

# LATINO AMERICAN COMMISSION

ESTABLISHED IN 1972 | SUMMER 2014 NEWSLETTER | WWW.LATINOAC.NEBRASKA.GOV



**Mission Statement:** The mission of the Latino -American Commission is to serve as a voice in the Nebraska State Government for Latino Americans/Latinos.

**Vision Statement:** The vision of the Latino -American Commission is to empower the Latino Community through a pro-active approach to issues that affect their access to educational, political, economical and social opportunities in Nebraska.

## 2014 Hispanic Heritage Month Awards

The 8th Annual Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration will take place on Friday, October 10, 2014 at the State Capitol Rotunda. We are currently seeking nominations for the 2014 Hispanic Heritage Month Awards. Please explain in 350 words or less why you believe this individual or organization should receive one of the following awards below.

Nominations may be submitted by Nebraska residents of all ages, ethnicities and backgrounds statewide. Nomination Deadline: 5 p.m. on Monday, September 22, 2014.

### Humanitarian Award

This award honors an individual who has enhanced multicultural understanding, communication, and social justice in Nebraska:

- Dedication has led to improvements in the quality of life within the Hispanic community
- Promotion of equality, social justice, human dignity and diversity in the community
- Exemplify, through actions, the role of a humanitarian and leader for the Hispanic community
- Achievement of cross-cultural understanding in the community
- Advocate for underrepresented youth, especially Hispanic youth

### Event Award

This award honors an individual or organization who has broadened cross-cultural understanding through an event, exhibit or body of work on issues affecting the Hispanic population or promoting the beauty of Hispanic culture:

- The promotion of Hispanic heritage, culture and community locally or statewide
- Publicly recognized a group or individual in the Hispanic community bringing positive attention
- Event, exhibit or body of work bridging cultural understanding between communities
- Eliminating myths and stereotypes through factual information provided in a large setting

- Advocating or bringing attention to topic(s) affecting the Hispanic community

### Inspiration Award

For an individual who has gone above and beyond promoting diversity and helping individuals within the Hispanic community. Preference is, but not limited to, educators:

- Actions have benefited Hispanic individuals in the local community
- Improved opportunities for academic and social advancement among Hispanic youth
- Serves as a role model to Nebraskans of all ages
- Has worked to keep Latin American culture and heritage alive in Nebraska
- Has organized support groups or fundraisers to benefit a group, individual or issue affecting the Hispanic community

### Organization Award

Honor an organization (community, student, non-profit, church, etc.) that has helped the Hispanic community with education, advocacy, healthcare, or awareness:

- Provides classes or programs to benefit the Hispanic community
- Advocate for social justice, equality and cultural understanding locally or statewide
- Achieved improvements in academic or social opportunities among underrepresented youth
- Provided direction, access, support and/or service to Hispanic individuals
- Assisted in helping immigrants settle in new surroundings

The Hispanic Heritage Month Committee will review the nominations and make the final selection. Send Nominations via email to: [Jasel.Cantu@Nebraska.gov](mailto:Jasel.Cantu@Nebraska.gov) or to:

Jasel Cantu  
Nebraska Latino-American Commission  
State Capitol, 6th Floor, P.O. Box 94965  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4965



*Lazaro Arturo Spindola  
NLAC Executive Director*

## A Message from the Executive Director

Buenas Tardes,

Welcome to Hispanic Heritage Month 2014.

Hispanic Heritage Month is recognized in the United States from September 15 to October 15 every year; we honor our heritage month by having a State Commemoration every October. This year's State Commemoration is taking place on Friday, October 10, starting at 3:30 p.m. at the Capitol Building in Lincoln. We are accepting nominations for our Hispanic Heritage Month Awards. Anyone can nominate anyone in for an Organization Award, Inspiration Award, Humanitarian Award, and Event Award. Details can be found on our website: [www.latinoac.nebraska.gov](http://www.latinoac.nebraska.gov) We will be accepting award nominations until 5 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 22, 2014.

