

# Esperanza

www.esperanza.us

NEWS FROM OUR MINISTRY

WINTER 2008



## Successful three year run for Esperanza Trabajando

When we tell supporters that their investment in our Esperanza Trabajando project was well made, they quickly ask us, "Why?" It is a great question, one we happily respond to with 3.7%. Most people do not know what to make of that percentage, but it speaks to the number of participants in the program that returned to prison or re-incarceration. Of the 3,200 participants, 1,808 were offenders and only 67 returned to prison. That is phenomenal.

Each year, over 650,000 men and women are released from federal and state prisons, and return to their communities and families. According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, two out of three inmates will be re-arrested for new crimes within three years of their release and more than half will be re-incarcerated. Additionally, it is estimated that unemployment rates among ex-prisoners are between 25% - 40%. Released prisoners face countless chal-

lenges that contribute to their return to criminal activity, re-arrest, and re-incarceration. These include joblessness, substance abuse, mental health problems, low levels of educational attainment, lack of stable housing, and poor family connections.

In this context, 3.7% is extraordinary. This success is attributed to our partners, faith- and community-based organizations, doing good work on the front lines of Hispanic America, in cities like New York, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Miami, Orlando, Tampa, Chicago, Tacoma, Tucson, Boston, Philadelphia,

Continues on page 5...

## IN THIS ISSUE

**PAGE 2** AMLA Partners with Esperanza

**PAGE 4** Esperanza Academy Students at Iowa Caucus

**PAGE 5** Esperanza Revitalizes its Neighborhood

**Esperanza**  
STRENGTHENING OUR HISPANIC COMMUNITY

4261 North 5th Street, Philadelphia PA 19140

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Permit # 6535  
Philadelphia, PA

## President's Brief



Saludos,

It seems like yesterday we were celebrating the first National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast.

But 2008 marks the seventh consecutive year we will come together as Hispanics of faith in our nation's capital to pray, celebrate, and advocate for the diverse needs of the Hispanic community in the United States.

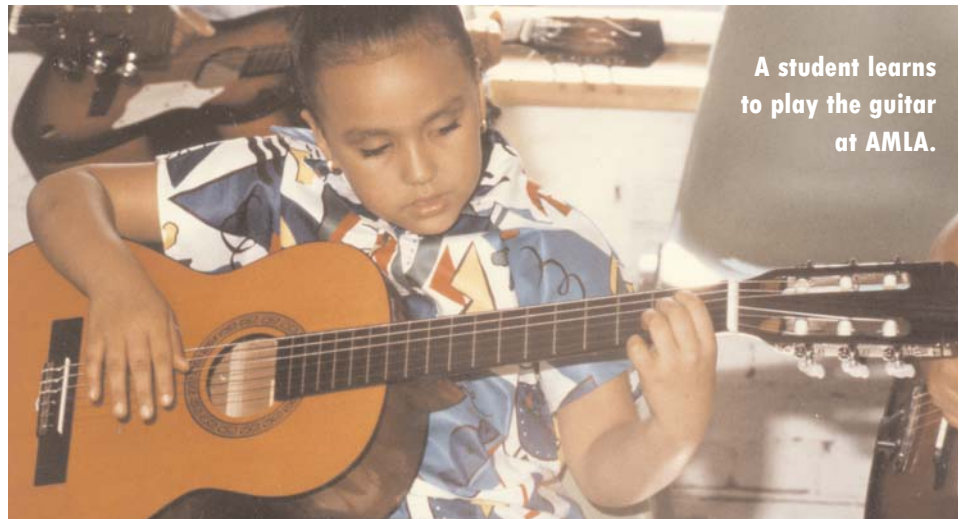
For this reason, I have the pleasure to announce that the National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast and Conference will take place from June 24 - 26, 2008 at the prestigious J.W. Marriott Hotel in Washington, D.C.

As in past years, the event will provide unique opportunities to pray for our leaders and this nation. You will be able to review research on issues affecting our communities, to network with and meet people committed to our community and country. Also, you will have the opportunity to meet your elected officials on Capitol Hill to speak out about issues affecting our people on a day-to-day basis.

