

Culinary and Cultural Art Expansion





Charting New Territory, Gaining New Ground



Guadalupe Center, Inc. (GCI) has a history of launching out into un-charted territory and leading the way for others. With almost 80 years of service to the Latino community of Kansas City, Missouri, GCI considered its first capital campaign – expanding the Guadalupe Center at 1015 Avenida Cesar E. Chavez – necessary, in order to address the changing needs and interests of GCI clients.

The Center began with a similar mission in 1919. The Mexican Revolution in the early 1900s prompted an exodus of Mexican nationals from their homeland in hope of a better life north. Many stopped in the southwest states to rebuild their lives and set a new course for the future of their children. Others pressed north into Missouri and settled in the Westside community of Kansas City, Missouri.

This new land offered great opportunity, but with it, new hardships. Some schools were closed to the Mexican immigrants, parents were prohibited from shopping at certain stores, medical services were unavailable to them – opportunity was outweighed by discrimination.

Named after the patron saint of Mexico and founded as a volunteer school and clinic for Mexican immigrants, the Guadalupe Center became one of the nation's first social service agencies for Latinos. GCI began by serving Westside Mexican immigrants with the basics – education and medical attention. Since that time the Center has expanded its borders to include metropolitan Kansas City and a community of around 100,000 Latinos. In addition, GCI now dispenses a greater scope of services including a bilingual preschool, a charter high school, the first and only bilingual substance abuse outpatient program in

the Greater Kansas City area, a teen pregnancy prevention program, services designed for the elderly, and many other social and cultural programs and events.

The Center is a nonsectarian organization with two major affiliations, the Heart of America United Way, since 1924, and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), since 1985. From a settlement house for Mexican immigrants to a multi-service Latino based agency serving the metropolitan Hispanic community, GCI grew with its constituency. By the end of the 1990s, GCI was ready again to chart new territory.

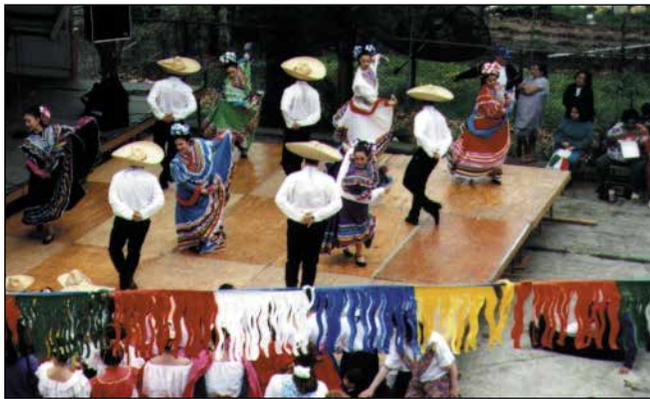
The nineties saw the Latino population in Kansas City grow at a faster rate than any other ethnic group. In response to this developing resource of cultural and economic influence, GCI anticipated a need to expand its building

and its programming. Expansion would not only give administrative offices breathing room, but add a full service catering and culinary arts training program and an enhanced Latino cultural arts facility. These services were already provided by GCI, but success came with its own challenges. GCI staff could see greater opportunity just ahead, but to get there they would need to venture into the new world of million dollar capital campaigns – the undiscovered country.

The summer of 1998, GCI engaged the consulting firm of Hartsook Companies to conduct a campaign assessment. The fundraising capacity at that time was estimated at around \$4 million. The GCI board needed a couple of months to discuss and embrace the venture. As their first major campaign and one of the first ever for a Latino based agency, this was a deci-

sion that could affect more than GCI – it could set precedent for the Hispanic community.

Once the decision was made, architects rendered ideas and ideologies. Executive Director, Cris Medina, explained, “We knew what we needed to make this facility functional. The architects wanted to build something that made a statement about our cultural achievements. We were supportive of that picture, but every time we spoke with the architects, the price and the campaign goal increased. We



finally came to a middle ground between the look and the function of the facility. The initial estimate was \$4.1 million. Eventually that campaign number rested at \$4.9 million, although \$5.1 was ultimately raised. Renovations to the 6,000-square foot center, and an additional three-story, 18,000-square foot building connect form and function. “It’s a building behind a building,” Medina said. “They will be connected by a long walkway. It will look very nice.”

The campaign process experienced heavy turnover in staffing. “We went through four development directors through the course of the campaign. One thing we do at GCI is give young people a chance to learn and grow. The positive side was that all our development

directors were personally familiar with the organization. They all came into the development director position knowing a lot about the mission of GCI. They moved on to other good jobs, but they will always remember GCI and appreciate our work,” Medina said.

The lead gift came in August 1998 from the Hall Family and Hallmark Cards. The original gift of \$675,000 was later upped to \$1.1 million. Steering committee members were active in opening doors to potential donors. Said Medina, “I went to all the solicitations, but without an introduction from members of our steering committee, most of those calls would not have happened. I would tell people, ‘If you can get

me in there, I can present our case’ and they did.”