In addition to Hispanic Heritage Month, we are also planning the 2014 Latino Summit that will take place in Lincoln on Monday, October 20, 2014. The Cornhusker will present this educational conference for 600 Latino high school students. Representatives from UNL, UNK, UNO, community colleges, Creighton University, and all three state colleges will be there to recruit and answer questions students have about college. There will also be financial aid counselors and motivational speakers to help students with questions. We will also have a panel with Latino doctors, lawyers, and educators who will share their experiences and answer questions on how to attain a similar career. It is not too late to sign up, and we encourage school field trips for this event.

Of course there are more projects and exhibits we are working on, including a Dia de los Muertos exhibit right here in the Capitol Building. More details to come.

If you have any questions or concerns, please let us know.

Dr. Arturo Spindola - Nebraska Latino-American Commission Director

### Latino American Commission Commissioners

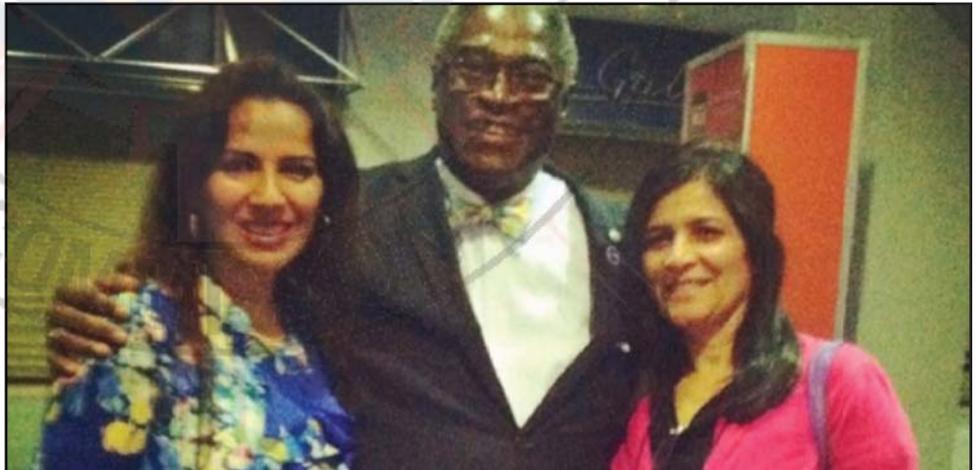
- Chabella Guzman (Chair)**
- Ramon Otero (Vice Chair)**
- Norma de la O (Secretary)**
- Jack Gutierrez**
- Ralph Hauke, M.D., FACP**
- Gisella Muñoz**
- Aida Olivas**
- Leticia Rodriguez**
- Adrian Sanchez**
- Jose Santos**

### NLAC Staff

- Lazaro Arturo Spindola, M.D.**  
Executive Director
- Jasel Cantu**  
Public Information Officer
- Dora Lima**  
Staff Assistant

**Visit Our Website:**  
[www.latinoac.nebraska.gov](http://www.latinoac.nebraska.gov)

## NLAC at NCLR Conference



*Two representatives from the Latino American Commission attended the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) National Conference from July 19-July 22 in Los Angeles, California. Staff Assistant Dora Lima and Commissioner Gisella Muñoz represented the Commission at the event. The representatives attended special lunches, workshops, panels, documentary screenings and a vendor exhibit. Among the many NCLR guests the pair encountered was Sly James, the Mayor of Kansas City, Mis. (Pictured Above) From left to right, Commissioner Muñoz, Mayor James, and Staff Assistant Lima.*

# NLAC Welcomes New Commissioners

## Aida Olivas and Adrian Sanchez

### Adrian Sanchez

Adrian Sanchez was appointed by Governor Dave Heineman in August as a Commissioner for the Latino American Commission (NLAC).

Sanchez will represent the Lincoln metro area for the Commission, replacing the seat vacated by Chandra Diaz-DeBose who resigned as Commissioner in May.

Born and raised in North Platte, Neb., Sanchez is a second generation NLAC Commissioner. His mother, Katherine Sanchez, served as an NLAC Commissioner in the 1990s representing North Platte.

“As a Commissioner, my goals are to work with the State of Nebraska to help resolve ongoing issues affecting Latinos, to continue raising public awareness of issues affecting Latinos and to engage and mobilize Latinos to take a more active role in improving our state,” he said.

