdown is a concern about how the community will respond. Sometimes tensions increase in communities during tougher economic times. However, the Multicultural Council has done a lot of work to make people feel welcome in California and they believe their community will address this issue better than others might.

There is a lot of concern about what people will do to meet health care needs. Health benefits exists for the Cargill employees but some will lose those benefits and because of they are not US citizens they will not qualify for programs that the State of Missouri offers. Many of the families are young and need health care not just for themselves but for their families too.

Senath, Missouri

Cheryl White, Eastern Missouri Migrant Education Center; **Angel Castro**, Eastern Missouri Migrant Education Center; and, **Sandra Sharp**, Southeast Missouri Health Network

Senath, located in Dunklin County, in Southeast Missouri, is a rural community that depends on Agriculture. Senath is in the northernmost part of the southern United States. Southeast Missouri has a longer growing season than other parts of the state, which allows it to grow crops that are typical of southern climates. Many of these crops rely on migrant labor force. For many years migrants have been traveling to Missouri to work on the farms in southeast Missouri. It was around 1990 -91 when a few migrant single men began coming to Senath to work in the watermelon fields and cotton gins.

Many of the migrants are Hispanic, but unlike other parts of Missouri where the migrants are mostly from Mexico, in southeast Missouri, migrants include Puerto Ricans, Haitians, and others. While migrants have been traveling to Senath for many years to work on the farms, in recent



years some of the migrants have been staying in Senath to live year round. Around 1994, by word of mouth, more migrants came to Senath for work and brought their families. What attracted them to Senath was the fact that they could find farm work without traveling as far as they had been. These first migrants came from Montemorelos, Mexico and were migrating to Oregon. Approximately 150 families have settled in Senath and are living there year round. Senath has the only area Hispanic grocery store “El Tienda”.

Affordable housing is an important issue facing Hispanic communities in southeast Missouri. Housing is an issue for migrants and those who choose to stay. Many migrants have been living in little more than shantytowns and impromptu trailer parks. There are some federal resources available to organizations that want to develop housing but it is difficult to find places where affordable housing can be built. Many of the communities in the area are not interested in developing affordable housing. They are concerned about property values and other issues related to having affordable housing in their communities.

Another critical issue is the availability of daycare for migrant families. During the summer classes are offered for the children of migrant families. However, in many cases, older children have to stay out of school in order to watch younger siblings.

In southeast Missouri many communities are just beginning to accept Hispanics in their communities. In Senath the growth has been higher, largely because they have been more receptive to Hispanics living there. They have addressed some of the cultural conflicts with assistance from Southeast Missouri Health Care and the Eastern Missouri Migrant Education Center. They have created an environment where some of the needs of migrants could be met and some have decided to stay. For some time, the Southeast Missouri Health Network and the Eastern Missouri Migrant Education Center helped address the education and health issues that had previously been barriers to migrants settling in Senath. Some of their programs have helped Senath adjust to Hispanics living in their community.

In nearby Kennett, they have held a fiesta, which has made it possible for the community to learn more about the Hispanic culture, which has helped remove some of the cultural barriers that have made it difficult for Hispanics to live in the area. This has been particularly valuable to Senath, who because of their proximity to Kennett have been able to participate.

SEMO has provided health services through their migrant health clinic program and they have received considerable attention for their efforts. Recently, the St. Louis Post Dispatch did a feature story on the work of the Southeast Missouri Health Network.

In the future they are hoping to focus on the development of better housing options. If there are better housing options, others may stay and this could provide an economic boost to the area.

Sedalia, Missouri

Cheri Heeren, Pettis County Community Partnership; and, **Elvera Satterwhite**, Pettis County Community Partnership

Sedalia is a community in Pettis County, in the west central part of Missouri. Hispanic immigration in this community has largely been driven by the location of a Tyson plant in that community in the mid 1980s. In 1987, Hispanics began to move into the Sedalia area due primarily to the new processing plant in Sedalia. Today, people are working in other jobs and businesses but initially immigration was driven by jobs available at the Tyson plant.