Please save the date and visit [www.esperanza.us](http://www.esperanza.us) for more information. Updates on registration will be announced soon. See you all in June!

Bendiciones,

**Rev. Luis Cortés, Jr.**  
President,  
Esperanza



A student learns to play the guitar at AMLA.

## AMLA partners with Esperanza

Artistas y Músicos Latino Americanos (AMLA) formed an important alliance with Esperanza to service Philadelphia area residents with quality arts and music education programs that celebrate Latino traditions. The new AMLA traces its origins back to 1982 and was born out of concern for the lack of arts programming in schools, the misrepresentation of Hispanic culture, and a firm belief in the power of the arts to transform lives.

AMLA's education programs include the *AMLA Latin School of the Performing Arts*, that provides Latino music and dance instruction to students of all ages and the *Artists in Education* program that takes Puerto Rican music and jazz workshops into city schools. AMLA also offers the *Latin Pulse Productions Booking Service*, which identifies work for approximately 20 orchestras and 200 artists.

The partnership brings AMLA's programmatic strength under the organizational umbrella of Esperanza. Together the partnership solidifies AMLA's operations and allows for program stability and expansion.

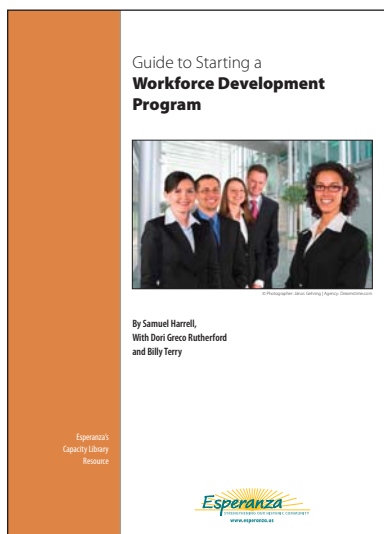
Already the partnership is paying dividends with AMLA bringing expertise to the developing arts program of Esperanza Academy Charter High School and extending the *AMLA Latin School* offerings from one day a week to three days a week at Esperanza's facilities. This alliance is an excellent example of non-profit partnerships that bring value to each other's programs and enhanced service to those we serve.

### **\$30,000 in new grants awarded to AMLA**

On December 2007, two new grants were awarded to AMLA that will allow the organization to flourish and accomplish its mission. The Samuel S. Fels Fund awarded \$20,000 in general operating support for AMLA's education programs. In addition, the Hispanics in Philanthropy Funder's Collaborative for Strong Latino Communities awarded \$10,000 to the organization for marketing and communications activities. Together these grants will increase visibility and awareness of AMLA's programming and allow for young and old to pursue their dreams and expand their musical talents.

## From our e-store...

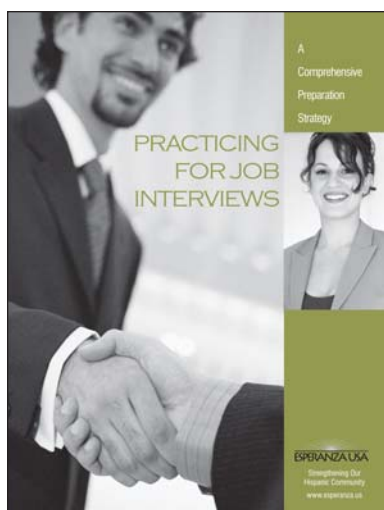
The Workforce Development section of the Esperanza e-store has a variety of resources created specifically to assist organizations that want to create workforce development programs and to help job seekers get ready for job interviews. These resources are available either as PDF downloads or in printed format. For your convenience, you can order them through our website's e-store at [www.esperanza.us](http://www.esperanza.us).



### Guide to Starting a Workforce Development

This helpful resource guide offers recommendations and suggested approaches for the development of new or enhanced workforce development programs by faith- and community-based organizations. The guide gives an introduction to key concepts and essential components for new entrants to the workforce development field engaged in designing, implementing, and enhancing programs.