Sanchez is currently the Director of Communications for the Nebraska Hospital Association (NHA). Among his duties, he serves as their media contact, conducts comprehensive communications management, and develops and executes strategic communication plans to build awareness of issues that affect Nebraska’s hospitals and the health care delivery system.

Sanchez graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) in 2005 with a Bachelor’s degree in Journalism and Mass Communications.

As a student, he joined the UNL chapter of the Sigma Lambda Beta Fraternity, Inc., a Latino-based fraternity, where he served as their President for three years. He would go on to become the Director of Alumni Operations for the fraternity’s Nebraska Alumni Association.

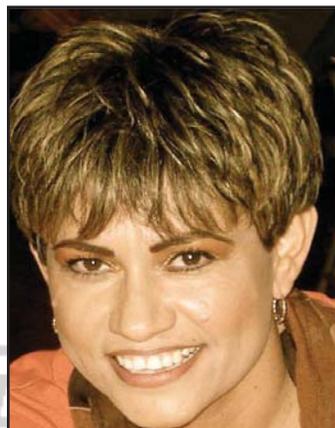
After graduation, he worked as a journalist for the *Columbus Telegram* newspaper in Columbus, Neb. covering the local school district, general assignments and the City of Columbus. It was during this time that he became involved in issues impacting the Hispanic community, and began to write more articles about Hispanic issues and stories.

“This led me to become involved in a middle school mentoring program for Latino youth in sixth and seventh grades,” said Sanchez. “The program was a success, and it eventually transitioned into a grant-funded after school program.”

Sanchez returned to Lincoln in 2010 to work as a technical writer at Fiserv, Inc. before being hired by NHA in 2012.

He has continued his professional development by receiving leadership training in the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry’s Leadership Nebraska Class of 2007. The program consisted of sessions covering various issues affecting Nebraska including economic development, education, and policy development.

Sanchez also continues to support his community through active involvement. He served on the board of directors for the Nebraska Court Appointed Special Advocates Association from 2009-2012.



Aida Olivas



Adrian Sanchez

Sanchez considers himself a third generation Mexican-American and fourth generation Nebraskan. His great-grandparents immigrated to Alliance, Neb. from Mexico and he is descended from one of the founders of Hemingford, Neb.

“As a native Nebraskan of Mexican-American descent, I have experienced both the challenges and opportunities Latinos face in the state. Because of my personal experience, I would like to be a catalyst for positive change, to promote the advantages available to Latinos and to help overcome prejudices and stereotypes that continue to exist,” he said.

### Aida Olivas

Aida Olivas was appointed by Governor Dave Heineman in July as a Commissioner with the Latino-American Commission (NLAC).

Olivas replaces retired Commissioner Yolanda Chavez Nuncio, and will represent the Hastings – Grand Island area.

Originally from Sinaloa, Mexico, Olivas immigrated to Hastings, Neb. in 1996 where she soon began her career in migrant education with the Head Start program. She currently works in the Migrant Education Program as a recruiter, a position she has held for the past 15 years after leaving Head Start. Her role is to help migrant students and their families with services and consultation.

“I love my job; I love what I do,” said Olivas. “You have to love what you do to help people; this is not an 8 to 5 job. I work holidays and on Sundays.”

Olivas is also working towards a bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education at Central Community College. A part-time student, she expects to graduate by 2018.

“I’m a single mom and it’s not easy. Even if it takes me 10 years, I’m going to graduate,” she said.

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# Farewell, Commissioner Yolanda Chavez Nuncio

Yolanda Chavez Nuncio has retired as a Commissioner with the Latino American Commission (NLAC).

She had been a Commissioner with NLAC for more than 10 years, first joining when the Commission was known as the Mexican-American Commission.

“The Commission has a long history in the state, beginning as the Mexican-American Commission, and I am proud to say that even before the name change to Latino-American Commission we served the Latino community,” said Nuncio.

“We didn’t differentiate between whether a Latino was Mexican, Chicana, El Salvadorian, Puerto Rican or Cuban, we served our familia and the Commission will continue to serve them.”

Nuncio is a lifelong resident of Grand Island, Nebraska.

She received her Bachelor of Arts in Education in 1990 from Kearney State College and a Master of Arts in Education in 1996 from the same institution, which by then had become known as the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK).

