



Circles of Care: The CCI Lehigh Latino Initiative

Following the centuries old Native American tradition of Neighborhood Empowerment Circles, and in the spirit of the well known African proverb, “It takes an entire village to raise a child”, CCI for the past several years, has administered a small grassroots program in specific Latino neighborhoods called Circles of Care. Working with very needy families, we bring together all the major players in a family’s life in weekly Circle of Care meetings. Participants can include any and every outside influential person who significantly impacts the family’s daily living situation. Such people can include neighbors, school personnel, employers, relatives and, most importantly, people of positions and power in the neighborhood itself. The objective is to help the family – as a family- deal with life’s many challenges and obstacles by slowly learning how to “grab life by the horns”, to quote a currently popular advertising slogan.

In virtually every neighborhood there is a “wise old head” that everyone knows as the person to go to in times of trouble. This is the person who has weathered life’s storms and has come out the other side as a survivor. This is the person who possesses an abundance of experienced-based wisdom or “street smarts” and is now able to offer practical guidance and advice to struggling families. The second phase of Circles of Care, is to incorporate this person into the Circle and begin to establish him or her as the continuing and ongoing resource person for the family as our professionals slowly phase out.

The Latino culture is and always has been a self-help culture, but something seems to disrupt and weaken its power and influence in urban areas, at least in our state. The ultimate goal and mission of our Lehigh Latino Initiative is to re-establish this culture so that Latino citizens can once again embrace and incorporate who they are and what they have historically always been.

Generously funded by the Lehigh County Office of Children and Youth in our early years, we now are working with local elected officials to secure the modest amounts of money we need to continue this very worthwhile program. Because our Founder and President is himself a product of the rural Midwestern tradition of neighbor-helping-neighbor (sometimes in order to survive, let alone prosper), CCI is excited about the possibility of helping others begin to walk the same pathway.