You can download a **free** PDF version of the guide through our e-store at [www.esperanza.us](http://www.esperanza.us).



### Practicing for Job Interviews – A Comprehensive Preparation Strategy

This handy resource provides detailed instructions and guidance for helping people prepare for job interviews as well as exemplary interview practices to help them meet the interviewer's needs.

This manual is **free** –you only pay for shipping and handling costs. To order a copy, please go to our e-store at [www.esperanza.us](http://www.esperanza.us).

## Esperanza College Library is Taking Shape



Students studying at the Esperanza College Library.

College libraries are not supposed to have empty computer terminals, reference sections or stacks. However, all libraries have a beginning and that was the reality of Esperanza College and its new library. Today, computers are working, collections are growing and reference works are expanding.

"Currently we are in the cataloguing stage," said Ann Paserchia, Esperanza Library Planner, about cataloguing all the books donated or purchased for the library. This is one more piece in Esperanza College's efforts to provide students with a state of the art library. The hard work of bar-coding and adding books to the system continues. Eventually, students will be able to take out books from the library using their Student ID's as library cards.

At this time, the collections are relatively small and we are accepting book donations. If you are interested in donating books to the Esperanza College Library, please contact Ann Paserchia, Library Planner, at 215-324-0746, extension 437. Your book donations will be greatly appreciated and will assist Esperanza College students in the pursuit of their degrees.

## Esperanza Academy Students at Iowa Caucus

Esperanza Academy Charter High School students, Yomara Arroyo and Zuleyka Rodríguez, traveled to Iowa to join sixteen other students chosen from across the United States to participate in the Presidential Forum Iowa caucuses, sponsored by the Active Citizen Project.

The Academy students had the exciting task of videotaping the proceedings for a soon to be released internet documentary. "I'm glad that we could voice the people's thoughts and ideas," said Yomara about her unforgettable experience in Iowa. The experience has given both girls a new perspective of the political process in the United States. "We had the opportunity to interview many people and learn what they were looking for in the next president," said Zuleyka, who enjoyed speaking with people from all over the country.

We congratulate the Academy and our students for competing and being selected from a national pool of applicants.



**From left to right:** the Rev. Luis Cortés, Jr., Yomara Arroyo, Zuleyka Rodríguez, and Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) at the inauguration of the new Arts Wing at Esperanza Academy Charter High School.

## Betances Job Training Participants Receive Laptops

The Betances Employment and Job Training Program, in conjunction with the Esperanza EARN Center staff, celebrated Participant Appreciation Day on December 12, 2007. During the ceremony, thirty-five Betances graduates were presented with laptops purchased for them by the program. The package also included free internet service for one year. The event recognized these individuals for completing major program milestones and moving towards fulltime employment. They represent the success that comes with hard work and perseverance.

Access to technology is a major obstacle to employment and advancement. Efforts to narrow the digital divide for those on the lower end of the social economic ladder are an essential component of our job training programs. Having both the hardware and the internet access will better equip our students to compete in demanding workplace environments. "Recognition events such as this one allow the clients to

understand that their hard work and dedication do not go unnoticed and that the training staff is whole heartedly interested in supporting their educational and personal goals," said Gizela López, Director of Job Training Services.

Once the job training participants complete the 16 weeks of required administrative support training, they graduate and are placed in jobs within the administrative service field.

**"I was ecstatic when I received the laptop. It helps me to complete my homework and projects. I appreciate everything that Betances has given me. Without it I don't know what I would have done with myself."**

**María Cruz, Betances participant**

Continued from page 1

## Esperanza Trabajando

and Bethlehem. Together twenty different organizations produced a 3.7% recidivism rate, a job placement rate of 62%, and a retention rate of 91%. This means we helped at-risk and adjudicated youth find jobs and *esperanza* (hope) in their quest to re-integrate into their families and communities. Our partners provided soft skills and basic training, mentorship, communities of support through congregations and community-based agencies, case management and, when needed, referrals and support services to local job training and remedial education services in their communities. Ultimately, employment was achieved but more importantly, participants learned that hope, support, and opportunities are available.