She began her lifelong career in education in 1990 as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher at Walnut Middle School in Grand Island. She would remain at the school for 11 years, with nine of those years as the sole ESL teacher in the entire middle school.

During her tenure there she developed and redeveloped their ESL program, which would eventually bring in two more ESL teachers.

While working, raising a family, and continuing her education she still made the time to serve her students and community. At Walnut Middle School she founded and sponsored the Multicultural Club and the Soccer Club. She also sponsored and implemented a tutoring and leadership program for the students that would eventually receive the First Lady’s Leadership Award.

In 2001, she left Walnut Middle School to become principal of Morton Elementary School in Lexington. She was responsible for a K-5 elementary school of 380 students with 46 percent in the ESL program.

In 2004, she became the Central Services Area Administrator at the Nebraska Dept. of Health & Human Services (DHHS) office in Grand Island.

As Administrator she oversaw 300 staff members and was responsible for implementing DHHS programs and systems in 22 Nebraska counties. Many of the programs that were implemented included areas in protection and safety, developmental disabilities, and economic assistance.

Nuncio retired from DHHS in 2012, but continued to serve her community in several capacities.

She is currently an advisor to Peter Kiewitt Scholars at UNK. She also recently received Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) accreditation, meaning the BIA has given permission to Nuncio to be a specially qualified non-lawyer to represent undocumented immigrants on behalf of



*Yolanda Chavez Nuncio (center) was honored at the August 23, 2014 Quarterly Meeting hosted by Southeast Community College in Lincoln. Nuncio was presented with a plaque in recognition of her services as an NLAC Commissioner for more than 10 years. She may be retiring from the Commission, but not from public service. She will continue her involvement with several organizations including Voices for Children and the Latino Summit Planning Committee.*

*Nuncio was awarded the plaque by Board Chair Chabella Guzman (left) and NLAC Director Arturo Spindola (right). She continues to remain in touch with the Commission on issues and events in and around Grand Island.*

a recognized organization.

The BIA will accredit non-lawyers only when they work for a recognized organization and will never accredit a non-lawyer who tries to practice immigration law on his or her own. As a BIA Accredited Representative, she works with Grand Island’s St. Mary’s Cathedral Immigration Program.

Nuncio has advice to NLAC Commissioners based on her many years as Commissioner:

“I think it is important that Commissioners be actively involved in their communities. Being a Commissioner and the duties we accepted are to represent our communities and in order to represent them we need to know what is going on, who the key leaders in the communities are, and how can we as Commissioners connect with them and help to give our communities a voice in Nebraska. There are too many things going on and representation and advocacy for our communities is a necessity.”

Nuncio continues to reside in Grand Island with her family including husband Saul, three children: Rachel, Feliciano, and Mario, and four grandchildren: Gabriella, Alicia, Bella and Anthony.

# Dr. Hector P. Garcia Day Proclamation



A Proclamation observing July 26 as Dr. Hector P. Garcia Day in Nebraska was signed by Governor Heineman on July 9 in the Capitol Building.

This is the first Proclamation to be signed observing a day in honor of Dr. Hector P. Garcia in Nebraska. The Proclamation was requested by Jose Garcia of the American GI Forum and organized by the Latino American Commission.

The Proclamation reads as follows:

WHEREAS, Dr. Hector P. Garcia was born on January 17, 1914 in Llera, Mexico and immigrated to Mercedes, Texas in 1917. After earning his doctorate in medicine from the University of Texas at Galveston in 1940, he moved to Omaha, Nebraska to complete his medical residency at Creighton University; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hector P. Garcia would begin his lifelong career serving in the military by joining the Citizens Military Training Corps, a branch of the U.S. Army, in 1929. During World War II, he achieved the rank of Major and earned six Battle Stars and a Bronze Star by the war's end; and

WHEREAS, in 1945, he began his service to the Latino population and community-at-large after settling in Corpus Christi, Texas by opening a medical clinic that helped indigent patients and sharing health education public service announcements. Due to discrimination and a lack of advocacy for Latino-American veterans, Dr. Hector P. Garcia founded the American G.I. Forum in 1948 in Texas, with an Omaha chapter being established in 1957. The American G.I. Forum fought against discrimination and advanced opportunities for Latino veterans nationwide in civil rights, education, voting rights, and was among the first organizations to hold a civil rights march in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hector P. Garcia continued his civil rights advocacy and public service for the remainder of his life. He brought attention to the neglect, poverty, and discrimination of Latinos in the areas of migrant labor, jury selection, healthcare, integrated education, and was instrumental in repealing the poll tax. His study and exposure of the harsh