One volunteer, teaching ESL English class at GCI, turned out to be a real key to opening doors. This older gentleman, not in the best health, had quietly donated a decade of his retirement years to teaching English at GCI. “I worked for this man right after I graduated from college,” Medina explained. “He had been the CEO of a manufacturing company for 20 years and now he was volunteering his time to GCI. It took some prodding, but I convinced him to be on the campaign steering committee.” The campaign also experienced its share of disappointments. A Kresge Foundation grant looked like a distinct possibility. The word was that the Foundation was interested in funding Latino causes. Kresge, however, decided against a grant to GCI. It considered GCI gifts too heavily weighted by foundations and corporations over major gifts from individuals. The board donated \$39,000 and the steering committee gave \$20,000 – not huge numbers to some, but they represented major sacrifices.

A Mabee Challenge Grant of \$750,000 was a win, but not without an 11th hour wait. One week before the September 15th deadline to receive the challenge grant, GCI had not yet met the goal. “It was close,” said Medina. “We barely made it, but William Dunn, Sr. came to bat for us with a big gift.”

Guadalupe Center had a very tight focus during their campaign and combined facilities expansion directly with program initiatives. Of the \$5.1 million raised, \$500,000 was targeted in support of two programs, culinary arts and cultural arts, each at \$250,000. The balance of the campaign was in support of the facilities needed to house and showcase these educational initiatives. In the course of marketing the campaign, GCI was able to land a \$2 million program grant from the U.S. Department of Labor in support of culinary arts education. “Although the total dollars could not be counted in the campaign goal, it demonstrates how an integrated campaign – one that considers all revenue streams strategically – can grow an organization in a variety of

ways," offered consultant, Eric Staley.

The majority of GCI's programs, services, events, and activities are currently held in separate buildings: GCI Administration Building, Alta Vista Education Center, Casa Feliz Senior Center, Our Lady of Guadalupe Elementary School, Plaza de Niños Preschool, Guadalupe Youth Center and Gymnasium, and Guadalupe Salud Center. The development of a culinary and cultural arts expansion to the current GCI Administrative Building creates training and employment opportunities and helps preserve the Latino heritage through the cultural arts.

The project will more than quadruple the size of the existing building – from 6,000 to 24,000 square feet – increasing the number of programs available and the number of individuals served. The culinary arts wing of the expansion will have two major components: a food preparation vocational training facility and a nonprofit catering service. These programs are essential in the Center's new initiative to create self-sustaining and revenue generating programs. The program utilizes this area's designation as an Enhanced Enterprise Community (EEC) to further strengthen and increase services to the community. Kansas City (Kansas and Missouri) received \$25 million in federal funds for economic development projects and an additional \$2.4 million for social service and community based programs. From this funding, GCI received a grant for the initial



operations of the culinary arts program.

An additional goal is to construct a multipurpose facility for cultural and folkloric arts education programs, special events, and exhibits that exemplify the Latino culture. There will also be gallery space for Latino art and a theater for performing arts.

"My mother's parents migrated to Kansas City in 1919, the same year the Guadalupe Center was established. She participated in fiestas and remembers Dorothy Gallager, the woman that built this place. After Ms. Gallager's twenty years of service and commitment to the community, we are now empowered to give people an even greater opportunity to grow and develop," Medina said. "This campaign has increased our visibility. There is now not one major foundation in the Kansas City area that doesn't know we're here. We brought many people out to see the work we do. Most had never been here before the campaign. Now that it's over, I feel like the proud father of a



new infant. People from the neighborhood call to me, 'Hey, good job.' Our most recent annual awards banquet, a black tie event held downtown, was the largest gathering ever – 1,000 people came out. They knew we really had something to celebrate this year," added Medina.

"We interviewed a number of consultants before starting this campaign. The thing that impressed us with Hartsook Companies was their commitment to teaching us how to campaign for ourselves. I would tell our counsel, Eric Staley, I want an A for this class," said Medina. "He guided and had an ability to recognize our talents and shortcomings and give us advice accordingly. It's been a very good rela-

tionship. We were one of their first minority community organizations, so I believe the process was informative for them as well."

Staley responded, "Cris Medina and his staff are among the most dedicated and persistent nonprofit managers I have ever known. Cris, in particular, set the pace and became increasingly tenacious, in the best sense, as the campaign moved forward. Despite setbacks during the campaign that included the turnover of four development directors and the death of the Center's business officer, Cris kept the leadership's spirits up. He wanted an A for his first course in fundraising. I would give him an A+ because of his level of dedication."

From humble beginnings to a historic \$5.1 million capital campaign, the Guadalupe Center, Inc. Culinary and Cultural Art Expansion show-cases a proud heritage and a prosperous and productive future.

For more information about Guadalupe Center, Inc., call 816.472.4770

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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