In 1986, the Caring Communities partnership was formed in Sedalia. A needs assessment was conducted. In that assessment there was no mention of a potential change in the community. In fact, there was no mention of Hispanics anywhere in that assessment. Just a few months later a young pregnant woman showed up at the Partnership. The father was Hispanic. He showed them to the Hispanic community, which at the time was largely invisible.

In the fall of 1987 a series of meetings were held in Sedalia at the Tyson plant to consider how the changes occurring in the community could be addressed. These meetings evolved into the Multicultural Forum. Subcommittees were formed to address issues in education, health and welfare, business and industry, transportation, government, law enforcement, and community service learning. The Pettis County Community Partnership agreed to move the agenda forward. More than 75 organizations have participated in the forum, which meets quarterly.



The biggest issues are housing, health and welfare, and education. Rents have skyrocketed. Hispanics are paying high rents, often for substandard living quarters. People don't know how to push the issue, because they are sometimes afraid that the false documentation will be discovered, and they don't want to be discovered, arrested, and deported. They need advocates to help address housing issues. They also need to learn what the cultural expectations are related to maintaining property.

Access to healthcare has been a difficult issue to address. Tyson requires their employees to enroll in the healthcare plans they provide. However, the plans don't go into effect for 60 days so many are not covered for the first two months of work. It can also be difficult to get dependent coverage because the employees may be working under different names because of the nature of the documentation they have acquired in order to get the job, which results in people having insurance that they can't really use. Often babies have different names than their parents because of differences in documentation. It is difficult for mothers to get good pre-natal care because they don't have insurance. They can receive some pre-natal assistance through Medicaid, but the assistance requires that recipients complete follow-up paperwork in order for doctors to get reimbursed. This can be difficult because this population moves often and are

difficult to track. As a result, doctors are requiring Hispanic families to pay between \$400 and \$600 per month, in advance, in order to receive prenatal care. There is assistance available at the University of Missouri but it is very difficult to get people to Columbia on a regular basis.

The Pettis County Community Partnership staffs a free health clinic in Sedalia. They do the volunteer recruitment, scheduling and other things for the clinic. A retired doctor provides most of the medical care and even donated his clinic. He is dealing with some health issues of his own so they know they won't be able to sustain the clinic indefinitely. In addition, it is difficult to staff a clinic with volunteers for any length of time. They are looking at other partnerships they can form in order to staff the clinic in a more sustainable manner.

People's first response to education is "you better learn English." However, it is harder to learn English than most people appreciate. Pettis County Community Partnership began their effort by sending volunteers into people's home. They have since partnered with State Fair College to get teachers to the Pettis County Community Partnership where they teach classes. Attendance is very good. Pettis County Community Partnership provides space for the classes. They also provide daycare for the mothers as they take classes. "Spanish for Gringos" has been offered to help service providers learn the Spanish they need in order to communicate with their clients. State Fair College recently began offering courses using the "Command Spanish" program. It is a curriculum that helps people learn how to speak Spanish in their field. There is a curriculum for law enforcement, health, business and other fields. The emphasis is on learning how to ask questions in Spanish that can be answered yes or no or with simple phrases.

Central Missouri State University brings students to the Pettis County Community Partnership. They volunteer at the Literacy Center, the Health Center's WIC program, and in the Migrant Education Center's Preschool. A Central Missouri State University Spanish Professor provides an attractive offer to her students. If they volunteer 10 hours they don't have to take her final.

Looking into the future, the Pettis County Community Partnership would like to see a Federally Qualified Health Center in Sedalia. They realize this is a long-term project and will be taking advantage of any support they can receive in the interim. There is also a need for some kind of a community center that builds on the efforts currently being provided and would facilitate people working together to help each other and to create a better community for everyone.

Noel, Missouri

Joan Yeagley, Multicultural Committee; ***Genaro Salas***, Multicultural Committee; and, ***Linda Alvarado***, Multicultural Committee

Noel is a small community in McDonald County, in the Southwest corner of Missouri. Noel has undergone tremendous change in the past 10 years. Noel is located just a few miles from both Arkansas and Oklahoma. The adjoining counties in both states are dry counties in that they don't sell alcohol. For a long time Noel was a destination for those who wanted to purchase liquor. Law enforcement was lax and there were many bars. Today there are more churches than bars. According to some residents this is due to improved law enforcement and the immigration of Hispanics into the community.