*(Above) The Dr. Hector P. Garcia Day Proclamation Signing took place on July 9, 2014 at the Capitol Building. Those in attendance were (from left to right) NLAC Director Dr. Arturo Spindola, Aida Olivas, NLAC Commissioner from Hastings Public Schools, Dr. Larry Bradley, Commander of the American GI Forum Omaha Chapter, Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman, John Navarette, Nebraska State Commander of the American GI Forum and Jose Garcia, American GI Forum member and Director of the Mexican American Historical Society of the Midlands. Dr. Garcia presentation provided by Jose Garcia. Not pictured are the American GI Forum Omaha Chapter Color Guard and NLAC Staff Assistant Dora Lima.*

working conditions of Latino farm laborers would serve as a backdrop for the 1956 novel and film "Giant"; and

WHEREAS, in his lifetime, Dr. Hector P. Garcia was appointed to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, named to the Order of St. Gregory the Great by Pope John Paul II, served as an alternate ambassador to the United Nations where he was the first American to give a speech to the U.N. in a language other than English, and was the first Mexican-American to be awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Ronald Reagan in 1984, the highest honor a civilian can receive in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hector P. Garcia died on July 26, 1996 leaving a legacy of community service, civil rights advocacy, diplomacy, and improving the care and opportunities of the Latino community nationwide. The American G.I. Forum continues to operate in Omaha and has expanded to several chapters around Nebraska serving veterans to this day; and

NOW THEREFORE, I, Dave Heineman, Governor of the State of Nebraska, do hereby observe July 26, 2014 as Dr. Hector P. Garcia Day in Nebraska. I do hereby urge all Nebraskans to take due note of the observance and educate themselves and others on the legacy of Dr. Hector P. Garcia, and to keep his memory alive by giving back to their community through volunteer service or support.

# Pieces of Nebraskan Hispanic History

## The Legacy of Victor Gonzales in McCook



*NOTE: The article below was researched and written by Susan Doak of the SW Nebraska Genealogy Society. This article is reprinted with the permission of the McCook Daily Gazette newspaper.*

*(Above right) Victor, front row on right at St. Patrick Catholic Church. (Above) Victor in his Army uniform. Photos courtesy of Victor Gonzales and the McCook Daily Gazette. Reprinted with their permission.*

In the Red Willow County Censuses preceding 1930, there were few names indicating anything but European decent, but in 1930 with the railroad running hard, that changed! Appearing in Willow Grove Township, on railroad right-of-way, you find many Spanish surnames: Rodrigues, Monzon, Cuellar, Acosta, Enriques, Ortiz and Gonzales.

Those families listed boxcars or other company owned property as their homes and among them was Victor L. Gonzales, 6-years-old, son of James and Mary. Additionally, Jessie Gonzales, Jessie Rangel, Frank Grayer and John Deise (Mexican nationals) lived with the family. The 1940 census finds Victor in his first year of high school. The following siblings were listed: Andrea, Joseph, Peter, Raymond, Virginia, Angelina, Alfred, Paul, Cecilia, and baby Susanne. Fred Moran, Hazel Spencer and Hazel Snyder show as additional members of the household.

According to the Census, Victor's father, James, had been born in Mexico, and his mother Mary was born in Texas. The heads of every Spanish surnamed family above listed "laborer" for the steam railroad as their occupation.

On Jan. 22, 1943, at the age of 19, Victor L. Gonzales enlisted in the military in Denver, Colorado after finishing all three years of high school. His status was: Single, without dependents. Height: 5'7" Weight: 134. His friend, Joseph Cuellar, enlisted shortly afterward on May 3, 1943 and was also listed as single, without dependents, 5'3" tall and weighed 104 pounds.

In March 1945, he was shipped overseas, serving with the 79th Infantry Division in France, Germany, Belgium and Czechoslovakia. He re-enlisted overseas and was assigned to General Patton's Third Army Headquarters until his return to the United States in 1946.

