

Local Hero

■ **Pedro Muñiz was named a local hero by two area organizations.**

Story by Shiara M. Dávila, LAPD
Photos courtesy Union Bank of California

POLICE DEPT. — Pedro M. Muñiz, Public Relations Specialist, LAPD, was one of five "Local Heroes" honored at an awards ceremony Sept. 21.

Union Bank of California and KCET select honorees during respective heritage months for Hispanic Americans, Asian/Pacific Americans and African Americans. September marked Hispanic Heritage Month. Award recipients were selected for their commitment and contributions to the arts, business, education, social services, and community activism. Muñiz received the award in the category of social services.

In 2003, the Public Relations Specialist spearheaded a hard-hitting Spanish language media campaign to foster public trust and support. In its third year, Muñiz's groundbreaking approach to community outreach has brought criminals to justice and has strengthened ties between the Spanish-speaking population and the LAPD.

His dynamic leadership and pioneering efforts have achieved maximum exposure for the Department in millions of Spanish-speaking households via such influential organizations as Univision KMEX 34 and Telemundo KVEA 52.

Through his efforts, several suspects have been captured. For instance, a homicide suspect was

apprehended after detectives appeared on Spanish-language television, prompting a flood of calls from the public. Similarly, the Department's Fugitive Warrants Section captured three suspects following a public appeal made on television by a Spanish-speaking officer.

To date, Muñiz continues to coordinate weekly television interviews, monthly public service announcements, and television specials.

He has also expanded the campaign to include radio broadcasts via Univision Radio Los Angeles, Spanish Broadcasting System, and others.

Among his work is Su Seguro Servidor, or Your Trusted Servant, which showcases Spanish-speaking police officers who are subject-matter experts. These officers deliver culturally relevant messages, including What to do

When You Get Pulled Over;

How to Start a Neighborhood Watch Program; Misuse of the 911

Emergency Line; Graffiti Prevention and Elimination; Gang Awareness; Gun Fire Reduction Program; Identity Theft; and Hate Crimes.

In a community often challenged by language barriers and distrust of law enforcement entities, Muñiz's campaign has softened the image of police officers; improved community relations and quality of life; and ultimately reassured residents that police officers are protectors rather than persecutors. Moreover, the campaign has helped officers gain a better understanding and



2006 Local Heroes: Dora Jacildo (Education); Pedro M. Muñiz, LAPD (Social Services); Eddie "Piolin" Sotelo (Community Activism); Sonia Marie De Leon de Vega (Arts); and José Daniel Ocampo (Business).

enhanced appreciation for the diversity of Los Angeles.

Recognizing the impact of his work, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) invited Muñiz to present the details of his campaign in a workshop at the 2005 IACP conference in Miami, attended by law enforcement personnel from around the globe. The workshop was titled, Improving Your Image in the Latino Community: How the LAPD Created Positive Partnerships with the Hispanic Media. Representatives from at least one other major U.S. city approached Muñiz to ask questions about implementing a similar campaign.

Among Muñiz's other noteworthy contributions is the LAPD Essay Contest, which he began in 2004. The annual writing challenge advances education through literacy, prompting nearly 30,000 middle school students to take an analytical look at youth crime and law enforcement.

In collaboration with Univision KMEX 34 and La Opinión, the largest Spanish-language newspaper in Southern California, the initiative encourages contestants to engage in serious discussions with peers, teachers, and parents about issues such as drug use, gang activity and domestic violence.

The LAPD Essay Contest, open to schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, promotes language arts, creativity, and proficiency.

Muñiz has gained support for the essay contest from a cross-section of Los Angeles organizations, including arts, business, and educational entities. Today, his campaign enjoys backing from the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, the California Science Center, Wells Fargo Bank, and Polaroid, among others.

Muñiz has been with the City of Los Angeles at the Police Department for five years.

Congratulations, Pedro!

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