We are excited about these outcomes. They speak to our commitment to excellence. In the end, it means that individuals between the ages of 18-34 received a second chance.

**"There is a lot to be said and be proud of when a program named Esperanza Trabajando (Hope Works) can successfully achieve the strengthening of several communities through the reduction of crime, provision of jobs, and education while giving countless youth what they really needed, a second chance."**

**Mr. José Lastra, Vice President of National Programs**



The Philadelphia skyline serves as a backdrop for the Hunting Park area of North Philadelphia, home of Esperanza.

## Esperanza Revitalizes its Neighborhood

For nearly a decade, Esperanza has helped to transform the face of the Hunting Park area of Philadelphia. Ten years ago when few were buying commercial properties in our neighborhood our commitment to community and asset development informed our decision to purchase and make an old factory building both our home and anchor for neighborhood revitalization. Today, what was an abandoned factory houses our corporate offices, the Esperanza Academy Charter High School, the Esperanza EARN Center, and Esperanza College. It is also home to several businesses that lease space and render services to our Hispanic community.

In January, the City of Philadelphia awarded Esperanza a *Targeted Neighborhood Grant* of \$75,000 to further this work. The funding will strengthen the commercial portion of Esperanza's work by supporting the formation of a small business association that will act as a crucial link to city funding streams for small business assistance and the development of neighborhood marketing and beautification plans. This is an exciting opportunity for our neighborhood and the businesses along our corridor. We appreciate the City's confidence in our organization and know that this financial support will advance and strengthen our commitment to our neighborhood's development and revitalization.

# A Testament to God's Glory at the Mujeres Event in Tampa

By Rosa C. Prieto, Executive Director, Mujeres de Esperanza



**From the left:** Rev. Marilyn Hartman and Rev. Bonnie Camarda pray for the women; Julissa during her joyful performance; women gather in prayer and worship.

On November 24, 2007 Mujeres de Esperanza celebrated an event in Tampa, FL that united women of all generations in prayer and intercession. The following testimonial captures the power, the love, and the presence of the Holy Spirit that day.

For months, event coordinators had been praying that God would manifest Himself and touch the lives of all who would attend the event. Early that morning women from all around Florida started arriving, some with their spouses, joining in worship with the musical group *Doble Porción*. You could feel God's presence waiting to heal our wounds, lift our spirits, and fill our souls with joy.

It was a powerful experience of prayer, with messages of faith and hope. We prayed for each other. Mothers, grandmothers, and sisters would hold hands in intercession around the younger women. Daughters and granddaughters would hug grandmothers and pray. Prayers were made for teachers, healthcare and government workers, pastors, and homemakers. We saw tears rolling down many cheeks, heard many heal-

ing testimonies, and felt the Holy Spirit from beginning to end.

After a time of prayer we gathered for the concert. Gospel singer, Julissa, who is also a member of the Board of Mujeres de Esperanza, inspired us with her joyful praises. She was joined by gospel singer Daniel Calveti, who began to glorify God and invited the public to bring all their anxieties to the altar. Calveti, Julissa, and the rest of the members of the Board united in worship and praise. We felt God's presence among us. There was great joy, tears, comfort, hope, and love among all... and even though it was late, nobody wanted to leave. We were all sharing, laughing, loving, and feeling God's touch.

At the end, we gave thanks to God for hearing our prayers. We felt His presence and were motivated to be women of faith in our communities through His greatness and love.

Vistis us at [www.esperanza.us/mujeres](http://www.esperanza.us/mujeres).



## THE NATIONAL HISPANIC PRAYER BREAKFAST AND CONFERENCE

### Save the Date!

The 2008 National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast and Conference will take place on  
**June 24-26, 2008**

at the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Washington, D.C.

Updates on registration and program details will be announced soon.