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## **LATION SERVICE PROVIDERS AIM TO SHARE INFORMATION, IDEAS**

### **Staff Report**

People who provide services to other have been gathering in Twin Falls for a long time to share ideas and network.

A new group has also started to focus on serving the growing Latino community. The Latino Service Providers Group meets monthly. At the lunch gathering, which are moved each month to different cities in the Magic Valley, participants are encouraged to bring any brochures, fliers, or business cards to share with the other service providers.

"We started meeting in December just to share information about what our agencies have going on to help the Latino community, said Millie Gaitan-Gonzalez, Raices Project coordinator, who is also with the Catholic Charities of Idaho Office. Catholic Charities provides various programs, including many to Latinos such as English instruction.

Gaitan-Gonzalez started the local Latino Service Providers group based on what the Raices Project started in Minnesota and Iowa. Raices, a Spanish word meaning roots, is a four-state, four year project focusing on building community resources in Latino communities in Iowa, Minnesota, Idaho and Oregon. It is a partnership between the Northwest Area Foundation University of Iowa institute of Support of Latino Families and Communities, and Main Street Project, a Minnesota-based nonprofit organization associated with the League of Rural Voters.

The purpose of the Latino Service Provider is to connect the people who serve Latinos, Gaitan-Gonzalez said "Those who attend include representatives of the Idaho Departments of labor and vocational rehabilitation, Idaho Legal Aid Services, Idaho Community Action Network, hospitals and the Community Council of Idaho, formerly the Idaho Migrant Council, and many of the participates are Latinos.

"There is strength and more empathy towards the issues that affect Latinos," Gaitan-Gonzalez said of the new groups.

The members share information about events, such as Hispanic Heritage Fiesta, held annually in August in Twin Falls or the Department of Labor has a special class. Then that information is passed on to the clients they help.

"Sometimes, we don't learn about those unless we talk to each other," she said.

Carmen Macias, an outreach paralegal with the Idaho Legal Aid Services, said the also has speakers about various programs and is a place for Latino professionals to meet and network.

**Any person or representative of the group that serves Latinos is invited to the meeting. Millie Gaitan-Gonzalez also hopes the Latino Service Providers will become a community resource and that it will work with other service provider groups.**

**On the Web**

**The nation's Latino population increased 1.4 million to reach 45.5 on July 1, 2007 or 15.11 percent of the estimated total US population of 301.6 million. To use a searchable data base of national and state estimates by race, Hispanic origin, sex and age released by the US Census Bureau go to [Magicvalley.com](http://Magicvalley.com).**

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**Census Population Estimates**

**The nation's Hispanic population increased 1.4 million to reach 45.5 million on July 1, 2007, or 15.1 percent estimated total US population of 301.6 million.**

**National and state estimates by race, Hispanic origin, sex and age released by the US Census Bureau also show that the Hispanic population exceeded 500,000 in 16 states.**

**Hispanics remain ed the largest minority group, with blacks (single race or multiracial) second at 40.7 million in 2007. The black population exceeded 500,000 in 20 states. Blacks were the largest minority group in 24 states currently with 20 states in which Hispanics were the largest minority group.**

**Blacks were followed by Asians, who totaled 15.2 million; American Indians and Alaska Natives, who totaled 4.5 million and Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders, with 1 million. The population of whites (single race and not of Hispanic origin.**