Volunteer Study Involving the Latino Community
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Abstract

Hispanics represent the fastest growing population with cultural, demographic, and geographic diversity. This makes it difficult to successfully deliver homogeneous programs. Therefore, it is essential to better understand and have awareness of Hispanic American community needs. Such an understanding will allow 4-H Youth Development educators to deliver programs that engage Latinos as volunteers to benefit their community. This study surveyed 85 Hispanics to describe their participation in volunteerism and activities they would like to be involved in. The results provided information and recommendations that enabled 4-H Youth Development professionals to develop strategies for programs focused on recruiting Hispanics as volunteers.

Keywords: 4-H Youth Development, Hispanic immigrants, Hispanic volunteers
Review of Literature

The 2010 census designated 50.5 million people as Hispanic/Latino (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2011), which constitutes 16.3% of the total United States population. This statistic shows that there is great potential for recruitment for many organizations. However, they have not sufficiently responded to the complex needs of the Latino population (De la Garza & Lu 1999). While recognizing how critical it is to engage with a diverse audience, especially adult Latinos, it is imperative to create new strategies that support Latino needs and participation (Nowak, 2005; Hobbs, 2007). Understanding and acknowledging differences in language and culture are major factors that will support and create new volunteer opportunities in Hispanic American communities. In order to achieve success, it is imperative to understand how Latinos perceive volunteerism.

There is a misconception in the Hispanic community regarding volunteerism. Hispanics view “volunteerism” as the act of helping others (Morales 1999; Hobbs, 2000; Gregory, Steinbring, & Sousa, 2003). Most Latino immigrants come from a system where governments and churches have been responsible for providing the majority of social services to the community. For Latinos, volunteerism is far more personalized, informal, and less institutionalized compared to White American citizens (Hobbs, 1997; Ramos, 1999; Nowak, 2005). This understanding is critical to choose a plan that sparks interest in the Latino community and to create new strategies that will support Latino needs and encourage participation in volunteering (Nowak, 2005; Hobbs, 2007).

Volunteers are an integral part of Extension. They play an essential role in the delivery of educational programs conducted by the Extension. This is especially true when the implementation of 4-H Youth Development Programs rely almost exclusively on the work of thousands of dedicated adult volunteers (Boyd, 2004). In spite of the important role of volunteers and the programs they support play in United States society, volunteer programs have not reached out sufficiently to include as diverse a volunteer pool. Such outreach programs make it possible to accommodate language skills, cultural understanding and differences in such programs (Ellis & Noyes, 1990; clutter & Nieto, 2000). Therefore, there is a need and demand for expanding Extension youth development programs in urban and diverse communities. It becomes clear that Extension must work harder to find volunteers from minority communities and be sensitive to their special needs. Providing training and support would expand benefits for volunteers and further strengthen the programs that they deliver (Braker, Leno, Pratt, & Grobe, 2000).

Morales (2011) pointed out that Extension 4-H has developed a multicultural model with the participation of Latino youth and parents as volunteers. The model demonstrated that providing volunteer opportunities has been the key factor for the program success. This program offered volunteers a variety of leadership positions giving them the opportunity to practice new skills. Lopez & Safrit (2001) also stated that having a family member or friend involved in a program provides motivation for volunteering.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the study was to conduct a volunteerism study involving Latino residents in King County, WA. The study objectives were the following:

1. To determine the level of Hispanic engagement in volunteerism practices
2. To identify activities preferences among the Latino Community
3. To describe selected demographic characteristics of the Latino Community

Methods and Procedures

The population for this study consisted of 85 Hispanic residents from the following cities: 1) Sea-Tac; 2) Burien; 3) Des Moines; 4) Renton; 5) Seattle; 6) Federal Way; 7) Normandy Park; and 8) Bellevue. Sixty eight females and 17 males participated in this study. They ranged in age from 20 to 40+ years.

A descriptive survey research design was used...
Findings and Discussion

In the summary of 85 respondents, 50 (61.2% of participants) revealed they had volunteered, and 31 (36.5%) of the respondents indicating they had not volunteered. Twenty five (48%) participants mentioned that they had volunteered at schools in the city of Sea-Tac, Burien, Des Moines, and Seattle respectively. Seven (13.5%) respondents had participated in volunteerism programs at churches. In addition, 13 (25%) participants had volunteered at Community Centers and seven (13.5%) in other locations. The majority, 83.9% of all non-volunteers, indicated that they would like to volunteer at schools, community centers, churches and other programs such as 4-H respectively.

