



To the Colaborando Juntos Network-

On February 6, 2008, the 2008 leadership for Colaborando Juntos held a retreat to identify some priorities for this year. We came out of this meeting with some goals in which we would like to focus and some policies and procedures we would like to establish that will help better frame the work we do.

At the December 2007 CJ Conference, we held an activity in which we asked the participants to identify priorities that they felt CJ should address. Using this information, the conference evaluation forms, and the results from last year's retreat, we identified CJ as having two overwhelming goals for this year.

One is to further add structure our collective organization so that it can be sustained and grow over the coming years. This will be accomplished by completing the necessary documentation for recognition as a 501 (c) (3) non-profit by the IRS. By going through this process, we will be required to set a unified mission and establish by-laws and protocols. This will give us some of the structure we have been lacking in the past. The leadership will be focused on this task for most of the year. We will, however, need the help of the larger network to accomplish this. If you are knowledgeable with this process, please let me know. We could use someone who has gone through it recently to help guide us.

Second, an overwhelming majority of conference participants identified youth and youth development as a priority for the Latino community in this area. As such, activities carried out by the teams will have that in mind as they craft their priorities for the year. One way in which the teams will change this year is with the development of a team protocol. This protocol will include guidance on how activities are to be carried out and endorsed by leadership. It is our hope that this will give team leaders much needed guidance on the expectations of the networks as a whole. Leadership will meet with team leaders to answer any questions about this initiative.

CJ conferences this year will also focus on Latino youth leadership and educational development. For those of you in our network who work specifically with youth, rest assured that any activity that is planned will not seek to replace what is already being done in the Greater Richmond area, but rather seek to enhance existing services or address issues that have not been traditionally a focus of our community. For those of you whose organizations and interests lie outside of youth, you will be surprised at the way youth development activities can be incorporated into your organizations. After all, our goal with CJ is not simply to enhance the way our organizations work with Latinos, but to impact change in that community.

Another area where you will see improvements will be in how electronic communication and the website are utilized. We understand that many of us get our information in these forms and it is important that they are timely and up-to-date. If anyone has a heart to help with this issue in the form of serving as a webmaster, please let me know.

Lastly, as all of you know, these kinds of priorities and improvements require funds to carry them out. Since we are still not a formal organization in the eyes of the IRS, we cannot solicit donations and we cannot apply for grant funds.

Currently, the only way we can raise money is through membership and conference fees. This will mean that a consistent effort to request that the network join as members will be carried



out over the coming months. The membership dues are certainly affordable and will help tremendously to do the things that the network has said are priorities in the community.

The 2008 leadership is a consensus-driven group of people from all kinds of industries and backgrounds. We are always willing to hear new ideas and address concerns anyone might have. Never hesitate to contact me in these instances.

I am really excited to be a part of this network and to watch us grow and become more focused and stable over the coming year. Thanks to all of you who participate.

Respectfully,

Cecily Rodriguez