

January 27, 2009

Dear High School Principals, ESL/ENL Coordinators, Teachers and Staff:

My name is Steve Ramos, and I am a co-founder of the Indianapolis Chapter of the National Society of Hispanic MBAs (NSHMBA). NSHMBA is a professional organization whose mission is to foster Hispanic leadership through graduate management education and professional development. We are Hispanic professionals that have made it through school, college and into corporations like IBM, Eli Lilly, and Cummins Engine. Across the United States there are over 8,000 members of NSHMBA.

The Problem: Hispanics lead the country in drop out rates.

According to the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Indiana Hispanic high school graduation rate is around 54%. Of those students graduating from high school only 2% enter into college. We do not know what percent of those students graduate from college. Clearly this is a huge problem for Hispanics and for Indiana. NSHMBA also takes this problem very seriously, and hopes that through programs such as Project Stepping Stone those percentages will increase. The low numbers of students graduating from high school and pursuing college degrees results in a deficit of eligible Hispanic candidates to obtain advanced degrees and fill the growing need for Hispanic leadership in Indiana and in corporate America.

Stepping Up: A FREE program to help our Hispanic youth.

NSHMBA and partners created Project Stepping Stone (PSS) in 2004 to help Latino high school seniors and juniors consider and prepare for college. This program operates in partnership with Indiana businesses, the State of Indiana, as well as universities and high schools throughout the state. Our focus is on breaking down barriers, building trust, providing a business immersion experience, preparing students for college, providing college orientation, as well as leadership training and helping in the community. All of these experiences and courses are provided by caring business and university volunteers at No Cost to the student or parent.

Success to date: Over 90% of Project Stepping Stone students enter college

2009 will be the 6th year of Project Stepping Stone. Of all students that have attended PSS, 90% are accepted and enter college. Last year 81 students from over 35 high schools were able to attend Project Stepping Stone. In 2009, we are hoping to confirm 135 students from 50 Indiana high schools. Over 200 volunteers, 21 sponsors, and 50 businesses will participate in helping the students learn and grow through the week long PSS experience. We ask the students to step outside of their normal world to meet, interface with, and to learn from many new people. At the end of the week these students will pass on the college opportunities to their friends and fellow students.

One Week for a Life Time: A growing family that helps each other.

This summer the program will be held on June 7-June 13th at IUPUI, Ball State and Marian College campuses. This 7 day/6 night program does not end on the last day but rather continues long after by building strong bonds with the mentors and students. The students also are challenged to become strong community leaders helping locally. We also ask them to use the knowledge they have gained to help guide other students to college. This is a life time experience that will make a difference in their lives.

Spread the word: Applications are being accepted now - Final Deadline is March 31st

Enclosed are several Project Stepping Stone documents. You can also download the forms from our web site at www.projectsteppingstone.com. An application form is included that must be completed by the students; priority will be given to those received via e-mail or fax by March 15, 2009. Application deadline is March 31, 2009. The package also includes a letter to the parents in Spanish and English. Please make copies for distribution to the students and parents.

Together we can make a difference in the lives of these young students. Thank you for your support. If you have any questions please contact me at 317-428-4555 or my cell phone at 317-213-8156.

Sincerely,

Steven A. Ramos
Project Stepping Stone
saramos@us.ibm.com
(317) 566-3953