Seventy six residents identified activities that they would like to participate in. Twenty-seven (35.5%) of the participants would like to participate in folkloric dance groups, 18 (23.7%) prefer to be involved in educational activities such as reading, homework, and computers. Moreover, five (6.6%) participants wanted to be involved in food and nutrition activities, eight (10.4%) in gardening, and six (7.8%) in childcare. However, three (3.9%) would prefer to be involved in mechanical programs, photography, and fairs.

Seventy two (84.7%) participants stated they wanted to participate in volunteerism training. Eighty five respondents indicated interest in attending trainings and over 24 (28.2%) respondents indicated that Monday through Thursday is the best time to attend training. Furthermore, 23 (27.0%) respondents indicated Friday is the best time to attend a training session. Twenty two (25.9%) and three (3.5%) indicated that preference for Saturday and Sunday training sessions.

Regarding demographic questions, the majority of the respondents (48.2%), ranged from 31 to 40 years in age. An additional of 20 (23.5%) respondents ranged from 21 to 30 years, respectively. The data also reveals that seventy five (88.2%) of respondents indicated that they have children and ten (11.8%) did not have children. A distribution of 29 was established by number of children, 29 (34.1%) respondents pointed out that they have two children, while 26 (30.6%) respondents have 3 children. Additionally, 11 (12.9%) respondents indicated they have one child. However, 7 (8.2%) have four children and two (2.3%) have five children.

The data revealed a breakdown of respondents by country of origin. Mexicans comprised the largest number of respondents, 66 (77.6%), while seven (8.2%) of the respondents were from El Salvador. Furthermore, five (5.9%) respondents were from Honduras. Respondents from Guatemala and Chile comprised 3 (3.5%) respectively, and one (1.1%) respondent was from the United States.

Thirty three (38.8%) of the individuals indicated that they live in the city of Sea-Tac while 19 (22.3%) of the respondents lived in Burien. Eleven (12.9%) of the respondents lived in Des Moines, and nine (10.6%) in Renton. Data also showed that six (7.2%) respondents mentioned that they live in Seattle and four (4.7%) were from the city of Federal Way. Finally, two (2.3%) and one (1.2%) indicated residence in Normandy Park and Bellevue respectively.
volunteerism is relatively low, this study showed that (61.2%) of those surveyed are already volunteering. Additionally, most participants indicated an interest in attending volunteer training. The results suggested that Extension 4-H Youth Development should make focused efforts to recruit and train individuals who are already actively involved in community service roles. This would increase the number of volunteers and would build stronger collaborations among Extension programs, volunteers and youth organizations. Results from these partnerships would allow great savings of financial resources.

Eighty-two percent of the respondents mentioned that they have at least one child in school. Respondents also reported that they prefer to volunteer in activities that include culture events, education, and nutrition. The study also suggests that increasing in the partnership with schools will increase the number of Latino parents becoming volunteers. Parents would learn new volunteering skills and gain knowledge that would allow them to effectively develop and implement 4-H programs with the cultural competency to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

Results of this study show that Hispanics are already volunteering at faith-based organizations which both act as a motivational setting for volunteering. Hispanic Americans are driven by their religious beliefs (Swenson, 1990). Therefore, religious organizations represent an outreach opportunity for Extension 4-H to target volunteers that could participate and implement programs that will help strengthen familial bonds.

Based on the respondents’ country of origin, the data stratified that Mexicans comprised the largest number of respondents, followed by Salvadorans, Hondurans, Guatemalans, Chileans, and the United States. This result pointed out the importance of ensuring volunteerism opportunities that allow Latino volunteers to utilize their culture and language skills to advertise opportunity throughout Spanish radio stations, newspapers, newsletters, and TV. Additionally, to ensure success, the effective advertising tools should be a “personal relationship” developed with individuals in the community.

In addition, 4-H Youth Development professionals should encourage Hispanics to remain active in their communities as volunteers. Individuals with limited formal education and limited income should be encouraged to attend volunteer training programs to improve their self-esteem and interpersonal skills.

Nonetheless, creating training programs to develop capacity for the Latino community can be worthwhile for Extension 4-H Youth Development Programs and other youth organizations. The benefits of volunteering help build awareness and community involvement through the strengthening the ability to solve their own problems. Volunteer efforts and interest cultivate and provide meaningful opportunities and space that is full of participation, of a diverse population delivering a vast array of experiences, knowledge, and expertise to benefit the communities they serve.

References


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