According to family, Victor and his brothers Joseph and Raymond (all serving during WWII) faithfully sent money home to their parents

from their service pay. It was with that money that James and Mary were able to purchase a home and move from the boxcar that had been their home for nearly 20 years. It was to that home that both Victor and Raymond returned, according to the 1948 city directory. Their occupations show that James had now become a foreman for the C B & Q railroad, while Raymond is shown as a driver and Victor as a laborer.

Company B, 128th Engineer Battalion (Combat) of the Nebraska National Guard was chartered with two officers and 21 enlisted men. Victor joined the unit in December 1948 and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant, Corps of Engineers, and then promoted to 1st Lieutenant in the June of 1952.

By the time of his promotion, Victor had married Geraldine Smith and was working as a driver for Stevens 7-UP Bottling. He and Geraldine had a daughter, Vickie Marie, and they lived just doors away from his parents at 114 West 7th, according to the 1953 City Directory. From the same directory, we find that James is still a foreman for the railroad. Victor's siblings, who were grown up and living in McCook, were Alfred (stockman for Moore's IGA), Angelina (nurse aide at Saint Catherine's hospital) and Raymond (bartender at Real's Bar).

On March 15, 1954, Captain Victor L. Gonzales took the helm of the McCook 128th. Serving with him as Executive Officer was Lt. Donald L. Keller. Platoon Leader and Warrant Officer was Lt. William G. Howard while Warrant Officer Lyle W. Stovall was Unit Administrator. Seventy-four enlisted men served under them, one of them is Victor's old friend, Master Sergeant Joseph Cuellar, who is listed among the key non-commissioned officers.

In 1957, the roster showed 30 active Nebraska National Guard units, less than five members had Spanish surnames and two of them were

## Upcoming Events

- **Proclamation: Sept. 11**  
Hispanic Heritage Month - Lincoln
- **Deadline: September 18**  
Hispanic Heritage Month Essay Contest
- **Deadline: September 22**  
Hispanic Heritage Month Award Nominations
- **State Event: October 10**  
Capitol Building Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration - Lincoln
- **Holiday: October 13**  
Columbus Day
- **Meeting: November 8**  
NLAC Quarterly Meeting - Lincoln
- **Holiday: November 11**  
Veterans Day

## Contact Information

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## 2014 Latina Summer Academy



The College of Saint Mary hosted the 13th Annual Latina Summer Academy (LSA) from June 22 to June 27, 2014. Fifty-one ninth and tenth grade Latina students participated in the educational and residential opportunity with the theme "Food Matters: The Science of Nutrition & Exercise". The students stayed at the college dormitory, took educational field trips including a tour of ConAgra, met with Latina community leaders, watched the documentary "The Graduates-The Girls" and participated in exercises, skits, and created artwork. Bilingual faculty and staff supervised the students. Maria Luisa Gaston, LSA Director, states "The College of Saint Mary's Latina Summer Academy gives young Latina women encouragement and exposure to college academics. It is our purpose to make sure these students know that they are capable of attending college and that college holds exciting opportunities for their future." This year, 57 percent of the LSA students were from Nebraska, 31 percent were from Missouri, with the other 12 percent coming from Iowa, Colorado and California.

## Aida Olivas Continued...

Olivas has three children: Jorge is attending Hastings College, Carlos, a high school student, and daughter, Karla, currently attending the University of Texas – El Paso.

In addition to her work and family life, she makes the time to give back to her community with a dedication that stretches back several years, giving back as both a volunteer and board member.

Olivas is a volunteer with Homeless Connection, the Nebraska Dept. of Health & Human Services, Catholic Social Services, the YMCA and with local schools as an interpreter among other roles. Her Board Membership positions include memberships with the Hastings Chamber of Commerce Board for six years, CASA Board for the past four years and ASSAP Board for the past six years. She is also one of the three founders of the Multicultural Alliance of Hastings, a grassroots community organization that serves the local refugee and immigrant population, which is going on its third year.

As a Commissioner, Aida wants to help change attitudes about the Latinos community: "I really want to be the voice of these people and bring information. I want to be helpful."