

And...Citizenship Classes!

Inspiration from initial planning sessions led to creation of a group of four volunteers from Kerr County who subsequently received training to teach citizenship classes. Boyett contacted a Kerrville organization, Families and Literacy, and an alliance was quickly formed, resulting in a class that began in March 2018. Armitstead and another Kerr County resident, Janet Meek, liaised with a church already providing English literacy programs in Hunt.

Citizenship classes are slated to begin in Hunt in the fall.



Who are the Role Models?

Luis Walter Alvarez, physicist, inventor, professor and recipient of the Nobel Prize in Physics

Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa, writer and scholar of Chicana cultural theory

Cesar Chavez, labor leader, civil rights activist and, with Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the National Farm Workers Union

Sandra Cisneros, Mexican-American writer and key figure in Chicana literature

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, born in 1651, self-taught scholar, poet, philosopher, and composer

Ellen Ochoa, engineer, former astronaut, first Latina in space and current director of NASA's Johnson Space Center

Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa, neurosurgeon, author and researcher

Sonia Maria Sotomayor, first Latina Supreme Court justice

Latinx Community Outreach Celebrates Role Models

Positive role models diminish stereotypes and validate the unique strengths of the Latinx community. The Kerr County Latinx Community Outreach Project is presenting children with role models who have made an impact as scientists, writers, activists, doctors and on the US Supreme Court.

The project presents a Role Model Fair that is interactive and fun. Eight learning stations, each with a stand-up cutout of the role model and activities, teach children about the life, education and career of each.

Passports are stamped as children visit the learning stations. Once completed, the passports are presented at a final station for a small reward. Books about the role models are displayed and a bibliography is offered to parents.

Off to a Great Start

In April 2018, Schreiner University in Kerrville invited organizers to partner with their Latino Engagement group to bring the Role Model Fair to the Dia de los Ninos celebration. Despite the blustery wind at the outdoor event, 48 passports were completed by children.

The next event was a Cinco de Mayo celebration at Notre Dame Catholic School in Kerrville where 135 children, Kindergarten through 8th grade, participated. While some were accompanied

What is Latinx?

Latinx is an inclusive term that encompasses people with origins in Mexico and Central and South America. It is a gender neutral term, so it includes people regardless of the their gender identity.

by parents at learning stations, older students were successful on their own, using their passports as a guide. Teachers from the host school were overheard making positive remarks about the enthusiasm and high level of participation by the students.

Registering Voters

League of Women Voters volunteers staffed a table at both events and parents were directed there. Only a few voter registrations, address changes, etc. were completed; however, there were multiple conversations about how to obtain unbiased candidate information on Vote411.org and availability of English-language and citizenship classes in Kerr County.



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Community Collaboration Makes it Happen

The idea for the Role Model Fair came out of a collaboration between Kerr County residents and Voces Tejas, a nonprofit that works to achieve equity for Latinx communities through service, outreach and bridge building. According to Voces Tejas co-founders, Leandra Blei and Maria Milner, allied social justice groups must become integrated into Latinx communities through dedicated involvement in community service projects, civic groups and churches. Because of historic and economic factors impacting Latinx communities, these groups must maintain this commitment in order to foster real community engagement.

Kerr County residents Dana Armitstead, Alicia De La Cerdá Boyett and Jeannette Ruark brainstormed a tentative plan for a traveling “Latinx Role Model Learning Fair,” which would be coupled with voter registration. Interviews with members of the local Latinx community validated the concept of reaching adults through their children while simultaneously providing services to the greater community.

Armitstead, with a background in marketing, understood the importance of creating a roadmap that communicates the comprehensive vision of the outreach project to potential partners. She conducted an outreach campaign to share this vision and roadmap in the Kerrville area and established relationships with Schreiner University, Notre Dame Church and School, media outlets and Latinx business owners.

Boyett and Ruark, both members of the League of Women Voters and deputized voter registrars, recognized this as an opportunity to provide voter registration services and candidate information, thereby making it more accessible to a variety of organizations, schools and churches. Boyett researched and created a menu of potential role models. Ruark, using social media, enlisted input from professional teachers for creation of the interactive learning stations.

A team of ten teachers provided ideas for and created interactive learning stations for eight Latinx role models. Life-size portraits of the role models were painted, providing a fun way to create photographic memories of the experience. Additional volunteers filled in as presenters and helped with setup and take down. The cost for production of all the elements of the fair was generously absorbed by the teachers and volunteers.



Fall Fairs and Beyond

Three fairs have been requested for fall 2018 in Kerrville: at the Diez y Seis de Septiembre community event in September and at Notre Dame Catholic Church in October; and at the Dia de los Muertos celebration at Schreiner University in November.

Additionally, after reading about the first two events on Facebook, an organizer for the Kendall County Hispanic Heritage Celebration contacted organizers to request inclusion of the Role Model Fair as part of their event. Organizers have agreed to provide materials and displays as well as oversight for production, while the Kendall County group agreed to provide volunteers for manual labor and for presenting learning stations. A volunteer registrar from the League of Women Voters will provide services and information at an adjacent table.

A similar fair has been requested for the Doyle Community Center in Kerrville to highlight African American as well as Latinx role models. Discussions are underway to fulfill this request for the mixed ethnicity neighborhood.

The future of the Role Model Fair now includes plans to add eight additional accomplished Latinx men and women to the current eight by September 2018.

Because trust is easier to engender when presenters share a similar ethnicity, plans are underway to recruit more men and women with a Latinx heritage to become part of the productions.



Similarly, because the Fairs have proven to be excellent networking opportunities, current League members plan to make a concerted effort to recruit additional people from the Latinx community to join the League and become deputized voter registrars.

Social justice groups must become integrated into Latinx communities through dedicated involvement in community service projects, civic groups and churches.