Hispanics began moving to Noel in 1994 to work in a newly renovated chicken processing plant owned by Hudson and then later sold to Tyson. Another chicken processing plant owned and operated by Simmons opened about the same time just a few miles away. Between 2 and 2.5 million chickens are processed in this part of Missouri each year. These plants caused a boom in the local job market and created a labor shortage. A few Hispanics began moving to Noel to work at Hudson around 1990 but it was not until after the renovation (which included an expansion) that Hispanics began to move to Noel. Currently, more than 50% of the population in Noel is Hispanic and nearly 1/3 of the County population.

Initially recruiters went to the border areas in Texas to recruit people to work in the plant. Many of the migrants stayed in an old roadside hotel sleeping four to a room and paying fifty dollars per person, per week. The conditions were difficult. As people began to save a little money they brought their families to Noel. Some have bought homes, businesses and are taking a stake in the community.

There have been many challenges to the community resulting from the immigration. The pressure on the schools has been enormous. In 1994 a new school opened and instantly it was too small. There have been many language issues such as students who don't speak English, teachers who don't speak Spanish, and access to culturally relevant materials.

Bigotry has been an issue. Families have been harassed in town. Homes have been tagged with graffiti and there have been incidents of intimidation. At the high school kids have tried out for the sports teams and they have even been selected for the teams but they don't get to play. There was an incident where a bus driver would not allow Spanish to be spoken on their bus. Negative letters occasionally will appear in the local newspaper. So the blending of cultures has not been easy. The Multicultural Committee has been actively trying to address these issues and have sponsored a number of events to bring the cultures together to learn more about each other.

Documentation is another issue. Everyone needs papers to work so they buy them or make other arrangements to borrow someone's identity to get jobs. Sometimes papers are bought from people in the area who don't work. Some of these people whom they buy papers from have problems such as outstanding warrants and others have outstanding obligations such as child support. Often, they end up having to do things such as make child support payments in order to use the papers.

The vast majority of Hispanics living in Noel come from Mexico and reside legally in the United States. However, law enforcement has been hard on Hispanics and sometimes heavy-handed. Some of this may be a backlash to September 11. Prior to 9-11, most of the times charges could be reduced or dropped but since September 11, felony forgery charges are filed and people are detained and held by the INS. The Multicultural Committee has gone to Joplin to find pro-bono attorneys that would help the Hispanics and often are able to get the charges dropped.



The Multicultural Committee began in 1995 to help new immigrants get information they need for things like drivers licenses or to find resources like churches. The committee was started by the churches in Noel and expanded from there. Bigotry was a problem so they help facilitate exchanges between the cultures so that people could educate each other.

The multicultural committee sponsors programs to provide immigration assistance. Immigration lawyers from Kansas come once a month to

help people with their INS issue. They have successfully taken advantage of the Life program, which created by congress to help keep families together. This program made it possible for parents in the United States to sponsor their kids and/or the kids to sponsor their parents so that

families could stay together in the United States. In Noel over 600 people have taken advantage of this program and others to get legal paperwork that would make it possible for them to stay in Noel.

Most people are going to Noel in search of the American dream and some people are finding it there. They come with nothing and in a short time they have cars and over time some have even bought businesses and homes giving them a stake in the community.

In the future the Multicultural Committee would like to see Hispanics more involved in local decision-making. Although many Hispanics are legal they are reluctant to get involved politically. There are some signs this is changing. A local Hispanic businessman is serving on the Park and Recreation Board, they are organizing a voter registration project, an informal soccer club has organized and is looking to develop a soccer park, and more Hispanic businesses are being established.

Kansas City, Missouri

The Rose Brooks/Mattie Rhodes Partnership

Anna Maria Bellatin, *Mattie Rhodes*; Lydia Madruga, *Mattie Rhodes*; and, Renee Zuniga, *Rose Brooks*

This program is a little different from the other communities presenting at the Cambio de Colores conference. The Hispanic community in Kansas City is large, diverse and growing rapidly. Rather than having a presentation on what is happening generally in Kansas City or focusing on one neighborhood, this program will focus on an effort to provide a service to the Hispanic community. The Mattie Rhodes Counseling and Arts Agency has a reputation for providing services to ethnic groups in the Kansas City area. In this community program the panel will discuss how they partnered with an Anglo-serving organization to provide needed shelter services to Hispanic women who are victims of domestic violence.

