The Colorado Health Foundation™



Voces Unidas de las Montanas: Helping Latinas and Latinos Learn Systems and Run Their Communities

As highlighted on vocesunidas.org, the organization was established to amplify the voices of Latinas and Latinos, foster opportunities for self-advocacy, and enhance representation and participation at decision-making tables.

“We believe that organizations should be led by those being impacted,” says Alex Sanchez, president and CEO of Voces Unidas de las Montanas. Hence, Voces Unidas comprises rural Latinas and Latinos in Colorado’s central mountain region, where they make up about 30% of the population yet are not equitably represented in rooms where decisions are being made.

As highlighted on vocesunidas.org, the organization was established to amplify the voices of Latinas and Latinos, foster opportunities for self-advocacy, and enhance representation and participation at decision-making tables. Uniquely, Voces Unidas organizes at the local level but operates with a statewide lens to create large-scale systems change. Understanding that changing systems, removing barriers and improving lives takes plenty of people power, Voces Unidas’ team of field organizers conducts year-long, year-round trainings on leadership skills, advocacy and organizing. These trainings provide the skills and confidence necessary for rural Latinas and Latinos to actively engage in systems with the goal of building and growing residents’ power and influence.

Voces Unidas launched in 2020 and, to date, more than 9,000 Latinas and Latinos have already engaged in policy, advocacy and organizing programs. Some members of this leadership corps are already making change happen and taking office at regional and statewide levels. The key to building up these leaders?

There isn’t one, according to Alex Sanchez. “Voces Unidas doesn’t have a secret sauce. It’s no different than other programs, except for the fact it’s in our communities.”

The Colorado Health Foundation is proud to support Voces Unidas in its advocacy efforts, recognizing the crucial role it plays in advancing the organization’s vision for justice, which encompasses creating communities, states and nations where Latinas and Latinos are actively represented in decision-making processes, driving positive change and shaping equitable systems. By teaching common-sense tenets of community organizing to the Latino/a populations of the Western Slope, Voces Unidas is shifting the power within the systems that impact people of color. “We are helping Latinas and Latinos learn systems and run their communities,” Alex says.

Historically, systems in the United States have been built by and for white people with disregard – if not outright disrespect – for people of color. This has led to inequity in every area of society. But Voces Unidas knows that fostering leaders and organizers in their own rural communities can have large-scale impact. Each year members of the Voces Unidas leadership corps advocate on the state level in Denver and the federal level in Washington, D.C. “We have been ready for a long time,” Alex says. “We want to be the creators and architects of our own solutions.”

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