



WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



LATINA TOTAL WELLBEING

BY THE NUMBERS

- 358 participants (356 women and 2 men) attended one of 5 eight-week series in 2015 and 2016.
- 100% of participants expressed interest in learning English.
- About 50% want to learn more about starting a small business.
- About 80% are interested in financial support (grants, loans) for a potential small business.
- 8 women enrolled in GED classes as a result of the workshops.
- 32 women enrolled in financial education classes.
- 34 women enrolled in First Steps Series, a business development course through the Center for Inclusive Entrepreneurship at Pinchot University.
- 15 women have completed the First Steps Series and have enrolled in the Access to Capital workshop through MercyCorp.
- 3 women attended a 4-H activity and are interested in enrolling their kids in 4-H.

2016

ISSUE

There are more than 700,000 Latinos in Washington (12% of the total population) and more than 71,000 in Snohomish County (9.5% of the total population). First-generation immigrant Latinos face multiple challenges to operate in an unfamiliar and sometimes hostile “system.” Some challenges include language and cultural barriers, health disparities, low educational achievement, under-banking, lack of awareness of and access to available services and resources, and discrimination. Furthermore, our experience suggests that Latina women are at an even greater disadvantage, in part because they tend to be more isolated since they often stay at home caring for their small children, have a lower level of literacy/education, and confront the “macho” culture of some male household members.

RESPONSE

The Latino Community Studies and Outreach program (LCSO) at Washington State University Extension, partnering with the Latino Educational and Training Institute (LETI), a nonprofit serving the Latino community in Lynwood, WA, established the Bienestar Total de la Mujer Latina (Latina Total Wellbeing) project. With seed funding from United Way Snohomish County obtained by LCSO, the Latina Total Wellbeing project provided assistance and support to Latina women with information on health and mental healthcare, health insurance plans, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, school and college education, healthy and active living, stress reduction, and cooperatives. We developed a series of 8 Spanish-language workshops, one per week for 2-3 hours each, in which 20-25 women participated regularly in 2015. LCSO program leader Dr. José García-Pabón and LETI executive director Rosario Reyes planned and organized the topics after consultation with Latino community leaders. Speakers made presentations, and materials and information were distributed. Additional resources and services were discussed. To promote attendance, childcare was provided and all attendees received a certificate of participation. Latina women with 100% attendance were awarded gift baskets.



QUOTES

“I had a difficult time, but this program helped me to grow as a woman and I can help other women now.”

“We live in a world of ignorance and with these classes we learned to have a better life, and now I can help others who are going through difficult times.”

“Here I learned about fraud; some people cheat us and take advantage of us and we do not use the opportunities to learn like this one when we have the time. There is childcare here and it is in our language. What else can we ask for?”

IMPACTS

Enthusiasm grew rapidly among the participants, who by word of mouth brought more women to the workshops. Toward the end of the series, the classroom filled beyond capacity. The Latina women became more empowered as a result of the workshops. For instance, they took the lead and organized a potluck for their graduation ceremony, in which they received their certificate of attendance and a gift basket. In a session on education with the local school superintendent, they grilled him with questions and comments about issues impacting their children.

In an on-site debriefing, participants indicated they feel more comfortable talking to their children's school teachers and counselors; they plan to enroll their families in the Affordable Care Act insurance plan; and they plan to attend English classes at the local community college. Additionally, they signed up for a variety of other classes including small-business development, financial literacy, and GED preparation. Approximately 24 hours of instruction were provided and many more hours of one-on-one personal coaching occurred with Rosario Reyes, Dr. José García-Pabón, and volunteers.

Due to the success of the workshops, LETI, with the cooperation of LCSO, repeated the series three times in 2016 with additional funding obtained by LETI from the Hazel Miller Foundation. The response was positive and now an increasing number of Latina women are enrolling in other classes and showing interest in topics related to cooperatives, mortgages, credit and financing to buy a car, starting a small business, and more. We plan to conduct a follow-up evaluation in the summer and fall of 2016 with former Bienestar Total de la Mujer Latina participants. Given the success of the program in meeting the needs of Latina women in Lynwood, we see similar efforts from Extension educators occurring in Yakima and Pasco. In addition, we plan to continue the series in Lynwood and expand to other rural locations in Snohomish and Skagit Counties. Our long-term goal is to provide training and empowerment opportunities to immigrant women, Latinas, and other disadvantaged communities throughout the state.