In Kansas City it has been difficult to find shelter services for Hispanic women who are victims of domestic violence. The environment is often not very welcoming or accommodating in existing programs. For example, food can be a real problem for women and their children. Kids often won't eat because the food is not familiar to them and shelter rules often won't allow women to get food for their kids unless they can share it with everyone. Some services like therapy will be required but only conducted in English.

A group of service providers in Kansas City was studying the needs of battered women and decided that the only way to meet the need would be to establish a shelter. Funding was available from the County Mental Health levy board for demonstration projects. Mattie Rhodes was still hoping to find a partner in the project so that they would not have to start a new shelter on their own.

Initially, they began working with a shelter that had just moved into a new facility and had space available. They met with the shelter group who, then agreed to work with them on the project. It was the intent of the project to help a shelter figure out the types of changes their organization would need to make in order to be able to effectively meet the needs of Hispanic women. It would entail some wholesale changes including changes in how the organization was governed. Initially, the shelter agreed to the changes. However, over time the changes that the shelter would need to make were just too great. In order for the project to be successful it required cultural and organizational changes that were just too difficult for the shelter to make. There was simply a clash of values and culture that was not going to work for the Hispanic women and their children so Mattie Rhodes began looking for another potential partner and they found it in Rose Brooks.

In Rose Brooks, Mattie Rhodes found a partner that was providing an environment more conducive to the idea of establishing a cultural and organizational support system that fit the needs of Hispanic women. In the second year of the program they began to work with Rose Brooks.



At Rose Brooks they had been aware for some time that there was a need for services for women who did not speak English. Some of their own clients didn't speak English and they were not equipped to meet these needs. There was even a meeting of shelters who were all receiving women who did not speak English. It was at this time while they were struggling to figure out how to serve Hispanic women, that Rose Brooks began to visit with Mattie Rhodes. The relationship has worked very well. In Rose Brooks, Mattie Rhodes found a shelter with the flexibility and commitment to make changes that would help

Hispanic women get through a difficult time in their life. In Mattie Rhodes, Rose Brooks found an organization that could help them learn how to better serve the Hispanic community and could provide services that would support their work at the shelter.

Some of the lessons learned in this process include:

- 1) Cultural competency is necessary in order for an organization that has been primarily an Anglo-serving organization to be able to provide effective services to Hispanic women. Speaking Spanish is just one small piece of that.
- 2) Approaching the partnership with a sense of openness made it easier for Rose Brooks to make changes. They knew they were going to need to make changes and they were open to ideas that would help them through that. This willingness to change was also motivated by the realization that the number of women needing their services was growing.
- 3) It is very important for the organizations to do their homework about each other and take the time to build relationships of trust before getting too far down the road. For example, words like empowerment can mean different things to different organizations. Sometimes a group can be better at articulating their values and principles than they are at using them to guide their work and only time in the trenches with each other will offer the opportunity to really learn whether organizations really share compatible values.
- 4) Sometimes an organization will have to make wholesale changes in order to be able to effectively serve a different population group. Particularly, when the population you want to serve is culturally different from the group an organization normally serves. In this project, Mattie Rhodes had an ally inside Rose Brooks who was able to help the organization make the changes they needed to make. Some of the changes required buy-in from the staff and leadership of the Rose Brooks. This insider, was able to help the organization work through the issues and help them understand why the changes were necessary.

Both organizations have had to make changes. Mattie Rhodes had to hire additional personnel in order to provide adequate support to the Rose Brooks project. They also realized there was a need to get feedback from the women in the shelter so that the services being provided were effective.

The partnership is very young and while they are effectively meeting the shelter needs of some Hispanic women they feel they are just scratching the surface in terms of meeting the need. There is a need for better services for the youth, education in the community and churches so that they can better respond to emerging needs. Rose Brooks is also starting a transitional living program and trying to figure out how to serve women with disabilities. The program has been successful so far but they feel there is a lot left to do.